

**IMPLEMENTATION OF SELF-ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION IN
THE U.S. MARINE CORPS FIRE SERVICE**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) recently agreed to adopt the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) Self-Assessment & Accreditation Program (CFAI program) as a measure of merit for DoD fire departments. While two of the DoD Components have started implementing the program, the U.S. Marine Corps has not yet evaluated the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service support for the CFAI program. Therefore, the problem prompting this research was the failure of the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Protection Program Office to assess the organizational support for the CFAI program and to identify any potential destabilizing forces that could affect the implementation of the program.

The purpose of this research was to determine the current organizational support for the CFAI program and to identify the potential destabilizing forces that may affect implementation by the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. Evaluative research methods were used to answer the following research questions:

1. Does the literature support the CFAI program as an effective method to measure fire and emergency services?
2. What is the experience of other DoD fire departments that have implemented the CFAI program?
3. Will U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service personnel support implementation of the CFAI program?
4. What are the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service organizational concerns affecting the implementation of the CFAI program?
5. What is the best strategy for implementing the CFAI program within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service?

The literature review indicated strong support for the CFAI program by municipal and DoD fire departments that had completed the program, however there were concerns about the time and resources required to complete the program. Interviews with four DoD chief fire officers also noted the improved professional knowledge of fire department personnel who worked through the self-assessment process. A survey instrument determined there was significant support for the CFAI program by the chief fire officers in the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service, although additional CFAI training and CFAI experience was needed prior to implementation. The chief fire officers expressed similar time and resource concerns regarding the CFAI program as that observed with other municipal and DoD fire departments.

The research recommended starting implementation of the CFAI program via a pilot program at selected U.S. Marine Corps fire departments. Additional recommendations included providing further CFAI training and CFAI experience opportunities, permitting fire departments to establish their own implementation timetable, encouraging fire departments to involve as many personnel as possible in the self-assessment process, keeping the initial focus on self-assessment in lieu of accreditation and follow-up with the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service chief fire officers who did not participate in the survey.

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INTRODUCTION

In August of 1997, the DoD Fire and Emergency Services Quality Working Group released the DoD Fire & Emergency Services Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 1998 through 2002. One of the major objectives contained in the Strategic Plan was to implement an assessment process for all DoD fire departments (U.S. Department of Defense [DoD], 1997). The assessment process would "provide for a systematic evaluation of the fire department, determine if the organization meets goals commensurate with assigned responsibilities, continually improves quality and performance and determines if programs and services are effective in meeting the needs of the Component" (p. 19). As a result of the Strategic Plan objective, the DoD Fire & Emergency Services Quality Working Group agreed to adopt the CFAI program for all DoD fire departments. The CFAI program will become policy for DoD fire departments when the revised DoD Fire and Emergency Services Program instruction is promulgated (DoD, 2000).

The U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force have started implementing the CFAI program, although by different means. The U.S. Navy adopted the CFAI program via policy directive and included specific target dates for implementation. The U.S. Air Force decided to implement the program via pilot testing at nine U.S. Air Force fire departments. The U.S. Marine Corps has not yet determined the current organization support for the CFAI program or the internal impact of the CFAI program on the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service and consequently cannot start implementing the CFAI program. Therefore, the problem prompting this research was the failure of the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Protection Program Office to assess the current organizational support for implementing the CFAI program and any potential destabilizing forces that could affect the implementation by the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments.

Since DoD will be implementing the CFAI program via policy, the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Protection Program Office must analyze the proposed change and develop a sound strategy for implementation by U.S. Marine Corps fire departments. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine the current organizational support for implementing the CFAI program and to identify the potential destabilizing forces within the organization that may affect implementation by the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments.

This research used an evaluative research methodology and focused on an internal evaluation of the CFAI program by the chief fire officers in the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. A survey instrument was utilized to assess the chief fire officer's support and concerns associated with the CFAI program. The research addressed the following questions:

1. Does the literature support the CFAI program as an effective method to measure fire and emergency services?
2. What is the experience of other DoD fire departments that have implemented the CFAI program?
3. Will U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service personnel support implementation of the CFAI program?
4. What are the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service organizational concerns affecting the implementation of the CFAI program?
5. What is the best strategy for implementing the CFAI program within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Prior to 1997, the traditional methods of evaluating U.S. Marine Corps fire departments consisted of annual fire loss data analysis and bi-annual program inspections conducted by the

U.S. Navy Fire Marshals. These traditional methods had worked well for many years and generally provided the necessary oversight and analysis of the fire department programs. However, in 1995, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security requested the development and use of measures of merit for all programs within the Environmental Security organization (DoD, 1995). The measures of merit would be used to define program goals, measure the achievement of the goals, assess program effectiveness and be a major factor in developing program budget submissions. The Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security stressed the need for performance measures in order to fulfill their advocacy role. Without the performance measures, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security could not effectively support the resource requirements needed to operate the fire protection and other Environmental Security programs, especially in a budget-constrained environment.

As a result of the emphasis placed on performance measures by the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security, measures of merit was identified as a critical issue in the DoD Fire & Emergency Services Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 1998 through 2002 (DoD, 1997). A specific goal was developed to provide performance measures for fire department managers that would identify resource requirements, assist in allocation and management of resources and measure organizational performance and effectiveness. An assessment program objective was recommended that would provide a systematic evaluation of DoD fire departments, determine if the fire department goals were commensurate with assigned responsibilities and determine the effectiveness of fire department programs and services. The DoD Fire & Emergency Services Quality Working Group approved the Strategic Plan in June of

1997 and submitted the plan to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security in August of 1997.

In June of 1998, the Chairman of the CFAI, Chief Randy Bruegman, briefed the Principal Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security and all the DoD Component Fire Protection Program sponsors on the CFAI program. As a result of the briefing, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security endorsed the CFAI program as an effective measure of merit for DoD fire departments. In July of 1998, the DoD Fire & Emergency Services Quality Working Group agreed to adopt the CFAI program as DoD policy and the DoD instruction on fire and emergency services program was revised to include the CFAI program (DoD, 2000). The revised instruction, including the CFAI program requirement, has been approved by all the DoD Components and is undergoing final coordination at the offices of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security.

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force have already started implementing the CFAI program. The U.S. Navy directed implementation of the CFAI self-assessment process in December of 1997 and established a CFAI Self-Assessment Implementation Action Plan in August of 1999 (W.D. Killen, personal communication, October 18, 2000). The Action Plan established a plan of action and milestones to ensure successful implementation of the CFAI program. As a result, two U.S. Navy fire departments have already completed the self-assessment process and been accredited by the CFAI. The U.S. Air Force adopted a pilot CFAI program in January of 2000 (H. Pike, personal communication, October 18, 2000). Nine fire departments within the U.S. Air Force will work through the CFAI program and seek accreditation in 2000 and 2001.

Since the CFAI program will soon become DoD policy, the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service must successfully implement this program. However, the U.S. Marine Corps Fire

Protection Program Office has not evaluated the impact of CFAI program on the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service and has not yet determined the best strategy for implementing the program. A critical component for successful implementation will be the acceptance of the CFAI program by the chief fire officers within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. Without the support of the chief fire officers, it will be extremely difficult to successfully implement the CFAI program since the officers will be responsible for implementation of the program at their fire department.

