

**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND PLANNING COMPLIANCE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES**

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research project analyzed the issue of employee compliance with the current performance appraisal system at the Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Fire & Rescue Services (DFRS). The problem was that not all officers are providing performance appraisals for their personnel. The purpose of this research project was to identify what percentage of the officers are not completing performance appraisals and the reasons why.

This research employed both historical and evaluative research (a) to determine what percentage of the DFRS officers are complying with the policy, (b) are there specific factors that influence the officers concerning the completion of performance appraisals, and (c) are there alternative methods that would continue or increase compliance with the policy.

The research was conducted through two means. First, a review of current literature concerning performance appraisals and their completion, and second a survey of the 216 Chief and Company/Line officers was conducted to gain information.

The major findings for this research were that only 40% of the officers were completing performance appraisals for their personnel. The officers did not believe the performance appraisal system currently in place had any real purpose, and lacked the ability to reward or improve employee behavior.

The recommendations resulting from this research include, (a) replacing the current performance appraisal system with one that is more effective, less time consuming and cumbersome, and (b) provide training to all personnel in the purpose, method and use of a new system.

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fire & Rescue Services (DFRS) has established, in its' Policies and Procedures, that all merit system employees will have a performance appraisal annually. The requirement for all merit system employees to have a performance appraisal has been re-enforced by the County Executive requiring that all employees of Montgomery County will be provided a performance appraisal. While there are many supervisors who are completing the required performance appraisals, it is believed that it is not being done uniformly.

The purpose of this project was to identify if the performance appraisals are being completed and if not the reasons why. Historical and evaluative research were employed to answer the following questions:

1. What percentage of DFRS Officers are complying with the policy?
2. Are there specific factors that influence the Officers concerning the completion of Performance Appraisals?
3. Are there alternative methods that would continue or increase compliance with the policy?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Montgomery County, Maryland has the largest population of any county or city in the state. There are approximately eight hundred and fifty thousand people who reside in the county. The County is considered a bedroom community, and is also home to some light industrial business, as well as numerous high tech, and research and development organizations

In 1988, emergency legislation was passed by the Montgomery County Council and signed by the County Executive making all career Fire & Rescue uniformed personnel employees of the Department of Fire & Rescue Service (DFRS), Montgomery County, Maryland. Prior to this, the vast majority of uniformed personnel were employed by the local volunteer fire and rescue corporations. County Tax Funds provided the salaries, benefits and all employees participated in the County Retirement System. As a direct result of this legislation numerous Policies and Procedures were implemented by DFRS. One of the Policy and Procedures implemented was the Performance Planning and Appraisal Policy (Appendix B).

Montgomery County Government is very specific in the area of Performance Planning and Appraisal. Montgomery County Executive Regulations provides general guidelines for all County employees. The Executive Regulation specifically states on page 18 that all employees will receive an annual written performance evaluation (Montgomery County Executive Regulation, 7/1/1998 as revised).

DFRS comprises more than 850 uniformed personnel and numerous support staff. In 1989 the policy was implemented, and training sessions were held for all fire/rescue officers on how to complete the Performance Planning and Appraisal. In the following nine years newly promoted officers have not had the benefit of this training. These officers are still required to complete the appropriate documentation, with only

peer support.

DFRS has reiterated the commitment to having all employees receive a Performance appraisal annually. It is distinctly spelled out in DFRS Policy that the Department of Fire & Rescue Services will conform with Montgomery County Government Administrative Procedures (Appendix B).

The National Fire Academy (NFA), *Executive Development Course* states in the Following & Leading segment that, Leadership is a transactional process and that leaders should reward the followers for performance (NFA, *Executive Development*, p.SM5-32 1998). Without the appropriate feedback from supervisors, employees will not be able to develop and perform for the leadership, thereby not receiving any rewards for the work completed. The *Executive Development Course* also relates in the Organization Culture section that Culture is defined as a set of important assumptions that members of a community share in common. If the belief is that Performance Appraisal is unimportant for the supervisor to do, and felt by the employees that they are not used for anything, this will eventually pervade the entire system (NFA, *Executive Development*, p.SM 7-3, 1998). The issue of Performance Appraisal is also closely linked with both the Labor Relations and Service Quality Sections as well (NFA, *Executive Development*, 1998).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kramer (1998) states that some view employee performance evaluation as one of the useless trappings of bureaucracy. Others see value in evaluation but provide little or no training for participants. This appears to be a common ailment in many organizations, but more so in the public sector. This is based on the fact that many times incremental pay raises and promotions are not based on performance, but on longevity. However Kramer (1998) also states that employee performance evaluation plays a crucial role

in providing superior service to the general public. Public service agencies have an obligation to the citizens they serve to continually evaluate and improve performance on both an organizational and an individual level. This not only enhances the service that is provided, but it gives the employees a vested interest in the system as a whole.

The yearly review should be used to clarify an employee's role and create expectation about his or her performance (Nance-Nash, 1997). First, the employee needs to be told exactly what is expected of them, not some vague mumbo jumbo about making the company or the division the best and biggest in the world. If executives cannot clearly articulate their reason for being, how can we expect line workers or supervisors to know their roles (Kerr, 1996)? The performance review is a tool to help in the development of the person being rated (Winning, 1997).

Abels (1989) says the greatest benefit of the performance evaluation is that it provides emotional reward and motivation to the employee who successfully accomplishes the job task, while it simultaneously establishes specific standards for improving unacceptable performance. Conversely though, Saunier (1998) says that a cardinal rule in performance management is that, despite their best intentions, managers cannot force employees to perform. Each employee must be accountable for, and "own," his or her performance. This will require a change in focus for both management and subordinates. To improve organizational and individual performance the process must concentrate on moving the middle while encouraging the great. It is not about "nailing" the worst performers or controlling the degrees of freedom. The process should focus on enhancing both the skills and wills (motivation) of solid employees (Saunier, 1998). Managers are keenly aware that how they mark those ten little boxes on the appraisal form is going to affect the

employee's disposable income, social status, and self-esteem (Golin, Brinklin, Diamond, 1991). While incremental raises, and social status are generally not an issue in DFERS due to the automatic nature of pay raises, the issue of self-esteem is certainly valid. Juechter, Fisher and Alford (1998), wrote that several issues need to be looked upon when confronting the culture of the organization and how performance appraisals are viewed. Do employees feel like victims of a system in which they have no stake, input, or control? Or do they feel like meaningful participants in the organization's strategic direction? Do they fear change as just another hassle, or do they embrace change from a sense of ownership. Do they feel entitled to certain benefits and advancement? Or do they measure their performance and manage their expectations based on outcomes?

The consultant Louis Schultz says, "Leadership today, which is probably a better word than managing-Leadership means pulling the whole organization together. It does not mean abdication of responsibility to lead. We cannot have anarchy. Leaders must lead, but by leading, they get all the inputs of all the people. They get them focused and moving in the same direction of their own accord. People want to do what's right; people want to do a good job; they want to be proud of themselves, their organizations, and their work. But they have to be in the right environment created by leadership that will enable them to do that." (Page 156, Golin et al, 1991).

Motivation is a key element in not only having the performance appraisal be of value, but in having the different levels of supervisors complete them. Conger, Finegold, and Lawler (1998) state that the right incentives must be in place to align directors' interests with those of the individuals they are meant to represent: the shareholders and other stakeholders in the corporation (employees, customers, and the

community, for example). They continue to say that having an evaluation process in place that focuses on identifying high-quality directors and encourages an open exchange of information may be as critical as establishing compensation policies intended to motivate some desired behavior.

Milas (1997) has written that the method and extent of recognition in a company provide insight into the firm's management values. Not all successes are measured. Many times, there should be recognition for above-average efforts expended in tackling intangible or not easily quantified issues. Safety is an important intangible; so are customer goodwill and satisfaction. To accommodate intangibles, recognition may be made based on efforts, not just quantified results obtained. It is difficult to measure employee morale, long term process improvement, or technological change, but these changes are essential to a company's good health.

In a Fred Nickols (1997) article, he states that Tauro Jokinen, a product development manager with Nokia, conjectured that performance appraisal systems actually erode performance over time as a result of people endeavoring to set goals that are achievable, thus ensuring themselves a decent appraisal. Nickols also says that performance appraisal systems could be eliminated with no harm done and with great economic and emotional benefit. Consequently, change-minded executives should not listen to pleas to redesign their company's performance appraisal system but should instead give serious thought to scrapping it.

In recent years the idea of the 360-degree evaluation has gained popularity with many organizations. The 360 process is designed to force supervisors into the sort of candid, face-to-face discussions that most supervisors would prefer to avoid. Most important for leadership, feedback from 360s can signal opportunities to learn (Sherman, 1995). Sherman also quotes Wayne Calloway, "I'll bet most companies

that are in life-or-death battles got into that kind of trouble because they didn't pay enough attention to developing their leaders." (1995).

