

AUDIT REPORT



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

Audit Report on Opportunities for Savings through Civilianization in Administrative Units of the New York City Fire Department

ME03-173A

June 28, 2004



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 Comptroller's responsibilities contained in Chapter 5, § 93, of the New York City Charter, my office has examined opportunities for savings through civilianizing positions in administrative units of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY).

The results of our audit, which are presented in this report, have been discussed with FDNY officials, and their comments have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Audits such as this provide a means of ensuring that City resources are used effectively, efficiently, and in the best interests of the public.

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

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*The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
Bureau of Management Audit*

**Audit Report on Opportunities for
Savings through Civilianization in
Administrative Units of the
New York City Fire Department**

ME03-173A

AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF

This audit of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) reviewed opportunities for savings from civilianizing positions in administrative (non-firefighting) units at the Department. FDNY's mission is to protect the life and property of City residents and visitors from fire and critical health threats through its five primary operations: response to fire emergencies; response to medical emergencies; fire prevention, including inspection and code enforcement; criminal and cause-and-origin investigation; and fire-safety education. FDNY's Fiscal Year 2004 operating budget totaled \$1.1 billion, including \$1.02 billion for personal services and \$90 million for other than personal services.

To accomplish its mission, FDNY has about 11,000 uniformed firefighters and officers, 2,800 emergency medical employees and 1,500 civilian support personnel. FDNY's administrative units perform such functions as firefighter training, fire investigation, and fire prevention, as well as health, personnel, and equipment maintenance services. FDNY has the following uniformed titles: firefighter, fire marshal, supervising fire marshal, lieutenant, captain, battalion chief, deputy chief, and chief (which also includes the positions of deputy assistant chief and assistant chief).

Audit Findings and Conclusions

FDNY has made efforts to civilianize a number of positions at various units in the Department. FDNY provided documentation that indicated that since 1995 it has civilianized 209 uniformed positions for budget savings of approximately \$4.09 million. Nevertheless, our review of the 10 largest administrative units in FDNY identified additional positions that could be civilianized. Based on our review, we determined that 47 out of the 800 uniformed positions in these units (as of the dates of our July 2003 to January 2004 visits) should be civilianized for annual savings of approximately \$1,672,112. These savings could be achieved over a period of time. As uniformed personnel resign, retire or otherwise leave the Department, lower-cost civilians should be hired or transferred to these units to assume some civilian-type functions currently being performed by uniformed personnel.

Audit Recommendations

The audit recommended that the FDNY:

- Review and civilianize the 47 full-duty positions identified in this report that are civilian in nature and held by uniformed firefighters and fire officers in 10 administrative units.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of all its administrative units to identify additional civilianizable positions that would generate cost savings.
- Conduct a study to identify other tasks that could be assigned to light-duty firefighters, especially to those on extended light duty, that would make the best use of the firefighters' training and experience, while still being consistent with their medical conditions.

FDNY Response

On May 28, 2004, we submitted a draft report to FDNY officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from FDNY officials dated June 7, 2004. FDNY generally agreed with our findings and recommendations.

In its response, FDNY stated:

“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.”

FDNY partially agreed with the audit's recommendation that it review and civilianize 47 full-duty uniformed positions located in the 10 largest administrative units. FDNY agreed to “take the necessary steps” to either civilianize 19 of these positions or fill them with light-duty personnel. FDNY further stated that it “will also perform an in-depth review of the remaining 28 identified positions.”

The full text of FDNY's response is included as an addendum to this report.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The mission of the New York City Fire Department is to protect the life and property of City residents and visitors from fire and critical health threats through its five primary operations: response to fire emergencies; response to medical emergencies; fire prevention, including inspection and code enforcement; criminal and cause-and-origin investigation; and fire-safety education. In addition, the FDNY is responsible for the separate but related functions of responding to calls regarding building collapses, hazardous material incidents, vehicular accidents, water main breaks, utility emergencies, and other non-fire emergencies. FDNY's Fiscal Year 2004 operating budget totaled \$1.1 billion, including \$1.02 billion for personal services and \$90 million for other than personal services.

To accomplish its mission, FDNY has about 11,000 uniformed firefighters and officers, 2,800 emergency medical employees and 1,500 civilian support personnel. Its command structure incorporates five borough command units, nine divisions, 49 battalions, 195 engine companies, and 143 ladder companies. In addition, FDNY has administrative (non-firefighting) units that may also require the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters and officers. Administrative units perform such functions as firefighter training, fire investigation, and fire prevention, as well as health, personnel, and equipment maintenance services. FDNY has the following uniformed titles: firefighter, fire marshal, supervising fire marshal, lieutenant, captain, battalion chief, deputy chief, and chief (which also includes the positions of deputy assistant chief and assistant chief).

This audit focuses on opportunities for savings through civilianization in administrative units of the FDNY. We do not include Emergency Medical Services units because all employees in those units are considered to be civilians.

