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Earl Landers

Metropolitan Cities That Do Not Operate a Fire Department Shop.

The following question was asked of each municipality that is covered by this survey. "As the Chief of your department, would you give your candid opinion as to which method is more efficient?"

Cincinnati, Ohio
Chief B. A. Lugannani

Comment: There are good arguments pro and con on both methods of maintaining equipment. However, all factors being equal, I think there can be little question that when the repair shop is part of the Fire Department, the quality and quantity of the work are far superior to that obtained from an agency responsible for the maintenance of a wide variety of automotive equipment. A comparison of Fire Department maintenance shops in Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio readily demonstrates this. The Columbus shops are well maintained, with mechanics trained in the servicing of fire equipment only, who devote their entire time to meeting the needs of the Fire Service and who are subject to Fire Department discipline. In Cincinnati the area designated as the Fire Division shop is shared with street sweepers, a tire shop and a wash rack. The general appearance is more that of a truck junkyard than of an efficient, well maintained repair shop. Although mechanics are supposed to be assigned to Fire apparatus, there is frequent transferring of personnel so that some men whose major mechanical experience is that gained in the lawn mower and small car shop are assigned as Fire equipment mechanics under supervisors with little more experience. Over the years, the Fire Division has lost practically all effective control over this agency. The situation in general is far from satisfactory.

There is an area, however, which a Fire Chief cannot ignore in evaluating a centralized maintenance shop. This is the area of economy to the municipal operation. Unquestionably the maintenance of separate repair agencies--personnel, equipment, buildings, etc.--for each City department cannot help but be more costly than when they are centralized, taking advantage of the economies that are achieved through the consolidation of personnel, equipment and buildings. Although the centralized agency will probably never serve an individual department or division as effectively, as one of its own, I believe it can be operated with a degree of efficiency that would be acceptable, if a City Administration establishes controls that restrict the maintenance facility to a service organization and insure the operating agencies of supervisory control over their own work and full control over selection and approval of their equipment

For a Fire Department that for years has maintained a high level of efficiency and discipline, and recently attained a Class One A.I.A. rating, our present maintenance facility is an eyesore and a disgrace. City Administration is becoming aware of this, and it is anticipated that some corrective action will be forthcoming.