



CITYGATE
ASSOCIATES

OPERATIONAL STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT **VOLUME 2 – FIRE DIVISION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

CITY OF LINO LAKES, MN

APRIL 24, 2025



CITYGATE
ASSOCIATES

WWW.CITYGATEASSOCIATES.COM

600 COOLIDGE DR., STE. 150 FOLSOM, CA 95630
PHONE: (916) 458-5100
FAX: (916) 983-2090



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Fire Division Executive Summary	1
Policy Choices Framework.....	1
Three Challenges	2
Challenge #1: Adequacy of Firefighting Response.....	2
Challenge #2: Intrinsic Delays in Onboarding New Members	2
Challenge #3: Administrative Demands and Peer Relationships	2
Positives.....	3
Current Deployment Measures	3
Fire Division Findings and Recommendations.....	5
Comprehensive Staffing Recommendations and Phasing	10
Phasing Plan	11
Next Steps.....	13
Near-Term	13
Longer-Term	13
 <u>Table of Tables</u>	
Table 1—Response Time Summary by Year.....	4
Table 2—Recommended Minimum Daily Response Staffing Model	11
Table 3—Proposed Fire Department Staffing Summary	13

FIRE DIVISION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Lino Lakes (City) retained Citygate Associates, LLC (Citygate) to conduct an Operational Study of the Public Safety Department (Department). For the Fire Division of the Department, this assessment, performed concurrently with an assessment of the Police Division, included a comprehensive Fire Division services evaluation to (1) establish recommended minimum requirements relative to the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations for the Department to consider; and (2) create a template for future deployment and performance analysis. The methodology utilized in this Operational Study in relation to the scope of work can be found in **Section 5** of this report.

Citygate’s study was initiated with on-site visits and stakeholder listening sessions beginning October 28, 2024. Subsequently, there was a pause to collect 2024 response data in its entirety for analysis and inclusion in our full report. Further, during the period of Citygate’s analysis, the City experienced executive personnel changes, and interim leadership began substantive improvements within both the Fire and Police divisions. **It should be noted that the content of this report reflects the Department as it existed *prior* to the appointment of interim chiefs for both police and fire operations.**

This report is presented in three volumes. This volume (Volume 2) includes a Fire Division Executive Summary, which contains a summary of Citygate’s analysis and all findings and recommendations. Volume 3 contains the full technical report, including an introduction to the study and background information about the City and Department; a Standards of Cover study supported by maps, graphs, and response statistics; and an administrative support staffing capacity review.

Overall, Citygate makes **25 findings and 15 recommendations** in the Fire Division portion of this report (numbered sequentially following the Police Division findings and recommendations).

POLICY CHOICES FRAMEWORK

There are no mandatory federal or state regulations directing the level of fire service staffing, response times, or outcomes related to fire services. The level of service provided, and any resultant cost, is a local policy choice. If services are provided at all, local, state, and federal regulations must be followed for the safety of the public and for the personnel providing the services.

Thus, the level of fire protection services provided is a *local policy decision*. Communities have the level of fire services they can afford and choose to purchase, which may not always be the level desired.

THREE CHALLENGES

For a community to achieve desired outcomes for fire and EMS events, adequate staffing, apparatus types, and response times are required. Citygate’s review of the Department identified **three key challenges**—some with serious deficiencies—that overlap and prevent adherence to best practices and even regulatory compliance related to basic fire service operations.

Challenge #1: Adequacy of Firefighting Response

The current deployment model of three part-time personnel on duty weekdays at Station 1 is *insufficient* to safely and effectively mitigate a moderate, single-family dwelling fire or other moderate incident type—with *no remaining on-duty personnel*, or *very limited POC personnel*, available for a major or simultaneous incident. The present, single-crew staffing and weak emergency callback capacity is contributing to sluggish response times, making positive outcomes less likely across the challenging road network around the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes.

On nights and weekends, the paid-on-call group provides emergency services by responding from their homes to stations 1 and 2. While this group of firefighters has a strong legacy of providing weekend and after-hours staffing coverage for the City, as in many other departments, the number of paid-on-call personnel has diminished while after-hours call volumes have simultaneously increased. The group routinely struggles to provide adequate staffing—even for emergencies requiring only a single-unit response—and is heavily dependent on adjacent agencies to provide the incident command and additional personnel capacity needed for more complex incidents.

Challenge #2: Intrinsic Delays in Onboarding New Members

The Department has consistently remained below authorized staffing levels for both part-time and paid-on-call personnel. A significant factor affecting staffing is that the City’s current public safety model requires all prospective Fire Division members to be vetted through the rigorous Criminal Justice Information Service (CJIS) personal history review prior to training and onboarding. This process takes several months and, prior to acceptance, applicants routinely lose interest or gain membership with other organizations with less stringent onboarding requirements.