Taigman tells us that it's also worthwhile exploring "360-degree" feedback tools that provide employees with broad-based feedback from peers, customers, direct reports and supervisors. Also, most management literature indicates that compensation issues should be handled separately from performance feedback (1998).

The 360-degree evaluation must not be done without the proper training. The purpose of training raters is to calibrate them so they understand clearly what they're supposed to be rating and they use a similar metric in making their ratings. Because training numerous raters can drain resources, many companies skip that important step. The aim of most 360-feedback programs is to get people to change their behavior on the job. We've found that most people don't prepare a development plan after receiving feedback (Bracken, Summers, and Fleenor, 1998).

In summary, the reviewed literature identifies that many managers, while enjoying the power over the employees, do not relish the thought of doing performance appraisals. The purpose of the performance appraisal should be to clarify the employee's role within the organization. Employees need to feel that they are an intrinsic part of the organization, and that they have sense of ownership. The performance appraisal should be used to motivate the employee, and to develop leaders of the future. While all organizations need a device to measure not only employee, but organizational success. The use of 360-degree evaluations while new in the fire service, continue to help in planning the development of the organization.

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

The desired outcome of this research was to determine if the Fire/Rescue officers were complying with the policy requiring the completion of performance appraisals. The purpose was also to see if there were specific reasons that influenced their completion of performance appraisals, and if there were any factors that would maintain or increase compliance with the policy. The research was historical and evaluative in that the literature review was conducted to determine what other organizations were doing in the area of performance appraisals.

The research was evaluative through the use of a survey. The survey was sent to 216 officers within the DFRS. The officers were from the rank of Lieutenant thru Deputy Chief. Of the 216 surveys, 34 were sent to Chief Officers and the remaining 182 were sent to Line/Company officers. The survey asked twelve different questions on all aspects of the current performance appraisal system. The survey appears as Appendix A.

LIMITATIONS

Of the 216 surveys sent out, only 151 were returned, a seventy percent return rate. A further breakdown showed, Chief officers returned 70.5% and the Line/Company officers returned 69.7%. Several individuals completing the survey did not choose one of the available answers to the questions and either wrote in their own or failed to answer at all. This was not limited to any particular question and was spread throughout the survey.

In the area of literature review, most of the material dealt with private sector organizations versus the fire service. However, with the exception of the required emergency response, much of the management

philosophies described in the literature review are applicable to the fire service.

RESULTS

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1. Survey question number six asked if the participant had evaluated all the personnel they were responsible for within the last year. Of the twenty-four Chief officers who responded, 10 said they had, while 14 said they had not (Fig 1.). The Line/Company officers response detailed a similar percentage of individuals who were providing performance appraisals for their personnel. With a response of 127 surveys, 50 stated they



had completed a performance appraisal for their personnel while 69 said they had not and 8 individuals chose not to answer the question at all (fig. 2). Compliance with

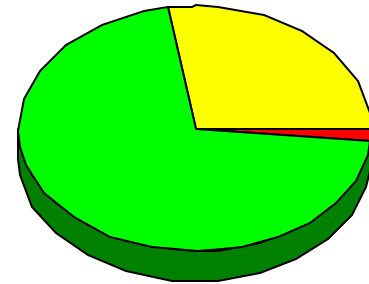
the policy is dismal at best. Nash-Nance (1997) suggests that supervisors sit down with their workers--or at least with the key ones, and provide an annual review. Doing so can help motivate the staff and also prevent problems in the future. On the positive side, this annual feedback tends to energize the best people.

Saunier (1998) says that if the purpose of the performance

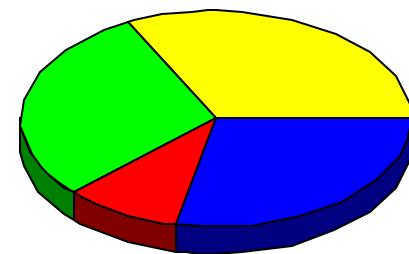


management process is as it should be, to optimize performance, then the biggest payoff is in clarifying expectations and developing and effectively using performance information. With only approximately forty percent of the work force receiving a performance appraisal, how can management expect the best when

the personnel are not being rewarded for work well done, nor given methods to improve in the areas that need it most. Question number seven on the survey asks how many of the respondents had received an evaluation in the last year. Question eight asked if they had answered “no” to question number seven than when was the last time they did have a performance appraisal. The Chief officers advised that only three of them had received a performance evaluation. Twenty said that they had not received a performance appraisal, and one did not respond to the question (fig. 3). Seven of the Chiefs advised that it had been 2-3 years, six said 4-5 years, one said 6-7 years, five said more than 8 years, and three did not respond (Fig. 4). With more than ninety percent of the senior leadership not being given performance appraisals and the associated guidance, it is logical to understand the apathy within the organization concerning performance appraisals.



■ Received Evaluation
■ Did Not Receive
■ No Answer



■ 2-3 years
■ 4-5 years
■ 6-7 years
■ over 8 years

Individuals at the Company/Line officer rank did fair a little better, but a significant seventy three percent of them did not receive a performance appraisal. Thirty-five stated that they had indeed received a performance appraisal in the last year. Ninety said that they had not received any type of performance appraisal and two individuals did not answer the question (fig. 5). The range of time for those who did not receive a performance evaluation is generally wide spread. Thirty advised that it had been 2-3 years, twenty-seven said it had been 4-5 years, nine said it had been 6-7 years. Twenty-six individuals, advised that it had been more than 8 years since their last performance appraisal (fig. 6). Watson (1998) said that

effective performance development must be linked to the goals and objective of the organization. That principle is called “alignment” and it also applies to measurement. Strong alignment is the genesis of all successful measurement. In practice, most failed measurement efforts lack a clear connection to the desired business outcomes. Watson also writes that the idea is to track the evolution of your organization from its current state of performance to a higher, more productive, and more efficient future state. In measurement, we gather evidence that progress is taking place. With a majority of the management of DFRS not receiving performance appraisals, how can one expect to become more efficient in not only the day to day routines, but in the actual operations at an emergency incident.



Survey question number nine asked the respondents if they had not given their employees a performance appraisal, was it because they themselves had not received one. The Chief Officers responded in the following fashion. Two said that they had not given their employees a performance appraisal because they had not received one. Fifteen said the answer was no to that question and two individuals did not respond (Fig. 7).

The Company/Line officers again provided a broad spectrum. Eleven of the officers answered the survey question yes that they had not given their employees a performance appraisal because they had not received one themselves. Eighty respondents answered the question no, and thirty-six did not answer the

question (Fig. 8).

Research Question 2. Survey question number two asked if each of the officers believed that everyone should receive a

performance appraisal. Of the twenty-four Chief Officers who

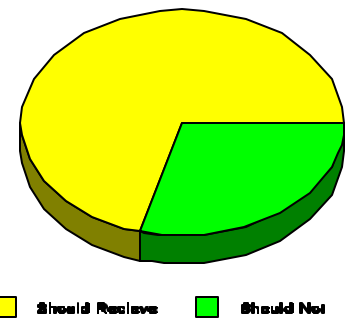
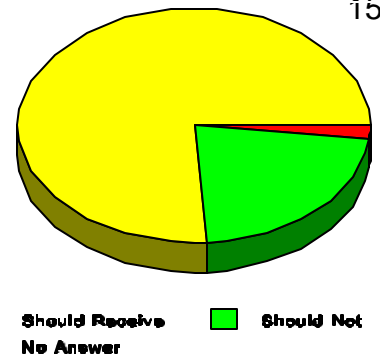
responded, seventeen said that they believed everyone should receive a performance appraisal annually.

Conversely, seven respondents did not believe a performance appraisal was necessary every year (Fig. 9).

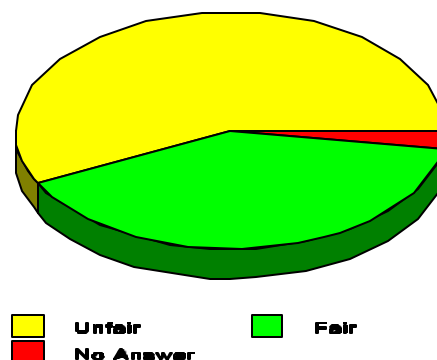
The Company/Line Officers were within percentage points of the Chief Officers in relation to the numbers who believed that everyone should receive a performance appraisal. Ninety-seven of the one hundred-twenty-seven respondents believe that all employees should be evaluated each year. Twenty-eight did not believe they should and two did not answer (Fig. 10). Watson, (1998) states that tracking progress, not obtaining proof, takes pressure off of the people doing the tracking and shifts it onto the people doing the performing, where it belongs. Juechter, et al (1998) proposes that when people operate from true commitment, they feel a profound personal ownership and responsibility for the success of the organization and for accomplishing its strategic direction. They recognize the significant link between their personal needs and aspirations and those of the organization. Their willingness to perform does not depend on specific directives or favorable

circumstances. They know that giving their best will serve and benefit everyone involved, so they spontaneously offer their best. While the previous statement may well be true, if the individuals are not given any direction thru a formal process, how will they be able to adjust to the needs of the organization as a

whole.



