



April 11, 2008

Honorable Mayor and
Common Council

Dear Honorable Mayor and Common Council:

The City of Racine Fire Department is widely known for their involvement as a State "Regional Hazardous Materials Team," covering Racine, Kenosha, Walworth and Jefferson Counties for any emergency involving Extremely Hazardous Substances (EHS). This level of response capabilities is known as Level A, which provides superior training and equipment to allow firefighters to operate independently of the contaminated atmosphere that surrounds a given incident. The Fire Department annually receives \$122,500 in payment from the State of Wisconsin to maintain our Level-A Team, provide training and purchase equipment.

In December of 2007, the Common Council authorized the Fire Chief to negotiate a Level-B Haz Mat Contract with Kenosha County Emergency Management. This was due to Kenosha County Emergency Management being notified that the City of Kenosha Fire Department would not be providing Hazardous Materials Level-B responses to county fire departments after January 1st, 2008.

The Racine Fire Department has a number of specialty teams beyond fire suppression and Emergency Medical Services that require regular training. The department provides confined space rescue capabilities, trench rescue capabilities and high angle rope rescue capabilities, in addition to Hazardous Materials capabilities.

Virtually all of our training dollars for specialty teams comes from revenue sources outside of the tax levy. The annual State Haz Mat revenue pays for a vast majority of training including supplies, equipment and overtime. This budget is stretched to the limit, as the State has not increased its payment to the Regional Teams in almost 10 years. This forces us to find additional revenue sources to compensate for the loss of real training dollars after taking inflation and wage increases into account.

The proposal, as presented in the attached document, allows us to provide Hazardous Materials Level-B services to Kenosha County in exchange for training dollars that will be used to keep our specialty-teams training at a very high level of competence. This will keep that type of training off the tax levy and allow for greater regional collaboration among area fire departments.

Respectfully,

Steve Hansen, Fire Chief