

May 1, 2019

**For more information, please contact**

Joel Bomgardner  
Northern Monroe Fire Territory  
[jbomgard@btfire.org](mailto:jbomgard@btfire.org)  
812-339-1115

## Northern Monroe County Fire Protection Territory Responds to BFD's Automatic Aid and Correcting Response Recommendations Statement

Bloomington, Ind. – Chief Joel Bomgardner of the Northern Monroe Fire Territory (NMFT) received word today from Chief Jason Moore of the City of Bloomington Fire Department (BFD) that all automatic aid to and from the City of Bloomington Fire Department will cease as of May 13. The move came as a surprise as many of the areas where changes will occur have been part of the current dispatching system for over a decade. At Chief Moore's request, county fire departments had up until recently been working collaboratively to ensure that this service continue into the future. As noted in a press release from BFD dated April 29, the long-standing interlocal practice of mutual aid – calling in help from neighboring fire departments as needed – will not change. Automatic aid differs from mutual aid in that the department responds at once to a call without having been requested to do so.

The Monroe County Chiefs Association received a copy of the press release. Chief Bomgardner responded to the release by saying that there were several assertions by Chief Moore regarding the provision of fire services by departments outside the City that were incorrect.

Chief Moore asserted that county fire department administrators exaggerate or misstate capabilities to representatives of the ISO (Insurance Services Organization) that is the body that assigns ratings to homeowners' insurance policies. According to the county chiefs, there is no proof for that accusation. Chief Bomgardner stated, "Like their City counterparts, both administrators and firefighters in the county work diligently to ensure that residents are provided with the best ISO rating possible given budgetary and staffing limitations which exist outside the City."

Other accusations include:

- The lack of performance based upon 22 months of continued non-compliance with City desired changes. A final draft of the proposed and mutually signed Safe Structural Firefighting Guidelines was not completed by Chief Moore and his staff until November 30, 2018. (Email to Monroe County Fire Chiefs.) While the assertion was made that there was continued non-compliance on the part of county fire departments, the fact that Chief Moore had previously sent out the second draft of the document on June 6, 2018 (Email to Monroe County Fire Chiefs), and the initial draft with an invitation to comment on September 9, 2017 (Email to Monroe County Fire Chiefs) is an indication of not only a spirit of cooperation, but the willingness of county departments to actively participate with the requested changes.

- County training officers have been meeting regularly, and began including requested automatic aid training in November 2018 prior to the release of the final draft of the Guidelines. Familiarization sessions for the county in which personnel met each other and toured apparatus occurred well before. Chief Moore himself met with county training committee members on January 28, 2019, to discuss the new guidelines along with a timeline for moving forward with training. There can be no question that Chief Moore was implicitly aware that the entire county was progressing. Training officers from across the county have developed, implemented, and continue to move forward with automatic aid drills in order to comply with Chief Moore's demands. NMFT personnel alone have attended 13 separate trainings pertinent to automatic aid and the signed Safe Structural Fire Guideline.
- Third, county chiefs have met and agreed upon not only a countywide numbering system for apparatus, but on a countywide accountability system. It should be noted that this system requires minimal changes for the BFD while every county department agreed to change from the current system which has been in use outside the City since the 1970s. The countywide numbering guideline was signed on March 26, 2019. The accountability system, integral to personnel safety and to command and control, was to be funded with a grant obtained by the Monroe County Emergency Management Agency. These changes were to occur countywide in conjunction with changes at Central Dispatch, and along with the implementation of Mobile Data Terminals for all countywide fire apparatus. These issues were well understood by all of the Monroe County Fire Chiefs, and are completely outside the control of those agencies.
- Fourth, the March email referenced by Chief Moore in the Adjusting Automatic Aid press release was his response to a notification of renewal of the Monroe County Mutual Aid Agreement. It had nothing to do with the automatic aid which BFD has decided to terminate. In the same email, Chief Moore noted that "we have made great progress." He goes on to include that the City was prepared to sign the Structural Firefighting Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) and the Fire Service Renumbering Guidelines, both of which were signed on March 26, 2019, by Chief Moore and other Monroe County fire chiefs.

As Chief Moore noted, "BFD requested that the other departments collaboratively establish the standards and protocols." With the exception of providing an initial SOG, the only thing which Chief Moore has offered in terms of collaboration, as evidenced by the City press release, is dictating what the county fire services must do and how they must operate in order to receive City fire services (automatic aid). While some discussion of requirements has taken place, at no time has Chief Moore presented a complete and comprehensive list of requirements to the county fire service providers that would result in a signed agreement to extend automatic aid to areas outside the City of Bloomington.

The latest press release from Chief Moore and the City of Bloomington is an unfortunate illustration of the differences which exist between City and county services, and a demonstration that the efforts put forth in good faith by the county departments to be collaborative partners with BFD seem to have been wasted efforts. In the opinions of the county fire chiefs, the exercise has cost money and time for all, with a final disappointing result.