

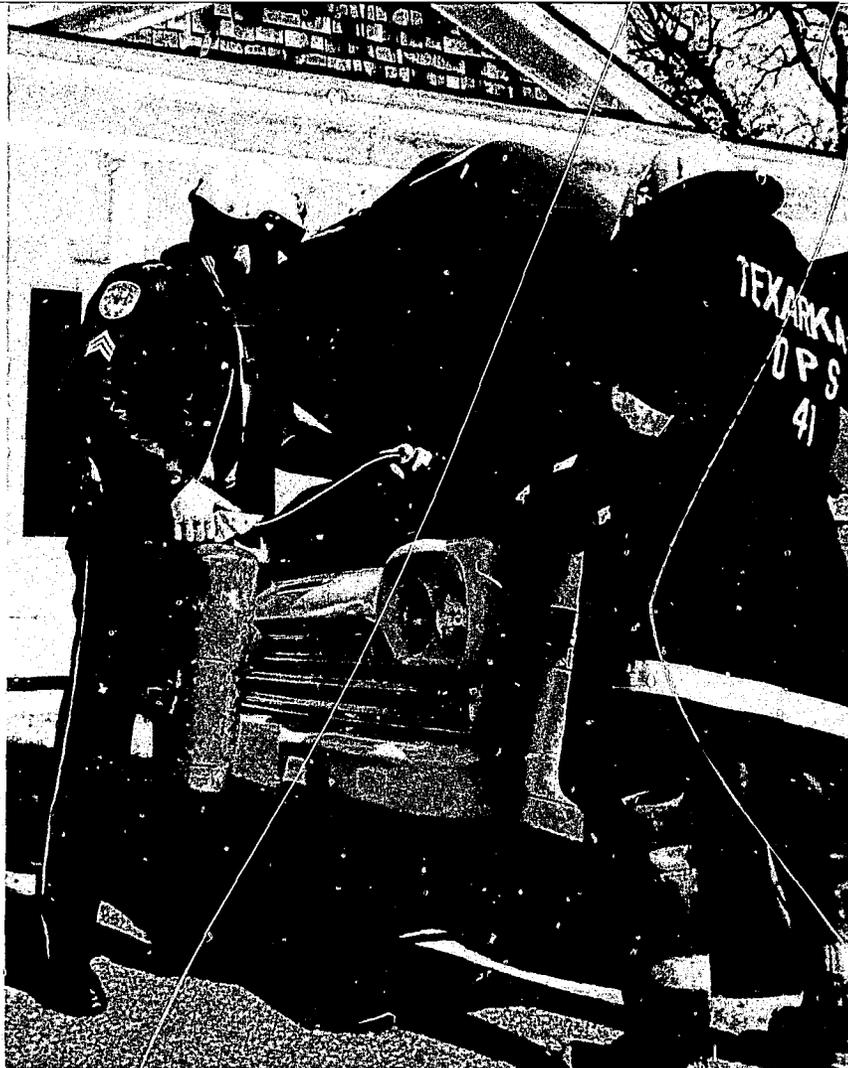
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Public safety officers extinguish automobile fire.

TEXARKANA'S PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM

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Our Nation's citizens are demanding more and better police and fire services, and the City of Texarkana, Ark., is confronting problems similar to those of other American cities in its attempts to provide and improve these services. Texarkana's situation, however, is unique, owing to its "border city" status. It has a population of approximately 22,000 citizens and encompasses an area of 11 square miles. Texarkana, Tex., her sister city, has an approximate population of 35,000 citizens within a 20-square mile area. In addition, the former city operates under a manager-council form of government which is totally separate from the latter. The Texarkana area is a cross-

roads and a major shopping center for a four-State area comprised of Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. Additionally, the Arkansas side is the only alcoholic beverage outlet within a 70-mile radius. Because of its unique situation, the Texarkana, Ark., Department of Public Safety is required to police approximately 70,000 to 80,000 people during peak periods, and this places an extreme burden on a department geared for a smaller population.

In the latter part of 1974 and in early 1975, Texarkana, Ark., was faced with the possibility of being required to employ several additional fire and police personnel because of projected requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act and the community's Citizen Advisory Committee's demand for improved law enforcement services. With limited local funds, but a genuine desire to provide positive fire and police services to its citizens, Texarkana considered an integrated public safety department.

In Canada and the United States, integrated fire and police services, operating under various titles to varying degrees, dates back several decades. Its history can be traced to around 27 B.C. in Rome. Although the exact number of cities using integrated fire and police services is unknown, it is obvious that the number of cities considering the concept is increasing annually.

The integrated public safety department can be categorized into five basic types: Consolidated service, partial consolidation, selected area consolidation, functional consolidation, and nominal consolidation.

Consolidated service is a complete reorganization of the two separate services into one integrated service. The majority of its force are "generalists" who are trained for and perform both police and fire duties.

