Nebraska Forest Service: Determining Fire Department Operating and Suppression Costs

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Determining Fire Department Operating Costs

Annually the chief of the fire department must meet with his Fire District Board of Directors or municipal board to establish a budget for the operation of the department for the ensuing year. Many times the chief has to justify any increase in the budget.

In order to do this is the cost of operation of each piece of fire equipment must be determined. The type vehicle and the equipment it carries will influence cost factors. Most vehicles may be categorized according to basic size and function. These general categories are:

- **Category I:** ¼ ton to 1 ton, 4x2 and 4x4 grass fire trucks and equipment trucks.
- **Category II:** 2 ton to 3 ton 4x2 and 4x4 pumpers.
- **Category III:** 1½ to 3 ton 4x2 and 4x4 tankers.
- **Category IV:** Forestry excess property vehicles, (4x2, 4x4, 6x6 grass trucks & tankers.)
- **Category V:** Aerial ladder trucks with pumps.

Additionally, four basic cost areas must be considered regardless of vehicle type or size:

- **Initial Cost of Vehicle.** Based on the current cost of total replacement and on a ten-year depreciation schedule.
- **Operational Expense.** Includes the cost for gas, oil, tires and preventive maintenance.
- **Mechanical Maintenance.** Includes repairs.
- **Insurance.** Can be liability only or full coverage.

Using these factors, the annual operating costs can be determined. Examples are shown for a commercial pumper and a forest service 6x6 tanker.

**Commercial Chassis 750 g.p.m. Pumper:**
- Annual vehicle cost*: $16,168
- Operational expense: 300
- Maintenance expense: 365
- Insurance expense: 300
- Annual operating cost: $17,133
  (*Based on: initial vehicle cost of $135,000 and a portable equipment cost of $26,675.)

**Forest Service 6x6 Tanker:**
- Annual vehicle cost**: $2,900
- Operational expense: 225
- Maintenance expense: 350
- Insurance expense: 185
- Annual operating cost: $3,660
  (**Based on: initial vehicle cost of $5,500, apparatus cost of $14,000 & portable equipment cost of $9,500.)

For more information, contact:
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Phone: 402.472.2944  Fax: 402.472.2964

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<th>Elapsed Time</th>
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