Objectives

The objectives of this audit were to (1) determine the number of uniformed firefighters and fire officers that the FDNY has assigned to administrative units to perform what are essentially civilian support functions, and (2) calculate the cost savings that FDNY could achieve by reassigning firefighters from civilian support positions to ones requiring the skills of uniformed firefighters.

Scope and Methodology

The focus of the audit was the uniformed personnel assigned to administrative (non-firefighting) units that perform support functions for firefighting units. We reviewed opportunities for savings through civilianization in the 10 largest administrative units.

To obtain background information, we met with FDNY officials and reviewed relevant reports and documentation. To determine the 10 largest administrative units in the Department in terms of the number of uniformed employees assigned to the unit, we reviewed a printout

listing all uniformed personnel working in administrative units. The printout was obtained from the FDNY Human Resources Information System (HRIS), a computerized employee tracking system used by the Department. The printout, dated September 2, 2003, listed all uniformed firefighters working in administrative units as of that date. According to HRIS, 878 uniformed personnel were assigned to the 10 largest administrative units as of September 2, 2003. This represented 90 percent of the 979 uniformed personnel assigned to FDNY administrative units as of this date. The remaining 10 percent (101 uniformed personnel) were assigned to 19 other smaller administrative units.

To assess the reliability of HRIS, we selected a random sample of 50 uniformed employees assigned to three administrative units and compared the data in HRIS on these individuals with the data in their personnel files. We then randomly selected 52 uniformed employees' personnel files and compared the data in these files with HRIS data on these individuals. Our data reliability assessment revealed that data generated from HRIS were generally reliable.

To determine whether there were uniformed positions in the 10 FDNY administrative units that could be civilianized, we visited the units and met with unit heads to discuss the duties of their uniformed and civilian personnel. We conducted our visits between July 2003 and January 2004. During these visits, the units provided personnel rosters to us that showed that 800 uniformed personnel were assigned to these units as of the dates of our visits. FDNY officials stated that the difference between the number of uniformed personnel assigned to the 10 largest administrative units as indicated by an HRIS printout (878) and the total number of uniformed personnel assigned to these units according to the units' personnel rosters (800) resulted from the different dates of the respective documents. FDNY officials claimed that the fluidity in the numbers of uniformed personnel assigned to these units resulted from the large number of uniformed employees with temporary assignments to these units. We also reviewed documentation prepared by each unit on its mission, functions, tasks, and organization.

To determine whether a position in an administrative unit could be civilianized, we considered the following questions:

- Does the position involve the duty of responding to fire and non-fire emergencies?
- Does the position require the special skills of a trained uniformed firefighter?

The audit considered a position civilianizable if the answers to these questions were "no." For those uniformed firefighter positions that we concluded could be civilianized, we reviewed Department of Citywide Administrative Services civilian job descriptions to identify comparable civilian job titles. The audit reviewed the functions of both full-duty and light-duty firefighters assigned to administrative units. Firefighters on light duty are those who were injured, either on or off the job, or have medical conditions that prevent their performing all the duties of trained firefighters.

To determine whether FDNY could derive cost savings by employing a civilian in a position currently filled by a uniformed firefighter, we calculated the difference between the

uniformed firefighter's current salary and fringe benefits cost, and the average salary and fringe benefits cost of a civilian qualified to perform comparable job duties. We included uniform allowance and employer contributions to Social Security, Medicare, and pensions in fringe benefits costs. We did not include employer contributions to health insurance and welfare funds because those contributions are set amounts, similar for civilian and uniformed employees. We obtained salary information from the Payroll Management System and the Fiscal Year 2004 Executive Budget, and fringe benefits rate information from the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget. If we determined that FDNY could derive cost savings by assigning a civilian employee to a position currently filled by a uniformed firefighter, we concluded that the position should be civilianized.

This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS) and included tests of the records and other auditing procedures considered necessary. This audit was performed in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the Comptroller, as set forth in Chapter 5, § 93, of the New York City Charter.

Discussion of Audit Results

The matters 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 discussed at an exit conference held on May 19, 2004. On May 28, 2004, we submitted a draft report to FDNY officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from FDNY officials dated June 7, 2004. FDNY generally agreed with our findings and recommendations.

In its response, FDNY stated:

“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.”

FDNY partially agreed with the audit's recommendation that it review and civilianize 47 full-duty uniformed positions located in the 10 largest administrative units. FDNY agreed to “take the necessary steps” to either civilianize 19 of these positions or fill them with light-duty personnel. FDNY further stated that it “will also perform an in-depth review of the remaining 28 identified positions.” FDNY also agreed with the recommendation that it conduct a comprehensive review of all its administrative units to identify additional civilianizable positions that could generate cost savings. In addition, FDNY agreed with the recommendation that it attempt to identify other tasks that could be assigned to light-duty firefighters that would make the best use of the firefighters' training and experience.