This paper was prepared to satisfy the applied research requirements associated with the Executive Leadership course at the National Fire Academy. The research relates to the Decision Making and Influencing modules of the course, specifically by involving U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers in the development of the CFAI program implementation strategy. This research also relates to the Analysis phase of the Change Management Module (U.S. Fire Administration, 1996). Through a survey of the U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers, the research seeks to assess the current organizational conditions and potential destabilizing forces affecting the implementation of the CFAI program.

The results of the research have significance to the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service in terms of the developing the implementation strategy for the CFAI program. The research also will help identify the organizational concerns that must be addressed to successfully implement the program. Finally, the research may assist other DoD fire departments in developing an implementation strategy for the CFAI program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this research focused on three major areas: an overview of the CFAI program, the experience of other DoD fire departments with CFAI program and the strategies used by the DoD Components to implement the CFAI program.

CFAI Self-Assessment and Accreditation Program

The formal CFAI program began with a 1988 memorandum of understanding between the International City/County Management Association and International Association of Fire Chiefs that committed both organizations to the development of a voluntary national fire service accreditation system (Commission on Fire Accreditation International [CFAI], 1999). After signing the memorandum of understanding, the International Association of Fire Chiefs established the National Fire Service Accreditation Program and the Accreditation Development Task Force to develop the self-assessment and accreditation program. The task force sought to address three basic questions:

- Is the organization effective?
- Are the goals, objectives and mission of the organization being achieved?
- What are the reasons for the success of the organization?

The goals and objectives of the accreditation program included the following:

- Must be applicable across the broad spectrum of the fire service
- Must have a degree of rigor, or it will be meaningless
- Must be contemporary, not revolutionary
- Must have the ability to change over time
- Must be achievable
- Must provide for a comprehensive organizational evaluation
- Must not be self serving for the fire and emergency services
- Must be a practical management tool

The self-assessment model developed by the Accreditation Development Task Force took more than eight years to complete and represents one of the most comprehensive projects ever

undertaken by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (CFAI, 1999). The self-assessment manual, the cornerstone of the CFAI program, has been revised five times since its initial release in 1995. There are 10 performance categories contained in the self-assessment model consisting of Governance and Administration, Assessment and Planning, Goals and Objectives, Financial Resources, Programs, Physical Resources, Human Resources, Training and Competency, Essential Resources and External Systems Relationships. Within the 10 categories, there are 44 criteria measures and a minimum of 233 performance indicators. For each applicable performance indicator, the fire and emergency service organization must provide a description, appraisal, plan and exhibits that define how the organization is addressing the indicator. Ninety-eight of the performance indicators are considered core competencies, which the organization must meet successfully in order to achieve accreditation. A fire and emergency service organization seeking accreditation must successfully complete the self-assessment process, pass an on-site peer assessment review and receive an affirmative vote from the CFAI.

Marsh (1996), in his analysis of accreditation for the Frederick County, Maryland Department of Fire & Rescue Services, noted that the CFAI program helps to facilitate change, improves quality and performance, provides a comprehensive desktop reference and provides recognition of good performance. Disadvantages cited by Marsh included the time involved with the self-assessment process and the fact accreditation does not guarantee ongoing quality of an organization. However, Marsh noted that accredited organizations are generally held to a higher standard of continual improvement, which is documented in annual reports to the CFAI. Marsh did recommend that Frederick County perform a comprehensive self-assessment using the CFAI model.

Buchanan (1998) compared the CFAI program with the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) grading schedule for the City of Oviedo, Florida Fire/EMS Department. Buchanan noted that both the CFAI program and the ISO grading schedule can be beneficial in evaluating fire department performance, however the CFAI program offers a better measure of the department's performance, effectiveness and efficiency. One disadvantage cited was the lack of a measurable cost benefit in becoming accredited, whereas there are potential insurance savings through the ISO grading schedule.

O'Connell also evaluated the CFAI program and ISO grading processes in 1998. As a result of his evaluation, O'Connell recommended that the Sunrise, Florida Fire Department discontinue efforts to improve their ISO rating and immediately begin the CFAI self-assessment process. This was based on the "positive results, organizational growth, improved service, self analysis, professional growth and increased marketing opportunities that most often result from the self-assessment and accreditation process" (p. 34). O'Connell recommended that all fire and rescue organizations conduct a self-assessment regardless of whether or not the organization chooses to pursue accreditation. O'Connell noted that there was a significant time commitment in completing the CFAI program and that several organizations were not pursuing accreditation due to the time required.

In his research on accreditation for the Aurora, Colorado Fire Department, Martinelli (1998) found that the CFAI program does provide a national standard for evaluating a fire and emergency service organization. The self-assessment process provides specific data about the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, which serves as the basis for organizational improvement. Martinelli identified comprehensive self-assessment, critical peer evaluation, clear understanding of required service levels, improved planning, improved budget process and

professional development as benefits of the CFAI program. The major concerns identified were the costs and time associated with completing the program.

Sauter (2000) conducted an assessment of the CFAI program for the City of Downey, California Fire Department. Sauter stated that the formulation of the CFAI risk assessment model, standards of response coverage and strategic plan will be a laborious process, but will benefit the Downey Fire Department and improve the knowledge of those who are involved in the process. He further advised it is important for an organization to develop the will and motivation to complete such an arduous endeavor.

In 2000, Branch reviewed the CFAI program to determine if it would help improve the consistency, accountability and professionalism of the Hattiesburg, Mississippi Fire Department. Branch cited self-improvement, pride in the organization, understanding of goals and objectives, effective allocation of resources and creation of a central depository for all fire department information as advantages of the CFAI program. Branch noted that accreditation is a sum total of the CFAI program and that the emphasis lies with the self-assessment process. He found that accreditation was not an immediate priority for the Hattiesburg Fire Department but recommended beginning the self-assessment process immediately. Branch estimated that the total cost for successfully completing the CFAI program would be approximately \$38,250 and would take 9 to 10 months to complete.

Mullen (1995) reported that fire department accreditation does not guarantee success for the organization, however it does provide a comprehensive evaluation of the organization according to recommended industry criteria and performance indicators. For the Naperville, Illinois Fire Department, the CFAI program provided specific data about the strengths and weakness of the organization, which served as a foundation for future improvements. Mullen

did comment on the extensive time and expenses required to complete the CFAI accreditation process for the Naperville Fire Department. Staff spent over 2500 hours of time and approximately \$34,800 to achieve the accreditation.

The Houston, Texas Fire Department Strategic Plan (1999) established CFAI accreditation as a professionalism goal for the department. The department was seeking accreditation to promote excellence within the organization, encourage quality improvement through continuous self-assessment, identify areas of strengths and weakness, improve professional growth, increase communication of organizational priorities, receive international recognition and to foster pride within the organization. Connealy (2000) noted that accreditation is a wonderful but painful process that forced the Houston Fire Department to adopt a strategic plan, conduct a comprehensive risk analysis and scrutinize every aspect of the organization. Connealy encouraged all fire departments, large and small, to start the accreditation process because of the outstanding return on investment.