Partial consolidation represents a method of using "generalists" as members of a special fire-police unit in an organizational relationship that retains the fidelity of the two services.

Selected area consolidation is characterized by a degree of integration whereby the two protective services function separately, except for the operation of specially trained police-fire personnel throughout a limited geographical area.

Functional consolidation represents a degree of integration in which separate police-fire services are retained, but one or more duties normally performed by one department have been assigned to members of the other department.

Nominal consolidation groups the bureaus that perform functions related to public safety into one agency.

Realizing that each concept varies with each community and that a pure consolidation could be a drastic change from the old dual system, a moderate approach—the combination of the selected area and partial consolidation methods—was determined to be the most desirable for Texarkana. The City of Durham, N.C., was using this type of approach, and in an effort to take advantage of their knowledge and experience, Texarkana city administrators visited Durham for an "on-site" view of the concept in oper-

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ation. Subsequently, a detailed community study was conducted. It included a physical and economic makeup, population characteristics, and the anticipated administrative and public support for a public safety officer (PSO) program. A careful analysis of the study by city administrators determined that Texarkana, Ark., was ripe for the PSO concept and that the concept used by Durham, N.C., would be most suitable for our community.

While preparing the plan, several areas were given serious attention, but emphasis was placed on leadership, personnel, training, and financial and legal issues.

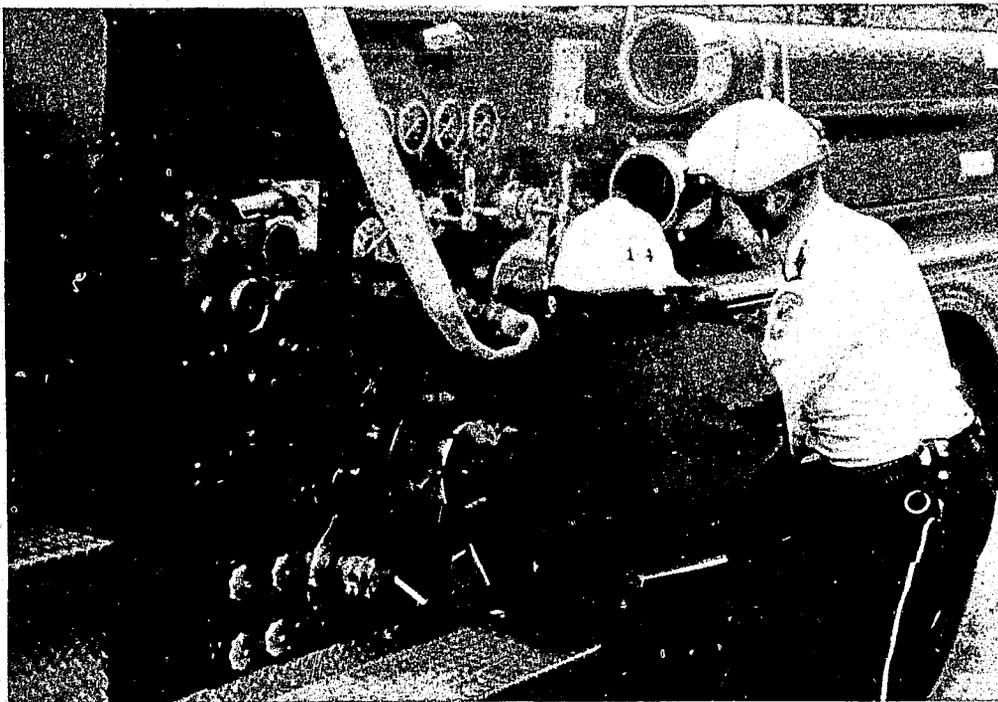
The legality of the concept posed no major problems. Arkansas State law stipulates that a police officer can be required to perform fire functions, but there is no provision regarding a fireman being required to perform police functions. The pension system presented the only difficulty since both services had separate pension plans. However, this problem was resolved with the purchase of an insurance policy which would reimburse the respective pension system of an officer who was injured or killed while performing an alternate function.



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Public safety officers operate firetruck equipment.

An organization structure was established which assigned both fire and police services under the authority of a single administrator—a director of public safety. But the structure was revised in 1977 with the official appointment of two deputy directors, one fire and one police. Both deputies had been performing those duties since the program's implementation.

All commissioned personnel were to be governed by a civil service system, and higher standards were required for personnel (firemen, policemen, and new applicants) requesting entry into the PSO program. Personnel were selected on a competitive and volunteer basis.

A training program was designed to teach law enforcement to firemen, fire control to policemen, and fire and police functions to those recently hired. This training period consisted of 6 weeks of basic police training, 6 weeks of basic fire training, and 4 weeks of on-the-job training as a team.