Survey question number three asked if the respondents felt that the current performance appraisal system was fair. Nine of the Chief Officers that responded felt that the current system was fair. Fourteen of the respondents did not believe the performance appraisal system was fair, and one did not answer (Fig. 11). Golin, et al (1991) cited a survey conducted with approximately 200 companies and developed a list of the four most common complaints; managers hold no real discussion with the employees and give them little opportunity to participate; Managers avoid being specific; Ratings sometimes are inconsistent with actual performance; and Employees aren't given information on how to improve. Juechter et al (1998) says that employees at all levels have to be engaged, have to be involved, and have to take ownership of the change. The senior managers of DFRS must initiate the change of compliance with the policy. They need to provide the appropriate example and leadership to the employees for whom they are responsible .

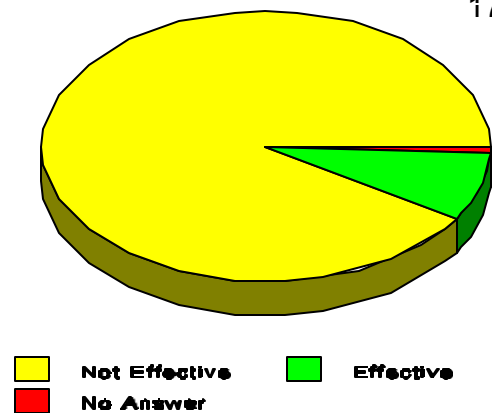


Of the Company/Line officers who returned the survey only 40%, or 51 individuals, believed that the current appraisal system was fair. Seventy three believed that the system was unfair and three chose not to answer (Fig. 12). The percentage of all officers who believed the system was fair remains fairly



constant between both the Chief Officers and the Company/Line Officers at approximately forty percent.

Survey question four dealt with the effectiveness of the current system to reward the employees. Only one of the Chief Officers who responded felt that the current system was adequate in providing rewards for the employees. Twenty-three of the respondents did not feel that the current system



was sufficient (Fig. 13). The Company/Line Officers' feelings were very similar to that of the Chief Officers. Ten of the respondents believed the current system to be effective in rewarding the employees. One hundred-sixteen did not believe the system to be effective and one respondent chose not to answer (Fig. 14).

Kerr (1996) provides six rules regarding performance awards for having people work faster and smarter. Rule 1, don't tie pay to power. In this day and age power and money need to be separated. Rule 2, make compensation comprehensible. Salary alone is not everything. Benefits such as insurance are a substantial portion of the wage employees receive. That needs to be communicated to the employees in plain language. Rule 3, when you give a deserving worker a reward, broadcast it. If you hand out a \$1,000 spot bonus, but no one knows it except you and the recipient, the total number of people you motivated is somewhere between zero and one. Rule 4, a reward delayed is almost as bad as a reward denied. The reward must be delivered quickly. The thought of months of delays may leave the employee wondering what they did to receive the award. Rule 5, the rewards need to be reversible. It's no good pretending you have perfect judgment. Some of the compensation decisions you make are going to be bad ones. Leave yourself an out. Rule 6, says that you can't always give what you want. If monetary awards are not available, search for non monetary items. These awards would range from special mention in the company

newsletter to the opportunity to make presentations to the division head.

Survey question five asks if the officers believe the current performance appraisal system has the ability to change the behavior of an employee. Nickols (1993) describes all behavior problems as falling neatly into two categories: Problems of omission, and problems of commission. Problems of omission occur when people aren't doing what they should be

doing. Problems of commission occur when people are doing something they shouldn't be doing. Only two of the Chief

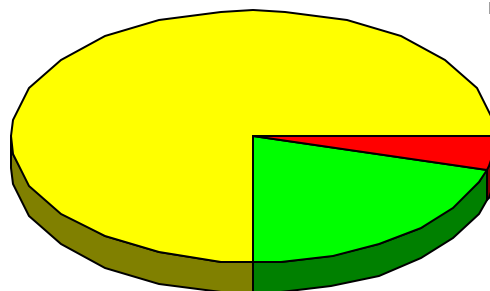
Officers who responded to the survey felt that the current performance appraisal system was effective in changing behavior.

Twenty believed that the current system was not effective and two chose not to answer (Fig. 15). The Company/Line Officers also

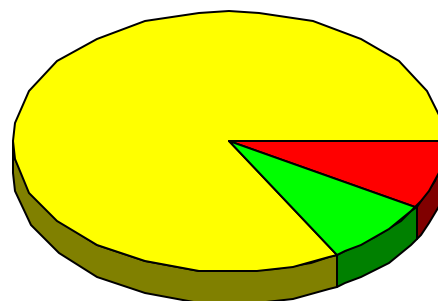
believed that the performance appraisal was ineffective in changing employee behavior. Eighteen of the Company/Line Officers believe

that the performance appraisal is an effective tool in changing employee behavior. One hundred-four did not believe it to be effective and five chose not to answer (Fig. 16). In the course of solving a problem of

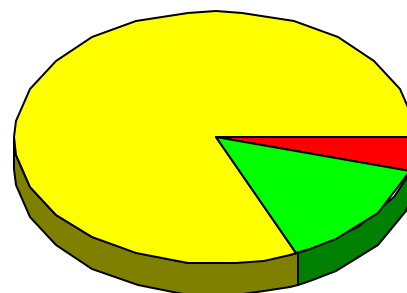
omission is to have someone start doing something they have not been doing. In the context of force-field analysis, this requires increasing the driving forces and decreasing the restraining forces. For a problem of



Should be used
Should not be used
No Answer



Not Effective
Effective
No Answer

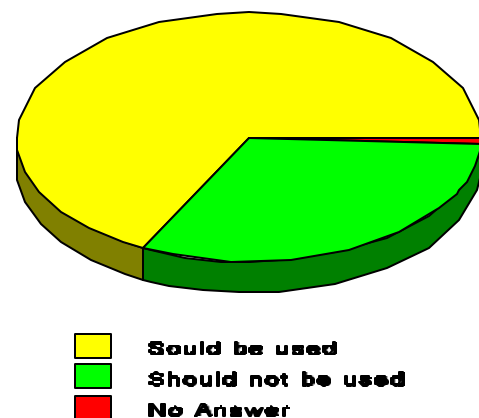


Not Effective
Effective
No Answer

commission, the objective is to have someone stop doing something they have been doing. Here, the change strategy is reversed. One must decrease the forces that sustain current behavior patterns and increase those forces that might restrain them. The likelihood that we will or won't engage in a particular behavior is governed in large part by our expectations or predictions of the effects and consequences of that behavior in relation to our goals and objectives: in other words, the extent to which it serves our purposes (Nickols, 1993).

Survey question ten was asked to determine the feeling of the management personnel regarding whether performance appraisals should be used as a determining factor in promotions. Seventy-five percent or eighteen of the responding Chief Officers believe that an employee's performance appraisal should be used as a determining factor in promotion. This is in comparison to the fact that only forty-two percent of the Chief Officers had themselves completed evaluations of the personnel for which they are responsible (see Fig. 1). Five of the Chiefs believe that performance appraisals should not be used in the promotion process, and one chose not to answer (Fig. 17).

The Company/Line Officers percentage is slightly lower at approximately sixty-eight percent or eighty-six believing that the performance appraisal should be used in connection with the promotional process. This again appears to be somewhat of a contradiction, in that only forty percent have evaluated all of their personnel in the last year (see Fig. 2). Forty of the Company/Line officers stated that they did not believe the performance appraisal should be used in the promotional process and one chose not to answer (Fig. 18).

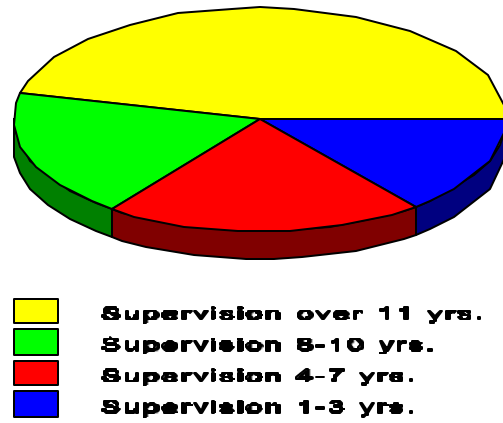


The next question in the survey asked if the officers believed they should have the opportunity to evaluate their supervisor. Ten of the Chief Officers believed they should have the opportunity to evaluate their superiors. Thirteen of the Chiefs did not believe they should have that opportunity and one chose not to answer (Fig. 19).



