

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

FIRE MARSHAL DIVISION

INTRODUCTION

This report, issued in March 2002, contains the results of our performance audit* of the Fire Marshal Division (FMD), Michigan Department of State Police (MSP).

AUDIT PURPOSE

This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency*.

BACKGROUND

FMD is composed of two sections: Field Operations and Program Services. FMD also provides support functions to the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council (MFFTC), an administrative unit within FMD.

FMD's mission* is to provide services and training to others for fire and explosion investigation; enforcement of arson fraud, fireworks, and explosives statutes; mitigation of hazardous materials incidents; abatement of dangerous conditions; data collection and analysis; and public fire education. FMD programs include fire investigation, investigation training, fire and arson data collection and analysis, response to hazardous materials emergencies, and public fire safety education. MFFTC develops and administers curriculums and required examinations for firefighters as well as other specialized training.

FMD had 21 central office and 29 field employees as of July 31, 2001 and was appropriated approximately \$5.5 million for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2001.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES,
CONCLUSIONS, AND
NOTEWORTHY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of MFFTC and fire investigation training programs.

Conclusion: Our assessment disclosed that MFFTC and Investigative Resources Unit training programs were generally effective and efficient. However, we noted reportable conditions* related to MFFTC firefighter examinations and training (Finding 1).

Noteworthy Accomplishments: The fire problem in Michigan, as in the entire country, centers around residential fires. FMD has developed an educational program for local fire departments to deliver in schools to address this problem. It is given, along with training, free of charge to any fire department in the State. This is consistent with FMD's mandate to provide public fire education and reduce the incidence and severity of fire.

MFFTC is in the final stages of testing and implementing an extensive computerized information management system (IMS). IMS links all business processes from the initial training application to issuance of training certificates. IMS maintains a permanent individual training record for each of the State's firefighters and is used for all business functions necessary to support the mission of MFFTC.

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the fire investigators' activities.

Conclusion: We concluded that FMD fire investigators' activities were generally effective and efficient.

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness of the fire incident and insured fire loss reporting systems.

Conclusion: We concluded that the fire incident reporting system was generally effective. However, we concluded that the insured fire loss reporting system was not effective. We noted reportable conditions related to the Michigan Insured Fire Loss Reporting System (MIFLRS) and the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) (Findings 2 and 3).

**AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Fire Marshal Division. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

Our audit procedures included examination of FMD records and activities primarily for the period October 1, 1998 through July 31, 2001. We conducted a preliminary review of FMD's operations to gain an understanding of its activities.

We tested the contract instructors' files to verify that instructors possessed the required qualifications and certifications to teach firefighters' classes. Also, we reviewed FMD course evaluations and surveyed individuals who took the firefighters' or investigators' training and chiefs of Michigan local fire departments (see supplemental information for survey results). Further, we tested firefighters' records to ensure that MFFTC certified

the fire department firefighters. In addition, we verified compliance with applicable State laws.

We examined fire investigation case files and analyzed fire investigators' case loads and response time. We also examined the case files to determine whether documentation provided evidence of supervisory review. In addition, we surveyed chiefs of Michigan local fire departments and local law enforcement agencies regarding their association with FMD investigation activities (see supplemental information for survey results).

We reviewed fire incident statistics generated by FMD via NFIRS to identify overall trends in the number of fires, injuries, deaths, and dollar losses and analyzed FMD's use of this data. Also, we evaluated the use of and the need to maintain MIFLRS.

**AGENCY RESPONSES
AND PRIOR AUDIT
FOLLOW-UP**

Our audit report contains 3 findings and 4 corresponding recommendations. MSP's preliminary response indicated that it concurred with the findings and will comply with the recommendations.

FMD complied with the 2 prior audit recommendations included within the scope of our current audit. The other 2 recommendations were no longer applicable to FMD because these responsibilities were transferred to other departments.