Identifying and Addressing Leave Usage for the
Virginia Beach Fire Department
William R. Journigan Sr.
Virginia Beach Fire Department
Virginia Beach, Virginia
CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: ____________________________________________
Identifying and Addressing

Abstract

The Virginia Beach Fire Department (VBFD) management was concerned about members using inappropriate leave. The problem is vacation leave opportunities for the members in VBFD are decreasing causing some members to use sick leave inappropriately. This increased the administrative overhead to schedule staffing increasing the overtime required in order to maintain deployable forces.

Action research utilizing literature review, convenience surveys, department records, and interviews, was used to answer research questions concerning; (a) standards from organizations for giving members leave, (b) identified patterns of leave usage from organizations, (c) managing leave usage against staffing needs, (d) policies and procedures for giving employees leave opportunities, (e) policies or procedures implemented to increase leave opportunities, and (f) leave usage patterns of VBFD members?

The procedures included a literature review and interviews addressing leave usage and policy content. An external survey was used to collect information about leave patterns, shift schedules, and recordkeeping from fire departments similar to VBFD. Also, an internal survey was used to determine how VBFD members utilized leave. Finally, information learned through the literature review and the surveys was used to evaluate the leave records of VBFD.

The results from the research included standards for leave usage are benefits and not a mandated right. Results also indicate other researchers used supervisor review, internal and external surveys, and computer analysis to identify specific patterns of leave. Those results served as a guide to evaluate trends for VBFD. The results show VBFD does have similar trends. Finally, the research provided opportunities for VBFD to consider for giving its members more time off.
Recommendations included, (a) VBFD implementing a team of members to research the different shift schedule models that was presented in this ARP, (b) VBFD examine the feasibility of hiring part-time members to offset the overtime costs of recalling a full time member, (c) VBFD to develop more extensive reports to monitor the usage patterns of leave, and (d) other researchers should expand the scope of the issue.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 3

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... 5

Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 7

Background and Significance .......................................................................................................... 8

Literature Review .......................................................................................................................... 12

Procedures ..................................................................................................................................... 21

Results ........................................................................................................................................... 26

Discussion ..................................................................................................................................... 45

Recommendations ......................................................................................................................... 50

References ..................................................................................................................................... 53

## Appendices

Appendix A: City of Virginia Beach Annual and Personal Leave Policy................................. 56

Appendix B: Virginia Beach Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures..................... 62

Appendix C: City of Virginia Beach Sick Leave Policy............................................................... 71

Appendix D: City/County Survey Email....................................................................................... 74

Appendix E: Identifying Leave Usage by Fire Department Members........................................ 75

Appendix F: Identifying Leave Usage by Fire Department Members Results.......................... 78

Appendix G: VBFD Survey Email................................................................................................. 85

Appendix H: Identifying Leave Usage Patterns in the VBFD..................................................... 86

Appendix I: Identifying Leave Usage Patterns in the VBFD Results......................................... 89

Appendix J: Identified Patterns of Leave Usage by City/County............................................... 93
Appendix K: Shift Schedules by City/County ................................................................. 94
Appendix L: Leave Usage by Day .............................................................................. 95
Appendix M: Leave Usage by Month ....................................................................... 96
Appendix N: Average Leave Usage per Firefighter by Years of Service .............. 97
Appendix O: PowerPoint Presentation ................................................................. 98
Identifying and Addressing Leave Usage for the Virginia Beach Fire Department

Introduction

The Virginia Beach Fire Department’s (VBFD) mission statement is, “The Virginia Beach Fire Department is a customer service organization partnering with the communities, members, citizens, and visitors to foster the feeling of safety anyplace, anytime through planning, mitigation, response and restoration” (Virginia Beach Fire Department Strategic Business Plan, 2002, p. 2). In the plan, it categorizes four desired outcomes the organization is striving to achieve. One category is Leadership, which states, “Members exercise behaviors which align with organizational values, purpose, and vision to enhance member effectiveness” (2002, p. 8).

The Virginia Beach Fire Department (VBFD) management was concerned about members using inappropriate leave. The problem is vacation leave opportunities for the members in VBFD are decreasing causing some members to use sick leave inappropriately. This increased the administrative overhead to schedule staffing increasing the overtime required in order to maintain deployable forces. While the daily attendance reports provided evidence of high occurrences of sick leave use, the problem has not been investigated to determine the nature and scope of the issue, and therefore, no appropriate response can be developed.