The Company/Line Officers were equally split as well. Fifty-eight of the respondents said they felt they should have the opportunity to evaluate their supervisors. Sixty-three did not believe the opportunity for evaluating their supervisors should exist, and six chose not to answer (Fig. 20). Conger, et al (1998) said that in the corporate world formal evaluations of a company's CEO by its Board of Directors are becoming increasingly commonplace. The process should involve three stages: establishing evaluation targets at the start of the fiscal year, reviewing performance at midyear, and assessing results at the end of the year. A common problem we have found is that boards rely too much on the CEO's self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is an essential part of an effective performance appraisal, but it is by no means sufficient by itself. Sherman (1995) says that the 360-degree evaluation can provide great benefits. First, it provides a means of systematically making subjective yet apparently unbiased judgements about people. Second, the 360 process is designed to force supervisors into the sort of candid, face-to-face discussions that most supervisors would prefer to avoid. Most important for leadership, feedback from 360's can signal

opportunities to learn. Growth begins when individuals reach a more objective understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to take responsibility for their own development. Sherman (1995) also quotes Wayne Calloway, "I'll bet most of the companies that are in life-or-



death battles got into that kind of trouble because they didn't pay enough attention to developing their leaders."

The final question in the survey was asked to determine how long each individual has been in a supervisory role. All respondents, Chief Officers and Company/Line Officers are included in these statistics. Overall the respondents advised that twenty-one had been in supervision for 1-3 years, thirty-two for 4-7 years, twenty 28 for 8-10 years and seventy for more than 11 years (Fig. 21).

Research Question 3. The survey included an area for additional comments. The response in this area was voluminous. Responses ranged from a few words to two page memoranda attached to the survey. The comments, while many, were generally of the same theme. One respondent advised that the system must provide rewards for outstanding performance. Another said that the current system was a waste of time. Still another advised that the current performance appraisal is a waste of time because they are not used for anything. Several officers wrote that there needs to be training on how to use the system effectively. Bracken et al, (1998) says that training raters is to calibrate them so that they understand clearly what they're supposed to be rating and so that they use a similar metric in making ratings. Several of the Chief Officers who responded stated their feelings for the need to provide feedback to subordinate personnel. One continued on to say that remedial training needs to be offered. The majority of the

personnel who provided written comments stated that more performance appraisals would be completed if the appraisals were used for something, other than a paperwork exercise. Many of the officers also complained about the length and complexity of the current appraisal system.

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey detail the apathy of all the officers toward the current performance appraisal system. This is shown not only in the number of officers who have not received a performance appraisal but also in the fact that most do not appraise the employees they are responsible for. Many of the individuals surveyed may well subscribe to the idea presented by Fred Nickols. Nickols (1997) says if you're a change-minded senior executive looking for ways to improve performance, cut costs, or free up resources that can be redirected against important issues waiting in the wings, you might give serious thought to scrapping your company's performance appraisal system. It devours staggering amounts of time and energy, it depresses and demotivates people, it destroys trust and teamwork and, adding insult to injury, it delivers little demonstrable value at great cost. From this follows an inescapable conclusion: the honest, fair, valid, and objective assessment of all employees is literally impossible. The structure, restraints, and constraints of the system do not permit it.

There appear to be many factors why the supervisors are not completing performance appraisals, from not receiving one themselves to the feeling that they are not used for anything. However, currently both the Administration of County Government and the DFRS require that every employee receive an annual evaluation. Bacal (1998) says that rating systems are so popular that computer programs have been developed to undertake the evaluations. One function of performance appraisals is to help employees develop so they can contribute more effectively. Do rating systems, in and of themselves, contribute to

employee development? The answer is no. Simply put, ratings on their own, do not convey sufficient information for people to improve. And since they don't do that, why use them.

Kramer (1998) says a valid, fair evaluation system requires measures and standards. Without them, employees will not know how to attain appropriate ratings. Employees must know, prior to being evaluated, how to achieve the desired scores. Kramer (1998) also states that the system must establish a system of incentives that tie directly to performance. Without meaningful incentives, however, the system will not realize its full potential.

The officers of DFRS generally do not feel the current appraisal system is providing any benefit. The greatest benefit of the performance evaluation is that it provides emotional reward and motivation to the employee who successfully accomplishes the job task, while it simultaneously establishes specific standards for improving unacceptable performance (Abels, 1989).

The current performance appraisal system is currently not effective for several reasons: 1- The surveys point out a lack of faith in the current system.

2- The inability to reward personnel for being above average employees, or to motivate the below average employee.

3- Time consuming nature of the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current performance appraisal system needs to be replaced with one that is less time consuming, cumbersome, and difficult to administer. A committee of Officers and Bargaining Unit personnel should be formed to develop a new appraisal system. The system must meet the needs of the management in tracking, evaluating and improving poor performance, as well as rewarding above average performance.

After the development is complete, and before institution of the new system there must be training for all personnel. The Bargaining Unit personnel need to see and understand what will be expected of them. The Officers need to be trained on what will be expected of them as well. They also need to be trained in how to utilize the new system, how to effectively evaluate their personnel, and how to effectively guide their personnel. Senior management should be trained in the importance of rewarding the outstanding employee, and providing the appropriate support when one of the Company/Line officers recommends that a behavior change is need in one their subordinates.

This should lead to a higher percentage of personnel accepting and utilizing the appraisal system. If the officers are managing their personnel correctly, it should provide several benefits. This ultimately will lead to better service to the citizens, who are the customer, through a more cohesive work force. The outstanding employees will receive the rewards that they richly deserve, and the below average employees will either be elevated to an acceptable level or removed from the system.

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Appendix A

SURVEY EXECUTIVE FIRE OFFICER PROGRAM EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

- 1.) You are a: Company Officer Chief Officer
- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2.) Do you believe everyone should receive a performance appraisal every year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.) Do you believe the current performance appraisal system is fair? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4.) Do you feel the current appraisal system is effective in rewarding employees? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 5.) Do you feel the current appraisal system is effective in changing employees behavior?
- 6.) Have you evaluated all personnel you're responsible for in the last year?
- 7.) Have you received a performance appraisal in the last year?
- 8.) If you answered no in Question #7, which would best describe when you had your last appraisal?
2-3 yrs 4-5 yrs 6-7 yrs over 8 yrs
- 9.) If you have not appraised your employees is it because you have not received an appraisal yourself?
- 10.) Should performance appraisals be used as a determining factor in promotions?
- 11.) Do you believe you should have the opportunity to evaluate your supervisor?
- 12.) How many years have you been in a supervisory role?
1-3 yrs 4-7 yrs 8-10 yrs over 11 yrs

Are there any additional comments that you believe would be relative to this survey?

Appendix B

SECTION 1: GENERAL GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

1.0 To set forth policies, responsibilities and procedures for employee performance planning and appraisal in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services for all merit system employees and for such non-merit employees as determined by appropriate elected officials whose period of employment will exceed 180 days duration.

1.1 To assure that the Department of Fire and Rescue Service Performance Planning and Appraisal Procedures conform to Montgomery County Government Administrative Procedure #4-12 (1983) entitled Performance Planning and Appraisal and Montgomery County Government Personnel Regulations (1986) Section 8. In areas not covered by these procedures, Administrative Procedure #4-12 will take precedence.

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DEFINITIONS

2.0 Acceptable Performance - For Operations personnel covered by BARS, acceptable performance will be considered a score of 51 or above. For other personnel, for whom a numerical score is not calculated, overall acceptable performance will be indicated as an overall rating of fully satisfactory or above.

2.1 Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) - A type of appraisal process whereby most major duties, functions, or responsibilities that are part of a given position or job are identified. Specific levels of achievement that illustrate varying degrees of performance in a given performance standard are then established.

2.2 Conduct - Job related behavior which has an indirect impact on the quality or quantity of work (e.g. timely and regular attendance, attentiveness to work during duty hours, courtesy and professionalism in personal work contacts; or, on the other hand, repeated tardiness, frequent personal telephone calls or conversations during working hours, rude or abusive treatment of others).

2.3 Immediate Supervisor - The individual(s) responsible for assigning and evaluating an employee's work.

2.4 Major Tasks or Responsibilities - That portion of a performance plan which states the principle kinds of work the employee is expected to accomplish. This may be the BARS standards or goals established by the employee's supervisor(s).

2.5 Performance - An employee's progress on, or accomplishment of, assigned work.

2.6 Performance Appraisal - One or more supervisors written assessment of an employee's performance in relation to the expectations in the employee's performance plan.

2.7 Performance Guidelines - That portion of a performance plan which describes the qualities or characteristics of work (major tasks and responsibilities) performed at a fully

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satisfactory level.

2.8 Performance Plan - The document which records an employee's major responsibilities and performance expectations as established by his/her supervisor in consultation with the employee. The performance plan is the basis for assessments of the employee's performance. The plan may be unique to the individual, standardized for a specific classification or be made up of BARS Standards.

2.9 Performance Planning and Appraisal - The total process of developing work and performance objectives, observing, reviewing and appraising individual work performance, recognizing outstanding and superior performance, identifying areas for improvement, and working with employees to improve their effectiveness and efficiency and to make the best use of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

2.10 Performance Review - One or more supervisors' verbal assessment of an employee's performance in relation to the expectations in the performance plan. (A performance review is distinguished from supervisory conferences which may use the performance plan as a point of reference, but which are generally focused on one or more particular issues; see definition 2.13 below.)