The physical budget for phase I of the plan required the employment of nine additional officers (five policemen and four public safety officers) and the transfer of four firemen and five police officers from their respective budgets, operational funds, and capital outlay funds for the purchase of additional vehicles and equipment.

Phase I of the program was approved by the city administrators, and in August 1975, the program was implemented in district 2 in the northern section of the city. Full responsibility for fire and police service began January 1, 1976. The operational plan called for the assignment of 1 PSO unit consisting of 16 PSO's (the initial group included 4 firemen, 8 policemen, and 4 recruits) to district 2. This unit would have full responsibility for providing fire-police service to that area. Officers would work 8-hour shifts, with one officer assigned to the district substation to operate the firetruck and the other officers assigned to a patrol beat in specially equipped fire/police vehicles. The police commander would supervise these officers except during fire situations which would be supervised by the fire commander.

Phase I was so successful that the citizens of another district, district 3 in the southern section of the city, petitioned city administrators for the program. Phase II was implemented in July 1976. Personnel for this phase consisted of a unit with 21 members, including 2 firemen, 12 policemen, and 7 recruits. This unit assumed full fire and police responsibilities for district 3 in January 1977.

The program continued to be successful and so highly accepted by the public that citizens on the northeast boundary of district 2 requested the program be expanded to cover their area of the community. Their request was granted in January 1978. This expansion consisted of five reclassified policemen assigned to district 2.

Prior to the PSO program, there were 50 commissioned police officers and 46 fire officers. There was an average of 3 patrol vehicles on the streets at any given time, and 15 personnel available for fire service. The response time for both fire and police requests was approximately 6 minutes. Now, there are 73 commissioned police/PSO and 34 fire officers. There is an average of 10.5 patrol vehicles in service at any given time, and 20 personnel available for fire service. Response time for both fire and PSO requests is now an average of 1.5 minutes. Reported Class A offenses for 1975, the last year of police operation without PSO, totaled 1,823, as compared to 1,587 in 1978 with PSO. The figures represent a 13-percent decline.

The city has maintained for several years an aggressive code enforcement program resulting in an extremely low fire rate. This extremely low fire rate allows a PSO to spend approximately 90 percent of his time in patrol functions. Due to this increase in patrol strength and faster response time, our crime rate is down considerably, while crime in most other cities in the Nation is up. It is also noted that faster response time and additional manpower for fire situations has brought about a decrease in fire insurance rates and has reduced property loss substantially. In 1975, the last year of fire operations without PSO, the estimated fire loss was \$1,108,650, as compared to \$494,981 in 1978 with PSO. The figures represent a 55-percent decrease.

The PSO program is not designed to reduce an organization's budget, but to allow better use of manpower and funds. Texarkana's overall DPS budget increased during Phase I and II mainly in the areas of personnel and capital outlay. However, the expansion of district 2 required no increase, only a reclassification and reassignment of personnel and equipment. It appears that manpower and capital outlay have stabilized, and a large savings is projected over a 5-year span by measuring services provided under the PSO concept when compared to the old dual system.

The initial plan did not include phase III, which is the reclassification of all remaining traditional police positions in district 1. However, because the program has progressed so successfully, phase III will begin in early 1979, and it is anticipated that by 1980 the traditional police officer will cease to exist in Texarkana, Ark. There are no current plans for the reclassification of the remaining fire positions (phase IV). The program is working very smoothly and no further changes are anticipated in the near future.

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In conclusion, the public safety officer program is based on certain principles which need to be adhered to for the program to be effective:

1. Appointment of a public safety director with full authority over police and fire services.
2. Consolidation of communications and dispatching.
3. High standards for personnel selected to be public safety officers.
4. Complete and thorough training of personnel in both fire and police duties before they are placed in the field.
5. Detailed planning before implementation.
6. Additional compensation for the increased responsibility.
7. Thorough briefing of public officials and organizational personnel, plus public education.
8. All participating personnel should be volunteers—no mandatory assignments.
9. Appropriate legislation must be developed.
10. Sufficient funds must be available and high original capital outlay considered.
11. Strong public commitment by the city council.

It must be noted that PSO programs can fail, and abuse of one or more of these principles will usually dilute the program's effectiveness.

The quality and quantity of fire and police services can be difficult to measure. However, since the implementation of the PSO program, our fire and police statistics plus our citizens comments and compliments indicate that the program is providing professional public safety services.

The public safety concept may be used by agencies large or small. The five basic alternative categories within the public safety concept enable an agency to select various combinations to design a program to meet its own particular needs. The results of our selected area/partial consolidation program indicate that this department is now providing public safety services more effectively, efficiently, and economically. Because inflation and tight money budgets are rapidly increasing, and police departments are searching for more practical methods of providing the desired level of services to their citizens, each police administrator should examine the feasibility of the PSO concept, as applied to his department.

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