

FIRE OFFICER DEVELOPMENT FOR THE SPARKS FIRE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The problem identified for this research project was that the Sparks Fire Department did not have an up to date 'Fire Officer Development Program' to train and prepare the future officers of the fire department. Fire Apparatus Operators (FAO) are used in an acting capacity when the fire captain is absent. Current training for these personnel and for the current fire captains is based on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Fire Officer Standard 1021, in the form of an outdated Sparks Fire Department specific format. The purpose of this research paper was to determine the requirements for and recommend a recognized standard to prepare professional fire officers for the Sparks Fire Department.

The following questions were used to make this determination:

1. What areas of training are necessary to produce an effective fire officer development program?
2. What are other fire departments using as a tool to prepare fire officers for their responsibilities?
3. What areas of training do the future fire officers of the Sparks Fire Department feel they need the most?

The results of the research showed that although the Sparks Fire Department required personnel participating in the promotional process be certified as NFPA Fire Officer I, and have at least thirty (30) college credits in a Fire Science degree program to take the test, most members felt the program was not beneficial to them. There were no continuing education requirements after being promoted and no officer school

upon promotion. Many personnel working as acting captains were certified and obtained college credits years ago in unstructured certification programs.

The evaluative research method was used to answer the questions for this research project. The results of the research indicated that a combination of NFPA standards, at least an Associates of Arts Degree (A.A.) in Fire Science and required continuing education after promotion will prepare the fire officer to fulfill the requirements of a company officer position. For the purpose of this paper, the research will be limited to the rank of Fire Captain.

The research showed that although the Sparks Fire Dept. (SFD) does have a formalized Fire Officer Certification program, it mirrors the National Fire Protection Association Professional Fire Officer Standard #1021, which was nearly twenty years old. What was missing from the SFD program was the training and classes that would meet the requirements of NFPA #1021.

The recommendations were to adopt a standard that would give the fire officer candidate the needed knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the job of fire captain in a competent and professional manner. In addition to the NFPA standard, the recommendations included training for the fire officer candidate in areas specific to the SFD.

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INTRODUCTION

The scope of this applied research project is limited to the questions of whether or not a Fire Officer Development program other than what already is in place is needed for the SFD. If a new program is needed, what training is necessary to provide the needed skills and what training do fire officer candidates think is necessary for them. This project was selected because the current certification program in the SFD is nearly 15 years old and has not been updated in many years and it does not have a curriculum of specific classes that must be part of a Fire Officer Development Program.

Problem

The problem was that the SFD had an outdated and vague program to prepare members of the SFD for the position of Fire Officer, primarily that of Fire Captain. During a recent promotional examination for the position of Fire Captain, it became obvious through candidate feedback and test results that preparation for the position was lacking in certain areas. The areas in which the candidates did the poorest were personnel administration, report writing, instructional techniques and fire incident reporting.

Purpose

The purpose of this research paper was to identify a Fire Officer Development Program which contained the basic job skills, knowledge and abilities to prepare the fire officer candidate to perform the job and prepare for promotion to fire captain. Included in the recommendations were classes that would meet the requirements and also classes specific to the SFD.

Research Method

The evaluative research method was used to obtain information for this project. The research consisted of a literature review of written material, interviews with other agencies, information obtained from the Internet, a survey instrument concerning areas of need from members of the SFD. Information was also obtained from NFPA Standards and Federal Regulations as well as the Insurance Services Office (ISO) regulations. Information and materials obtained at conferences, training sessions and seminars was also used in this project. Research for the project started in August 2001, at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy (NFA). The majority of the written materials used in this project was obtained from the LRC.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to formulate recommendations and a solution to the problem:

1. What areas of training are essential to produce an effective fire officer development program?
2. What are other fire departments in the area using as a tool to prepare prospective fire officers for their responsibilities?
3. What areas of training do prospective fire officers in the SFD feel are most important?

BACKGROUND and SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Sparks, Nevada is the fourth largest city in the state of Nevada. The city limits are contiguous with the City of Reno and Sparks is located in Washoe County. The population of the city in 1999 was 62,108, population projections for the year 2005 are 85,000 and in 2020 120,000. The current square mileage of the city is approximately 35 square miles. There is continual development within the city and including annexation, both the geographic size, number of residential and commercial structures increase annually. The fire department is also undergoing a growth period, but unfortunately, the growth in the fire department is not keeping up with the growth of the city. The Union Pacific Railroad has a large railroad yard in the city and a major freeway also runs through the city. The flight path of Reno/Tahoe International Airport is directly over Sparks and there have been numerous small aircraft crashes within the city limits.