2.11 Probationary Period - A continuation of the employment examination process which commences upon promotion or appointment to a full time or part time merit system position and provides an opportunity for the employee to demonstrate satisfactory performance.

2.12 Reviewing Official - The individual(s) responsible for reviewing and commenting on an employee's performance appraisal.

2.13 Supervisory Conference - Any discussion between an employee and his/her supervisor(s) about the employee's conduct or performance.

POLICIES

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3.0 The performance planning and appraisal program is directed toward the accomplishment of the following objectives:

- A. To encourage employees to work toward his/her own self development and fulfill his/her highest potential.
- B. To help the Department of Fire and Rescue Services identify employees capable and willing to assume greater responsibilities.
- C. To identify employees whose work performance is deficient.
- D. To help the supervisor analyze the work of subordinates in order to assist them in overcoming any weaknesses.
- E. To improve two-way communications between the employee and management.

3.1 Employees shall have a written appraisal at least once in every 12 month period no later than 60 days prior to the increment date. Review shall take place at the midpoint of the appraisal year.

3.2 Additional review sessions may be held at any time with the employee if needed to:

- A. Reevaluate objectives and goals.
- B. Discuss any problems that either the employee or the supervisor(s) deems important to the employee's performance.
- C. Give praise or discuss marginal or inadequate performance.

3.3 There will be no pre-established quota system for the distribution of expected

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performance levels.

RESPONSIBILITIES

4.0 The Director, Department of Fire and Rescue Services, shall maintain a formal procedure to ensure timely submission of Planning Performance and Appraisal (PPA) forms, and notify supervisors when related PPA activities are due.

4.1 Each level of supervisor who reviews an appraisal is responsible for the operational aspects of the program including consistence, equity, and overall qualities.

4.2 The immediate supervisor(s) is responsible for conducting the planning, the review, and the appraisal.

PROCEDURES

5.0 Performance Planning

A. Responsibility - The immediate supervisor(s) is responsible for initiating the performance planning process, providing an opportunity for employee input and, where applicable, deciding on the final content of the performance plan, or amending performance plans. Where more than one individual directly supervises an employee, each should participate fully in the process.

B. Initiation of the Appraisal Process - The initiation of an appraisal period will occur in conjunction with the end of the previous appraisal period and the completion of the previous appraisal document. Initiation shall occur early enough so that the evaluation process will be completed 60 days prior to the employees increment date. This will allow time for administrative processing to be completed by this date, which will allow for proper action on the Personnel Action Form (PAF), if applicable.

The exception to this rule is for new employees. New employees should be thoroughly

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familiarized with the appraisal system within 30 days of employment.

New employees assigned to the Operations Bureau (recruits) should be thoroughly familiarized with the BARS appraisal system once they are assigned to a station following satisfactory completion of recruit school.

The Chief and/or President of each fire and rescue corporation may provide, for consideration, written input into the performance planning process of the Senior Career Officer assigned to their Corporation.

C. Applicability - A performance plan is to be established for any period of employment which will exceed 180 days duration.

D. Frequency and Timing of Performance Planning - Performance plans should be established within 30 days after an employee begins work in a given position, and a new plan is to be established at least annually thereafter.

New employees assigned to the Operation Bureau (recruits) will have performance plans established within 30 days after assignment to a station following satisfactory completion of recruit school.

E. Substance of Performance Plans

1. Each employee's performance plan is to state all major tasks or responsibilities for the job, and all significant performance guidelines for each major task or responsibility.
2. Performance guidelines other than Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) are to describe a satisfactory level of performance in terms which are explicit and permit reasonably objective assessment.
3. Performance guidelines for Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Firefighter III, Master Firefighter, Sergeant, Lieutenant assigned to the Operations Bureau are listed in Section 3

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of this manual, Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS).

4. The performance plan of every supervisor shall include performance planning and appraisal for subordinates as a major task or responsibility.
5. Performance plans shall be consistent with Departmental work programs and position descriptions.

F. Performance Planning Process

1. Employees are encouraged to participate in this process as much as possible, particularly when developing goals. Employees should feel free to ask their supervisor(s) for feedback, steps for corrective action and advice on how to further develop their skills.
2. Performance plans are formally established by signature of the supervisor and the employee. The employee's signature indicates only that he/she has seen the plan. It does not indicate agreement.

If an employee refuses to sign a performance plan, the plan shall be referred to the Bureau head or designee for review and consultation with the employee and the supervisor(s). If the employee refuses to sign the plan following this consultation and any resulting changes by the supervisor(s), a notation on the plan by the supervisor(s) indicating the employee's refusal to sign will be accepted in lieu of the employee's signature.

3. Performance plans are subject to amendment or revision at any time at the initiative of an employee, with the concurrence of the supervisor, or at the initiative of the supervisor. All amendments must be documented with the signatures of the employee and the supervisor.
4. Additional information specifically related to BARS can be found in Section 3.

G. Documentation of Performance Plans

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1. Employees shall receive a copy of their performance plan, and any amendments or revisions within 14 calendar days after the plan or amendment is established. All Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II, Fire Fighter III, Master Fire Fighter, Sergeant, Lieutenant assigned to the Operations Bureau shall also receive a copy of the Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) standards goals assigned them.
2. Two copies of performance plans for each employee are to be kept in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services operating files for a period not to exceed two years. One copy is the Department's record, the other copy will be used in any assessment of Departmental procedures and practices conducted by the County. Access to employee's performance plans is limited to officials of the County Government on a need to know basis in accordance with Montgomery County Administrative Procedure #4-8, (1982) "Review of Employee Personnel Record". Only hard copies are to be retained for the record. Retention in an automated system provides insufficient security against loss or unauthorized review and does not provide a record of required signatures.

5.1 Performance Reviews

A. Responsibility - Performance review is the responsibility of the employee's immediate supervisor(s). Where more than one individual directly supervises an employee, each should participate in the performance review. The supervisors should share this responsibility in a manner consistent with their roles in directing the employee's work.

Prior to either the mid year performance review or the yearly performance review, the employee should be encouraged to submit information to their supervisor for consideration in the review.

B. Applicability - All employees subject to a performance plan are to receive performance reviews.

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C. Frequency and Timing of Performance Reviews - Each employee is to receive two performance reviews in each twelve month period. One performance review is to take place concurrently with the performance appraisal. The other performance review is to take place at the mid point of the appraisal year.

Probationary employees (recruits) assigned to the Operations Bureau shall have a performance review at the 7th and 10th month of their probationary year. The 10th month review shall be the annual review.

D. Substance of Performance Reviews - The performance review shall encompass all major tasks assigned in the performance plan, including strategies for resolving performance problems or providing career or skill development opportunities. The review shall also include consideration of the need to amend the plan, and follow through as appropriate.

If the employee is experience conduct problems, these issues should be discussed in conjunction with the performance review.

E. Documentation of Performance Reviews - Each performance review shall be documented by signature of both the employee and the supervisor and the date of the performance review on the appropriate form. Copies will be given to both the employee and the supervisor. The substance of the performance review shall be documented if the discussion includes any changes to the performance plan or the identification of specific performance issues for further attention.

5.2 Performance Appraisal

A. Responsibility

1. Performance appraisal is the responsibility of the employee's immediate supervisor(s). Where more than one individual directly supervises an employee, each should participate in the performance appraisal.

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The supervisors should share this responsibility in a manner consistent with their roles in directing the employee's work.

Prior to the final performance appraisal, the employee may submit information to their supervisor for consideration in the appraisal.

2. The employee's second level supervisor shall review each employee's performance appraisal. After this review, it shall be forwarded to the employee for signature. The employee's performance appraisal shall then be forwarded through the Division/District Chief, to the Bureau Chief for final review and filing. The original copy will go in the employee's Department personnel file and a copy given to the employee. Any subsequent comments shall be provided to the employee.

For Fire Fighter I, Fire Fighter II, Fire Fighter III, Master Fire Fighter, Sergeant, and Lieutenant assigned to the Operations Bureau, the second level supervisor shall be the employee's supervising senior career officer. The employee's performance appraisal shall then be forwarded to the District Chief for final review. After this review, it shall be forwarded to the employee for signature. The original copy will go in the employee's Department personnel file and a copy given to the employee.

3. An employee's second level or higher supervisor may not change an appraisal or order the immediate supervisor to change an appraisal. However, the immediate supervisor may be asked for additional supporting documentation for the appraisal under highly exceptional circumstances and with full documentation, withdraw authority to appraise performance from the employee's immediate supervisor and establish a new performance appraisal for the employee. In such cases, the Director is to be notified immediately of the action taken.

B. Applicability - A performance appraisal is to be completed for any period of work or significant work assignment of 180 days or more.