The full text of FDNY's response is included as an addendum to this report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fire Department has made efforts to civilianize a number of positions at various units in the Department. These efforts, although not systematic, have resulted in the civilianization of some positions in such FDNY units as Fire Prevention, Fleet and Technical Services, and Personnel. Many positions in these units had traditionally been held by firefighters. FDNY officials provided documentation that indicated that since Fiscal Year 1995, FDNY civilianized 209 uniformed positions for budget savings of approximately \$4.09 million. FDNY also provided documentation that indicated that FDNY civilianized 132 uniformed positions in the Bureau of Fire Prevention in Fiscal Years 1991 and 1992. In those years, fire protection and associate fire protection inspectors replaced firefighters and lieutenants in the Bureau.

Nevertheless, our review of the 10 largest administrative units in FDNY identified additional positions that could be civilianized. Based on our review, we determined that 47 out of the 800 uniformed positions in these units (as of the dates of our July 2003 to January 2004 visits) should be civilianized for annual savings of approximately \$1,672,112, as shown in Table I below. These savings could be achieved over a period of time. As uniformed personnel resign, retire, or otherwise leave the Department, lower-cost civilians should be hired or transferred to these units to assume some of the civilian-type functions currently being performed by uniformed personnel. The savings would not necessarily be returned to the City Treasury. Depending on budgetary circumstances, options available to the City include reinvesting the funds in FDNY operations to improve emergency response times or strengthening arson investigation efforts.

Table I
Cost Savings in the 10 Largest Administrative Units

(1) Administrative Units Reviewed	(2) Total No. of Positions Filled by Uniformed Employees*	(2) No. of Uniformed Employees on Full Duty	(3) No. of Full Duty Uniformed Positions That Should Be Civilianized	(4) Annual Salary & Fringe Benefits** of Positions That Should Be Civilianized	(5) Annual Salary & Fringe Benefits** Of Comparable Civilian Positions	(6) Cost Savings (Col. 4 – Col. 5)
Borough Command	32	19	4	\$358,533	\$218,883	\$139,650
Bureau of Health Services	59	2	2	\$181,086	\$135,888	\$45,198
Divisions	179	57	8	\$582,926	\$328,777	\$254,149
Fire Investigation	100	95	12	\$1,040,217	\$563,323	\$476,894
Fire Prevention	19	12	2	\$181,085	\$90,426	\$90,659
Fleet and Technical Services	75	28	10	\$779,456	\$390,390	\$389,066
Operations	109	22	2	\$224,276	\$106,742	\$117,534
Personnel	22	5	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Special Operations	81	51	4	\$317,008	\$225,711	\$91,297
Training	124	96	3	\$262,708	\$195,043	\$67,665
Total	800	387	47	\$3,927,295	\$2,255,183	\$1,672,112

* These figures are based upon personnel rosters provided to us by each unit at the time of our visit.

** Fringe benefits include uniform allowances and employer contributions to Social Security, Medicare, and pensions, but do not include employer contributions to health insurance and welfare funds because those contributions are set amounts that are similar for civilian and uniformed employees. This definition also applies to Tables II through X.

In this report, we present information on our audit results on a unit-by-unit basis. However, some recurring themes emerged throughout the audit. One point made by many FDNY officials during the audit is the greater flexibility that uniformed firefighters provide the Department as compared to civilians. The officials argued that uniformed firefighters can be asked to do almost any legal task their commanding officers want them to perform. But, they

argued, a civilian can refuse to do anything outside his or her job description. However, the judicious and careful hiring of an appropriate mix of civilian employees with a wide variety of job descriptions should alleviate most of these concerns.

Another point FDNY officials often made during the audit was that it would be time consuming and difficult to train civilians, who may not be familiar with FDNY terms and equipment, to perform some of the non-firefighting and non-emergency functions currently carried out by uniformed personnel. Unlike firefighters who already know their way around the various firehouses in the City and have knowledge of FDNY protocol, it would take civilians a long time to learn how to navigate the system, they said. One official said that civilians would have to be “spoon-fed” if they replaced seasoned firefighters on certain tasks. However, we believe that qualified civilians who are properly trained can acquire whatever knowledge is necessary to handle such tasks. We would not expect FDNY to summarily replace such seasoned firefighters with inexperienced civilians. Rather, as such firefighters resign or retire through normal attrition, they would be replaced with qualified, properly trained civilians.

FDNY officials also argued that positions being filled by firefighters on light duty should not be civilianized. We agreed with this argument. Firefighters on light duty are those who were injured, either on or off the job, or have medical conditions that prevent their performing all the duties of trained firefighters. FDNY officials argued that firefighters on light duty might perform many emergency-response-related tasks, such as those of a chief aide, who acts as the communications link between the deputy chief and the various firefighting units during the course of a fire emergency, but is not involved directly with fighting fires. The Department has many of these types of positions available to uniformed personnel on light duty, as well as many routine administrative positions. The administrative positions assigned to light-duty uniformed personnel will be discussed later in this report, in the section entitled “Uniformed Personnel on Light Duty.”

The following sections of this report present the audit’s specific findings for each of the 10 administrative units.