The Truckee River is considered to be a navigable waterway, it runs through the entire city and also is a dividing line between the City of Reno and City of Sparks. The city is home to a large petroleum tank farm which stores millions of barrels of flammable liquids. There is a large industrial area in the southwestern section of the city. Manufacturing, warehousing and distribution centers bring in more than 20,000 additional people to the city each work day. These additional people add to the population, cause an increase in traffic on city streets and in general add to the need for public safety services. The largest employer and largest building in the city is John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel Casino. The Nugget is a twin-tower high rise hotel, each tower is twenty-eight stories in height. There are more than two-thousand guest rooms in the

Nugget as well as a very large casino gaming area. A seven story hospital is located on the eastern edge of the city. A large chemical manufacturing and distribution facility is also located within the city limits. Nevada is the second most active earthquake state in the nation and there is the potential for a large scale earthquake in the area. Because of the growth in the area, the industrial and commercial growth, and other problems specific to the City of Sparks, the need for well trained, competent and professional fire officers is very apparent. As the city and the fire department grow, it is imperative that fire officers in the SFD are trained to deal with the many potential problems that may arise, as well as a new generation of fire fighter.

The fire officer in the fire service of today faces challenges not faced by officers of the past. The majority of firefighters hired in today's fire service have not spent any time in the military. I think that military service helped to develop the discipline, the dedication to duty and pride in a job well done. This training helped the fire officer in the completion of his duties. Today's fire officer must deal with the "Twenty-somethings", the group of people who may be working for the first time in their lives and the fire service is their first job. Many have been full time students and never out on their own. The paramilitary structure of the fire service may be a culture shock for them and if they do not work for a competent fire officer, their career in the fire service may be very short. Cultural diversity, harassment issues, changes in technology, building construction, changes in public perception of the fire service and liability issues are all reasons that the fire officer of today must be well trained and prepared to do the job for which he/she has been promoted.

Sparks Fire/Rescue Department

The Sparks Fire/Rescue Department (SFD) is a paid professional career fire department. The SFD provides fire, EMS and rescue service from four fire stations. There are three engine companies, two quint companies and one truck company. Each company is staffed with a Fire Captain, Fire Apparatus Operator and one or two firefighters. A Fire Battalion Chief is the shift commander. The SFD has three platoons, working a 56 hour schedule, each platoon has twenty-six personnel, with a minimum of twenty-three on duty each day. In addition to emergency services, the suppression division also participates in a Engine Company Business Inspection Program. The SFD has the following Divisions: Suppression, Training, Administration and Fire Prevention. A total of 100 personnel work for the SFD. In 2000, the SFD responded to nearly seven thousand emergency calls. The majority of calls were for medical emergencies, nearly 85%. In addition to fire suppression, the SFD provides EMS, HazMat, Water Rescue, Confined Space and High & Low Angle Rescue.

Currently, the only fire officer development program in the SFD is an officer certification program that is based on the NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, 1997 Edition. This standard, with a few added SFD specific requirements is the format for Fire Officer I in the SFD. In order for a member to fill the role of Acting Fire Captain, he/she must meet these requirements. The certification process is self-paced and for the most part done on an individual basis. The length of time for a person to complete the process depends entirely on the individual. Once a person has certified as a Fire Officer I, he/she is eligible to act as Fire Captain and is also eligible to test for the position of Fire Captain if all other

experience and educational requirements are met. In the past, there has been very little specific officer related formal training provided to members involved in the certification process or those preparing for a promotional examination. There is also very little formalized officer training for any officers in the department. The purpose of this paper is to identify training classes critical to satisfactory performance by company officers, either acting or permanent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted to determine the most critical areas of training required for officer development for prospective fire officers. To identify training programs currently in use as on-going training for fire officers. Also researched was educational and experience requirements for a fire officer. The research was limited to the requirements for the position of Fire Captain or Fire Officer I.

Thomas Hawkins Jr. wrote that most fire departments have sophisticated promotional systems to fill higher-level positions. In his article, Hawkins states that on many occasions, the new officer who may have done well on an assessment center, fails to perform well in the position. Poor performance situations usually occur because chiefs fail to take the next step in the promotional process, mandating training for newly promoted company officers. According to Hawkins, the Alexandria, VA Fire Department created the Leadership, Education, and Development Institute (LEAD). The major goal of the LEAD Institute is to provide a comprehensive leadership and training program for all department managers. In order to design, implement and manage this program, a group of employees in various stages of their careers and from all parts of the organization were appointed by the fire chief. Their first step was to decide on a set of

principles that would guide the program's development. They arrived at three conclusions:

1. The curriculum couldn't be abstract, it had to be real. Each subject module had to provide real information the students could use.
2. All curriculum components must have end objectives that are specific and measurable. Desired outcomes were established before selecting instructors.
3. Instructors must use innovative instructional techniques such as case studies, role-playing, group interaction and class participation.

The delivery system for this program was set up so that each September, 25% of the department management team was assigned to the program. Newly promoted officers were required to attend the program at the start of the first session after being promoted. This program included managers from every division of the fire department from fire suppression officers to the maintenance division. The LEAD team developed a four-phase curriculum, with 4 and 8 hour modules in each phase.