Walter (1998) advised that CFAI accreditation takes a lot of work but is worth the effort because it increases the efficiency and effectiveness of fire service organizations. The CFAI program forces organizations to assess whether or not there is value added to the fire department customers. “The accreditation process should assist managers in continually improving the quality and performance of organizations by asking critical questions to determine if their programs and services are effective in meeting community needs” (p. 18).

Brooks (1997), in his evaluation of the Greensboro, North Carolina Fire Department self-assessment process, noted that the primary outcome from CFAI self-assessment is a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. The department was able to identify every program and service it was delivering, analyze the program effectiveness and write individual

program improvement plans. The research and documentation from the self-assessment process provided data critical for justification of programs and resources and led to the development of a department strategic plan. Brooks noted that the self-assessment process was so successful that it is now used as the primary management tool for program evaluation and planning within the Greensboro Fire Department.

The previous reports and articles influenced this research by indicating the overall positive influence of the CFAI program on those organizations that have been through the process. The CFAI program also is meeting the basic intent of the original accreditation task force by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an organization and forcing the organization to evaluate the effectiveness of their goals, objectives and programs. Many of the reports expressed concerns about the time and rigor of the CFAI program. However, as expressed by Walter (1998), "It would be foolish to think that a process covering such a broad range of services and programs would be simple and easily accomplished" (p. 17). Finally, some of the reports indicated that the true benefit of the CFAI program is the completion of the self-assessment process, whether or not an organization ever decides to seek accreditation.

DoD Fire Department Experience

Interviews were conducted with four DoD chief fire officers to gather information on DoD's experience with the CFAI program. Three of the chief officers and their fire departments have been through the entire CFAI program and one of the chief officers served as a CFAI peer assessor on two fire department site visits.

Fire Chief H. Stefansson (personal communication, October 12, 2000) stated that the main benefit of the CFAI program was the knowledge gained by his fire department personnel as they complete the self-assessment process. He also felt the U.S. Naval Air Station Keflavik Fire

Department received better budget and service support from the Installation Commanding Officer after receiving accreditation. Chief Stefansson implemented the program by introducing the self-assessment process to all members of the department, personally answering each question in the self-assessment manual and then assigning portions of the process to each shift. Five chief officers from the fire department attended the self-assessment training and two chief officers attended an on-site peer assessment at another fire service organization, which Chief Stefansson felt was very beneficial. Chief Stefansson's recommendations for fire departments seeking to implement the CFAI program included participation in the self-assessment training and communicating the value of the program to all fire department personnel.

Deputy Fire Chief E. Piercy (personal communication, October 12, 2000) of the U.S. Air Force Academy Fire Department stated that the CFAI program benefited their organization by forcing them to clearly articulate their programs and services in writing. This included revising standard operating procedures, defining community fire hazards and developing long-range plans. They did have difficulty building their program exhibits due to the voluminous amount of information contained within them. The Academy Fire Department implemented the CFAI program by introducing it to all department members and then assigning specific projects to each section of the fire department. The accreditation manager scrubbed the data from each section and put into final form. Chief Piercy believes the CFAI program will be very beneficial to all DoD fire departments by aligning them with their municipal counterparts and nationally recognized standards. For fire departments starting the program, Chief Piercy recommended beginning with goals and objectives, strategic plan, risk assessment and standard of response coverage documents since everything else in the process relates back to those documents.

Fire Chief P. Stewart (personal communication, October 16, 2000) of the U.S. Naval Air Station Jacksonville Fire Department indicated the CFAI program improved the relationships with all personnel in the department since they involved all personnel in the process. He believed the involvement of all personnel created an ownership of the program and resulted in a heightened understanding of what it takes to run the fire department. Chief Stewart felt the CFAI program improved their ability to review programs for effectiveness and efficiency, improved the professional knowledge of all fire department personnel and helped the community understand the services provided by the fire department. Chief Stewart's biggest concern was keeping his younger personnel interested in the program since it takes a long time to complete the self-assessment process. For fire departments starting the CFAI program, Chief Stewart recommended having several personnel attend self-assessment training, empowering a program manager to oversee the program and using everyone in the department to complete the process.

Fire Chief C.B. Duffy (personal communication, October 16, 2000) stated that the major benefit of the CFAI program was the involvement of the fire department personnel in the self-assessment process. He believes all personnel gain tremendous insight into the mission and operation of the fire department by working through the process, even though the process takes a lot of time. Having served as a peer assessor on two on-site visits, Chief Duffy feels it critical for fire departments to send personnel to an on-site peer assessment before starting the program. He believes the CFAI training programs provide a general overview, but the real specifics on completing the program are best obtained by participating in an on-site peer assessment. Chief Duffy stated it was important for DoD fire departments to focus on the data and planning elements of the self-assessment process, since data and planning are critical components of the standard of cover and risk analysis documents.

The interviews with the four DoD chief fire officers influenced this research by indicating there was similar support for the CFAI program within DoD as that observed by the municipal fire departments that had been through the program. Although there were concerns expressed about the length of time it takes to complete the process, all four chief fire officers felt the CFAI program was beneficial for DoD fire departments. An important consideration noted by all the chief fire officers was the involvement of all department personnel in the process. They felt this created ownership of the program and improved the professional knowledge of all personnel. Chiefs Stefansson (personal communication, October 12, 2000) and Duffy (personal communication, October 16, 2000) both noted the benefit and importance of attending an on-site peer assessment prior to beginning the CFAI self-assessment process.

DoD Implementation Strategies

Interviews were conducted with the U.S. Navy Fire & Emergency Services Program Director and the U.S. Air Force Fire Protection CFAI Program Manager to gather insight on the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force CFAI implementation strategies.

W.D. Killen (personal communication, October 18, 2000) felt the best way for the U.S. Navy to institutionalize the CFAI program and comply with the forthcoming DoD policy was to mandate the CFAI program via a policy directive. The U.S. Navy was the CFAI program pioneer within DoD and began implementation of the CFAI program in 1997. In 1999, the U.S. Navy established target dates for completing CFAI training, appointing self-assessment team members, completing self-assessments and requesting peer assessment on-site visits. The target dates were designed to hold the fire departments and Installation Commanding Officers accountable for implementing the CFAI program. As a result, many U.S. Navy fire departments had completed CFAI training and had experience with the CFAI program. Killen recognized

that some fire departments would not be able to comply with the policy or target dates and the U.S. Navy would permit waivers to the policy where appropriate. Killen stated they needed to implement the CFAI program in order to meet the Chief of Naval Operations request for measures of merit in U.S. Navy installation programs.

H. Pike (personal communication, October 18, 2000) advised the U.S. Air Force instituted a pilot CFAI program because they did not know enough about program, wanted to determine the value added by the CFAI program and wanted to assess the time and burden placed on the U.S. Air Force fire departments. Based on the results of the pilot program, the U.S. Air Force could determine the best process for implementing the program throughout the remainder of their fire departments. Pike advised they had little experience with the CFAI program initially and could not fully commit the U.S. Air Force before evaluating the benefits and costs of the program. Pike stated the CFAI program does a good job of verifying if a fire department is meeting its specified mission and standards. However, he was concerned that the process was very labor intensive and that a substantial training effort was needed before implementing the program.