Challenge #3: Administrative Demands and Peer Relationships

Much of the time and attention of the Fire Division’s two full-time staff is devoted to managing a transient, part-time firefighter group and responding to incidents when staffing is deficient. These short-notice operational demands have limited their ability to schedule and complete supporting elements—most notably inspections, training, and emergency planning. However, even with these burdens removed, there would still be a need to increase staffing to fully engage and manage the support and compliance functions related to Fire Division services.

The Division has had limited participation in local leadership discussions regarding planning and response with their firefighting peers. This has contributed to the recruitment and retention issues previously noted.

Positives

Citygate found the Division to be an organization with functional policies and processes needing only minor adjustments, primarily with regards to staffing. The Division's existing fleet and facilities are in the condition to allow for immediate adjustments to response capability. This is an enviable position in the fire service as station and apparatus build times now routinely exceed 36 months. The remaining element for increasing capacity is personnel, and the Division should be very proud of its strong culture shown by the spirit of duty and cooperation within both its part-time and paid-on-call personnel. Citygate was very impressed by these individuals and the work accomplished to date and believes there is strong DNA in the Division upon which to ensure future successes.

CURRENT DEPLOYMENT MEASURES

The Department serves an urban/suburban/rural population with a mixed residential and non-residential land-use pattern typical of other Twin Cities area cities of similar size and demographics.

Fire service deployment, simply summarized, is about the *speed* and *weight* of response.

Speed refers to initial response resources—typically engines, ladder trucks, squads, or ambulances—strategically deployed across a jurisdiction within a specified travel time interval to mitigate routine-to-moderate emergencies to achieve desired outcomes.

Weight refers to multiple-unit responses for more serious emergencies such as building fires, multiple-patient medical emergencies, vehicle collisions with extrication required, or technical rescue incidents where enough firefighters must be assembled within a time interval to safely control the emergency and prevent it from escalating into an even more serious event.

As shown in the following table, total response time performance in the City is significantly slower than best practice recommendations. For the most recent reporting year, this resulted in a first-unit call-to-arrival performance that was 5:18 minutes *slower* than Citygate's 7:30-minute recommended best practice goal to facilitate desired outcomes in suburban communities. The City utilizes Anoka County's public safety answering point (PSAP) for both Police and Fire and can

improve response times for Fire units through effective training of dispatch personnel and increasing on-duty station staffing.

Table 1—Response Time Summary by Year

Station	Overall	2022	2023	2024
Department-Wide	13:26 (1,172)	14:28 (292)	13:25 (428)	12:48 (452)

Typical desired outcomes in suburban-density communities include preventing permanent impairment from medical emergencies where possible and confining building fires to the room or area of origin. To achieve these desired outcomes:

- ◆ The initial (first-due) unit should arrive within **7:30 to 8:30** minutes, before brain death becomes permanent and an incipient building fire expands beyond the room of origin.
- ◆ The full, multiple-unit Effective Response Force (ERF) should arrive within **11:30 to 12:30** minutes, with a sufficient number of personnel to safely perform all of the critical tasks necessary to mitigate the emergency.

Given only one staffed fire station on weekdays, Citygate is concerned with the Department’s ability to provide equitable “speed of response” to large sections of the City—as well as sufficient “weight of response” capacity for more serious emergencies *and* concurrent incident responses—to achieve commonly expected outcomes in urban/suburban communities similar to Lino Lakes, which has more than 22,000 residents plus employment and visitor populations.

Citygate understands that a cadre of part-time personnel provides great value to the City and Department, but it *does not meet* the City’s current risk exposure needs. A combination of full-time, part-time, and paid-on-call personnel will be needed for the foreseeable future to ensure an adequate first-unit “speed of response” and ERF “weight of response.”

The Department is in an advantageous position, with adequate stations and apparatus to adequately protect the City. **The missing element is adequate staffing to bring the speed and weight of response to appropriate levels for a high-functioning suburban city.** The two current fire station locations can cover much of the City within adequate response travel time goals—if they are staffed.

Best practice is to provide an equitable level of service to all areas of a jurisdiction with similar risk and population density. The travel constraints created by the lakes make it impractical for one station to provide equitable service for all neighborhoods.