Phase One:

- Mission and Values of the fire department
- Myers-Briggs type indicator
- Self-directed professional growth and development

Phase Two:

- Communications skills (verbal and written)
- Time management
- Team-building skills

Leadership styles and process

Training techniques and responsibilities

Conflict management and resolution

Phase Three:

The legal aspects of being a manager

Employee evaluations and the discipline process

Phase Four:

Management of emergency situations

Customer service programs

The fire department as part of local government

Financial management

Citywide expectations

Hawkins wrote that both he and the LEAD Institute team feel that participants are better prepared to handle many different situations and that the overall knowledge of attendees has improved. This improvement seems to have minimized problems in running the department Hawkins wrote. (Hawkins, 2000, pp 68-71)

Kevin S. Brame and Patrick McIntosh wrote about the development of the Orange County, CA Leadership Institute in 1997. The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) was established as an independent fire agency in 1995 as the result of a separation from the County of Orange governmental organization. Before the separation, the county provided limited opportunities for selected individuals to attend various types of managerial and leadership development courses. Once the OCFA had been formed, the responsibility for training fire officers fell solely on the OCFA. In

addition to having this responsibility, the OCFA found itself facing major changes with many retirements at all ranks taking place in the organization. During this transition the agency a professional growth program for the OCFA was being developed. Mark Maier, Ph.D., chair of the organizational leadership program at Chapman University in Orange, CA, the OCFA Leadership Institute was created. The Leadership Institute focuses on preparing for the future by training individuals to be leaders and assume leadership roles through a journey of lifelong personal development, wrote Brame and McIntosh.

The curriculum for the OCFA Leadership Institute includes the following:

- Introduction to organizations, leadership and self
- Leadership
- Communications
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Empowerment and delegation
- Learning organizations
- Overcoming organizational defenses
- Managing conflict
- Groups and teams
- Ethics and leadership
- Change and the leadership challenge

The inaugural Leadership Institute class began with 24 members in September 1998.

The first class graduated in June 1999 and the participants have continued their commitment by developing a quarterly leadership newsletter, as well as designing a logo for the Leadership Institute, according to the article. The Leadership Institute has

continued to do well, with more applicants applying than the institute could accommodate. There is a high level of commitment required of the attendees, they must attend all sessions, there is no overtime authorized. A shift firefighter on duty must use vacation time or shift trades to attend. Attendees on a forty-hour week must use vacation time or flex-time to attend. The OCFA reciprocates in providing all texts, survey materials, lunch and refreshments during class sessions. The OCFA also provides housing for multi-day off-site sessions, facilitator fees, and any other incidental costs. (Brame & McIntosh, 2000, internet). Bruce J. Cavallari wrote about the Fire Officer Certification program in use in Florida. He said the program had been established for many years, but that to his knowledge, none of the fire departments in the area required mid- or lower-level supervisors to attain this certification. Additionally, the labor groups in the area also had not pushed for fire officer certification. The Florida Fire Officer Certification Program consists of a seven-part instructional curriculum followed by a test. If the candidate is successful in the process, a certificate of competency is issued. The following seven courses make up the Florida program:

- Fire Service Instructor: Methods and Techniques
- Company Officer
- Hazardous Materials I
- Hazardous Materials II
- Firefighting Tactics and Strategy I
- Fire Prevention Practices
- Private Fire Protection Systems

Each of the above courses is 40 hours in lengths and is also good for three college credits. The State of Florida Fire College, Bureau of Fire Standards and Training will issue the successful candidate a certificate of competency. Cavallari stated in the article "I believe this program should be called Fire Officer Minimum Standards." He also wrote that this class was only the basic education for the company officer and that the fire service must have higher educational values in its leadership roles. He also spoke of current management requiring the reading and use of certain management textbooks that they have not read and do not use the principles of the book. He felt that this inconsistency will cause major conflicts between existing staff members and newly promoted officers. (Cavallari, 1997, pp.16-18). In the Sparks Fire Department (SFD), a problem similar to this has occurred where educational requirements for promotion are identical for Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief and Fire Chief. The majority of fire departments in the United States require a Bachelors Degree in Public Administration or Public Safety for the rank of Deputy Chief. Many fire departments require a Masters Degree, or completion of the Executive Fire Officer Program for the Fire Chief position. As indicated in the article, the inconsistencies in educational requirements and management practices will be easily recognized by the front-line firefighters. William Shouldis wrote about the critical need to properly prepare present and future leaders for the Philadelphia, PA Fire Department (PFD) through a comprehensive fire officer development program. He wrote that with the diverse and complex issues facing the fire service today, the one challenge agencies cannot ignore is the development of their human resources. In his article, Shouldis wrote that the fire officer development program in the PFD grooming new officers was a formal process with a long tradition.

