

Case Study

Porth Bureau of Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services

The City of Porth has a population of about 500,000 and serves an area of about 150 square miles. The fire department has 27 fire stations and about 750 sworn and nonsworn employees, and it provides a full range of emergency and prevention services. The Prevention Division has about 70 employees devoted to public education, fire investigation, code enforcement, and plan review activities. Over time, the efforts of individual programs have been evaluated in a variety of ways.

Workload indicators are tracked for the city auditor, who produces a regular report on the activities of the fire department. The annual report on service efforts and accomplishments is shared through the International City Managers Association and the Government Accounting Standards Board.

Efficiency measures have been tracked in general terms and used in a benchmarking process with other jurisdictions. Effectiveness measures have been tracked closely and documented for specific programs such as public education campaigns. Overall, the measures demonstrating risk and loss reduction have dominated the discussions about the relative value of prevention programs in Porth.

Recently, a new program of charging fees for fire code enforcement inspections was instituted. As part of that program, a 5-year evaluation period was established to demonstrate the impact of the program. The measures for the program include risk reduction and loss reduction measures, but they also include more specifically targeted measures for the occupancies subject to the code enforcement activities. Several examples of the data analysis are shown in the accompanying figure.

Case Study Review Questions

1. Given the information presented, what measures portray risk reduction and loss reduction in the Porth case study?
2. What inferences can be made from the comparison between Porth and other comparable jurisdictions in the Service Effort and Accomplishment (SEA) report? What dangers are there to these comparisons?
3. What conclusions can be drawn from the comparison of Porth's fire loss statistics to state and national trends over the same period of time?
4. What indicator in the Porth case study reflects
5. Where are examples of anecdotal instances in the case study? How much of an impact (presumably) would these indicators have on the decision makers responsible for continued funding of the fee for inspection program?
6. How is evaluation linked to planning?
7. How may we describe results of fire prevention programs?
8. What is the value of benchmarking?
9. What is the difference between performance measurement and evaluation measures?
10. How does the term *results* overlap both performance and evaluation measures?