

Mayor Coleman Orders Immediate Changes in Fire Department Following Audit Release

Coleman Says Audit Is Roadmap for Progress, Commits to Strengthening Department

(Saint Paul) - Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman released the City's comprehensive study of the Saint Paul Fire & Safety Services Department today. The study was completed by TriData to examine various operational and management issues in the Department.

"Saint Paul is a safe City and is well-served by its Fire Department. Residents know that safety comes first in our City and have come to expect a world-class Fire Department that will provide the best possible emergency services quickly and equitably. I am absolutely committed to meeting this standard. We requested an outside perspective on operations in the Department to ensure we were doing everything possible to strengthen the Fire Department and provide the best possible service delivery to the residents of Saint Paul," Coleman said.

The audit reports that the organizational state of the Department "is in a state of internal crisis. The problems have not yet affected delivery of service to the public but could easily do so if not addressed. The absence of trust between firefighters and the fire administration is a key factor affecting poor relations between labor and management." Mayor Coleman has directed the Chief to take immediate action to address these management issues.

"While the report makes it clear that all parties have played a role in the breakdown of the relationships, it is the responsibility of the Chief to set the tone and direction of the Department. I call on everyone in the Department to set aside past disputes and focus on implementing the recommendations in the audit."

Mayor Coleman added, "It is time to move the Department forward. The residents of our City expect it. I will accept nothing less than a full effort on everyone's part."

Mayor Coleman also announced immediate actions he is taking in light of the recommendations:

- The Mayor has directed the Fire Chief to make immediate changes to the management team.
- The Mayor will immediately move forward on the recommendations regarding Emergency Preparedness.
- The Mayor has directed the Fire Chief and presidents of both unions to immediately recommit to participating in the Labor Management Committee. In

addition, he has asked for a State Mediator from the Bureau of Mediation Services to facilitate these meetings.

- The Mayor is bringing together two groups, one internal and one external, to examine the feasibility of every recommendation.
 - The external group (former Mayor George Latimer, City Council President Kathy Lantry, Council on Black Minnesotans Executive Director Lester Collins, HealthPartners Vice President of Government and Community Relations Donna Zimmerman and former Deputy Fire Chief Pete Pream) will provide community input and focus on customer service and the services the Department provides.
 - The internal group (Fire Chief, an Assistant Fire Chief, a representative from Local 21, a representative from Local 3939, the Fire Department's Administrative Manager and Office Manager, and an EMS Officer) will be charged incorporating the input of the external group and the Audit while developing a five year strategic plan for the Fire Department.
- The Mayor has directed Terry Haltiner from Human Resources to chair and lead both groups and manage the transition of the audit.

The report is an objective assessment of the strengths and opportunities in the Fire Department organization. It provides data and comparative information, analyses and recommendations to improve the Department's management, structure and operations.

"We will use the recommendations of this report, along with our own history and experience, to forge a stronger organization and create a new five year strategic plan for Fire Department that will best meet the needs of the residents and businesses of Saint Paul," Coleman said.

TriData conducted an in-depth audit over a five month period. Representatives from TriData spent a significant amount of time with city staff including Fire Administration, Locals 21 and 3939, Fire Department sworn and civilian staff and staff from several other City departments.

Mayor Coleman also emphasized that the audit is the beginning of a long-term assessment for the direction of the Fire Department.

"This audit is a roadmap for progress in the Fire Department. Its recommendations are vast and touch all corners of the Department. This is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to moving this Department in the right direction. We need to get this job done the right way, and I ask all stakeholders to enter into this process in good faith as we commit ourselves to making meaningful changes that will enhance service delivery," Coleman said.