The program had evolved from a simple one-week review of Standard Operating Guidelines, then into a two-week program based on an internal survey that assessed the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Since 1994, the program has been a three-week intense study program. In 1996, Shouldis was designated as the officer development course coordinator for a class to be presented to a group of newly promoted officers. His responsibility in this assignment was to create a contemporary, cost-effective and educationally sound curricula. Shouldis began the process by referring to NFPA 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, 1992 edition. He also reviewed numerous National Fire Academy (NFA) Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) research papers and had discussions with other training officers. The result of his research was a 15-day program that provides 100 instructional hours. His program curricula consisted of the five following areas:

- Management: includes leadership, supervision, coaching, managing change and report writing
- Operations: hands-on evolutions, strategy & tactics, EMS
- Safety: injury and accident trends
- Fire Cause: NFA Fire/Arson detection course
- Prevention: FPB programs at the company level, fire & building codes and cultural diversity

In the article, Shouldis wrote that the fundamental philosophy for the officer development program was that operational and managerial skills developed prior to a promotion will be a short-term help in making the transition from firefighter to company officer. He also stated that a well-planned fire officer development course can no

longer be viewed as a luxury or mere formality, also by combining technical units with management modules, new officers can begin carrying out the fire department mission rapidly. A well-planned, relevant fire officer development program will provide both the fire officer and the public with high quality service in the future. (Shouldis, 1996, pp. 22-24). Chris Connealy wrote about an officer development program in the Houston, TX Fire Department (HFD). In 1998, a new fire chief was appointed and one of his first goals was to implement a fire officer development program for the current and newly promoted officers in the HFD. Connealy was assigned this project. The end result of the project was a 16 hour program of annual fire officer training for the 650 officers in the department. A 40-hour officer school was also created for newly promoted officers and those on eligibility lists and close to promotion. The ranks included captain, senior captain and district chief. According to Connealy, HFD in the past promoted members unprepared for officer positions. The 40-hour officer school enhances good management practices and an overhaul of substandard practices in the HFD. (Connealy, 2000, pp.120-125). Clinton H. Smoke wrote of the history of fire officer development programs in the United States. He also discussed the benefits and responsibilities of such a program. In 1969, a publication entitled *Guidelines for Fire Service Education Programs in Community and Junior Colleges* identified basic courses essential to all fire service programs. This list included communications, human relations, government, fire prevention, firefighting tactics & strategy and building construction. These course recommendations from more than thirty years ago, are very similar to those that have been recommended for fire officer development programs of today. The Joint Council of National Fire Service Organizations was formed thirty years

ago after a group of fire service leaders met to discuss problems in the fire service. The first goal of the council was to develop nationally recognized standards for competency and achieve development of skills, technical proficiency and academic knowledge appropriate to every level of the fire service career ladder. Smoke wrote, that the establishment of the National Professional Qualifications System identified specialty areas in the fire service and specified a particular level of knowledge required for each specialty area. According to him, there was much similarity between the course topics listed in the *Guidelines* and specialty areas identified within the National Professional Qualifications System. He also wrote that to capably serve in the new position after promotion, training and education in the new skills, knowledge and abilities should be mastered before promotion. (Smoke, 1997, pp. 7-8). In an article written by Bruce G. Hensler, the difference between training and education was discussed. Hensler gave the following definition of each:

Training: Leads to the development of skills and techniques. The end goal of a training program is to make people more alike. Fire service training programs are intended to develop similarly skilled practitioners of the firefighting craft. The fire department training officer must provide a training program that strives to have all members meet specified skill levels for operational effectiveness.

Education: Leads not to technique but to information and knowledge. Information and knowledge are the foundation of wisdom. Education requires the student to examine personal experience in light of new ideas.

Hensler wrote that a good training program may produce effective firefighters, but not contribute anything to the development of wise and effective leaders. An officer with training and education has more potential for becoming an effective leader than one who is merely trained in the skills of firefighting. Basic training for company officers should include fire attack, hose handling, ladders, ventilation, rescue, breathing apparatus, fire prevention and fire protection systems and apparatus operation. Additionally, areas of training specific to the individual department should also be included in any officer development program. Additional areas in which officers should have training in include:

- Supervision
- Incident management
- Pre-incident planning
- Advanced tactics
- Report writing
- Conflict management
- Computer use
- Interpersonal dynamics
- Team building
- Instructional techniques

Hensler's article also discussed the various degree programs available in fire service and which ranks generally require a degree. (Hensler, 1997, pp.3-5). In the Sparks Fire Department, an Associates in Applied Science (AAS) (Fire Science) is a requirement for battalion chief. Thirty credits in fire science are required for fire captain and fifteen

credits are required for apparatus operator. In the last promotional process in the SFD, the requirement for both fire chief and deputy fire chief, was the same as for battalion chief, an AAS Degree in Fire Science. After reviewing many job announcements for fire chief and deputy fire chief, I found the majority of fire departments in the United States required a minimum of a bachelor's degree and in many of the advertising fire departments, a Masters degree was either required or desired. The National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program was also desired in most fire departments. Educational requirements is one area in the SFD that has not kept pace with changes in the fire service and how we prepare personnel for higher level management positions. The difference in salary between fire chief and battalion chief is substantial, yet educational requirements for each position are virtually the same. These requirements have raised questions in the firefighter ranks as to why the position of chief of the fire department does not have a higher educational requirement than the position of fire battalion chief. Many firefighters being hired in the SFD today have a bachelors degree when hired and are working on masters degree programs. It is my opinion that our department must change educational requirements at the higher level management positions to have credibility.

