



Municipal Technical Advisory Service  
INSTITUTE *for* PUBLIC SERVICE

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## Recommendations for Small Municipal Fire Departments

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Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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## Recommendations for Small Municipal Fire Departments

**Reference Number:** MTAS-417

Small municipal fire departments using volunteers are important to Tennessee cities. There are 723 recognized fire departments in Tennessee. Most of them are small fire departments struggling with water supply issues. Many small-city fire departments lack an adequate supply of water and the necessary funding to provide for needed supplies, equipment, and facilities. Improving a city's fire service rating can lead to homeowner insurance savings, and it can provide a mechanism to fund needed improvements in the fire service. Residential sprinkler systems can reduce the loss of life and property. Growth issues affecting a city's ability to provide an adequate level of fire service to its community need to be adequately addressed.

MTAS recommends that cities look for innovative methods to improve the water supply required for fire service such as:

- Develop and participate in model programs that pay for fire service improvements from reduced fire insurance rates, similar to the Texas model program outlined herein;
- Seek changes in federal laws that prevent a city from taking over a utility inside the city where the utility has outstanding bond obligations. Cities should be allowed to pay off the bonds and acquire the utility;
- Support changes in the state's growth laws requiring utility districts operating within a city, or its urban growth area, to comply with the city's subdivision regulations. This would give cities the ability to provide needed water for fire service; and
- Include utilities in the county/city 20-year growth plan.

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*DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.*

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