

## **Gallagher / Ben Franklin / Apollo 13 & the Unknown RAR**

On a visit to Boston, Benjamin Franklin noted that the inhabitants of Boston were far better prepared to fight fires than the natives of his adopted city, Philadelphia. Under Franklin's leadership, a group of thirty men came together in Philadelphia to form the Union Fire Company on December 7, 1736. Their equipment included leather buckets, strong canvas bags and wicker baskets (for packing and transporting goods), which were to be brought to every fire. The Union Fire Company met monthly to talk about fire prevention and fire-fighting methods. Homeowners were mandated to have leather fire-fighting buckets in their houses.

*"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail"* is one of Benjamin Franklin quotes. This admonishment, shared in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, is certainly applicable to the fiscal challenges Colorado's fire protection districts are facing.

The current forecast projects that the RAR will be 6.11% in 2019 and 2020 and is based on anticipated growth in residential and non-residential actual values. While the actual RAR will likely differ from the 6.11 assumption (maybe higher & maybe lower) it is a prudent fire service leader who is preparing several different fiscal scenarios for their fire protection district.....good, worse and worsen.

Even those FPDs who are going to the ballot to "de-Gallagherize" cannot be sure 1) the ballot measure will pass or 2) the ballot measure will withstand expected legal challenges if it passes.

Since no one knows what will happen in the 2019 General Assembly with Gallagher, each FPD should take the time and prepare financial projections to accommodate several different RARs.

The association of "failure is not an option" with the Apollo 13 mission is due to its appearance in the film Apollo 13 uttered by Ed Harris, who was playing Gene Kranz (Apollo 13's Flight Director), and said *"We've never lost an American in space; we're sure as hell not going to lose one on my watch. Failure is not an option"*

Indeed, failure is not an option for the more than 250 fire protection districts in Colorado. Our leadership responsibilities to our firefighters, our taxpayers, our citizens and our communities demand nothing less than fiscal preparation for the unknown RAR.

Garry