The current Fire Officer program in use in the SFD is based on an outdated version of the NFPA Fire Officer Certification program. The SFD Fire Officer I program has had minor revisions, but has been in use since 1983. The following definitions for fire officer certification levels are from the SFD Fire Officer Certification:

- Fire Officer I: The fire officer, at the first level of command, who has demonstrated the knowledge and the ability to perform the objectives specified in this standard for that level.
- Fire Officer II: The fire officer, at the second level of command, who has demonstrated the knowledge and the ability to perform the objectives specified in this standard for that level.
- Fire Officer III: The fire officer, at the third level of command, who has demonstrated the knowledge and the ability to perform the objectives specified in this standard for that level.
- Fire Officer IV: The fire officer, at the fourth level of command, who has demonstrated the knowledge and the ability to perform the objectives specified in this standard for that level.
- Fire Officer V: The fire officer, at the fifth level of command, who has demonstrated the knowledge and the ability to perform the objectives specified in this standard for that level.

- Fire Officer VI: The fire officer, at the sixth level of command, who has demonstrated the knowledge and ability to perform the objectives specified in this standard for that level.

Because of the age of the program used by the SFD, it is not consistent with current standards listed by the NFPA for fire officer certification. The SFD certification program has six levels for fire officer and the current NFPA standard (1997) has only four. In addition to being outdated, the SFD program also allowed many equivalencies to be used to obtain fire officer certification. These equivalencies were defined in the SFD program. Fire Officer I through VI Certification may be awarded on a case by case basis to applicants with documentation of equivalent education or experience or a combination of both based on the following guidelines:

- Fire Officer I: An officer who has been on permanent status for one year or more with 30 fire science credits, or an applicant who is a certified Firefighter III with a two year fire science degree.
- Fire Officer II: An officer who has been on permanent status for two or more years with 30 fire science credits, or an officer on permanent status with a two year fire science degree.
- Fire Officer III: An officer who has been on permanent status for three or more years with a two year fire science degree.

- Fire Officer IV: An officer who has been on permanent status for four or more years with a two year fire science degree and additional documented education in the field, or an officer on permanent status who has a baccalaureate degree.
- Fire Officer V: An officer who has been on permanent status for five or more years with a two year fire science degree and additional documented education in the field, or an officer on permanent status who has a four year degree in fire science.
- Fire Officer VI: An officer who has been on permanent status for six or more years with a baccalaureate degree.

The only update to this standard occurred in 1998 when the following requirements were added to the SFD Fire Officer I Standard:

- Confined space training per the IAFF “Confined Space Operations” program and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) OSHA
- Infectious Diseases per the IAFF “Infectious Diseases” program
- Water rescue per “Swift water rescue technician I” by Rescue 3 International
- Hazardous Materials by “HazMat for first responders” by IFSTA, “HazMat training for first responders” by IAFF, “Hazardous materials, managing the incident” by Fire Protection Publications

- Vehicle Extrication by Sparks Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines
- Carbon Monoxide by Sparks Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines
- Fire ground Operations by Sparks Fire Department Operating Guidelines
- Fire Service Instructor I per (NFPA 1041, 1992) (SFD 1983 and 1998).

The State of Nevada Fire Marshal's office is in charge of fire service training for the state. Although most of the larger fire departments in the state provide their own training and certification, the fire agencies in Southern Nevada utilize the fire marshal's office to test and certify firefighters, primarily in the FF I and II levels. In the area of fire officer certification, the Nevada State Fire Marshal's Compliance Process lists the following requirements.

The certification program for the State of Nevada is a voluntary program of professional competency in the area of fire fighter adopted by the Nevada Fire Service Standards and Training Committee pursuant to NRS 477.090. In order to become certified in these areas by any state fire service training organization in Nevada, or by another fire service agency issuing certificates on behalf of the Fire Service Standards and Training Committee, the individual or fire service agency must follow the prescribed steps.

- Submission of applications
- Application evaluation
- Certification process
- De-certification

- Renewal

These steps are generic in how the applicant or the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) must request certification from the state to certify a firefighter at the levels currently certified by the state. The State of Nevada Fire Officer I Certification program mirrors the NFPA Fire Officer Professional Qualifications nearly word for word. The standard identified is NFPA 1021, 1997 edition. (State of Nevada, 1998)

The National Fire Protection Association Standard, 1021 “Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications”, 1997 edition lists the descriptions for fire officer from Fire Officer I to Fire Officer IV. These levels are defined as follows:

- Fire Officer I: The fire officer, at the supervisory level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level I.
- Fire Officer II: The fire officer, at the supervisory/management level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level II.
- Fire Officer III: The fire officer, at the managerial/administrative level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level III.
- Fire Officer IV: The fire officer, at the administrative level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level IV.