Borough Command

Borough Command is charged with ensuring the training and firefighting readiness of battalions and engine and ladder companies within the Bureau of Operations. The Borough Commander responds to fires and other emergencies on both a mandatory and a discretionary basis, depending on the complexity and severity of the operation. Among Borough Command’s other duties and responsibilities are to: (1) observe and evaluate the performance of field personnel and equipment during fire and other emergency operations; (2) plan and implement large-scale drills, often in conjunction with outside agencies; (3) supervise fire prevention programs; and (4) supervise and implement community outreach events and programs.

There is a Borough Command office in each of the five boroughs. According to the Deputy Chief of the Manhattan Borough Command, all the Borough Command offices have personnel who perform essentially the same functions. Therefore, although we obtained

documentation on the functions performed at all of the Borough Command offices, we visited only the Manhattan office.

As of October 30, 2003, there were a total of 32 uniformed firefighters and five civilians employed at the five Borough Command offices. Of the 32 uniformed firefighters, 19 were on full duty and 13 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that four of the 19 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the four full-duty firefighters could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included:

- maintaining and editing databases concerning other City agencies;
- conducting general office operations, including completing payroll sheets for all employees;
- establishing and controlling office routines, including supervising office maintenance;
- coordinating training activities;
- maintaining records and files in compliance with the Fire Department Uniform Filing System; and
- answering telephones.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniformed personnel. These functions included:

- working directly with the staff chief, both in the Borough Command office and at fires and emergencies;
- coordinating special events drills and VIP visits in the borough; and
- attending meetings as required by the Bureau of Operations or Commissioner's Office.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the four full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these four uniformed firefighter positions in the Borough Command units, for an annual savings of \$139,650, as shown in Table II below.

Table II
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Four Positions
in the Borough Command Offices

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Captain	\$96,009	\$96,009	Administrative Manager	\$71,951	\$71,951	\$24,058
1	Battalion Chief	\$107,762	\$107,762	Administrative Manager	\$71,951	\$71,951	\$35,811
1	Firefighter	\$70,536	\$70,536	Clerical Associate	\$33,545	\$33,545	\$36,991
1	Lieutenant	\$84,226	\$84,226	Quality Assurance Specialist Level 2	\$41,436	\$41,436	\$42,790
4	Total		\$358,533			\$218,883	\$139,650

Bureau of Health Services

The Bureau of Health Services' (BHS) mission is to ensure that all firefighters and emergency medical service workers are fit to perform the rigorous demands of their jobs. BHS accomplishes this mission by performing medical and psychological evaluations. It performs annual medical examinations on a designated schedule to evaluate nearly all firefighters in the Department. As of August 8, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 59 uniformed firefighters and 41 civilians employed in the unit. Of the 59 uniformed firefighters, two were on full duty and 57 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that the two full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because their functions could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included:

- coordinating patient visits;
- following up on patients who have missed appointments; and
- performing managerial and administrative duties.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the two full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these two uniformed firefighter positions in the Bureau of Health Services, for an annual savings of \$45,198, as shown in Table III below.

Table III
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Two Positions
in the Bureau of Health Services

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Captain	\$94,345	\$94,345	Administrative Manager	\$71,951	\$71,951	\$22,394
1	Lieutenant	\$86,741	\$86,741	Associate Staff Analyst	\$63,937	\$63,937	\$22,804
2	Total		\$181,086			\$135,888	\$45,198

Divisions

FDNY has nine Divisions in charge of battalions, engine companies, and ladder companies within their respective districts. The primary mission of each Division is to respond to all major fire and medical emergencies. Each Division has administrative responsibility for each of the firefighting units within its jurisdiction. These duties include handling daily officer work and vacation schedules; approving all reports from subordinate units on fire operations; scheduling major drills; and overseeing fire prevention activities of all units.

There are two Divisions each in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan, and one in Staten Island. According to the Deputy Chief of the Manhattan Borough Command, all uniformed personnel in the nine Divisions are performing essentially the same functions. Therefore, although we only visited the First Division located in Manhattan, we obtained documentation on the personnel functions performed at all of the other Divisions. As of November 6, 2003, there were 179 uniformed firefighters and one civilian employee in the nine Division offices. Of the 179 uniformed firefighters, 57 were on full duty and 122 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that eight of the 57 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the nine Divisions could be civilianized, because the functions of the eight full-duty firefighters could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire

or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included:

- timekeeping,
- coordinating work and vacation assignments;
- operating and maintaining motor vehicles;
- answering telephones; and
- maintaining a computer database of all Division records.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniformed personnel. These functions included responding to major fires and other emergencies and serving as the primary link between the chief and the dispatcher.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the eight full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these eight uniformed firefighter positions in the nine Divisions, for an annual savings of \$254,149, as shown in Table IV below.