The information provide by the U.S. Navy Fire & Emergency Services Program Director and the U.S. Air Force Fire Protection CFAI Program Manager influenced this research by indicating the two DoD Components are taking very different approaches in implementing the CFAI program. The different implementation strategies appear to be based on the level of competency and experience that the DoD Component has with the CFAI program. In the case of the U.S. Navy, which had been involved with the CFAI program for a number of years, there was a strong desire to fully implement the program as quickly as possible. This would help institutionalize the process and provide the performance measures requested by the Chief of

Naval Operations. Conversely, U.S. Air Force felt they needed to begin with a pilot CFAI program because they did not fully understand the program and its impact on their fire departments. The pilot CFAI program would provide an evaluation of the program without committing the majority of the U.S. Air Force fire departments to the process. Once the pilot CFAI program was completed, the U.S. Air Force could assess the best strategy for full implementation.

PROCEDURES

Procedures began with a literature review at the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center in May 2000. Additional literature reviews were conducted at the Learning Resource Center and the Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps Fire Protection Programs library and files. These literature reviews took place between June 2000 and September 2000. The literature review focused on authoritative sources that addressed the CFAI program. A number of research reports, studies and articles were identified that addressed CFAI program and documented the experiences of fire departments that had been through the program.

Fire Chief Haraldur Stefansson of the U.S. Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland Fire Department and Deputy Fire Chief Ernst Piercy of the U.S. Air Force Academy Fire Department were interviewed by electronic mail on October 12, 2000. Fire Chief Paul V. Stewart of the U.S. Naval Air Station Jacksonville Fire Department was interviewed by electronic mail on October 16, 2000. Fire Chief Charles B. Duffy of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Yuma Fire Department was interviewed by telephone on October 16, 2000. The chief fire officers were interviewed to provide an evaluation of the CFAI program for use within the DoD. They

provided information on the benefits and concerns with the CFAI program as well as recommendations for fire departments starting the program.

Telephone interviews were conducted with Mr. William D. Killen, U.S. Navy Fire & Emergency Services Program Director and Mr. Hugh Pike, U.S. Air Force Fire Protection CFAI Program Manager on October 18, 2000. The interviews sought to determine the rationale for the CFAI program implementation strategies within the U.S. Navy and U. S. Air Force.

Description of Survey

A survey instrument titled “Self-Assessment & Accreditation Questionnaire” (see Appendix A) was provided to all chief fire officers in the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine the current chief officer support for the CFAI program and to help define the best method of implementing the program. The questionnaire posed a number of specific questions including rank and experience in the fire department, CFAI training, CFAI experience and support for implementing the CFAI program. For chief fire officers who indicated they would support implementation, the questionnaire attempted to determine the reasons for the support. Conversely, for officers who indicated they would not support implementation of the CFAI program, the questionnaire attempted to determine reasons for the lack of support. Finally, the questionnaire asked the chief fire officers for their recommended implementation strategy.

The U.S. Navy Fire & Emergency Program Director, who also serves as a CFAI Commissioner, reviewed the questionnaire prior to distribution. Based on the review, a few clarifications were made to the instructions, however there were no revisions to the questionnaire. A total of 59 questionnaires were distributed and 29 were completed and returned for a response rate of 49 percent. Response to the questionnaire was voluntary and a significant

percentage (51 percent) of the chief fire officers did not respond. Table 1 provides demographic information on the chief fire officers who responded to the questionnaire and Appendix B provides the respondent comments. The data from the questionnaire was compiled and entered into a relational database (Microsoft Access 2000). The results were tabulated and used to help answer the research questions.

TABLE 1

Frequency Distribution of U.S. Marine Corps Chief Fire Officer Questionnaire Respondents by Rank, Experience, CFAI Training and CFAI Experience

Rank	N – 29	%
Fire Chief	9	31.0
Deputy Fire Chief	2	6.9
Assistant Fire Chief – Operations	10	34.5
Assistant Fire Chief - Prevention	5	17.2
Assistant Fire Chief – Training	3	10.3
Total	29	100

Years of Experience	N – 29	%
10-20	3	10.3
>20	26	89.7
Total	29	100

CFAI Training	N – 29	%
None	17	58.6
Self-Assessment	11	37.9
Peer Assessor	1	3.4
Total	29	100

CFAI Experience	N – 29	%
None	27	93.1
Peer Assessment Observer	1	3.4
Peer Assessor	1	3.4
Total	29	100

Setting

The U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service consists of 14 U.S. Marine Corps fire departments that provide fire and emergency services to 17 U.S. Marine Corps installations in the U.S. and Japan. The 14 departments range in size from a single engine company department with nine personnel to a 185-person department that operates 12 engine companies and three ladder companies. There are approximately 900 U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service personnel consisting of 680 U.S. civilian employees and 220 Japanese local nationals. The supervisory/non-supervisory personnel ratio is about 1 to 5 with approximately 180 supervisors and 720 non-supervisory personnel. Within the 180 supervisors, 63 personnel are designated as U.S. civilian chief fire officers (there were four vacancies at the time of the survey).

Limitations and Assumptions

The research was affected by a number of limitations and assumptions. The first limitation was the high percentage of U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers who did not respond to the questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was voluntary and there was not sufficient time for follow-up, it was not possible to determine the specific reasons for a 51 percent non-response rate. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that some of the chief officers did not understand the CFAI program and as a result did not complete the questionnaire.

The research assumed that the survey respondents understood the questions, answered all questions truthfully and understood the characteristics of the CFAI program. Based on the comments from the respondents (see Appendix B), it was apparent that many of the respondents did not fully understand the CFAI program and will require further training before implementation.

The “Self-Assessment & Accreditation Questionnaire” survey instrument could have been enhanced by allowing respondents to express concerns or support for the program independent of their yes or no answer to Question 6. One of the respondents indicated both a yes and no answer to Question 6 and addresses items in both Questions 7 and 8. Several respondents provided comments (see Appendix B) on their concerns with the program, even though they supported implementation by a yes answer to Question 6.

Finally, the research was limited in that it only evaluated input from the chief fire officers in the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. A full evaluation should include input from all fire and emergency service personnel within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service as well as the U.S. Marine Corps Installation Commanding Officers that oversee the fire departments.

Definitions

For the purposes of this research, the following definitions apply:

Accreditation: The process by which the CFAI evaluates and recognizes fire and emergency service agencies as meeting certain pre-determined standards.

Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI): A non-profit organization dedicated to the improvement of fire and emergency service agencies through self-assessment and accreditation (CFAI, 1999).

Insurance Services Office (ISO): An independent statistical, rating and advisory organization that serves the property and casualty insurance industry (Insurance Services Office, 1997).

Measures of Merit: Performance measures designed to assess program goals and evaluate organizational performance.

Peer Assessment: An on-site validation of a fire and emergency service agency's self-assessment process performed by a team of individuals that share comparable experiences with the assessed agency.

Self-Assessment: A self-conducted performance evaluation designed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a fire and emergency service agency.

RESULTS

1. Does the literature support the CFAI program as an effective method to measure fire and emergency services?

The literature review indicated strong support for the CFAI program within the municipal sector, especially for fire and emergency service departments that had been through the CFAI program. One of the major reasons cited for the support was the comprehensive evaluation of the fire and emergency services programs provided by the self-assessment process. Branch (2000), Brooks (1997), Buchanan (1998), Connealy (2000), Marsh (1996), Martinelli (1998), Mullen (1995), O'Connell (1998) and Walter (1998) all commented on the benefits of the self-assessment process in measuring the effectiveness of the fire and emergency service programs. Brooks noted that the CFAI self-assessment process was now the primary management tool for the Greensboro, North Carolina Fire Department program evaluation and planning. While most of the studies and reports expressed concerns about the time and costs required to complete the CFAI program, there was consistent support for the CFAI program as an effective measuring tool for fire and emergency service departments.