In the introductory paragraphs of the NFPA 1021 Standard, it was discussed that earlier editions of the standard were meant to develop a set of performance standards specifically for the fire service. The levels of achievement were to build on each other within a strictly defined career ladder. The later standards recognized the utilization of materials from fields other than the fire service. The 1997 edition of 1021 also reduced the number of levels of progression for fire officer to four. It originally had been six, which is what the SFD Fire Officer Certification was based on. Another change in the 1997 edition was the conversion to Job Performance Requirements (JPR). This was to make the standard consistent with other standards in the NFPA Professional Qualifications Project. Each JPR consists of a task to be performed, the required tools and equipment to complete the task, evaluation parameters or performance outcomes and the prerequisite knowledge and skills one must have to complete the task. The technical committee developing the standard, according to the written introduction felt that the JPR's could be used in any fire department in any city, town or private organization throughout North America. (NFPA 1021, 1997). The SFD fire officer program which uses the old NFPA standards has adopted the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), *"Fire Department Company Officer"*, Third Edition, as a reference. This book was also referenced in the most recent promotional examination for fire captain in the SFD. The Purpose and Scope section of this IFSTA manual indicated that there was an assumption that the aspiring fire officer was competent in fire behavior and fire fighting skills. Each chapter in this text addressed one or more of the objectives contained in Levels I and II of NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 1997 Edition. This book includes discussions on labor

relations, liability and legal issues, human resource management. Budgeting, information management, training, emergency service delivery are also included in this book. Currently in the State of Nevada, the State Fire Marshal's Training Division will not accept any fire officer certification from another agency without administering their own examination, even though the format used came from the current NFPA Fire Officer Standard. This has caused dissension between the local fire departments and the state agency. (IFSTA, 1998). James E. Kefalas wrote of a fire officer academy developed on a regional concept by five fire departments in the Pacific Northwest. In January 1995, representatives from the Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, Vancouver, WA Fire Dept., Portland Fire Bureau, Clackamas County Fire District #1 and the Oaklodge Fire District met to discuss creation of a fire officer academy that would give newly promoted fire officers the tools they would need to do the job of company officer. In addition to fire department staff, the local IAFF groups were invited to participate in the process. The outcome of the venture was a successful program that when the article was written in 1997 was entering its third year. Some of the guidelines for the program agreed on by the participants included:

- Instructors recognized as experts in their field
- Do not limit training to fire-related areas only
- Acquire nationally recognized instructors
- Ability to duplicate the class each year
- Create an atmosphere where students can interact and get to know each other

According to Kefalas, the last item in the above list is critically important, in that many of the fire departments in the area rely on each other for mutual aid. If personnel are familiar with each other, operations go more smoothly. The situation is very similar in the Reno/Sparks area. The SFD has mutual aid agreements with all fire departments in the immediate area and we respond into each others boundaries on a regular basis. We do not have compatible radios, so it is very important that firefighters know each other and what each other does on the emergency scene operationally. The staff level officers, battalion chiefs and above meet on a monthly basis to discuss current issues in the area. During the recent anthrax scare, a regional response plan was developed to deal with possible anthrax calls. The response plan allowed all area fire departments to handle calls the same way. A Regional Public Safety Training Center recently opened and all agencies are now training on a regional basis. Once fire officer development becomes standardized on a regional level, it will allow for even better cooperation between agencies. The community college, also a partner in the training center, is developing a fire officer program that will certify area fire officers in a consistent manner through the same training and education programs. At this time, it is unknown when the program will be completed.

In his article, Kefalas listed the topics for newly promoted fire officers. The main areas for the "Metro Officers Career Development Course" were:

- Emergency Incidents: ICS, tactics and strategy, mass casualty, safety, accountability, decision-making

- Education: Fire prevention, P.R., building construction, media, public education, fire protection systems
- Personnel: Managing people, ethics, difficult people, diversity, team building, coaching
- Administration: Time management, communication, computers, law, report writing (Kefalas, 1997, pp. 63-64).

Walter S. Booth wrote an article dealing with raising the requirements for testing for promotion to company officer. It was his opinion that in many fire departments, the only requirement to be eligible to test was to have enough time in grade. In a survey he conducted of large (over 100 members) fire departments, he found that 36% of the departments required candidates to attend specific training courses prior to promotion. Additionally, he wrote that almost two-thirds of the fire departments that did not require pre-promotion training highly recommended it to their personnel. In this article, Booth wrote that he found that in many fire departments the higher the rank, the higher the minimum educational requirement prior to promotion. (Booth, 1999, internet). As I mentioned earlier, this was not the case in the SFD. Allen Clark wrote about seniority versus classroom when promoting personnel. He wrote of a letter to a fire publication in which the author of the letter said that “No A.S. or B.S. degree will ever equal the knowledge one earns through training and experience.” Clark contended that too many times he has seen firefighters with 10 to 20 years of experience, but in reality is only one year repeated 10 to 20 times. He says a good balance of both education,