Table IV
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Eight Positions
in the Divisions

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Firefighter (Div. 7)	\$70,536	\$70,536	Principal Administrative Associate	\$47,114	\$47,114	\$23,422
2	Firefighter (Div. 8)	\$67,622	\$135,244	Clerical Associate	\$35,412	\$70,824	\$64,420
1	Firefighter (Div. 8)	\$67,622	\$67,622	Principal Administrative Associate	\$47,114	\$47,114	\$20,508
1	Firefighter (Div. 13)	\$70,536	\$70,536	Clerical Associate	\$33,545	\$33,545	\$36,991
1	Lieutenant (Div. 13)	\$84,226	\$84,226	Principal Administrative Associate	\$47,114	\$47,114	\$37,112
1	Firefighter (Div. 15)	\$70,536	\$70,536	Clerical Associate	\$35,952	\$35,952	\$34,584
1	Lieutenant (Div. 15)	\$84,226	\$84,226	Principal Administrative Associate	\$47,114	\$47,114	\$37,112
8	Total		\$582,926			\$328,777	\$254,149

Bureau of Fire Investigation

The Bureau of Fire Investigation (BFI) conducts investigations of all complex, fatal and suspicious fires within the City to determine their origin and cause. BFI employs fire marshals, who are firefighters that have three or more years of experience, have achieved passing scores on the “Promotion to Fire Marshal” civil service test, and have at least 13 weeks of training at the Fire Academy. Fire marshals perform criminal investigations of all arson fires and related crimes, while enforcing criminal and administrative laws. BFI also provides and augments security and safety measures for all FDNY critical locations and personnel. As of October 14, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 100 uniformed fire marshals and eight civilians employed in the unit. Of the 100 uniformed fire marshals, 95 were on full duty and five were on light duty.

The audit concluded that 12 of the 95 full-duty uniformed fire marshal positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the 12 full-duty fire marshals could be

accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed officers. These functions included:

- reconciling BFI records with Medical Examiner records to ensure that these records are correct in the determination of death;
- keeping track of vacations and mutual exchanges of tours of duty;
- acting as liaison with District Attorney offices;
- acting as dispatcher to relay information to fire marshals in the field;
- maintaining a fleet of cars; and
- supervising civilians who perform clerical duties, such as tracking and filing reports.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniformed personnel. These included:

- working on the Juvenile Fires Intervention Program, an intervention program to prevent fires caused by juveniles;
- storing, securing, logging, and issuing firearms;
- preventing fires at the City's correctional facilities; and
- investigating false alarm, insurance fraud, and arson cases.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the 12 full-duty uniformed fire marshals with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these 12 uniformed fire marshal positions in the Bureau of Fire Investigation, for an annual savings of \$476,894, as shown in Table V below.

Table V
Cost Savings from Civilianizing 12 Positions
in the Bureau of Fire Investigation

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Supervising Fire Marshal	\$96,525	\$96,525	Attorney	\$73,141	\$73,141	\$23,384
1	Fire Marshal	\$79,656	\$79,656	Staff Analyst	\$53,371	\$53,371	\$26,285
3	Fire Marshal	\$79,656	\$238,968	Fire Alarm Dispatcher	\$41,436	\$124,308	\$114,660
1	Supervising Fire Marshal	\$96,525	\$96,525	Fire Alarm Dispatcher	\$41,436	\$41,436	\$55,089
1	Fire Marshal	\$79,656	\$79,656	Motor Vehicle Supervisor	\$42,261	\$42,261	\$37,395
2	Fire Marshal	\$79,656	\$159,312	Principal Administrative Associate (Lower Level)	\$43,999	\$87,998	\$71,314
2	Supervising Fire Marshal	\$96,525	\$193,050	Principal Administrative Associate (Lower Level)	\$43,999	\$87,998	\$105,052
1	Supervising Fire Marshal	\$96,525	\$96,525	Principal Administrative Associate (Higher Level)	\$52,810	\$52,810	\$43,715
12	Total		\$1,040,217			\$563,323	\$476,894

Bureau of Fire Prevention

The Bureau of Fire Prevention (BFP) enforces the laws, codes and rules relating to the prevention of accidental fires. BFP issues permits and performs inspections to ensure compliance with accepted fire prevention practices. This includes inspecting locations where materials and equipment associated with a higher-than-normal incidence of fire are manufactured, stored, used or offered for sale. As of November 5, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 19 uniformed firefighters and 355 civilians employed in the unit. Of the 19 uniformed firefighters, 12 were on full duty and seven were on light duty.

The audit concluded that two of the 12 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the two full-duty firefighters could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included reviewing and approving fire alarm systems (primarily a technical function) and tracking and processing Letters of Defect generated by the Fire Alarm Inspection and Hi-Rise units.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniformed personnel. These functions included examining and approving fire safety plans (such as evacuation plans) from a firefighter’s perspective, reviewing requests for code variances, representing the Department on the Board of Standards and Appeals, which rules on fire code standards, and performing safety inspections of social clubs.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the two full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these two uniformed firefighter positions in the Bureau of Fire Prevention, for an annual savings of \$90,659, as shown in Table VI below.