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C. Frequency and Timing of Performance Appraisals

1. Employees who have completed probation shall receive at least one written performance appraisal in every 12 month period.
2. Where an employee's position or supervisor in the Department changes, and the employee has worked under a performance plan for a period of less than 4 months prior to the change, a performance appraisal does not have to be completed by the employee's previous supervisor, unless directed by the Senior Career Officer or Bureau Chief.

Where an employee's position or supervisor in the Department changes, and the employee has worked under a performance plan for a period of 4 or more months prior to the change, a performance appraisal is to be completed within 30 days following the change by the employee's previous supervisor.

If this change occurs within 4 months of the end of the appraisal year, this appraisal will constitute the yearly appraisal.

Probationary employees (recruits) assigned to the Operations Bureau shall receive performance appraisals at the 7th and 10th month of their probationary year. The appraisal at the 10th month is their first annual appraisal.

D. Substance of Performance Appraisals

1. A performance appraisal shall record the accomplishment of tasks or responsibilities in relation to performance guidelines and or performance standards established in the performance plan. Compliance with general standards of conduct may be addressed outside the context of the performance planning and appraisal process as provided in the Personnel Regulations, Section 27 (1986) unless conduct issues are included in the performance plan. To the extent that conduct problems significantly affect the employee's performance, they should be addressed in the performance appraisal.

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2. Where one or more tasks and responsibilities were assigned and completed satisfactorily, but not made a part of the performance plan, their accomplishment should be assessed as part of the performance appraisal.
3. Performance appraisals must include narrative remarks which address actual performance in relation to performance guidelines in the plan except where guidelines are expressed in quantitative or other absolute measures for which narrative comment would be inappropriate.

For employees covered under the Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) appraisal system, the performance guidelines are delineated in Section 3 of this manual.

E. Performance Appraisal Procedures

1. Employees are to be given a reasonable time in which to demonstrate performance in accordance with a performance plan prior to a performance appraisal.
2. Immediate supervisors and reviewing officials are to provide an opportunity for the employee to sign and comment on the appraisal and each reviewing official's remarks which are attached thereto. The employee's signature indicates only that he/she has seen the appraisal or comment; it does not indicate agreement.
3. The individual being evaluated should be informed at least three days prior to the appraisal interview. Almost all individuals, when informed of this fact, go through an informal self-evaluation process. Because most people have a fairly accurate view of their strengths and weaknesses, this should ensure a smoother appraisal interview process than if it were to come as a surprise to an individual who has not had a chance to prepare himself. The individual should also be asked to review the current performance plan he/she is working under. This will enable him/her to accurately assess and discuss his/her evaluation during the appraisal interview. Advance notice of the interview will also allow the

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individual to give some thought to what his/her goals should be for the next appraisal period. Employees are encouraged to provide their supervisor with a list of accomplishments for the previous year to be discussed during the performance appraisal session.

4. The evaluator should then complete the appraisal document for the ending appraisal period. This will involve the final review of the individual's achievement of the goals set for the ending period, and other accomplishments for the period. The evaluator shall also initiate a new appraisal form for the coming appraisal period, as the goals for that period will be based in part on the results of the current evaluation.

5. If an employee refuses to sign a performance appraisal it shall be referred to the Bureau Chief or designee for review and consultation with the employee and the supervisor(s). If the employee refuses to sign following this consultation and any resulting changes by the supervisor(s), a notation on the appraisal or comment by the supervisor(s) will be accepted in lieu of the employee's signature.

F. Uses for Performance Appraisals

1. Performance appraisals are to be considered in decisions on granting merit system status and merit increases, and for demotion, removal or other adverse administrative actions to resolve performance problems.

Prior to taking any action specified in Section 27 "Disciplinary Actions" of the Personnel Regulations which is based solely on the employee's performance in relation to a performance plan or any amendment thereto, the supervisor must be able to demonstrate that the work and applicable performance guidelines have been known to the employee for a reasonable time.

2. Performance appraisals are an appropriate basis for decisions to grant performance awards. At a minimum, where a performance award is recommended for an

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employee, the recommendation and relevant aspects of the employee's most recent performance appraisal are to be consistent.

3. Performance appraisals may not be used in any competitive selection procedure (including RIF) unless this use has been reviewed by the Employment Division of the Personnel Office and approved by the Chief Administrative Officer. The requirements for use of performance appraisal in making decisions about which employee(s) will be affected by a RIF are found in paragraph 3.23 of the Administrative Procedure #4-19 (1981) (Reduction in Force).

4. The substance of a performance appraisal may not be the subject of a grievance (see Section 8.5 Personnel Regulations, 1986 as amended). Employees may use the grievance process to only examine alleged procedural irregularities in performance planning or appraisal.

G. Documentation of Performance Appraisals

1. Performance appraisals which assign to a substantial portion of an employee's performance either the highest or lowest possible rating in accordance with Department's procedure must be supported with a specific description or copies of the work which demonstrate the reasons for the appraisal.

2. One copy of the performance appraisal is to be kept in the employees' official records for a period of five years. Two copies of performance appraisals for each employee are to be kept in Departmental operating files for a period not to exceed two years. One copy is the Department's record. The other copy will be used in any assessment of Departmental procedures and practices conducted by the County. Access to employees' performance plans is limited to officials of the County Government on a need to know basis in accordance with Administrative Procedure #4-8, (1982) "Review of Employee Personnel Records". Only hard copies are to be retained for the record. Retention in an automated system provides insufficient security against loss or unauthorized review and does not provide a record of required signatures.

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SECTION 2: GUIDELINES FOR USE ON INDIVIDUALIZED
PERFORMANCE PLANNING AND APPRAISAL (PPA)

APPLICABILITY

1.0 This section and the form contained within this section shall be applicable to Operations Bureau personnel above the rank of Lieutenant and all other Department of Fire and Rescue Services personnel, both uniform and civilian. In addition, it may be used for Operations Bureau personnel below the rank of Captain when the Bureau Chief deems it more appropriate than the BARS system in Section 3.

PROCEDURES

2.0 Performance Planning Process

A. The immediate supervisor is to initiate the performance planning process by completing the following areas on the Performance Planning and Appraisal (PPA) Form. When appropriate the employee should contribute to the development of the major work responsibilities and performance guidelines.

A1 - Form Content

1. Name of Employee
2. Class Title
3. Class Code
4. Supervisor's Name
5. Bureau/Division

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6. Section
7. Location/Shift
8. Review Period - The period covered by the plan
9. Type of Appraisal
10. Performance Plan/Date/Initials - Plan is initialed after it is discussed with the employee. Initials of both the employee and supervisor are needed.
11. Major Work Responsibilities
12. Performance Guidelines

Information on performance planning, substance of performance plans, the performance planning process, and the documentation of performance plans are contained in Section 1, Part 5.1.

B. Major Work Responsibilities - Conduct an analysis of the job and determine what are the most significant/major responsibilities. Write short statements to describe these major duties and enter in the first column marked "Major Work Responsibilities."

Most employees will have between 5 and 10 major work responsibilities listed. These major work responsibilities should represent significant components of the individual job and should be listed in order of descending priority.

C. Performance Guidelines - At least one performance guideline needs to be written for each major work responsibility listed to measure, at the fully satisfactory level, the employee's expected performance on that major work responsibility. These performance guidelines are to be entered in the second column marked "Performance Guidelines".

Performance guidelines should be objective, measurable indicators. Possible measures

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include quality of work, quantity of work, timeliness, end results expected, and performance against pre established standards.

2.1 Performance Reviews - Two performance reviews are to be held each year. The first will be conducted at the midpoint of the appraisal period and the second concurrent with the final appraisal.

All performance reviews shall be documented with the employee's and supervisor's signatures and date under the section of the PPA form titled mid year progress discussion and annual progress discussion.

2.3 Performance Appraisal

A. Responsibility - Performance appraisal is the responsibility of the employee's immediate supervisor(s). Where more than one individual directly supervises an employee, each should participate in the performance appraisal. The supervisors should share this responsibility in a manner consistent with their roles in directing the employee's work.

1. A rating must be given for all applicable major work responsibilities and associated performance guidelines. If a major work responsibility was set up at the beginning of the appraisal period and then not rated enter N/A in column 3 marked "Performance Narrative" with an explanation concerning the change in plan.

2. A brief discussion is required in the Performance Narrative for all ratings unless the performance guidelines were written in explicit terms which makes the narrative redundant.

3. The remaining sections of the form should be completed at this time.

a. Overall Rating

The overall rating assigned must be reasonable in context of the plan as a whole. It should

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reflect the quality and quantity of work, accomplishment, and overall contributions and performance. Although the overall rating need not be an arithmetical average of the individual elements, it must reflect a balanced weighing of those elements. Overall ratings above or below the "fully satisfactory" level must be substantiated in the comments section.

4. Prior to the annual performance appraisal these ratings are considered preliminary. They will be finalized after the supervisor and employee have discussed them and any changes made. The appraisal is finalized after all signatures are obtained.

B. The employee's second level supervisor shall review each employee's performance appraisal prior to forwarding it through the chain of command to his/her supervisor.

