



PINELLAS COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION

5095 93rd Ave. N.  
Pinellas Park, FL 34666

March 13, 1992

Mr. George Greer, Chairman,  
Pinellas County Charter Review Committee

Dear Sir,

The Pinellas County Fire Chiefs Association has reviewed the Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) portion of the Pinellas County Government Services Improvement Plan. We believe it to be a summary of how the various elements function separately but does not properly depict how these elements function collectively.

The Pinellas County Fire Chiefs Association has, over the past few years, initiated an operational consolidation of local fire service resources into an effective county-wide fire service delivery system while maintaining our responsibility to local elected and appointed officials and their constituents.

The following is a list of issues and programs successfully implemented by the Association.

**JOINT COMMUNICATIONS:** All Fire Departments in Pinellas County are dispatched from one central facility owned and operated by Pinellas County Government. A users group made up of representatives from all entities serves as an advisory board to the county staff. This board resolves all issues which arise as well as setting new policies in conjunction with County Staff.

**GROUP PURCHASING:** Initiated entirely by the Association and implemented in conjunction with the local Association of Purchasing Directors, this effort has proven to be very effective in containing the costs of equipment used by the fire service.

**NEAREST UNIT RESPONSE:** This program assures residents that the closest geographically located unit is dispatched to the emergency, and is currently required by the existing fire service contracts between the various Fire Departments and the County Government.

**AUTOMATIC AID:** This process assures automatic response for emergency equipment from neighboring jurisdictions in conjunction

with nearest unit response policies.

**COUNTY-WIDE SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAMS:** Through group consensus, the Chiefs Association has promoted development of specialized teams for water rescue, rope rescue, hazardous materials response, and below grade rescue by select Fire Departments, thereby eliminating the need for each department to develop its own team.

**UNIFIED EMERGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** This assures that every Fire Department operates in the same prescribed manner on any size emergency scene. This enhances and simplifies emergency scene operations.

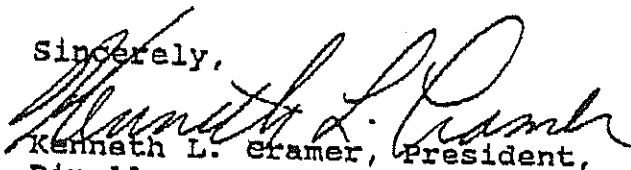
**COUNTY-WIDE NUMBERING OF FIRE & EMS UNITS:** This program enhances the dispatching of emergency equipment and was accomplished by a great deal of give and take by all departments.

The Association worked with City and County planners and purchasing departments to determine the best methods of joint cooperation. Following these research projects, we developed a comprehensive Emergency Response System that crosses territorial lines, but maintains local control and hometown pride. We understand the financial constraints of today's economy, but when considering the fact that the Fire Chiefs in this county have basically not expanded the Fire and EMS Service since the inception of county-wide EMS, except to meet the needs of new growth areas, it becomes evident that we have an extremely efficient emergency service delivery system.

We would also emphasize how each Fire and EMS station, no matter which community served, is an integral part of how the closest unit system functions. An elimination of any one station will shift responsibility onto neighboring departments and will have a domino effect throughout the system.

The Pinellas County Fire Chiefs Association has adopted the position that consolidation of services is a policy issue to be decided by the voters and selected officials of this County. Should consolidation in any form take place, the Pinellas County Fire Chiefs Association is prepared to take a leadership position in the design and implementation of the system.

Sincerely,



Kenneth L. Cramer, President,  
Pinellas County Fire Chiefs Association