

AUDIT REPORT

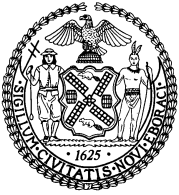


CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BUREAU OF FINANCIAL AUDIT
WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR., COMPTROLLER

Follow-up Audit Report on Fire Department Procedures for Replacement of Front-line Vehicles

FS09-082F

April 21, 2009



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
1 CENTRE STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007-2341

WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

To the Citizens of the City of New York

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In accordance with the responsibilities of the Comptroller contained in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter, my office has performed a follow-up audit to determine whether the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) implemented the recommendations made in a previous audit of the procedures for replacing front-line fire-fighting vehicles.

FDNY's Fleet and Technical Services Unit maintains more than 2,000 vehicles, including ambulances, trucks/ladders, engines/pumpers, and rescue and support vehicles assigned to 354 facilities Citywide. We audit City agencies such as this to ensure that their policies and procedures are efficient and properly safeguard public resources for which they are responsible.

The results of our audit, which are presented in this report, have been discussed with FDNY officials, and their comments have been considered in preparing this report. Their complete written response is attached to this report.

I trust that this report contains information that is of interest to you. If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my audit bureau at audit@Comptroller.nyc.gov or telephone my office at 212-669-3747.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William C. Thompson, Jr.".

William C. Thompson, Jr.

WCT/fh

Report: FS09-082F
Filed: April 21, 2009

Table of Contents

AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF	1
Audit Findings and Conclusions	1
Audit Recommendations	1
INTRODUCTION	3
Background	3
Objectives	3
Scope and Methodology	3
Discussion of Audit Results	4
RESULTS OF FOLLOW-UP AUDIT	5
ADDENDUM Fire Department Response	

*The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
Bureau of Financial Audit
Support Services Division*

**Follow-up Audit Report on
Fire Department Procedures for Replacement
Of Front-line Vehicles**

FS09-082F

AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF

This follow-up audit determined whether the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) implemented the recommendations made in a previous audit, *Audit Report on the Fire Department Procedures for Replacement of Front-line Vehicles* (#MH05-073A), issued May 17, 2005.

The previous audit evaluated whether FDNY was in compliance with its union contract with regard to replacement requirements for front-line fire-fighting vehicles. The audit found that FDNY was in compliance with the replacement requirements for front-line firefighting vehicles in its union contract, but FDNY needed to formalize its replacement procedures in its own written policies. Also, even though the location information for the spare vehicles was tracked in the FDFLEETS computer database, the location information for spare vehicles in FDFLEETS was not updated regularly. FDNY is currently working on the development of an Oracle database to replace FDFLEETS for vehicle tracking.

Audit Findings and Conclusions

The current follow-up audit disclosed that of the four recommendations made in audit MH05-073A, issued May 17, 2005, FDNY has implemented two and partially implemented two. FDNY has developed both a policy and guidelines regarding replacement of front-line vehicles, but they have not been signed, dated, or disseminated throughout FDNY.

Audit Recommendations

To address the issues that still exist, we make three recommendations. FDNY should:

- Approve, sign, and date the policy regarding the replacement of the front-line fire-fighting vehicles and spare vehicles when they reach a certain age, and disseminate the policy to all appropriate FDNY units.

- Approve, sign, and date the guideline that determines when and for how long a spare vehicle should replace a front-line vehicle, and ensure that newer spares are assigned to those vehicles out of service for a longer time.
- Link the new database being developed for vehicle tracking, once it is in place, to all related FDNY systems.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The New York City Fire Department responds to fires, public safety and medical emergencies, disasters, and terrorist acts to protect the lives and property of City residents and visitors. Firefighters respond to nearly 300,000 fire and non-fire-related emergencies each year.

FDNY's Fleet and Technical Services Unit (FTSU) maintained 2,083 vehicles as of June 30, 2008. Vehicles include ambulances, trucks/ladders, engines/pumpers, and rescue and support vehicles assigned to 354 facilities throughout the five boroughs. According to the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2009, FDNY's capital commitment for the replacement of front-line fire-fighting apparatus, support vehicles, fireboats, and equipment totals \$60.6 million.

