

## Accreditation

On February 26, 2008, the City of Maryville Fire Department became an Accredited Agency. This milestone reached by the department, is under the auspice of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI); the only accrediting agency for the fire service. The process, which took two and one-half years to complete, resulted in the department becoming the third accredited agency in the State of Tennessee and the 128<sup>th</sup> internationally. The CFAI accreditation process provides a well-defined, internationally recognized benchmark system used to measure the delivery of fire and emergency services to a community. The objectives of accreditation include:

- Providing a system that improves the ability of fire agencies and community members to readily recognize and understand potential risks and hazards present within the jurisdiction;
- Determining local fire agencies' need for up-to-date resources and emergency service delivery systems;
- Improving the agencies ability to plan for future challenges that may present themselves including the needed structure to ensure a state of readiness is maintained at all times;
- Rewarding those who actively participate in the accreditation program, achieving excellence in service and establishing a plan for continuous improvement.

The process includes three major components. The first, being a self-assessment as to the current condition of the agency as it relates to their ability to perform tasks associated with protecting the lives and property of the citizens they serve. This assessment requires the mastery of 244 performance indicators divides among ten core categories. These include:

- Governance and Administration
- Assessment and Planning
- Goals and Objectives
- Financial Resources
- Programs
- Physical Resources
- Training and Competency
- Essential Resources
- Human Resources
- External Systems Relationships

The second is a detailed Strategic Plan based on current and projected needs. The five year plan allows for the construction of a “roadmap” that insures the agencies ability to achieve its mission; not only at the present time, but into the future.

The last component, The Standards of Cover/Risk Assessment, involves a physical survey of structures and facilities within the jurisdiction; for Maryville this meant over 1000 specific evaluations. These evaluations are then used to determine the levels of risk

present in the community. Once complete, the compiled data allows the agency to determine what steps will be involved in ensuring their ability to mitigate possible emergency incidents.

Once accreditation status has been achieved, CFAI requires an annual in-depth report that ensures the benchmarks that were achieved, are maintained. After a five year period, the re-accreditation process begins, thus proving continuous quality improvement.