If desired outcomes include limiting building fire damage to only part of the inside of an affected building and/or minimizing permanent impairment or death resulting from a medical emergency, the urban/suburban population density areas of the City will need both first-due unit and multiple-unit ERF coverage from two fire stations and a blended part-time and full-time firefighter force to deliver Citygate's recommended *urban/suburban area* response performance goal.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFFING CAPACITY SUMMARY

Citygate's review and evaluation of the Division's administrative support organization finds that the management organization and most headquarters programs are not adequately staffed or in conformance with Minnesota requirements and national best practices to provide a properly trained, equipped, and supported response force.

Ensuring a prompt response with safe, competent service delivery requires management, planning, and compliance records. Compliance regulations for fire services operation have steadily increased over the last 20-plus years, mandating practices for the proper hiring, training, and supervision of operational personnel.

FIRE DIVISION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are Citygate's Fire Division findings and recommendations as contained throughout this report.

Service Capacity and Deployment

Findings

- Finding #57:** Both front-line engines have an extraordinary water tank capacity to augment water supplies in deficient areas.
- Finding #58:** While the City and Department have established response performance goals, they are not consistent with best practice recommendations for a suburban setting as published by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International and the National Fire Protection Association. Adopting updated performance goals and policies will serve as an improved guide as it relates to future fire crew staffing, apparatus types, and deployment methods.
- Finding #59:** The Department's current deployment model provides only a single three-person crew weekdays at Station 1 to provide immediate response capacity within the 32-square-mile service area. Additional response capacity is provided

by notification of paid-on-call personnel or mutual aid from adjacent fire and emergency services agencies as needed and available.

- Finding #60:** The Department's night and weekend response as provided by paid-on-call personnel from either station is dependent on the notification and availability of staff responding from home and varies in reliability.
- Finding #61:** The Department has response plans for each of the reasonably expected incident types that could occur within the service area.
- Finding #62:** The Department has a standard response plan that prioritizes apparatus utilization by call type and location as paid-on-call members arrive and assemble into three-person teams at each station. There are also county-wide response zones for mutual aid response. Each type of call for service receives the combination of engines, trucks, specialty units, and command officers customarily needed to effectively control that type of incident based on Department experience.
- Finding #63:** The number of paid-on-call personnel and the timeliness of response from home that can be expected for an emergency event is unpredictable.
- Finding #64:** The Department's service area has a high percentage of large homes and a corresponding population of persons with disabilities that may need evacuation assistance, which has the coupling effect of increasing the demand for the "search" function at fire incidents.
- Finding #65:** The City's natural geography makes response routing inefficient.
- Finding #66:** The two fire station locations reasonably cover the sections of the City with the highest incident demand with regards to travel time.
- Finding #67:** Continued, significant growth in the northeast area of the City could drive the need for a third station with one staffed fire engine.
- Finding #68:** Annual service demand in the City was relatively consistent over the three-year period of data studied.
- Finding #69:** Due to the method of timestamping that was captured in the Department's response data, it is not possible to separate call-processing and turnout times for separate analysis.

- Finding #70:** Department-wide, combined call-processing and turnout times for personnel at all stations was 3:41 minutes in 2024, 11 seconds beyond the 3:30-minute combined national best practice (90 seconds call-processing; 120 seconds turnout).
- Finding #71:** Travel times are well beyond the 4:00-minute recommended standard for both stations.
- Finding #72:** In 2024, the total average response time from 9-1-1 answer to first-unit arrival was 5:18 minutes longer than best practice recommendations for positive outcomes in a suburban city. This is due to three reasons: (1) slow dispatch processing, (2) most responses only occurring from Station 1 during the day, and (3) delays for personnel responding from home on nights and weekends.
- Finding #73:** The Department's current deployment is insufficient in both speed and weight of response in regard to the City's current risk exposure needs.

Recommendations

- Recommendation #37: Adopt Deployment Policies:** The City Council should adopt complete performance measures to aid deployment planning and monitor performance. The measures should be designed to deliver outcomes that will prevent death or more serious injury for EMS patients upon arrival when possible and keep small but serious fires from becoming more serious. With this in mind, Citygate recommends the following measures.
- 37.1 – Distribution of Fire Stations:** To treat pre-hospital medical emergencies and control small fires, the first-due unit should arrive within 8:30 minutes, 90 percent of the time, from receipt of the 9-1-1 call at the Anoka County Dispatch Center from two staffed fire stations. This equates to a 1:30-minute call processing / dispatch time, a 2:00-minute crew turnout time, and a 5:00-minute travel time.
- 37.2 – Multiple-Unit Effective Response Force for Serious Emergencies:** To confine building fires near the room or rooms of origin, keep vegetation fires under one acre in size, and treat multiple medical patients at a single incident; a multiple-unit ERF of at least 12 personnel, plus at least one Chief Officer, should arrive within 12:30 minutes from the time of 9-1-1 call receipt, 90 percent of the time, within the suburban-population-density areas of the City. This equates

to a 1:30-minute dispatch time, a 2:00-minute crew turnout time, and a 9:00-minute travel time.

