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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Terry L. Witkowski
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Fire response changes could mean big savings for city

The City of Milwaukee could save more than \$400,000 per year using just six specially equipped pickup trucks to handle less than a quarter of the annual emergency medical calls received by the Milwaukee Fire Department, according to a report from the Comptroller's Office delivered at today's meeting of the **Public Safety Committee**. The report added that certain operational issues would need to be addressed by the Fire Department to assure adequate fire response.

The Comptroller's report also stated that transitioning to the smaller trucks handling all of the MFD's EMS calls could result in an annual cost reduction of more than \$1.7 million, said **Alderman Terry L. Witkowski**, chair of the Public Safety Committee.

Alderman Witkowski said the city now pays substantial annual fuel costs for large fire trucks or rigs that get about one or two miles to every gallon of gasoline, and the purchase cost of each of those trucks is usually in the range of \$500,000. He said only about 7% of the MFD's calls involve smoke or fire, yet a rig is usually assigned to respond to each call.

"The \$1.7 million in average annual capital and operating savings could be achieved in addition to the savings in city interest costs through reduced borrowing to finance the purchase of new fire engines," Alderman Witkowski said.

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Fire vehicles/ADD ONE

“In addition, the savings realized would offset the cost of purchasing the pickups and required EMS equipment in 1-2 years, with all future years’ savings yielding a net gain to the city. And this would occur without any department staffing or fire engine fleet reductions,” he said.

Late last year, Alderman Witkowski brought the smaller trucks option to the attention of the Common Council and the MFD, and made an attempt to secure some vehicles as part of the 2012 budget process. The budget amendment did not pass, but in the discussion before the Finance and Personnel Committee, the MFD and Comptroller’s Office agreed to study whether the use of smaller trucks for non fire related calls would be beneficial for the city.