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) is to identify patterns of leave usage by fire department members and develop recommendations to address the opportunities for the members to use vacation leave. This research focuses on the occurrence of leave usage and associated opportunities for gaining leave so appropriate recommendations can be made to make a positive impact on the problem.
Action research, utilizing convenience surveys, department records, and interviews, will be used in conjunction with the review of the available literature to answer research questions, (a) what standards from association and governmental agencies exist for giving members leave opportunities, (b) how have other fire departments and agencies identified patterns of leave usage in their organizations, (c) how do other fire departments and agencies manage leave usage against staffing needs, (d) what policies and procedures exist for giving employees leave opportunities of other fire departments, (e) what policies or procedures have been implemented by other fire departments and agencies to increase leave opportunities for its members, and (f) what are the leave usage patterns of VBFD members?

Background and Significance

VBFD is a medium sized fire department serving approximately 450,000 people in an area slightly over 410 square miles. VBFD provides fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response and mitigation, technical rescue, fire and life safety education, fire inspections, fire training, fire investigations and emergency management services to its citizens, visitors and employees. The department consists of 436 uniform personnel and operates 20 stations housing 21 engine companies, 6 ladder companies, 2 squads (tech rescue and hazmat) and 1 fireboat in the Operations Branch. The uniformed members of the fire department consist of; a fire chief, two deputy chiefs, five district chiefs, nineteen battalion chiefs and ninety-five captains, with varying years of service. During the last five years, the department has seen a significant amount of turnover resulting in a rapid growth of new inexperienced officers. The annual fire department budget is approximately $39,500,000. The Department has received national accreditation from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.
Over the last ten years, VBFD has increased minimum staffing to the shift roster by four firefighters. Adding these firefighters to the roster was the department’s attempt to have four-person staffing per unit. Each shift has a roster of 125 firefighters and officers. The maximum number of members that are allowed off is 26 per shift. This includes all types of leave, departmental meetings, firefighter physicals, training, etc. Adding these four firefighters to the roster without allowing for the demands for leave and departmental activities created pressure on leave requests.

VBFD leave policy SS/HR 2.04 designate leave as (a) Category 1, which is leave slots used for annual leave, compensatory leave, flex leave, and birthday leave; (b) Category 2, which is leave slots used for vacancies, long-term injuries, physicals, meetings, temporary duty assignments (TDAs), military leave, training, realignment and departmental activities; and Emergency Slots, which is used for sick leave and family and medical leave (2002, p. 1). Departmental policy has divided the leave slots into 13 in Category 1, 7 in Category 2, and 6 in Emergency slots. When demand on staffing falls beyond the 26 allotted slots, overtime is used to backfill the shortages. However, due to an average of seven vacancies per shift during the last two years, Deputy Chief Steve Cover (S. Cover, personal communication, February 26, 2007) change the policy to use available category one leave for category two needs, thereby reducing annual leave opportunities. In effect, the new policy reduced the opportunity for category one leave to an average of nine slots.

The significance to the leave demand is that over the last five years, VBFD has seen retirements at a steady rate. On average the department experienced seven vacancies per year. The recruit academy takes four months to complete. Typically, by the time the academy is completed, the department has had more retirements, thus creating a revolving door of vacancies.
This virtually eliminated the category two slots, which has caused the department to fill category two needs by reducing the number of category one slots available to members.

The demands for category two activities have increased significantly. Particularly, the department assists the Department of Emergency Medical Services with Advance Life Support (ALS) to the city. Firefighters that are certified as paramedics operate from engines and ladders to enhance ALS coverage. There are not enough paramedics to adequately staff the needs of the system at this time. When firefighter/paramedics take leave, VBFD hires back another firefighter/paramedic to fill the vacancy. This has placed a burden on the departmental overtime budget. VBFD’s course of action has been to restrict the overtime use to fill leave request in anticipation of the ALS needs.

The significance of these issues to this research is that members are bearing the brunt of the department’s staffing problem. They have less opportunity to obtain category one leave and, for some members, are beginning to use sick leave as a mechanism for a day off. VBFD has traditionally taken a hand’s off approach to members using sick leave. Due to this culture, it appears that members are using more sick leave and driving up the overtime costs.

