

## **FIRE SUPPRESSION CAPABILITY BUILD-UP**

In keeping with international standards, the Bureau desires to attain the ideal ratio of one operational firetruck for every 28,000 population. With the country's population approaching 92.2 million, the BFP should have been provided with 3,293 serviceable units of firetruck. Presently, the Bureau has in its fleet of firetruck a total of 1,809 units of which only 1,516 units or 84.0% are operational. As such, there is an outright shortfall for 1,777 serviceable units to meet the ideal firetruck-to-population ratio. As a matter of top priority, therefore, one of the program thrusts for this year is to narrow down the gap between the ideal requirement for firetruck and what we have on hand.

The Bureau, last year, filed House Bill No. 383 and Senate Bill No.1909 proposing for the modernization of the BFP. Essentially, the bills provide for the strategic approach or program components of the modernization; the amount and sources of fund; and the authority for the Bureau, through the DILG, to enter into multi-year contracts and other contractual arrangements with local and foreign suppliers / contractors for the acquisition of equipment and facilities.

The BFP Modernization bills have already gone through third readings in the concerned Committees of both houses, and extra efforts

are being exerted by the BFP to lobby for their passage into law. The BFP through the DILG has requested the Office of the President to certify the aforesaid bills as priority administration bills and all instrumentalities of the Bureau have been instructed to conduct massive information dissemination on the bills as well as lobby and solicit letters of support from their constituent Congressmen and Senators.

Pending approval of the bills by Congress, the Bureau is currently negotiating for the supply and delivery of some 76 units of brand new firetrucks and their spare parts through export financing from the Austrian Government. The project has gone through the review and approval of the Investment Coordinating Committee (ICC) and is now for submission to the NEDA Board for confirmation and, subsequently, to be presented to the Monetary Board and the Department of Finance for the crafting and approval of the Loan Agreement.

Our existing policy on solicitation for donation of equipment and facilities from local government units and non-government organizations will continue to be pursued with vigor. LGUs will be provided with technical assistance by our field units in availing soft loan from Land Bank for the acquisition of firefighting, rescue and EMS equipage.

Likewise, strong representations with Congressmen and Senators will be pursued for acquisition of fire fighting equipment utilizing their Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), commonly known as pork barrel. We are pleased to inform the body that through the sustained lobbying activities of the BFP leadership, a group of Congressmen have agreed to contribute their PDAF for CY2009 for the acquisition of firetruck in the total amount of ₱200 million.

To improve the communication system of the operating units, the Bureau is currently negotiating for a soft loan from the Austrian Government to implement a state-of-the-art Incident Management and Communication System (IMCOS). In capsule, the project aims to establish a complete and interconnected communication solution for all offices and fire stations in the NCR to improve their dispatch system and maximize their resource utilization.

## **FIRE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

In tandem with our desire to increase the inventory of our serviceable firetrucks is the urgent need to prepare the Implementing Rules and Regulations for the recently approved Comprehensive Fire Code of 2008.

The amended Fire Code will clearly define the accountability of public officers entrusted with the duty of implementing the Code. Stricter administrative and criminal penalties will be imposed on public officers' negligence, malfeasance or misfeasance to their duties resulting to or failed to prevent the loss of life and/or damage to property.

The amendment also provides for more stringent measures against owners, administrators, occupants or persons responsible for the condition of the building structure and their premises or facilities which violate the Code, its implementing rules and regulations and other related laws.

More importantly, the amended Fire Code authorizes the BFP to utilize the revenue generated from the enforcement of the Code in support of the proposed BFP Modernization Program. Subject to the approval of the DILG Secretary, the Bureau will now have a steady annual stream of revenues for the acquisition of fire protection, rescue and paramedic equipment, improvement of facilities and salary adjustments of its personnel.

Existing fire prevention programs will be mainstreamed with more emphasis, to include among others: the Kiddie and Junior Fire Marshal

Project which aims to integrate fire safety and prevention in the curricula of elementary and secondary education; the mandatory submission of the Fire and Life Safety Assessment Report (FALAR) by structure owners whose building plans are being reviewed by the Bureau; the use of pre-numbered and standardized checklist for fire safety inspection of establishments to avoid anomalous inspections; organization and training fire volunteer brigades as frontline fire prevention officers in the communities; and the strengthened fire prevention campaigns through barangay ugnayan, distribution of printed fire safety information kits, press releases and appearances in radio and television programs.

## **FIRE INVESTIGATION AND INTELLIGENCE PROGRAMS**

The Bureau will exert extra effort to finish the construction of the new BFP-NHQ building within the year which will co-locate the fire laboratory. Procurement of basic laboratory equipment will be programmed through realignment of funds from the current appropriation of the Bureau.

In the meantime, the BFP shall sustain its existing cooperative working arrangements with other government law enforcement agencies

such as the NBI and the PNP for the storage, handling and examination of arson evidence as well as the apprehension of suspected arsonist.

To ensure sufficient number of properly trained investigators, a higher training quota will be requested from the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC). Extra efforts will also be exerted to source out scholarships, exchange student program and similar foreign training of investigators. Needless to say, properly trained and well equipped fire investigators will result in the timely identification of the causes and origin of fires as well as lead to the early apprehension of suspected arsonists.

## **EMS AND RESCUE PROGRAMS**

Continued training of emergency medical technicians and rescuers will be pursued to include trainings in dealing with the effects of weapons of mass destruction, hazardous material exposure, and environmental / climate changes. The BFP will continue to strengthen its coordination with Patrol 117 and other private pre-hospital providers and rescue groups to improve its capability and response time during incidents.

In keeping with the President's thrust and all-out campaign against drug abuse and addiction, the BFP will strengthen its drug testing program among its rank and file. The Program aims to ensure that BFP personnel are free from using illicit drugs which could significantly diminish the efficiency and effectivity in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS**

The BFP has successfully lobbied for the passage of Senate Bill No. 3085 which allows the extension for five (5) years the reglamentary period for complying with the minimum educational qualification and appropriate eligibility in the appointment to the BFP. The same Bill when passed into law will also exempt BFP personnel from the required educational and eligibility requirement if they have already rendered fifteen (15) years of service.

To improve availability of critical decision-making inputs from the field units, the Bureau will expand the coverage of the existing website and install internet capability up to the Provincial Office level. In addition, the BFP, in coordination with DILG, will implement the Public Safety Information System to operationalize a comprehensive database

capability for its mission-critical functions of fire suppression, prevention, investigation and EMS and rescue.

To cope up with the shortage of operations personnel at the station level, streamlining of personnel and reorganization will be instituted at the BFP-NHQ, Regional and Provincial offices.

Educational intervention programs will also be implemented to address the requirement of personnel with educational deficiencies without drastically affecting the performance of their duties. Among others, the initiatives will include Distance Learning Program; Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program; Customized Educational Curriculum Study Programs in coordination with the Civil Service Commission; and in-house review class programs