The FTSU uses two computer systems to keep track of its fleet: the Maintenance Control Management System (MCMS) is an on-line processing system used to record vehicle maintenance information. It is maintained by FDNY of Information Technology and Telecommunication (DoITT) and assists all City agencies that use and maintain vehicles. The second system, FDFLEETS, is an in-house database system for internal use. It records the location of the vehicles. FDNY is currently working on the development of an Oracle database to replace FDFLEETS for vehicle tracking.

According to the FDNY contract with the United Fire Officers Association, Article XIII, Safety Standards and Equipment, §2, FDNY should operate all regularly assigned engine, ladder, squad, and rescue companies with vehicles less than 11 years old. However, if a regularly assigned vehicle is unavailable, firefighters must respond to fires on available equipment.

Objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the FDNY implemented the recommendations made in a previous audit, *Audit Report on the Fire Department Procedures for Replacement of Front-line Vehicles* (#MH05-073A), issued May 17, 2005.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93, of the New York City Charter.

The scope period of the audit was Fiscal Year 2008 (July 1, 2007–June 30, 2008). To achieve our objective and gain an overall understanding of FDNY’s fleet maintenance program, we reviewed the findings and recommendations of the previous audit, *Audit Report on the Fire Department Procedures for Replacement of Front-line Vehicles*, issued May 17, 2005

We interviewed officials at FDNY’s Fleet and Technical Services Unit. We also interviewed various officials responsible for the MCMS and the FDFLEETS computer systems to gain an understanding of the systems’ functions, processes, and reporting capabilities.

To determine the reliability of the FDFLEETS data, we analyzed security regarding user-access levels, security, and system policies. We also analyzed and examined all records for valid dates and codes in each record to determine whether the information recorded complied with the required attributes as designated by the system specifications. We performed data-integrity tests, including tests for appropriate ranges and existence of blanks to determine whether the data recorded in the database are reliable and accurate. These tests included evaluating data relationships to ensure that the information that exists in the database is relevant, assessing completeness of information by verifying that the location of the equipment can be substantiated, and determining overall reliability of the data in both systems

Discussion of Audit Results

The matters covered in this report were discussed with FDNY officials during and at the conclusion of this audit. A preliminary draft report was sent to FDNY officials and was discussed at an exit conference held on February 25, 2009. We submitted a draft report to FDNY officials with a request for comments on March 9, 2009. We received a written response from them on March 23, 2009. In their response, FDNY officials stated, that they intend to utilize the recommendations.

The full text of the FDNY comments is included as an addendum to this report.

RESULTS OF FOLLOW-UP AUDIT

The current follow-up audit disclosed that of the four recommendations made in audit #MH05-073A, issued May 17, 2005, FDNY has implemented two and partially implemented two. FDNY has developed a policy and guidelines regarding replacement of front-line vehicles, but they were not signed, dated, or disseminated throughout FDNY.

Previous Finding: “The Department has no written policy regarding the replacement of Front-Line Firefighting Vehicles.”

The previous audit found that FDNY follows the union contract, but lacks its own written replacement policy.

Previous Recommendation #1: “Have its own written policy regarding the replacement of the front-line firefighting vehicles and spare vehicles when they reach a certain age.”

Previous Response: “The Department agrees and will implement this recommendation.”

Current Status: PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED

FDNY provided us a written replacement policy that follows the union contract. However, this policy statement is unsigned and undated, and FDNY could not demonstrate that it had been distributed. Therefore we consider this recommendation partially implemented.

Previous Finding: “The Department has no written guidelines to dictate when and for how long a spare vehicle should replace a front-line vehicle.”

The previous audit stated: “According to officials, if it is determined that a front-line vehicle will be out of service for longer than five hours, based on the type of repair needed, a spare vehicle is assigned to the firehouse. In addition, an official stated that the newer spare vehicles are assigned to replace front-line vehicles that will be out for extended periods. “

Previous Recommendation #2: “Develop written guidelines to determine when and how long a spare vehicle should replace a front-line vehicle, and ensure that newer spares are assigned to those vehicles out of service for a longer time.”