2. What is the experience of other DoD fire departments that have implemented the CFAI program?

All four of the DoD chief fire officers interviewed for this research indicated they supported the CFAI program and felt it would benefit their organization and DoD. The benefits included greater budget and service support from the Installation Commanding Officer, compliance with national standards, improved fire department personnel relationships, improved program reviews, and increased understanding of the fire department services by the community. The four chief fire officers also highlighted the professional knowledge gained by the fire department personnel as they completed the self-assessment process. The chief fire officers felt it was important to communicate the value of the CFAI program to all personnel and to encourage their input in the process. Concerns expressed about the program included the time it takes to complete the program, keeping personnel interested in the program and proper exhibits documentation. Participation in the self-assessment training was recommended by Chiefs Stefansson (personal communication, October 12, 2000) and Stewart (personal communication, October 16, 2000). Chiefs Duffy (personal communication, October 16, 2000) and Stefansson felt it was very important for fire department personnel to attend an on-site peer assessment before starting the CFAI program.

3. Will U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service personnel support implementation of the CFAI program?

Table 2 provides the data from the U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers regarding their support for the CFAI program and the reasons for their support. Of the 29 respondents, 23 (79.3 percent) indicated they would support implementation of the CFAI program. The main reasons identified for supporting the CFAI program were to improve fire department quality and performance (70 percent), improve fire department evaluations (65.5 percent), ensure department goals and objectives are defined and satisfied (65.5 percent) and to justify resources

requirements (65.5 percent). Slightly less than half of the respondents (48.3 percent) specified fire department measures of merit and improve public and Command relationships as reasons to support implementation of the CFAI program.

Table 3 indicates the support of the CFAI program by the respondent demographics of rank, fire department experience, CFAI training and CFAI experience. There was strong support for the CFAI program throughout all the chief officer ranks and for all the chief officers who had any CFAI training or CFAI experience.

4. What are the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service organizational concerns affecting the implementation of the CFAI program?

Tables 2 and 3 also provide the data from the U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers who did not support implementation of the CFAI program and the reasons for the lack of support. Of the 29 respondents, three (10.3 percent) indicated they would not support CFAI implementation and all felt the program was unnecessary. The main reasons cited for not supporting implementation included insufficient resources (10.3 percent), increased fire department costs (10.3 percent) and increased fire department workload (6.9 percent). All three respondents who did not support implementation of the CFAI program also had no experience or training on the program.

5. What is the best strategy for implementing the CFAI program within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service?

Table 4 shows the U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers recommended implementation strategy for the CFAI program. Eighteen respondents (62.1 percent) indicated additional training was needed prior to implementation and 13 respondents (44.8 percent) felt a pilot program at selected fire departments was the best strategy for implementation. Seven

respondents (24.1 percent) recommended a mandatory implementation via policy, five respondents (17.2 percent) recommended voluntary participation and one respondent (3.4 percent) recommended no implementation at all. Seven respondents (24.1 percent) provided other recommendations for CFAI program implementation.

TABLE 2Frequency Distribution of U.S. Marine Corps Chief Fire Officer Questionnaire RespondentsConcerning Implementation of CFAI Program

Support Implementation of CFAI Program?	N – 29	%
Yes	23	79.3
No	3	10.3
Other	3	10.3
Total	29	100

Reasons for Supporting Implementation of CFAI Program	N – 29	%
Improve Fire Department Evaluations	19	65.5
Ensure Goals/Objectives are Defined and Satisfied	19	65.5
Improve Fire Department Quality and Performance	20	70.0
Define Fire Department Measures of Merit	14	48.3
Improve Public and Command Relationships	14	48.3
Justify Fire Department Resource Requirements	19	65.5
Required by DoD Policy	6	20.7
Other	3	10.3

TABLE 2Frequency Distribution of U.S. Marine Corps Chief Fire Officer Questionnaire RespondentsConcerning Implementation of CFAI Program

Reasons for Not Supporting Implementation of CFAI Program	N – 29	%
Increase Fire Department Workload	2	6.9
Increase Fire Department Costs	3	10.3
Increase Fire Department Training Requirements	1	3.4
Insufficient Resources	3	10.3
Program is Not Necessary	3	10.3
Other	1	3.4

TABLE 3Relationship between U.S. Marine Corps Chief Fire Officer Support for Implementation of CFAIProgram and Respondent Demographics of Rank, Experience, CFAI Training and CFAIExperience

Support CFAI Implementation	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Rank						
Fire Chief	6	20.7	1	3.4	7	24.1
Deputy Fire Chief	2	6.9	0	0	2	6.9
Assistant Fire Chief – Operations	8	27.6	1	3.4	9	31.0
Assistant Fire Chief – Prevention	5	17.2	0	0	5	17.2
Assistant Fire Chief – Training	2	6.9	1	3.4	3	10.3
Total	23	79.3	3	10.3	26	89.7
Years of Experience						
10 - 20	1	3.4	1	3.4	2	6.9
>20	22	75.9	2	6.9	24	82.8
Total	23	79.3	3	10.3	26	89.7
CFAI Training						
None	12	41.4	3	10.3	15	51.7
Self-Assessment	10	34.5	0	0	10	34.5
Peer Assessor	1	3.4	0	0	1	3.4
Total	23	79.3	3	10.3	26	89.7

TABLE 3

Relationship between U.S. Marine Corps Chief Fire Officer Support for Implementation of CFAI Program and Respondent Demographics of Rank, Experience, CFAI Training and CFAI Experience

Support CFAI Implementation	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
<u>CFAI Experience</u>						
None	21	72.4	3	10.3	24	82.8
Peer Assessment Observer	1	3.4	0	0	1	3.4
Peer Assessor	1	3.4	0	0	1	3.4
Total	23	79.3	3	10.3	26	89.7

TABLE 4

Frequency Distribution of U.S. Marine Corps Chief Fire Officer Questionnaire Respondents
Concerning Best Strategy for Implementing CFAI Program

Best Strategy for Implementing CFAI Program	N – 29	%
Mandate by Marine Corps Policy	7	24.1
Pilot Program at Selected Fire Departments	13	44.8
Voluntary Participation	5	17.2
Provide Additional Training Prior to Implementation	18	62.1
Do Not Implement	1	3.4
Other	7	24.1

DISCUSSION

One of the main purposes of this research was to determine if there was support for implementing the CFAI program by the chief fire officers within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. The results indicated there was significant support for the CFAI program by the chief officers who responded to the questionnaire. More than 79 percent of the respondents supported the program and felt it was important to improve fire department quality and performance, ensure goals and objectives are defined and satisfied, justify fire department resources and improve fire department evaluations. Based on the support of the chief fire officers, it appears appropriate to begin implementing the CFAI program within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service.

