

A photograph of two firefighters in a fire truck. One firefighter, wearing a yellow high-visibility vest over a dark jacket, is looking at a tablet. The other firefighter, in full protective gear including a helmet and goggles, is standing next to him. The background shows the interior of a fire truck with various equipment. The entire image has a red overlay.

FROM RESPONSE TO RESILIENCE...

**HOW FIRE AND RESCUE AGENCIES ARE
ADAPTING TO LIFE IN THE 'NEW NORMAL'**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 THE CHALLENGES BEFORE US
- 02 LIFE IN THE 'NEW NORMAL'
- 03 CHARTING A NEW COURSE FORWARD
- 04 TECHNOLOGY WILL BE KEY
- 05 SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE



The Challenges Before Us

There may never have been a more challenging time to be working in public safety. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 many first responders have worked excessively long hours, often for several weeks in a row to save lives and protect property.

Only months after the outbreak, outrage regarding cases of police brutality have fueled the flames for civil unrest. Firefighters, EMTs and paramedics responding to fires set by protesters or calls for medical assistance have been confronted, sometimes violently, by rioters in several cities.

The climate that exists surrounding first responders hasn't diminished the services these agencies provide to their communities. Civil unrest, combined with COVID-19 and the economic impact will change how fire and rescue operate going forward.

Looking backwards is not an option - there is no going back to "normal". Now, the focus is on how to adapt and become more resilient, effective, and efficient.



UNPRECEDENTED FIRE/EMS WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- ◇ Adjusting financially and operationally to budget decreases due to the economic downturn
- ◇ Managing first responder post-traumatic stress
- ◇ Mitigating the risk and impact of assaults on personnel responding to calls for service during civil unrest
- ◇ Initiating emergency staffing plans to maintain operations due to COVID related vacancies
- ◇ Managing excessive overtime due to COVID and civil unrest
- ◇ Tracking COVID related cost for reimbursement justifications
- ◇ Adhering to COVID PPE policies and daily decontamination of operational equipment
- ◇ Ensuring first responder safety from COVID virus exposures while responding to calls for service
- ◇ Maintaining adequate staffing levels due to decline in volunteer firefighters

Life in the 'New Normal'

While the role of fire and rescue during the COVID-19 pandemic remains the same, a day-in-the-life of this workforce certainly has changed.

- ◇ New safety protocols for firefighters and EMS providers have been established to ensure that all interactions adhere to operational policies and patient care.
- ◇ Complex decontamination practices are required daily.
- ◇ New training has been established for application of COVID-19 HIPPA policies, exposure control and use of PPE's.
- ◇ Wearing full PPE (glasses, masks, gloved and gowns) when going into healthcare facilities and nursing homes is required in most communities.
- ◇ In some areas, there are longer response times due to COVID related staffing shortages or lack of volunteers.
- ◇ Calls to multiple EMS organizations are often required due to increased wait times for ambulance transfers.
- ◇ Volunteer fire companies have loss their means of financial support due to an inability to raise funds at events.
- ◇ Many volunteer and most training programs have been suspended.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC FIRST RESPONDERS



Charting a New Course Forward



Fire and rescue leaders already have difficult tasks balancing workforce compliance policies with complicated scheduling, training, compensation and equipment processes. Now with COVID-19 and civil unrest added to the mix, many agencies are looking back in order to chart a course forward.

In the future 'new normal', operational and administrative roles will merge. Funding will take center stage. Documentation and oversight tracking will be critical. Agencies using this time to monitor where their budget has been so they can plan and justify where it should be going will be ahead of the curve.

Are You Asking the Right Questions?

- ◇ How can we use analytics to see where our budget has been used and where it should be allocated going forward?
- ◇ What was the cost of allocating personnel and equipment for this year's COVID vacancies and civil unrest?
- ◇ How can we proactively plan for COVID vacancies?
- ◇ How can we justify our COVID reimbursement applications?
- ◇ What's the best way to manage the fluidity of our schedules?
- ◇ How can we ensure that our personnel are receiving the right training for their roles?
- ◇ How do we track compliance with new policy reforms?
- ◇ If we restructure, how can we consolidate certain job classes and their pay changes?

Technology Will Be Key.

While smart technologies like advanced bio-telemetry and autonomous vehicles will become more essential, managing the fire and rescue workforce from an operational and administrative perspective will be equally vital.

Using manual, ad hoc processes augmented by spreadsheets simply won't cut it going forward. Relying on homegrown disparate systems or generic workforce management platforms will not provide timely information and will add cost to an increasing workload.

Law makers and communities come together to generate policy reforms. These new policies will need to be socialized and enforced. As new training and certification programs will be required, they will need to be scheduled and tracked. As volunteers decline and COVID vacancies increase, new scheduling methodologies will need to be clarified. As personnel assume multiple roles, compensation calculations will need to be applied. And as 2021 tax bases drop, so will budget allocations.



How Will Technology Help?

Data-driven analytics that provides actionable insights will be critical – no matter if the data revolves around costs, personnel, schedules, training, or equipment. Having the ability to use one platform to manage the workforce both operationally and administratively will be incredibly valuable. Even more so, being able to use its own data or data consumed from other essential public safety platforms will bring a new level of understanding about workforce activities and costs. This is what the future will require -- and technology will be key.

Serving Those Who Serve

It is inevitable that there will be budget adjustments, policy changes and many new challenges. Let us help you navigate the path to the road ahead. At Orion, our mission is to serve those who serve.



Generate analytical insights regarding workforce operations and the related cost so that it can be shared with others on a regular basis.



View real-time labor tracking and job costing of community services at macro and micro levels.



Automate complex scheduling and payroll rules to reduce cost and ensure policy compliance.



Track operational equipment assignments and cost for personnel, units and work locations.



Ensure that the right persons, with the right skills are placed in the right assignments at the right time.



Keep field personnel connected with mobile technologies.



Continuously exchange workforce data with other public safety technologies for analytical insights and ongoing, scheduled reporting.



To learn more about Orion's public safety workforce management software and services, contact us today at 866-779-1689 or go to www.orioncom.com.





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