Table VI
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Two Positions
in the Bureau of Fire Prevention

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Captain	\$98,058	\$98,058	Associate Fire Protection Inspector	\$50,997	\$50,997	\$47,061
1	Lieutenant	\$83,027	\$83,027	Fire Protection Inspector	\$39,429	\$39,429	\$43,598
2	Total		\$181,085			\$90,426	\$90,659

Fleet and Technical Services Division

The Fleet and Technical Services Division (FTSD) performs several support functions for the Fire Department, including planning, budgeting and procuring all fire apparatus, ambulances and support vehicles. FTSD is also responsible for the purchase, distribution, tracking,

maintenance, and replacement of all fire tools and equipment distributed to the fire units. As of December 16, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 75 uniformed firefighters and 352 civilians employed in the unit. Of the 75 uniformed firefighters, 28 were on full-duty and 47 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that 10 of the 28 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the 10 full-duty firefighters—primarily repairing and servicing breathing-air equipment—could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters.

Other functions of the unit, including delivering breathing-air equipment and firefighting tools to firefighters at the scenes of fires and other emergencies, were properly assigned to uniformed personnel.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the 10 full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should civilianize all 10 positions. Therefore, the audit concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these 10 uniformed firefighter positions in the Fleet and Technical Services Division, for an annual savings of \$389,066, as shown in Table VII below.

Table VII
Cost Savings from Civilianizing 10 Positions
in the Fleet and Technical Services Division

(1) No. of Posi- tions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
4	Lieutenant (Mask Services)	\$89,060	\$356,240	Quality Assurance Specialist, Level 2	\$41,436	\$165,744	\$190,496
6	Firefighter (Mask Services)	\$70,536	\$423,216	Quality Assurance Specialist, Level 1	\$37,441	\$224,646	\$198,570
10	Total		\$779,456			\$390,390	\$389,066

Bureau of Operations

The Bureau of Operations (Operations) supports the FDNY mission to respond to fires, public safety and medical emergencies, disasters, and terrorist acts. Operations has several sub-

units that perform various tasks, including the development of strategic and emergency response plans, the editing of FDNY documents and manuals, the collection and communication of emergency operation information, the daily assignment of firefighters and officers, and other administrative functions. As of August 21, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 109 uniformed firefighters and eight civilians employed in the unit. Of the 109 uniformed firefighters, 22 were on full duty and 87 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that two of the 22 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the two full-duty firefighters could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included:

- formatting and editing FDNY documents;
- proofreading, publishing, and distributing all FDNY manuals; and
- researching FDNY publications for the legal unit.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniform personnel. These functions included responding to major fires and other emergencies, coordinating special events (e.g., dignitary visits, World Series), and developing strategic and emergency response plans for terrorism and major disasters.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the two full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these two uniformed firefighter positions in the Bureau of Operations, for an annual savings of \$117,534, as shown in Table VIII below.

Table VIII
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Two Positions
in the Bureau of Operations

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Battalion Chief	\$122,688	\$122,688	Staff Analyst	\$53,371	\$53,371	\$69,317
1	Captain	\$101,588	\$101,588	Staff Analyst	\$53,371	\$53,371	\$48,217
2	Total		\$224,276			\$106,742	\$117,534

Bureau of Personnel

The Bureau of Personnel (Personnel) provides personnel services to all FDNY employees and makes sure that civil service regulations and policies are enforced. Personnel oversees hirings, terminations, promotions, demotions, transfers, retirements, and leave balances involving the civilian and uniformed workforce. As of January 7, 2004, the date of our visit, there were 22 uniformed personnel and 40 civilians employed in the unit. Of the 22 uniformed firefighters, five were on full duty and 17 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that none of the five full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the firefighters assigned to the unit required the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included assigning new and promoted uniformed staff to firefighting units throughout the City and preparing firefighter civil service exams. The knowledge and expertise of firefighters in preparing the exams are useful in ensuring that the exams are fairly representative of the functions of firefighters.

Special Operations Command

The Special Operations Command (SOC) is responsible for marine firefighting, specialized rescue operations, and the detection, mitigation, and decontamination of hazardous materials. As of November 12, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 81 uniformed personnel and five civilian employees in this unit. Of the 81 uniformed firefighters, 51 were on full duty and 30 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that four of the 51 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the four full-duty firefighters could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included:

- maintaining overtime records;
- processing requisitions of new equipment;
- providing secretarial services;
- picking up, sorting and delivering mail; and
- ensuring warehouse control.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniformed personnel. These functions included:

- responding with chiefs to major fires and emergencies, teaming with chiefs to support communications and record-keeping at incidents;
- answering questions from field units regarding SOC decontamination procedures;
- implementing decontamination operations; and
- operating pumps, hydraulic tools and other specialized equipment during emergency operations.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the four full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these four uniformed firefighter positions in the Special Operations Command, for an annual savings of \$91,297, as shown in Table IX below.