The data from the chief fire officer survey indicated strong support for CFAI program across all demographic areas surveyed. In fact, only three respondents did not support implementation of the CFAI program and they were evenly spread across the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief – Operations and the Assistant Fire Chief – Training ranks. In terms of CFAI training, all the chief officers who had some level of training (11 respondents) supported implementation of the program. All three of the respondents who did not support implementation of the program did not have any CFAI training. This same relationship was observed with CFAI experience in which all three of the respondents who did not support implementation also had no previous experience with the CFAI program. However, this relationship was much less significant for the CFAI experience because only two respondents had any previous experience with the CFAI program. The relationship observed with the CFAI training and CFAI experience appears to indicate that the more exposure personnel have with the CFAI program, the more likely they are to support implementation of the program. As a result, it will be important to significantly increase the CFAI training and CFAI experience

opportunities for members of the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service as part of the implementation strategy.

The U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service chief officers cited improved fire department quality and performance as the most significant reason for supporting the CFAI program. This supporting factor was consistent with that observed in the literature by Branch (2000), Brooks (1997), Buchanan (1998), Connealy (2000), Marsh (1996), Martinelli (1998), O'Connell (1998) and Walter (1998). All of the previous reports identified improved fire department quality or performance as a benefit of the CFAI program. However, Marsh (1996) and Mullen (1995) both noted that the CFAI program does not guarantee on-going success for the organization. Thus, it will be important to continue using the self-assessment process to foster continuous improvement in the fire department, even if a department becomes accredited.

Over 65 percent of the chief officer respondents cited improved fire department evaluations as a reason for supporting implementation of the CFAI program. This finding was very consistent with the literature in which Branch (2000), Brooks (1997), Buchanan (1998), Connealy (2000), Marsh (1996), Martinelli (1998), Mullen (1995), O'Connell (1998) and Walter (1998) all reported on the benefits of the self-assessment process in measuring the effectiveness of the fire and emergency service programs. However, only about half of the chief fire officer respondents (48 percent) felt the program would define the fire department measures of merit. This dichotomy was important because one of the major reasons for evaluating fire department programs was to define the measures of merit. This was exactly reason the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Environmental Security endorsed the CFAI program. As a result, it will be important to provide further emphasis on the CFAI program as an effective measuring tool and to use the results from the CFAI program in defining the fire department measures of merit.

One of the basic tenants used in the development of the CFAI program by the Accreditation Development Task Force was the achievement of fire department goals, objectives and missions. The chief fire officers in the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service concurred with this tenant as indicated by their by strong support for the strategic planning process. Over 65 percent of the chief fire officer respondents felt the CFAI program would ensure the fire department goals and objectives were defined and satisfied. Branch (2000) and Connealy (2000) also noted the benefit of the strategic planning process in their evaluations of the CFAI program for the Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Houston, Texas Fire Departments.

Justification of fire department resource requirements was the final significant reason for supporting implementation of the CFAI program by the chief fire officers. This was consistent with the findings by Stefansson (personal communication, October 12, 2000), who received improved budget and service support from the Installation Commanding Officer after receiving accreditation and by Brooks (1997), who noted that the self-assessment process provided the data needed to help justify programs and resources.

The main concerns expressed by chief fire officers who did not support implementation of the CFAI program were the lack of sufficient resources and the increases in workload and costs required to complete the program. Additionally, a number of chief fire officers who supported implementation of the CFAI program, also expressed concerns about the time and costs associated with the program (see Appendix B). These concerns were very consistent with concerns expressed in the literature. Branch (2000), Marsh (1996), Martinelli (1998), Mullen (1995), O'Connell (1998), Sauter (2000) and Walter (1998) commented on the time, costs or rigor associated with the CFAI program and O'Connell noted that several organizations decided not to pursue accreditation due to the time required. Because the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service

is currently implementing a number of new programs including the DoD Fire & Emergency Services Certification Program, the Activity Based Costing Program and the Fire Fighter Fitness/Wellness Program, implementing the CFAI program could place an excessive strain on the fire departments. Therefore, it will be extremely important to provide sufficient resources and time for fire departments to implement the CFAI program. Failure to provide the necessary resources and time could quickly jeopardize the successful implementation of the CFAI program within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service.

The U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers strongly recommended additional training on the CFAI program prior to implementation. This recommendation was supported by the comments of Chiefs Stefansson (personal communication, October 12, 2000) and Stewart (personal communication, October 16, 2000), who recommended having several personnel attend CFAI training before starting the program. The survey data also indicated that additional CFAI program experience was needed since only two of the chief fire officers had any previous experience. Chiefs Stefansson and Duffy (personal communication, October 16, 2000) both noted the benefits of sending personnel to an on-site peer assessment before implementing the CFAI program. As discussed previously, the need for additional CFAI training and more opportunities to gain CFAI program experience must be provided as part of the implementation strategy.

One of the internal benefits of the CFAI program was the professional knowledge, experience and improved relationships of the fire department personnel who work through the process. This benefit was noted by the DoD chief fire officers interviewed for this research as well as by Sauter (2000) in his research on the CFAI program for the Downey, California Fire Department. Chiefs Stewart (personal communication, October 16, 2000) and Duffy (personal

communication, October 16, 2000) both recommended involving all personnel in the fire department because of the insight and knowledge they gain about the department as they work through the program. Thus, there is a valuable professional development opportunity provided for fire departments that truly involve their personnel in the CFAI program.

In their research on the CFAI program, both O'Connell (1998) and Branch (2000) noted that the true benefit of the CFAI program was the self-assessment process, whether or not an organization ever decides to pursue accreditation. This finding certainly has merit because many U.S. Marine Corps and DoD fire departments may not be eligible for accreditation based on the results of the self-assessment process. This could create a negative view of the CFAI program if the sole focus is on accreditation. It will be important for the U.S. Marine Corps and DoD leadership to focus on the self-assessment process and to use the results to continually improve the fire department. This is not meant to diminish the organizational pride and recognition that comes from receiving accreditation, but rather to ensure all departments benefit from the CFAI program whether or not they reach the accredited status.

The data from the chief fire officer questionnaires recommends implementing the CFAI program via a pilot program at selected U.S. Marine Corps fire departments. This recommendation is not surprising given the limited training and experience that chief fire officers have with the CFAI program. The U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service appears to be in a similar position as the U.S. Air Force with limited knowledge about the CFAI program and concerns about the time and burden the program places on a fire department. Implementation via a pilot program will provide lessons learned and a roadmap for completing the program without initially committing all the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments. Personnel from the pilot fire departments can serve as mentors for subsequent departments and assist them in

implementing the CFAI program. A pilot program will also provide additional time for the fire department personnel to obtain CFAI training and CFAI experience.

Finally, the failure of 30 U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service chief officers to respond to the survey was a concern as well as a limiting factor of this research. While the results from the survey appear very supportive of the CFAI program, there was a substantial portion of the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service chief officers whose opinions, concerns and recommendations were not captured. There was some indication that chief fire officers who did not understand the CFAI program did not respond to the questionnaire, which may be partially responsible for the low response rate. Whatever the reason, it will be important to try and capture the input of all chief officers in the CFAI program implementation strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the significant support shown by the U.S. Marine Corps chief fire officers, this research recommends beginning the implementation of the CFAI program within the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service. The program should provide numerous benefits to U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service including improvements in quality and performance, improved program evaluations, justification of fire department resources and implementation of a strategic planning process. Implementation of the CFAI program will also provide the necessary measures of merit for the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service and comply with the new DoD policy in the revised DoD program instruction (DoD, 2000).