experience and seniority is required to make a person the better leader. He also wrote that until the fire service brings the education level of its leaders to the level of leaders other services and businesses, it will not be treated as equal in dealing with budget and political matters. (Clark, 1996, internet). Clint Smoke wrote about fire officer development students being asked what they feared most about being promoted, the majority replied it was being promoted without the benefit of officer training. The students wanted training in areas other than just emergency situations. They wanted training in areas such as discipline, counseling, grievances and other personnel issues. According to Smoke, Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent of the National Fire Academy says that for fire officers to be considered professionals, we must use an education model comparable to that of engineers and physicians, especially in regard to company officer. He felt one way to accomplish this is through certification. Onieal also felt that fire department leaders should encourage (if not require) their company officers to complete some sort of officer certification. (Smoke, 2001,pp.56-57). Dennis R. Matty wrote of the requirements in the Miramar Florida, Fire-Rescue Department. In order to test for an officer-level promotional exam, a member must have Fire Officer I training and five years on the job. An associate's degree is required for any position above lieutenant. These requirements have increased the knowledge base of the officers in his department, but they do not address a critical issue fire departments face when developing candidate pools. This is issue is that of having officer development programs in place to develop the skill level and confidence of prospective officers. In the SFD, there is a fire officer certification requirement to take a test for fire captain, the problem is that the program has not been updated and there is very little consistency in

how the firefighter completes the format. There is a need to update the program, list specific educational requirements as part of the format and ensure there is ongoing training, both for permanent officers, including staff level chiefs and those personnel aspiring to become fire officers. (Matty,1998,pp.14-18). In *FIRE CHIEF* Magazine, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Professional Designation Task Force began working on a program to identify minimum core competencies for senior fire service leaders. According to the article, the program will be voluntary and point based. The candidate must score 80% or 800 points out of a possible 1000 points. There is no examination for this designation, the candidate must earn points in seven job-related components:

- Experience
- Education
- Professional development
- Professional contributions
- Active association memberships
- Community involvement
- Technical competencies

The article concludes by saying that even though this program is voluntary, the entire fire service should embrace the initiative to raise the level of professionalism in our industry. The future leaders of the fire service will not be made from experience alone. The professional fire service leader of the future must combine experience and education to provide a vision for their organization and for the nation's fire service. (Fire Chief Staff,1997, p. 16).

PROCEDURES

The procedures used for this research paper started with a review of written material on the subject at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy in August of 2001. Sources of information included written articles in fire service periodicals, fire officer certification formats at the national, state and local levels. A survey was conducted of local fire departments concerning both fire officer development programs and requirements for personnel to temporarily act in an officer position, or to be eligible to test for a fire officer position. These surveys were done over the telephone. The results of this survey are found in Table no. 1.

A second survey was conducted of SFD members who had taken the most recent promotional examination for fire captain. This survey questioned candidates on the need for a fire officer development program in the SFD. It also asked about areas the candidates felt they were weakest in, both in the testing process and actually working in the position in an acting capacity. This survey was conducted through a one-on-one interview with the candidates. The following questions were asked of all firefighters who recently tested for fire captain and act in the capacity of fire captain temporarily.

1. Do you feel the SFD Fire Officer I Certification was beneficial to you during the testing process and when you act as fire captain?
2. What areas did you feel weakest in during the testing process?
3. What areas do you feel are critical for a fire officer development program?

Assumptions and Limitations

The limitations in the research process included a delay in the actual research

for this project because of the events of September 11th and its effects on the nations fire service, including the SFD. My attention at the time was focused on the events unfolding in the country and how it was affecting our firefighters. Assumptions were that all SFD members interviewed concerning testing in the SFD and the Fire Officer I program in use would be complete and honest in their answers. Because of time and limitations, survey instruments for this project were local in nature, but this allowed relevancy to the project and those involved in fire officer development and testing in the SFD. Many large fire departments have the ability for continuous fire officer classes, our department does not have that luxury and as a result, training may not occur.

RESULTS

The purpose for this project was to determine the need for an updated and improved fire officer development program in the SFD, to determine the needs of SFD members in the area of fire officer development and preparation for promotional examinations, and also to identify fire officer development programs available and discuss some of the programs in use in various areas of the United States. Additionally, the purpose was to determine areas where SFD prospective fire officers felt they needed training. The results of the research showed that the current program in the SFD is outdated and most members felt it was of minimal benefit in preparing them for the position of fire captain. Some felt the program was so old, it did not cover areas critical to the needs of a fire officer today. The need for an updated program with training focused on areas besides firefighting tactics was also evident. Most SFD members surveyed indicated they felt weakest in areas other than handling emergencies. Some of these areas included; communications (written and verbal),

report writing, personnel issues (coaching, counseling, discipline) and personnel performance reviews.

Research Question no. 1:

What areas of training are necessary to produce an effective fire officer development program?

Research of various fire officer development programs revealed consistency in the following areas:

- Communications skills
- Personnel administration (coaching, team-building, counseling, discipline)
- Leadership
- Conflict management
- Emergency operations (fire, hazmat, rescue, ems)
- Report writing and computer use
- Instructional techniques
- Time management
- Legal issues

These areas should at the minimum be the basis for an effective fire officer development program. In most fire departments, call volume is decreasing and personnel issues are on the increase and effective training for company officers in this area is a necessity. In addition to initial fire officer development training, mandated on-going training for fire officers should occur.