C. The individual being evaluated should be informed at least three days prior to the appraisal interview. The individual should also be asked to review the current performance plan he/she is working under. This will enable him/her to accurately assess and discuss his/her evaluation during the appraisal interview. Employees are encouraged to provide their supervisor with a list of accomplishments for the previous year to be discussed during the performance appraisal session.

The evaluator should then complete the appraisal document for the ending appraisal period. In addition, the evaluator shall initiate a new appraisal form for the coming appraisal period.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

3.0 General guidance and training in performance planning, reviews, interviewing and appraisals can be obtained from the Training Section of the Office of Human Resources. Additionally, that section has developed the following training handouts which should be reviewed by supervisors before beginning the planning and appraisal process.

1. Developing Performance Plans, dated November 14, 1986
2. Conducting Performance Reviews and Interviewing Techniques, dated November

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12, 1987, and

3. Appraising Employee Performance, dated April 25, 1988

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SECTION 3: GUIDELINES FOR USE OF
BEHAVIORAL ANCHORED RATING SCALES (BARS)

INTRODUCTION

1.0 The Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales appraisal program is one component of the Department of Fire and Rescue Services overall performance planning and appraisal program. This component covers Operations Bureau personnel up to and including the position of Lieutenant.

DEFINITIONS

2.0 Explanation of terms that are specific to the Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) appraisal system

2.1 Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) - A type of appraisal system whereby most major duties, functions, or responsibilities that are part of a given position or job are identified. These jobs are analyzed for performance criteria to develop examples of specific levels of achievement that illustrate varying degrees of performance in a given standard. Each of these standards is then assigned a weight indicating the relative importance of the standard in relation to the performance of the whole job for each position.

2.2 Standard - A specific area of job performance/major task or work responsibility which is identified as being necessary to evaluate for given positions. Each of these is assigned a specific number and title (e.g., Standard #10 - Response to Supervision).

2.3 Achievement Indicator - A number assigned to a specific level of performance. Most standards have achievement indicators of 1 through 9. The mid-point number of 5 indicates competent performance, or that level of performance which is required and expected of each employee. Achievement indicators 6 through 9 represent progressive levels of achievement above what is expected and required. Achievement indicators 1 through 4 indicate achievement below what is expected and required.

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2.4 Performance Criteria - A narrative statement associated with an assigned numerical achievement indicator which specifically identifies examples of actions, behavior or performance associated with a particular level of achievement in each standard area. The performance criteria is equivalent to the performance guidelines which is defined in Section 1 part 2.6. Achievement levels or indicators 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 contain these specific statements. Indicators 2, 4, 6 and 8 have no specific statement but allow the evaluator to assign an achievement level in between the specifically identified performance criteria. This allows for some flexibility and discretion of the evaluator.

2.5 Weight - Relative importance assigned to each standard as it relates to each position. These weights are assigned a value of 1 through 5. Those standards which are not relevant to a given position are assigned no weight as indicated by an asterisk (*), and are not used for those positions. It is important to understand that the level of achievement as indicated by the performance criteria is the same for all positions to which it is applied.

2.6 Achievement Rating - The specific numerical achievement indicator given an evaluated individual in a specific standard area.

2.7 Performance Score - Equals the weight times the achievement rating in a given individual standard area.

2.8 Total Performance Score - Equals the sum total of all individual performance scores for a given individual.

2.9 Coefficient - A three digit decimal figure which, when multiplied by the total performance score, converts that score to a percentile. This figure has been determined by dividing the maximum score attainable for a given position into ninety, and then rounding up to a three digit number.

2.10 Final Score - Equals the total performance score times the coefficient. Represents the final annual appraisal of a given individual's performance expressed in a percentile figure. Final scores are possible in the range of 10 through 90.

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GENERAL EXPLANATION OF BARS APPRAISAL SYSTEM

3.0 Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS)

This part of The Department of Fire and Rescue Services Performance Planning and Appraisal System describes the Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) approach to personnel evaluation with an option to establish supplemental and or developmental goals in addition to the BARS standards.

Using this approach most major duties, functions, or responsibilities that are part of a given position are pre-defined in a standardized performance plan. These jobs were analyzed for performance criteria and examples of specific levels of achievement that illustrate varying degrees of performance in a given standards were developed. Each of these standards was then assigned a weight indicating the relative importance of the standard in relation to the performance of the whole job for each position. The primary strength of the BARS system is that it allows for the evaluation of most key actions necessary to job performance.

The BARS system has been applied in this appraisal program by identifying the areas desirable for evaluation for Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Firefighter III, Master Firefighter, Sergeant, and Lieutenant. For each function, a BARS standard has been developed which contains nine (9) levels of performance. (Standards 1, 2, and 15 only have 5 levels of performance). Five of these levels, 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 contain narrative observable performance criteria or job anchors. Four levels of performance, 2, 4, 6, and 8 contain no narrative statements.

These four levels provide the evaluator flexibility for individuals whose performance does not fit into one of the specific performance levels. Additionally, the narrative statements are to be considered **ONLY AS EXAMPLES** of the behavior necessary to score at the indicated achievement level.

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Each of these standards may have a different relative importance depending on the position being evaluated. Therefore, each standard has been assigned a different weight of 1 to 5, depending upon the position. These weights have been listed by position at the bottom of each of the standards. It is important to understand that a lower weight does not mean that a lower level of performance is expected or required. It simply means that, with respect to the standard evaluated, its relative importance for that position is less.

The standards provide the following advantages:

- A. Provides specific guidelines to the personnel as to what performance is expected of them, the type of performance that is unacceptable, and how improvements can be made.
- B. Officers as evaluators and supervisors benefit, as they are given specific behavioral criteria with which to appraise and guide their personnel.
- C. The Department of Fire and Rescue Services benefits because it can be assured that all key job functions are being appraised in a consistent manner and against the same standard.
- D. The system also provides flexibility as job dimensions change, are added, or are deleted. BARS standards can be changed, added, or deleted as needed. In the event that an individual is detailed to a special assignment, some or all of the standards may not be applicable. If a standard does not apply to the employee, omit it from the rating calculation. Employees should not be rated on tasks for which they have had no opportunity to perform. See 5.6 on page 10 for recalculating the coefficient.

3.1 Supplemental Goals

If the employee has significant responsibilities in an area not covered by the BARS standards for which they should be rated on, supplemental goals should be established at the beginning of the appraisal cycle. These activities should be listed on the appraisal form, and follow the format established in the general Department of Fire and Rescue

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Services Performance Planning and Appraisal procedure for developing major work responsibilities and performance guidelines. The weight for each Major Work Responsibility should be established in accordance with the importance of the activity as determined by the employee's supervising senior career officer. Supplemental goals are established by the employee's immediate supervisor(s) or the employee's supervising senior career officer.

For either the employee's immediate supervisor(s) or supervising senior career officer to consider a supplemental goal for the employee, the employee should spend approximately 25% of his/her time on that goal. No supplemental goals will be established for any employee without the approval of the employee's supervising senior career officer. Also, no supplemental goal will be given a weight greater than 5.

3.2 Developmental Goals

Goals which are established to help the employee achieve developmental objectives, but are not to be rated, may be established. This may include non required training, special short term projects, career development, etc. This excludes training activities that are covered under Standard 15. If goals are to be documented on the appraisal form they should be established at the beginning of the appraisal cycle. No rating should be given to these goals. However, if the achievement of these goals results in a significant benefit to the Department, up to 3 bonus points may be awarded by the supervising Senior Career Officer. These bonus points will be added to the final score.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPRAISAL FORM

4.0 Page 1 contains the following information for identification information only:

Employee name
Assigned station, bureau, shift
Class title
Class code

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Supervisor's name, title
Appraisal period
Type of appraisal

Signature blocks

Plan Establishment Date and Signature - Lists the appraisal plan's establishment date and documents that standards and goals are known to the employee. Employee and supervisors signatures and date are required at the beginning of the appraisal period.

Mid Year Performance Review Date and Signatures - Documents that employees performance was discussed with the supervisor at midpoint of appraisal year.

Annual Performance Review Date and Signatures - Documents that employees performance was discussed with the supervisor at end of appraisal year.

Final Appraisal Date and Signatures - Finalizes the appraisal. After all input is received and everything is finalized, these signatures close out the performance planning appraisal cycle and the evaluation becomes part of the employees personnel record.

This page also provides for some security of the contained appraisal information. The evaluator must assure that the information contained within this document is kept confidential.

Page 2 - Provides the information necessary to complete the BARS standard evaluation.

Page 3 - Provides space for Supplemental Goals, Developmental Goals, and listing additional accomplishments during the evaluation period.

Page 4 - Provides space for the verbal review session comments. Documents contents of mid year and annual performance reviews. At the mid year performance review, where justifications or circumstances dictate, this review session may also serve as an

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opportunity to adjust supplemental or developmental goals. If they are changed, it is noted in this section. Employees and supervisors signatures and date required on front of form.

