

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.

It may be of some value to relate some of our background in this area. Until shortly after the end of World War II, the Fire Division did have its own repair shop, with most personnel being part of the uniformed ranks. At that time, in an economy move, the City centralized the maintenance shops under one Municipal Garage operation. However, the Fire Division retained a supervisory position in the Municipal Garage with supervisory authority over the mechanics working on Fire apparatus and with some voice in the transfer of men in and out of the Fire Department repair section. This man, under the Fire Chief, had full control over practically all matters concerning Fire equipment. His position carried the title of Supervisor of Fire Apparatus and Equipment and had rank equal to a Battalion Chief.

In January, 1966, over strenuous objection of the Fire Division, this position was abolished, and all operational control over the repair facilities by the Fire Division was taken away. Since then, we have been able to show the need for filling the vacated position, but it has been reestablished at the rank of Lieutenant. The new position, however, has no supervisory authority and little control over the shop work related to Fire Department equipment and as to other duties and responsibilities assigned to the former position at the Municipal Garage. There has been strong opposition from the man in charge of municipal facilities to the presence of any Fire Division personnel in his operation.

San Francisco, California.
Chief William Murray.

Comment: If we had our own maintenance shop it would be more efficient.

Jacksonville, Florida.
Chief J. J. Hubbard.

We operated our own maintenance shop until November 1968. It is now under the City Motor Pool. It is my opinion that if we had our own shop under Fire Department Supervision it would be more efficient.

Fairfax County, Virginia.
Chief W. H. Burton, Jr.

Comment: Centralized repair shop for all the municipality may work efficiently for the Fire Service, but I do not believe this would be possible without close control by the Fire Service. Such control will necessitate a well qualified Superintendent of Fire Equipment and other personnel, all under the control of the Fire Chief.

Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Chief K. W. Hall.

Comment: Our Maintenance of Fire Apparatus is conducted by the Equipment Division of the Department of Public Works. We are satisfied with the service and feel that it is more efficient and economical than it was when under the Fire Department. This is partly due to having to use the shop to employ various disabled fire fighters whereas this is not possible now. ✓

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Chief Harry J. Keller.

Comment: No, we do not operate our Maintenance Shop. It is my opinion it would be better under the Fire Department Supervision.

Newark, New Jersey.
Chief J. M. Redden.

Comment: I find that centralized maintenance, as opposed to a Fire Department operated shop, to be a severe detriment to Fire Department operations.

Cleveland, Ohio.

Comment: A separate and complete maintenance would be more efficient.

New Haven, Connecticut.
Chief Frank Sweeny.

Comment: No Department takes care of its equipment like the Fire Service. You will not be satisfied with a City operated repair complex.

Jersey City, New Jersey.
Chief R. A. Gibney.

Comment: A central garage maintained by the Department of Public Works maintains our equipment. This arrangement has been in existence short period of time. Unable to say which method is more efficient.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Comment: A shop operated by the Fire Department for Fire Department equipment is the only way a large Department can keep equipment rolling.

52
Salt Lake City, Utah.

Comment: Public Safety Garage comprises: Fire Department, Police Department, and Board of Health, all under the direction of the Fire Department Master Mechanic. We think our system of public safety works very well. We always have our fire apparatus under our supervision.

Tulsa, Oklahoma.
Chief E. S. Hawkins.

Comment: We had our own shop for some 50 years, but for many reasons--cost, help, etc., we joined a Central City Maintenance Shop. A Fire Department Shop is more efficient when adequate quarters and personnel can be provided. Most cities are growing so rapidly that a Central Garage is a must. We have a firm understanding that our emergency equipment comes first.

Richmond, Virginia.
Chief Sherry.

Comment: I think a separate Maintenance Shop is more efficient and more economical.