37.3 – Hazardous Materials Response: To protect the City from the hazards associated with uncontrolled release of hazardous and toxic materials, the fundamental mission of the Department's response is to isolate the hazard, deny entry into the hazard zone, and minimize impacts to the community. This can be achieved with a first-due total response time of 8:30 minutes or less in the suburban-population-density areas of the City to provide initial hazard evaluation and/or mitigation actions. After the initial evaluation is completed, a determination can be made whether to request additional resources to mitigate the hazard.

37.4 – Technical Rescue: To respond to technical rescue emergencies as efficiently and effectively as possible with enough trained personnel to facilitate a successful rescue, a first-due total response time of 8:30 minutes or less is required in the suburban-population-density areas of the City to evaluate the situation and initiate rescue actions. Additional resources should assemble as needed within a total response time of 12:30 minutes in the suburban-population-density areas of the City to safely complete rescue/extrication and delivery of the victim to the appropriate emergency medical care facility.

Recommendation #38: Develop consistent timestamping procedures with regards to station alerting and turnout times so that performance can be tracked and managed in the future.

Recommendation #39: Add career and paid-on-call staffing at stations to provide, *at minimum*, three-person shift staffing 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Four-person staffing is optimal when paid-on-call personnel are available.

Recommendation #40: As the career model expands, transition first responder EMS primary response from the Police to the new Fire Department.

Administrative Support Staffing Capacity

Findings

- Finding #74:** The Division is somewhat isolated from regional peers with regards to training and response primarily due to its placement within a department with a public safety model which emphasizes law enforcement.
- Finding #75:** The Division experiences difficulties in recruiting personnel due to the delays caused by rigorous background reviews, which are required of potential candidates as a result of the Division's placement within a combined Public Safety Department.
- Finding #76:** The attrition levels associated with the Division's part-time staff create a sustained hiring and onboarding administrative burden.
- Finding #77:** Except for Plan Review, the single certified Inspector represents a single point of failure for Prevention duties for the City.
- Finding #78:** Ancillary response and readiness duties within the Division are excessive and do not allow adequate time to fulfill annual inspection mandates.
- Finding #79:** The Department's training program is within Minnesota requirements; however, the depth and breadth of training could be enhanced through more internally developed training that focuses on specific hazards within the community and the Departmental equipment available for response.
- Finding #80:** The Department has routinely utilized personnel without credentialed apparatus training to operate equipment for emergency response.
- Finding #81:** The quality and scale of the indoor training props at Fire Station 2 provides an excellent opportunity for year-round, hands-on training for the Division and others in the region.

Recommendations

- Recommendation #41:** The City should transition the Fire Division's organizational structure to a distinct City Fire Department, managed and directed by a Fire Chief who reports directly to the City Administrator.

Recommendation #42:	Consider transferring the Emergency Manager role and responsibilities to the Fire Chief or designee.
Recommendation #43:	Consider adding full-time Chief Officer positions for Prevention, Training, and also Logistics (fleet, equipment, and facilities) duties.
Recommendation #44:	Ensure that all personnel with emergency response driving responsibilities complete Emergency Vehicle Operator (EVO) training.
Recommendation #45:	Maintain the Administrative Lieutenant position for continued focus on the mission of fire prevention. Develop a cross-trained staff member to ensure continuity of services in the event of absence and attrition.
Recommendation #46:	Consider adding a part-time (0.5 FTE) office support position to assist with administrative duties.

COMPREHENSIVE STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS AND PHASING

Based on Citygate's comprehensive review, the Department's current dynamic staffing model of a single part-time engine crew weekdays at Station 1, as well as paid-on-call personnel responding from both stations on nights and weekends, needs to be expanded to provide (1) a more equitable *speed of response* to all areas of the City and (2) an improved *weight of response* for more serious or concurrent incidents.

To achieve this, Citygate recommends the City transition the Department by converting the staffing model to that of a fire department with a combination of full-time and part-time personnel, utilizing a modest number of full-time personnel at both stations to provide a guaranteed minimum daily response staffing level in alignment with best practices and state regulations for fire services. This two-station staffing plan would then be augmented by a part-time firefighter/EMT program, with firefighters scheduled to work or called back under the existing scheduling model for paid-on-call personnel.