The CFAI program should be implemented via a pilot program at selected U.S. Marine Corps fire departments. A pilot program will allow the U.S. Marine Corps to begin implementing the program without fully committing all the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments to the process. The U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona Fire Department is

recommended as the initial pilot department because Chief Duffy has most experience with the CFAI program in the U.S. Marine Corps and many of his personnel have already received training on the program. Other U.S. Marine Corps fire departments can begin implementing the CFAI program once they have the necessary training and experience on the program.

The survey data clearly indicates that additional CFAI training and experience is needed as part of the implementation strategy. This research recommends that several personnel from each fire department attended CFAI training classes before starting the program. Additionally, at least one chief fire officer and the fire department's accreditation program manager should attend an on-site peer assessment before beginning the program. The recommended training and experience will assist the fire department personnel in understanding the program, provide a methodology for completing the program and provide the self-confidence needed to start the process.

Because of the lack of CFAI training and experience as well as the number of new programs currently being implemented in the U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service, implementation of the CFAI program will be a slow process. In fact, it may be several years before all the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments have implemented the CFAI program because some departments may not be able to quickly commit personnel and resources to the program. As a result, this research recommends that each U.S. Marine Corps fire department develop an individual implementation timetable, based on their ability to commit personnel and resources to the program. As long as the timetable is reasonable, this strategy should allow the individual fire departments to complete the program at their own pace without the pressure of a specific completion date.

This research recommends that each U.S. Marine Corps fire department complete the self-assessment process internally and involve as many personnel as possible in the process. While some of the respondent comments (see Appendix B) suggested using contractors to complete the process, the interviews with the DoD chief fire officers clearly indicated that the fire department personnel gain great insight and knowledge about the fire department as they work through the process. This is a positive benefit of the CFAI program that should not be underestimated or ignored.

The focus of the CFAI program, at least initially, should be on working through the self-assessment process, and not on achieving accreditation. The self-assessment process is the most important and difficult process in the CFAI program and will provide tremendous benefit to the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments whether or not they ever seek accreditation. The self-assessment process includes the development of a strategic plan, risk assessment plan and standard of response coverage plan, which are the key planning documents needed to improve and measure the fire department's performance. Only after the fire department has successfully completed the self-assessment process should the focus shift towards attaining accreditation.

Follow-up is recommended with the 30 chief fire officers who did not respond to the questionnaire. Because the CFAI program will have a great impact on the entire U.S. Marine Corps Fire Service, it is important to try and get input from all chief fire officers who must sell the program at their fire department. The opinions, concerns and recommendations of all the chief officers should be evaluated and incorporated in the final implementation strategy.

Finally, additional research is recommended after implementation of the CFAI program to ensure the CFAI program is improving the U.S. Marine Corps fire departments and providing the necessary measures of merit for the DoD.

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APPENDIX A**Self-Assessment & Accreditation Questionnaire**

**HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAMS (LFF-1)
2 Navy Annex
Washington, DC 20380-1775
(703)695-9453 DSN 225-9453
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Corps Fire Service Chief Officers
FROM: Kevin King, Manager, Fire Protection Programs
SUBJ: SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION QUESTIONNAIRE
DATE: 27 July 2000

Please find attached the subject questionnaire on implementation of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) Self-Assessment & Accreditation program within the Marine Corps Fire Service. This questionnaire and subsequent analysis will assist me in determining the current organizational support for the self-assessment and accreditation program and help to define the best method(s) of implementing this program. The analysis will also satisfy one of my applied research requirements for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. The questionnaire is intended for your individual assessment of the CFAI Self-Assessment and Accreditation program and the affect it will have on your organization. Please answer the questions based on your own beliefs and experiences not based on the opinions of other personnel. You are not required to provide your name on the questionnaire, although your individual comments are encouraged at the end of the questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire as promptly as possible and return to me by e-mail or fax no later than 1 August 2000. When completed, I will provide a copy of the research report to all the Marine Corps Fire Departments for your review and information.

I thank you for your attention and support for this project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above phone numbers.

MARINE CORPS FIRE SERVICE

CFAI SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of Fire Department: _____

2. Current rank in the Fire Department:

- _____ Fire Chief/Deputy Fire Chief
 _____ Assistant/District Chief (Operations)
 _____ Assistant Chief (Prevention)
 _____ Assistant Chief (Training)

3. Fire Department Experience (total service in department):

- _____ 1 to 5 years
 _____ 5 to 10 years
 _____ 10 to 20 years
 _____ More than 20 years

4. CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation Training. Please check all that apply.

- _____ None
 _____ Self-Assessment Workshop
 _____ Peer Assessor/Team Leader Workshop
 _____ Exceeding Customer Expectations Workshop
 _____ Risk Assessment (RHAVE) Workshop

5. CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation Experience. Please check all that apply.

- _____ None
 _____ Peer Assessment Observer
 _____ Peer Assessor
 _____ Peer Assessor Team Leader
 _____ Accreditation Manager
 _____ Accreditation Team Member

6. Do you believe the Marine Corps Fire Service should implement the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation program?

_____ Yes _____ No

7. If you answered yes to question 6, why do you believe the Marine Corps Fire Service should implement the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation program? Please check all that apply. (If you answered no to question 6, go to question 8.)

- Improve fire department evaluative process.
 - Ensure goals & objectives of the department are defined and satisfied
 - Improve quality and performance of the department
 - Define fire department measures of merit
 - Improve fire department public and Command relationships
 - Help justify fire department resource requirements
 - Required by DoD policy
 - Other (please list) _____
-
-

8. If you answered no to question 6, why don't you believe the Marine Corps Fire Service should implement the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation program? Please check all that apply. (If you answered yes to question 6, go to question 9.)

- Existing fire department evaluative processes are acceptable
 - Increase fire department workload
 - Increase fire department costs
 - Increase training requirements on fire department
 - Insufficient resources for the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation program
 - Do not believe the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation program is necessary
 - Not the fire department's responsibility
 - Other (please list) _____
-
-

9. What do you believe is the best strategy for implementing the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation program within the Marine Corps Fire Service?

- Specific mandate by Marine Corps policy
 - Pilot program at selected Marine Corps Fire Departments
 - Voluntary participation by all Marine Corps Fire Departments
 - Provide additional training prior to implementation
 - Do not implement at all.
 - Other (please list) _____
-
-

10. Other Comments (Please continue on additional sheets if more space is needed):

APPENDIX B

Respondent Comments from the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation Questionnaire

The following comments from the respondents were included on the Other Comments section of the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation Questionnaire. They have been edited for spelling, but have not been edited for content.

Probably could be a good form of checks/balance. If we're going to do something, let's do it right! This program would give a checklist of requirements that all would feed on. If so, Marine Corps Fire Service would have a better sense of balance. Fund and hire a contract employee to work on pilot program and develop implementation program.

Provide funds to Marine Corps Commands/Fire Dept. Accept state accreditation. How does the layperson receive this kind of training? Communication/Emergency Medical requirements.