Page 4 also provides space for written justifications which is necessary when an achievement level of 1, 2, 8 or 9 in any standard is achieved.

While this should only be necessary for unusual evaluations, additional information may be provided on 8-1/2 x 11 plain white paper. This information should be placed inside the booklet form by attaching it to the front of Page 2.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE OF THE BARS APPRAISAL SYSTEM

5.0 Directions for Evaluation of Standards

The evaluator must keep the following points in mind, and must adhere to these guidelines when using the standards and associated achievement levels:

A. Achievement Level 5 represents the expected level of performance for a competent employee in any given area. A five indicates that the employee is doing his/her job and doing it well. It is also the level at which, on a cumulative basis, the normal increment would be awarded, unless there were significant deficiencies in critical areas.

B. The narrative statements of each achievement level are only examples of the type of performance that is expected at that level. They are not intended to be all inclusive, although the specific narrative must be considered. There may be other behavior or performance that justifies a higher or lower level of achievement. When this is the case, the evaluator should document the specific performance that influenced the level of achievement.

C. The standards are progressive in nature. In other words, before an individual can be given a higher rating, substantial compliance at the lower level must be attained.

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D. Each standard should be applied without consideration of the achievement level in any other standard area. While standards of job knowledge may often be affected by achievement in the standard area of training, it is quite possible that, while job knowledge is good, training achievements may be low due to a disruptive influence or other factors displayed by an individual.

E. Specific additional written documentation containing dates, times, places, and/or references to previous written documents such as awards, commendations, reprimands, etc., must be provided for an achievement level of 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 or 9 in any standard. This written documentation is placed on page 4 of the performance planning and appraisal form. If necessary a separate 8 ½ by 11 piece of plan paper may be used and placed inside the booklet form by attaching it to the front of page 2.

F. Additional guidance as to level of performance expected of any position may be found in the appropriate Class Specification for the position under consideration. This may be particularly useful for officer or specialized positions. Length of service should be considered when interpreting standards.

5.1 Directions for Computation of Scores

A. Determine the appropriate weight for the position being evaluated and write in space allocated. The relative weights for each position are listed at the bottom of every standard.

B. Review the achievement indicators and enter number associated with the achievement earned by the employee in the space allocated.

C. Multiply the weight times the achievement level, and enter the figure in the space marked "performance Score".

D. Place the score from any supplemental goals in the space marked "Supplemental Goal Scores".

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E. Add up all the Performance Scores and Supplemental Goal Scores and enter in space marked "Total Performance Score".

F. Multiply the total performance score by the proper coefficient, which will produce the final Score on a percentile basis. The proper position coefficients are as indicated for each position being evaluated:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>
Firefighter I/EMT	.166	Firefighter I/Paramedic	.131
Firefighter II/EMT	.152	Firefighter II/Paramedic	.122
Firefighter III/EMT	.139	Firefighter III/Paramedic	.114
Master Firefighter/ Rescuer/EMT	.137	Master Firefighter/ Rescuer/Paramedic	.113
Sergeant/EMT	.109	Sergeant/Paramedic	.093
Lieutenant/EMT	.113	Lieutenant/Paramedic	.095

If there are supplemental goals or standards are not used for a particular rank, the coefficient must be re-calculated.

G. If there are any bonus points from developmental goals, add them to the final score at this time.

H. Final appraisal scores are possible in the entire range of 10 through 90 and may be interpreted in the ranges as follows:

10 - 30: Employee's performance is seriously deficient in the position currently assigned. Termination or other serious personnel action should be implemented.

31 - 49: Employee's performance is below the acceptable level. Training, counseling, guidance should be implemented to bring performance to an acceptable level. Sustained

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performance at this level after proper corrective action should lead to termination. Performance at or below this level may result in the withholding of the normal service increment by the Director.

50 - 64: Employee's performance is in the acceptable performance level expected and required. Individual's performance is good throughout the standard areas relevant to his currently assigned position on an averaged basis. At this level and above, the employee should be granted the normal service increment.

65 - 79: Employee's performance on an averaged basis is excellent and above the level expected or required. Individual **may** be considered for a performance award.

80 - 90: Employee's performance is outstanding and far above what is expected or required on an averaged basis throughout the standard areas relevant to his currently assigned position. Employee **may** be considered for a performance award.

5.2 Directions for Review of Supplemental Goals

Determine performance of each supplemental goal in relationship to pre-defined performance guideline and give rating between 1 and 9. Multiply by weight assigned (maximum is 5) to arrive at performance score. Add to total performance score. See Section 5.6 on recalculating coefficient.

5.3 Directions for Review of Developmental Goals.

During the final appraisal review, the evaluator should consider the following:

- A. Were the goals accomplished in a timely manner? A particular goal may be assigned any reasonable completion date that occurs within the annual appraisal period.
- B. Was the level of accomplishment satisfactory?

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- C. Were there outside or unexpected influences which inhibited goal achievement? If mid-year review, do these goals need to be adjusted?
- D. How much did the Department benefit? If you feel the Department benefitted greatly, make recommendation to Senior Career Officer that bonus points be awarded.

5.4 Additional Accomplishments During Period

The evaluator may use this section to indicate additional accomplishments of a special nature. These accomplishments should be in addition to those covered in the goals area. Education, training, and awards are a few of the areas that may be covered.

5.5 Re-calculating the coefficient

If an employee is not to be evaluated in some standards or supplemental goals are to be established, then the coefficient used to convert the total performance score to the final score has to be re-calculated. To determine this new coefficient:

A. First determine the maximum "total performance score" attainable. This is done by putting a 9 in the space marked achievement rating for all standards, including supplemental goals, that the employee is to be evaluated in. (Note that in standards 1, 2, and 15 a 5 is the maximum achievement rating that is attainable. So for these standards place a 5 in the space marked achievement rating). Multiply each achievement rating by the appropriate weight for each standard the employee is to be evaluated on. Any standard that the employee is **not** to be evaluated in is to be marked "**NOT EVALUATED**". By doing this you will have calculated the highest performance score that can be attained for each individual standard. To get the maximum "total performance score" attainable simply add up all of these performance scores.

B. Take this number (maximum total performance score), divide it into 90 and round up

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to a three digit number. This is the new coefficient. An example is demonstrated on the next page.

C. Multiply the individual's total performance score by this new coefficient to determine his/her final score.

5.6 Example for re-calculating the coefficient

As an example, we are re-calculating the coefficient for a Firefighter III who is not to be rated in Standards 3, 4, 6 and 8. This employee has one supplemental goal with a weight of 5 as part of his performance plan.

WEIGHT X ACHIEVEMENT = PERFORMANCE
RATING SCORE

1.	ATTENDANCE	1	5	5
2.	PERSONAL APPEARANCE	1	5	5
3.	APPARATUS CHECK OUT	4	NOT EVALUATED	
4.	STATION MAINTENANCE	2	NOT EVALUATED	
5.	TRAINING	4	9	36
6.	AREA KNOWLEDGE	5	NOT EVALUATED	
7.	PHYSICAL FITNESS	5	9	45
8.	FIRE PREV. & INSPECTIONS	3	NOT EVALUATED	
9.	PUBLIC EDUCATION	3	9	27
10.	RESPONSE TO SUPERVISION	4	9	36
11.	PUBLIC RELATIONS	3	9	27
12.	REPORT AND RECORDS	3	9	27
13.	RESPONSE AND ADJUSTMENT	5	9	45
14.	TEAMWORK	4	9	36
15.	SAFETY	5	5	25
16.	RETURN TO SERVICE	3	9	27
17.	DRIVING	4	9	36

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18.	PERFORMANCE ON STANDARD FIRE GROUND EVOLUTIONS	5	9	45
19.	EMERGENCY CARE - PATIENT MGMT.	4	9	36
20.	EMERGENCY ARE - EMT SKILLS	5	9	45
21.	EMERG CARE-ALS SKILLS			NOT APPLICABLE
22.	ANNUAL RECERT AND EVAL			NOT APPLICABLE
23.	MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS			NOT APPLICABLE
24.	INCIDENT COMM. UNIT OFFICER			NOT APPLICABLE
25.	COMMUNICATIONS-ORAL			NOT APPLICABLE
26.	WRITTEN COMMUNICATION			NOT APPLICABLE
27.	ORGAN/PLAN/ASSIGNING			NOT APPLICABLE
28.	SUPERVISORY CONTROL			NOT APPLICABLE
29.	DECISION MAKING			NOT APPLICABLE
30.	EVALUATING PERFORMANCE			NOT APPLICABLE
31.	TRAINING AND INSTRUCTING			NOT APPLICABLE
32.	SUPPLEMENTAL GOALS #1	5	9	45
	#2			
	#3			
	#4			

MAXIMUM TOTAL PERFORMANCE SCORE 503

DIVIDE 503 INTO 90 AND ROUND UP TO A 3 DIGIT NUMBER
TO GET NEW COEFFICIENT. NEW COEFFICIENT = 0.179

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