Previous Response: “The Department agrees and will implement this recommendation.”

Current Status: PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED

FDNY provided us a written guideline, as recommended; however, this document is unsigned and undated, and FDNY could not demonstrate that it had been distributed. Therefore, we consider this recommendation partially implemented.

Previous Finding: “The location information for spare vehicles in FDFLEETS is not updated regularly.”

The previous audit found that the Supervisor of Mechanics on duty at the Control Center determines which spare vehicle is available to replace an out-of-service vehicle by consulting the Spare List, a sheet of paper that lists all the spare vehicles. The locations of available spare vehicles are written in pencil and erased each time a vehicle is assigned. Even though FDFLEETS tracks the location of spare vehicles, the location information for spare vehicles in FDFLEETS is not updated regularly.

Previous Recommendation #3: “Ensure that the location information for spare vehicles maintained in FDFLEETS is kept up-to-date.”

Previous Response: “The Department agrees and will implement this recommendation.”

Current Status: IMPLEMENTED

FDNY created a separate application to augment FDFLEETS that tracks the movement of all spare vehicles and the locations of stored available spare vehicles. We found that information in the application is kept current. Therefore, we consider this recommendation implemented.

Previous Recommendation #4: “Consider computerizing the process of assigning spare vehicles to replace out-of-service front-line vehicles.”

Previous Response: “The Department will consider the feasibility of computerization of the assignment process.”

Current Status: IMPLEMENTED

FDNY is currently working on the development of an Oracle database for vehicle-tracking. The new database system will track information for all Department vehicles including vehicle purchasing data, vehicle specification data, the assignment of vehicles to users, and the assignment and identification of EZ Pass tags, gas cards, and gas cans to vehicles. The system will also track the scheduling of vehicles for preventative maintenance and keep a history of all changes associated with each vehicle. The new version of the database in Oracle was given to FTSU for its review. Once FTSU signs off, FDNY estimates it will take two months to clean up the old records and migrate it into Oracle. Therefore, we consider this recommendation implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the issues that still exist, we make three recommendations. FDNY should:

1. Approve, sign, and date the policy regarding the replacement of the front-line fire-fighting vehicles and spare vehicles when they reach a certain age, and disseminate the policy to all appropriate FDNY units.

FDNY Response: “The Department agrees and has implemented this recommendation.”

2. Approve, sign, and date the guideline that determines when and for how long a spare vehicle should replace a front-line vehicle, and ensure that newer spares are assigned to those vehicles out of service for a longer time.

FDNY Response: “The Department agrees and has implemented this recommendation.”

3. Link the new database being developed for vehicle tracking, once it is in place, to all related FDNY systems.

FDNY Response: “The Department agrees and will implement this recommendation.”



FIRE DEPARTMENT
9 METROTECH CENTER BROOKLYN, NY 11201-3857



NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA
Fire Commissioner

March 23, 2009

Mr. John Graham
Deputy Comptroller
Policy, Audits, Accountancy & Contracts
Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street
New York, New York 10007-2341

Re: Follow Up Audit Report on Fire Department Procedures for Replacement of Front-line Vehicles. FS09-082F.

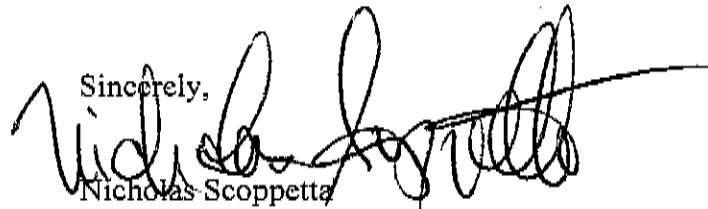
Dear Mr. Graham:

Attached is a copy of FDNY's response and Agency Implementation Plan (AIP) to the four recommendations made by the Office of the Comptroller in the abovementioned audit

Please thank your staff for the time and diligence that they put into this audit the Department appreciates their efforts, and intends to utilize their recommendations.