Research question no. 2:

What are other area fire departments using as a tool to prepare fire officers for their responsibilities?

A survey of the Northern Nevada area fire departments revealed an assortment of fire officer development programs in most departments and no programs in others. As stated earlier, with the opening of the Regional Public Safety Training Center, the goal should be for all area fire departments to train fire officer in the same manner, using a regionally accepted curriculum. Because of time constraints and relevancy to local fire departments, the survey was conducted by phone with chief officers of each agency. The results are shown in Table No. 1.

Table no. 1: Fire Officer Certification Programs in use by department

Fire Dept.	F.O.D. In Use	F.O.D. Req. to Test	F.O.D. Req. to Act
Sparks	Yes NFPA (old)	Yes Fire Officer I	Yes Fire Officer I
Reno	No	No	No
Carson City	Yes NFPA	Yes NFPA	Yes NFPA
North Tahoe	Yes NFPA	Yes NFPA	Yes NFPA
East Fork FPD	Yes NFPA	Yes NFPA	Yes NFPA
Tahoe-Douglas	Yes Ca. St. F.O.	Yes Ca. St. F.O.	Yes Ca. St. F.O.

As can be seen by the table above, the NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 1997 Edition, is the standard used most in Northern Nevada. The Reno Fire Department indicated they were in the process of developing a fire officer program. Reno was also the only fire department which conducts a fire officer class after promotion for newly promoted officers. Once again, using a nationally

recognized standard for officer development and certification will result in improved operations at a regional level.

Research question no. 3:

What areas of training do the future fire officers of the Sparks Fire Department feel they need the most to be effective fire officers?

After interviewing members of the Sparks Fire Department who participated in the most recent promotional exam for fire captain, it was obvious that most felt the current fire officer certification program did not meet the needs of the individual. Most indicated the program did not help them at all. As indicated earlier, the existing program is a 1983 version of the NFPA standard in use at the time. The majority said they felt the training they needed most was very similar to what was listed as answers to question #1. The following areas were listed as most important to fire officer training and development:

1. Communication skills (written and verbal)
2. Personnel administration
3. Report writing (incident reports and memorandums)
4. Legal and liability issues
5. Tactics and strategy
6. Instructional techniques
7. Time management

DISCUSSION

The research for this project, primarily through the literature review of written material on the subject indicated there is a feeling in the fire service that fire officer development is crucial to the success of a fire officer. This development and the training and education associated with this success must occur prior to the promotion of the officer candidate.

The fire officer of the future will be facing many new challenges that some of us who have been officers for any length of time have not been confronted with. Some of the challenges include new technology, a changing workforce, different public perception of the fire service, different types of calls such as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, chemical and biological threats. The public will always call the fire department when there is an emergency and they don't know who to call. It is imperative that prospective fire officers be prepared to handle the challenges. Fire officer development is becoming a recognized requirement that many fire departments in the past did not deal with. Today, to have a well-run, professional organization, fire officer development is a necessity, not a luxury. While most fire chiefs agree on the need for fire officer development, there are many different ideas as how to provide it. *NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, 1997 Edition*, provides a valuable tool for departments to either use or structure fire officer certification programs after. Rather than develop an entirely new format, use of the NFPA standard will allow for consistent training, at least in the Reno/Sparks Fire Departments. This consistent officer training will ultimately produce fire officers who will work together effectively on mutual or automatic aid incidents. This cooperative effort will provide for an increase in the effectiveness of the departments and better service to the public. A

well-rounded fire officer, one who is competent not only in handling the emergency, but also interacting with his or her crew, the public and the staff of the fire department, will be the result of an effective fire officer development program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research for this project has shown to the author that there is a definite need in the Sparks Fire Department to update the current fire officer certification program. The current program is based on an outdated format, which is vague and also allows for competencies to be used. There have been so many changes in the fire service since the current program was adopted, that it may be totally useless. Candidates who recently tested for fire captain indicated they felt the program was of no benefit to them. The recommendations resulting from the research are as follows:

1. The Sparks Fire Department should formally adopt the NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, 1997 Edition. As the standard is updated, the SFD program should change to include revisions.
2. Fire officer development and ongoing training should become mandatory for members preparing for promotion and also for current officers.
3. Chief officers, battalion chief and above should participate in officer training on a regular basis.
4. Educational requirements for officer positions above battalion chief should be increased. The requirement for deputy chief should be at least a bachelors degree. The requirement for fire chief should be a bachelors degree and completion of the Executive Fire Officer Program.

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Appendix A: Fire Department Fire Officer Certification/Development Questionnaire.

1. Does your fire department have a fire officer development/certification program in place? If yes, which format or standard is being used?

2. Does your fire department require a fire officer certification from a recognized standard for a member to act in the capacity of fire captain? If yes, which format or standard is being used?

3. Does your fire department require a fire officer certification from a recognized standard for a member to test for fire captain? If yes, which format or standard is being used?

4. Does your fire department provide or require an officer academy for newly promoted fire captains?