Citygate recommends the City consider funding additional personnel across a phasing period of a few fiscal years to eventually reach a minimum of three full-time personnel on duty daily (optimally four) for supervision and incident command as summarized in the following table. This recommended staffing delivers a minimum recommended response capacity and, when coupled with two part-time personnel at each station, can deliver adequate firefighting response for *speed of attack*. This also provides the City with capacity for firefighters to enter burning structures under

the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) two-in/two-out federal and state safety standard¹ and provides for incident command and a pump operator.

Table 2—Recommended Minimum Daily Response Staffing Model

Station	Full-Time and Part-Time Personnel			Total On-Duty Staffing
	Full-Time Captain	Full-Time Firefighter	Paid-On-Call Firefighter	
1	1	1	2	4
2	1	1	2	4
Total	2	2	4	8

Citygate suggests that any full-time position vacancy be backfilled in a fiscally balanced approach, with a combination of full-time personnel on overtime and qualified paid-on-call personnel. Paid-on-call personnel can also be utilized for additional staffing at each station on high-activity days—such as days when the community is busy with special events, or days with bad/extreme weather. As another option, with four or more firefighters at each station, a station could staff a fire engine *and* a quick response EMS unit—locally referred to as a Light Rescue.

The Department also needs to meet administrative and safety regulations, as an appropriately staffed headquarters team is needed to provide the leadership, training, and accountability necessary for the provision of safe and effective service delivery. This organization can be built in phases over a few fiscal years as summarized in the following table—ideally assisted by federal firefighter staffing grants. Once City Council provides policy direction, staff can provide detailed expenses per fiscal year. Citygate recommends a three-year plan to recruit, train, and onboard the new and additional personnel that will be needed to achieve the recommended staffing model. Once these internal improvements are achieved, the Department should be ready to consider new regional agreements for service.

Phasing Plan

Gathering community input, designing and approving a funding plan for increased career staffing, and recruiting and onboarding all take time. Given the cost and administrative burden on a small city to grow and gradually obtain the full funding needed, Citygate offers this phasing plan, which could be executed on a per-fiscal-year basis.

The following are *career* personnel changes/additions to improve training and emergency management as well as stabilize apparatus staffing:

¹ [https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134#1910.134\(g\)\(4\)](https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134#1910.134(g)(4))

- Recommendation #47:** **Step 1 (2025 Budget Amendment)** – Increase career staff from two to eight by adding three Captain positions and three Apparatus Operator positions. Utilize paid-on-call personnel to staff six additional positions. These additions will stabilize single fire engine shift staffing and ensure response to emergency incidents. Add a part-time (0.5) administrative support position (as mentioned in Recommendation #46).
- Recommendation #48:** **Step 2 (2026 Budget)** – Add one Fire Prevention Chief, one Training Chief position, one Logistics Chief position, three Captain positions, and three firefighters at Station 2. Utilize six paid-on-call firefighters for a total crew staffing of four personnel at each station.
- Recommendation #49:** **Step 3 (2027 Budget)** – If the paid-on-call group is not able to sustain firefighter positions, add six additional firefighters to ensure, at a minimum, three-person—but optimally four-person—staffing at both stations when paid-on-call personnel are available.

With the addition of recommended positions, the Department can staff two engines with a minimum of six personnel. Paid-on-call staff will work scheduled assignments to provide backfill and add the third and fourth firefighter on each apparatus, resulting in a daily staffing of eight personnel—an adequate ERF for the City’s routine fire events.

The following table shows these phased changes by year.

Table 3—Proposed Fire Department Staffing Summary

Step/Position	Total Career Personnel	Added Career Personnel	Total
Present	2		
Step 1 – 2025			
Captains		3	
Apparatus Operators		3	
Administrative Support		0.5	
Total Count	2	6.5	8.5
Step 2 – 2026			
Prevention, Training, and Logistics Chiefs		3	
Captains		3	
Apparatus Operators		3	
Total Count	8.5	9	17.5
Step 3 – 2027*			
Firefighters		6	
Total Count		6	23.5

*If needed based on experience to sustain consistent three-person staffing at both

NEXT STEPS

Citygate offers the following suggested sequential next steps.

Near-Term

- ◆ Review and absorb the content, findings, and recommendations of this report.
- ◆ Consider adopting revised response performance measures as recommended.
- ◆ Ask staff to return with the costs and phasing to implement the study's recommendations as desired by the City Council.
- ◆ Identify funding to begin phasing/implementation Step 1.

Longer-Term

- ◆ Consider applying for federal firefighter staffing (SAFER) grants.
- ◆ Work with other local fire departments and the Anoka County Dispatch Center to improve 9-1-1 response performance time for serious emergencies.
- ◆ Monitor response performance against adopted goals.