Have a private contractor present to all Marine Corps activities the concept and values.

As stated in question #7, without proper funding, staffing and resources it will not work. Adding this to personnel who already have several collateral duties is not a good idea. Suggest, if possible, hiring temporary personnel whose sole job is to do the assessment. They could devote full effort to the project and probably complete it in less time. Extra training is also necessary for personnel involved in the project.

Should be a dedicated position for duration of initial assessment.

Should be funded and authorized billet for implementing and maintaining.

Implement after a period of time when DoD Certification is caught up.

I agree that the process should be implemented, however there could be problems as stated in question #8.

If we do it, give us the training and time to do it. This entire process should be funded by HQMC start to finish. I believe you only get out what you put in. Let's learn from the pilot programs and pass it on to the people that will do the work. Each installation should have a program coordinator start to finish and that person should be present at all meetings. I have seen many people sent to self-assessment training but they are not the one's that do the all the work. Training should be just that and not a free trip to network. The program needs safeguards up-front if it is to work, and hold bases accountable.

It was purely a paperwork shuffle at the Presidio. The assessment was hauled out to show to other Fire Chiefs then put on a bookshelf to gather dust. The questions asked were good ones and the thought that went into answering them could have produces tangible results. Having an assessment of the problems is all well and good but the fire departments need the funding and backing from the Command to fix them. If this self-assessment will be used to bolster funding within the Marine Corps Commands then it is a good idea.

Cherry Point does not have any admin support and assigning one person to do nothing but oversee the accreditation would not be feasible. Our main focus at this point is the DoD Firefighter Certification Program. If all goes according to plan we will be able to make the accreditation our main focus by Jan. 2002. Our new software and databases will be in place and the necessary information needed for accreditation will be readily available. Any date before Jan. 2002 would not be a realistic goal.

I think the accreditation process could be of value to the Marine Corps Fire Service in that it would be a good tool for outside agencies to evaluate our fire department. It would serve to bring more prestige to our installations. I do believe that it would increase our workloads significantly during the process. Personnel are reluctant to take on additional duties even if they are related to their jobs now. We could try to sell this process as a means of job security in the future. I think initially we could see some of the benefits of being accredited, but the continued process of updating our accreditation package would probably fall by the wayside. I will say that the future of us having to complete an accreditation study has made us look at better, more efficient ways to keep up with our fire department records. So there has been some good to come out of it so far.

Progress should be monitored closely and a date for completion established.

All fire departments should have at least one peer assessor.

Talk to Navy's installation(s) that completed the self-assessment and see what the benefits were. Identify both pros and cons and go from there. I think we need a specific goal or reason why to conduct a self-assessment, as it will be extremely labor intensive (need to dedicate one individual full time for more than a year) and then we have created a living document that could come back to be used against us in a court of law. (i.e. I identify we need program XYZ at a cost of 123 dollars, the program does not get funded and I let it sit and Firefighter ABC is fatally injured. The lawyer picks up our own self-assessment & accreditation and uses it against the Command and me as the Fire Chief!) Also, with the recent and on-going implementation of the DoD Certification Program, to implement another major program is just too overwhelming right now. The timing is extremely bad. If HQMC were to implement this Self-Assessment & Accreditation Program, I would strongly recommend that HQMC authorize and fund an over-hire position to conduct this program and/or fund a private contractor to come in and perform this tasking. In closing, I'm concerned with HQMC "NOT" having the funding to correct any/all deficiencies identified during the self-assessment program.

I am not familiar with the program. Sounds like a good program although at age 54, I do not know how this would benefit me, could benefit future officers.

I believe a pilot program at selected Marine Corps Fire Departments would be the route to go in implementing the CFAI Self-Assessment & Accreditation process. The pilot fire departments would then become "mentors" for the other departments once they come on line with implementing the CFAI process. I feel everyone would be more accepting of taking on this process/program if they felt they could have help from fellow departments that have gone

through this process/program instead of everyone in the same "boat" sort of speak if all departments have to go on line with this program at the same time. The pilot departments would be the "pioneers" to "blaze" through this process/program and be able to give everyone the benefit of their "experience". I think it would be very beneficial for everyone to hear the highs and lows the pilot departments experienced while going through the process – what worked, what didn't – what they would have done different. This process/program seems to be a big undertaking in the terms of time. From my understanding, once started you can't quit, you must complete the process and it seems to be a very time consuming for the WHOLE department. However, the end "product" seems to be worth the effort.

Most departments, even if mandated to, will make half-hearted attempts to comply or to complete the self-assessment. This would be from no real malicious act on their part. It would be due to cost constraints and manpower limitations present in the Fire Service. We are all striving to do more with less, and any attempt to tackle a project as ambitious as this would certainly draw from already limited resources. Add to this the mandates of BRI and DoD certification and we can see that any attempts to add straw to the camels back would raise objections. I personally feel this would benefit each and every department participating or attempting to initiate a self-assessment. A possible solution to this dilemma would be a self-assessment team made up of individuals from Marine Corps Fire Departments in each regional area to form a team that would be assigned to the self-assessment program for a short period. The mission of each team would be to develop a common plan and standard matrix to be used by each department. Then this team could revisit each department to assist with the formulation of each program. The idea would be that the Marine Corps Fire Protection is one big department

with only regional differences to be added to each program. Marine Corps Headquarters could fund to staff each team with one person on temporary assignment to this project and the other members TDY from area departments. This might offset the cost and manpower draw from individual departments. During a recent Training Officer's meeting, we discussed the formulation of Standard Operating Procedures by region using the same format as above. I believe it can work and can be done in a way that would impact each department and could possibly increase the passing of each department in the self-assessment.

Based on my limited training and awareness of the process, it appears too time and labor intensive to EFFECTIVELY complete the program with limited resources. Most fire departments are currently "up to our necks" with the ABC/M process. Recommend that HQMC contract or at least partially contract this evolution.

My answer to #6 is "no" only because I do not know enough about the process to give a one-word answer. From what I know about it, it is a valid process as long as it can remain objective. That would be hard to do internally. I believe an outside consulting team would be best in order to avoid or reduce the risk for "skating" on the tough assessments (no one likes to look "bad" syndrome). Downloading this onto individual fire departments also may run a high risk in receiving less than through assessments. Not that we don't have the talent, but the kind of assessments that needs to be done is time intensive, will require training and consistent monitoring. If outsourcing is not an option, then at a minimum, an "in-house" team comprised of members of several different departments that travels from base-to-base doing the assessments. This will create an atmosphere of accountability. It will also allow them to

conduct the assessments without other job obligations interfering, resulting in a more thorough assessment report. Of course their job obligations will have to be absorbed by someone during their absence. A possible solution would be to comprise the team of functional members.

Training Officers for evaluating the Training, Operations Chiefs for Operations, etc....with an outside facilitator for each group. This way, not everyone is gone at the same time.

Like I noted above, this is a good program, but the time it will take to complete the program with limited manpower at small facilities other required programs would suffer and or not be completed at all.

Just one more unnecessary program to deal with that accomplishes nothing. Does not improve morale or benefit personnel in anyway. Increases costs in a time when budgets are constantly being cut in an attempt to justify the existence of the Federal Fire Service.

Training needs to be funded and classes held in more locations.