Table IX
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Four Positions
in Special Operations

(1) No. of Positions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Lieutenant	\$87,968	\$87,968	Administrative Manager, Level 1	\$69,908	\$69,908	\$18,060
1	Lieutenant	\$87,968	\$87,968	Procurement Analyst	\$53,550	\$53,550	\$34,418
1	Firefighter	\$70,536	\$70,536	Principal Administrative Associate	\$47,114	\$47,114	\$23,422
1	Firefighter	\$70,536	\$70,536	Assistant Chemical Engineer	\$55,139	\$55,139	\$15,397
4	Total		\$317,008			\$225,711	\$91,297

Bureau of Training

The Bureau of Training (BOT) is responsible for the training and continued skill development of members of the FDNY. BOT accomplishes this through the use of senior fire officers and firefighters as instructors. As of October 2, 2003, the date of our visit, there were 124 uniformed firefighters and four civilians in the unit. Of the 124 uniformed firefighters, 96 were on full duty and 28 were on light duty.

The audit concluded that three of the 96 full-duty uniformed firefighter positions within the unit could be civilianized because the functions of the three full-duty firefighters could be accomplished by civilians. These positions did not require personnel to respond to fire or other emergencies or to possess the special skills of trained uniformed firefighters. These functions included:

- overseeing maintenance and security of the training facility;
- maintaining inventory of training supplies;
- performing the purchasing functions for the training facility; and
- maintaining the Training Library, including the inventory of books and study materials.

Other functions of the unit were properly assigned to uniformed personnel. These functions included training firefighters and developing training course curricula.

When we compared the average salaries and fringe benefits of the three full-duty uniformed firefighters with those of civilians with comparable responsibilities, we concluded that FDNY should employ civilians in these three uniformed firefighter positions in the Bureau of Training, for an annual savings of \$67,665, as shown in Table X below.

Table X
Cost Savings from Civilianizing Three Positions
in the Bureau of Training

(1) No. of Posi- tions	(2) Uniformed Title	(3) Uniformed Employee Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(4) Total Uniformed Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 1 x Col 3)	(5) Comparable Civilian Title	(6) Civilian Average Salary & Fringe Benefits	(7) Total Civilian Salary & Fringe Benefits (Col 6 x Col 1)	(8) Cost Savings (Col 4 – Col 7)
1	Battalion Chief	\$107,762	\$107,762	Deputy Director of Administration	\$92,351	\$92,351	\$15,411
1	Lieutenant	\$77,473	\$77,473	Supervisor (of Maintenance Workers)	\$57,108	\$57,108	\$20,365
1	Lieutenant	\$77,473	\$77,473	Dept. Senior Librarian	\$45,584	\$45,584	\$31,889
3	Total		\$262,708			\$195,043	\$67,665

Recommendations

1. FDNY should review and civilianize the 47 full-duty positions identified in this report that are civilian in nature and held by uniformed firefighters and fire officers in 10 administrative units.

FDNY Response: “The Fire Department PARTIALLY Agrees.

“Of the 47 positions identified for civilianization by the Comptroller’s audit, FDNY’s preliminary review established that 19 of these positions could either be civilianized or filled with light-duty personnel. The Department will take the necessary steps to do this.

“FDNY will also perform an in-depth review of the remaining 28 identified positions, although it feels that in many cases (especially Fire Investigation and Fire Prevention) the

original documentation provided by the bureau chiefs adequately justified the necessity for full-duty, uniformed personnel in these positions.”

Auditors’ Comments: We commend FDNY for its plans to civilianize some of the 47 full-duty uniformed positions we identified and to perform an in-depth review of 28 other uniformed positions. We believe that FDNY should seriously consider the benefits of civilianizing these positions. For example, providing additional civilian support to the Bureau of Fire Investigation could free up to 12 fire marshals to perform additional arson investigations and other tasks that are properly assigned to full-duty uniformed personnel.

2. FDNY should conduct a comprehensive review of all its administrative units to identify additional civilianizable positions that would generate cost savings.

FDNY Response: “The Fire Department Agrees – In the past, FDNY has reviewed all uniformed off-line assignments, and reported on the responsibilities and qualifications needed for the positions. It will expand the scope of this review to include the identification of those positions that can be filled with either light-duty or civilian personnel.”

Uniformed Personnel on Light Duty

In a related matter, our review of the 10 largest administrative units at FDNY found that 413 (52%) of the 800 firefighters assigned to these units were on light duty. Of these 413 light-duty firefighters, 302 (73%) were assigned to civilian-type functions. FDNY officials told us that light-duty firefighters typically are assigned to civilian-type positions to give them something to do while they wait to be reassigned back to full duty. Had these uniformed firefighters not been given civilian-type functions, officials would have had little choice but to send them home at full salary. Furthermore, the Department would have had to hire civilians to perform some of the jobs that were being done by the light-duty firefighters.

Clearly, those uniformed personnel properly assigned to light duty for health reasons cannot be asked to perform the duties of full-duty firefighters. However, we believe that some light-duty personnel could be assigned to work more in line with their training. Many of these light-duty firefighters were functioning as maintenance workers, secretaries, administrative assistants, messengers, motor vehicle operators, and nurse’s aides. Considering the amount of training that a firefighter has to go through, and the cost of this training, FDNY should make a better effort to find work for firefighters on light duty that is more in line with their special skills. For example, light-duty firefighters could be trained to perform safety inspections or to provide fire safety education programs.