If you have any questions about our response or AIP, please contact our Executive Director of Audit, Frank Buccellato, at (718) 999-5180.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Scoppetta

Attachment

cc: Michael Vecchi, Associate Commissioner
James Basile, Assistant Fire Commissioner

Follow Up Audit FS09-082F – Fire Department Procedures for Replacement of Front-Line Vehicles

Audit Recommendations / FDNY Response – Agency Implementation Plan

- 1) FDNY should approve, sign and date the policy regarding the replacement of the front-line firefighting vehicles and spare vehicles when they reach a certain age, and disseminate the policy to all appropriate FDNY units.

FDNY Response – The Department agrees and has implemented this recommendation (See policy attached).

- 2) FDNY should approve, sign and date the guideline that determines when and for how long a spare vehicle should replace a front-line vehicle, and ensure that newer spares are assigned to those vehicles out of service for a longer time.

FDNY Response – The Department agrees and has implemented this recommendation (See policy attached).

- 3) FDNY should link the new database being developed for vehicle tracking, once it is in place, to all related FDNY systems.

FDNY Response – The Department agrees and will implement this recommendation.



FIRE DEPARTMENT
48-58 35th Street Long Island City, N.Y. 11101

JAMES BASILE
Assistant Fire Commissioner
Bureau of Fleet and Technical Services

**GUIDELINES FOR THE ISSUANCE OF FDNY SPARE APPARATUS
FSD PROCEDURE #2009-02**

REISSUED FEBRUARY 25, 2009

All FDNY spare fire apparatus shall be maintained in a ready condition that can be utilized to subsidize or enhance FDNY operations.

Spare apparatus shall be stored indoors at the Paidge Avenue facility.

The Control Room supervisor shall maintain and update on a tour-by-tour basis a listing of all spare fire apparatus being utilized or available for deployment.

Requirements for issuance of spare apparatus:

- Review the list of available spare apparatus and utilize the newest spares.
- Prior to issuance, all spare apparatus will go through a safety inspection.
- Firefighters picking up spare apparatus shall:
 - Road test and operate the apparatus systems (lights, pumps, ladders, etc.), before accepting the spare fire apparatus.
- The Control Room supervisor shall immediately update the spare list.

Upon return of the spare apparatus to Fleet Services, the responsible supervisor of mechanics shall ensure that a complete vehicle and safety inspection is performed prior to the fire apparatus being placed back and made available at the Paidge Avenue facility. The Control Room supervisor shall update the spare list and make the spare apparatus available for assignment.

Note: Whenever a spare fire apparatus is used to replace a long-term company apparatus, the spare fire apparatus will go through the same preventive maintenance program as the company fire apparatus.



FIRE DEPARTMENT
48-58 35th Street Long Island City, N.Y. 11101

JAMES BASILE
Assistant Fire Commissioner
Bureau of Fleet and Technical Services

**FDNY APPARATUS REPLACEMENT POLICY
FSD PROCEDURE #2009-01**

REISSUED FEBRUARY 25, 2009

FDNY currently has a replacement policy that front-line firefighting apparatus is replaced before the apparatus is eleven (11) years old.

Since 9-11, FDNY has been pro-active in maintaining a larger "ready fleet" that would be available to deploy rapidly.

Since the City does not allow funding to support a replacement of spare apparatus, the decision on replacement is based on inventory and requirements of the Department.

Spare firefighting apparatus are maintained in a safe and ready state. Spare firefighting apparatus is removed from service when it normally meets one of the following criteria:

- When a significant number of new apparatus is acquired, normally the oldest spare apparatus are decommissioned.
- Significant damage to major systems (i.e. motor, pump, ladder), are such that repairs would not be feasible.
- Major motor vehicle accidents.
- Issues that would negate the safety of firefighters.

This policy is effective immediately, and supersedes any former policy and/or procedure.