Our review of light-duty firefighters identified in the FDNY Human Resources Information System as being assigned to the 10 largest administrative units as of September 2, 2003, found that 143 were on light duty for more than one year, and that 65 of these were on light duty for two or more years. The longer that a firefighter is anticipated to be on light duty,

the more important it would be for the firefighter to be assigned tasks that are more in line with their training and experience.

The FDNY did provide us with a copy of a March 14, 2001 report that described the tasks being performed by 320 light-duty firefighters in administrative units. The FDNY concluded in the report that three light-duty positions should be civilianized. However, many light-duty positions that FDNY clearly describes as being civilian in nature were not identified for civilianization. For example, FDNY described the position of administrative lieutenant as follows: “Sort bag from mail room, direct mail to deputy chiefs & field units. Send Dept. circulars to units. Forward fire reports.” In another example, FDNY described the wide area network engineer position as follows: “Assist in design, installation, maintenance, troubleshooting and support of Wide Area Network.” In still another example, FDNY described the maintenance crew position as follows: “These firefighters perform minor repairs, perform interior and exterior cleaning of the Fire Academy. They deliver needed supplies to the various units of the Academy. They stock and help maintain the inventory of Building #10, perform snow removal, drive to pick up and deliver supplies off site, and perform necessary gardening chores.”

The FDNY report supports our conclusion that many light-duty firefighters have been assigned civilian tasks. We believe that it would be appropriate for the FDNY to expand its review of light-duty positions. This review should include the identification of other tasks that could be assigned to light-duty firefighters that would be more in line with their training and experience, while still being consistent with their medical conditions.

Recommendation

3. The Fire Department of New York should conduct a study to identify other tasks that could be assigned to light-duty firefighters, especially to those on extended light duty, that would make the best use of the firefighters’ training and experience, while still being consistent with their medical conditions.

FDNY Response: “The Fire Department agrees (with reservation) – FDNY has done so in the past, both to describe tasks that could be performed by personnel permanently unfit for full-duty (reasonable accommodation positions), as well as to identify positions that could be filled with light-duty personnel on a long-term basis. It has established the Light-Duty Desk to provide the best match-up of personnel qualifications with temporary needs of the various bureaus.

Auditors’ Comments: We believe that FDNY should enhance its efforts to ensure that firefighters on light duty are given assignments that are more in keeping with their training and experience, while still taking into consideration their medical conditions.



FIRE DEPARTMENT

9 METROTECH CENTER

BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11201-3857

NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA
Fire Commissioner



June 7, 2004

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

**Re: Audit Report on Opportunities for Savings through Civilianization in
Administrative Units of the New York City Fire Department (ME03-173A).**

Dear Mr. Brooks:

Attached is a copy of FDNY's response and Agency Implementation Plan (AIP) to the three recommendations made by the Office of the Comptroller in the above-mentioned 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 Chief Compliance Office, Frank Buccellato, at (718) 999-2033.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Scoppetta

Attachment

cc: D. White
F. Buccellato

**New York City Office of the Comptroller Audit Report on Opportunities for Savings
through Civilianization in Administrative Units of the New York City Fire Department
(ME03-173A)**

Audit Recommendations – FDNY Response / Agency Implementation Plan

The audit recommended that the FDNY:

- 1) **Review and civilianize the 47 full-duty positions identified in this report that are civilian in nature and held by uniformed firefighters and fire officers in 10 administrative units.**

FDNY Response : The Fire Department PARTIALLY Agrees.

Of the 47 positions identified for civilianization by the Comptroller's audit, FDNY's preliminary review established that 19 of these positions could be either civilianized or filled with light-duty personnel. The Department will take the necessary steps to do this.

FDNY will also perform an in-depth review of the remaining 28 identified positions, although it feels that in many cases (especially Fire Investigation and Fire Prevention) the original documentation provided by the bureau chiefs adequately justified the necessity for full-duty, uniformed personnel in these positions.

- 2) **Conduct a comprehensive review of all its administrative units to identify additional civilianizable positions that would generate cost savings.**

FDNY Response : The Fire Department Agrees – In the past, FDNY has reviewed all uniformed off-line assignments, and reported on the responsibilities and qualifications needed for the positions. It will expand the scope of this review to include the identification of those positions that can be filled with either light-duty or civilian personnel.

- 3) **Conduct a study to identify other tasks that could be assigned to light-duty firefighters, especially to those on extended light-duty, that would make the best use of the firefighters' training and experience, while still being consistent with their medical conditions.**

FDNY Response : The Fire Department Agrees (with reservation) – FDNY has done so in the past, both to describe tasks that could be performed by personnel permanently unfit for full-duty (reasonable accommodation positions), as well as to identify positions that could be filled with light-duty personnel on a long-term basis. It has established the Light-Duty Desk to provide the best match-up of personnel qualifications with the temporary needs of the various bureaus.