While some of the daily sick leave absences are for known reasons, it is the department’s responsibility to attempt the reduction of inappropriate use of sick leave; however, alleviating the root cause of restricting leave opportunities for VBFD is an ethical responsibility for management. To date, this author knows of no effort by the department to either identify leave use patterns or address leave opportunities for obtaining leave. If successful, this research will serve to perform both of these functions and establish a platform from which members can receive time from work thereby enhancing their work/life balance.
Identifying and addressing trends of leave use on VBFD are examples of the effective changes the new administration of VBFD would like to achieve. However, an organizational culture has developed that the member’s need for leave has caused them to make unethical decisions in regards to the leave policies of the department. In the book *Managing Fire and Rescue Services*, ethics are discussed as “A cornerstone of public service is having the public’s trust and confidence” (Freyss, 2004, p. 89) Steering the department to consider ethical decision making in its quest for members to obtain and use their leave appropriately will take a comprehensive effort by the department’s administration and membership. Effective leadership will play an important role in making those changes successful. The topic of this ARP is therefore directly related to many of the content areas of the February 2007 *Executive Development* course offered at the National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Perhaps the most relevant of the content areas is *Unit 8: Ethics and Change* (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2006, pp. 8-1 to 8-50). Any changes to the present leave usage will result from a combined effort between administration and the firefighters themselves. An understanding of how appropriate leave usage and the opportunities to obtain leave will benefit all parties must be conveyed to the department as a whole. Effective leadership qualities are essential to this process. The process will involve a combination of ethical leadership, principle-centered ethics, shaping and reinforcing organizational values, and ethical problem solving described in Unit 7 (NFA, 2006).

The topic of this research is also relevant to the five-year operational objectives of the United States Fire Administration (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2003). The third operational objective is to “ Appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues” (USFA, 2003). Maintaining the balance of staffing and paid-time-off programs is becoming a
problem for fire departments across the country. This often leads to increased overtime expenditures. Resolving excessive sick leave usage, increased overtime costs, and providing paid-time-off to employees while maintaining staffing levels is therefore a response to an emerging issue.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to gather information about leave issues for the workforce and possible solutions that could help members receive time off from work, particularly for the Virginia Beach Fire Department. Information on leave benefits was available from a variety of resources such as libraries, personal communications, Internet sites, and databases.

Vacation, sick, and other paid-time-off benefits are topics that are well addressed in current literature relating to human resources management. One interesting observation was that none of the information found speaks to the origin of leave benefits. This is an important observation since one of the research questions of this ARP specifically seeks the standards for giving members leave opportunities. A reason for this was explained by C. Anderson, Human Resource Manager with the City of Virginia Beach Fire Department (VBFD). Leave is a benefit provided to employees and is not mandated by law (C. Anderson, personal communication, March 13, 2007). In fact, mandated benefits prescribed by law include social security, worker’s compensation, unemployment compensation and family and medical leave (Freyss, 2004). Paid-time-off benefits offer leave to employees for vacation, holidays, personal needs and illnesses that do not jeopardize the employee’s employment. These types of leave and its extent of how it is paid “is generally a matter of agreement between an employer and an employee (or the employee’s representative) (Harroch, 2006). Information from several sources indicates that
good benefits are important for recruitment, employee satisfaction and employee retention (Freyss, 2004; Harroch, 2006; & Beam and McFadden, 2001).

The literature review did find information on the leave benefits, particularly as it relates to paid-time-off provided to employees. Since this research is considering the specific issue of paid leave provided by employers to employees, further information on the mandated benefits—other than family and medical leave—is not necessary at this time. Paid leave is a common benefit offered by employers. Employers offer these benefits in order to compete in the marketplace and retain employees once hired (Mathis and Jackson, 2003). Typical paid-time-off benefits include holiday pay, vacation pay, personal leave, and leave of absences (Mathis and Jackson, 2003). In particular, vacation time off is becoming a necessity for employees and employers. Liddick (2006) emphasizes vacation time off allows employees to recharge themselves and ensures to employers that their members are well rested and ready to mentality and physically do their jobs. The Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI), an organization committed to original public policy research and education on economic security and employee benefits, indicates that vacation leave, often referred as annual leave, is generally accrued according to the employee’s length of service (2005). EBRI notes in a study of state and local governments from the Department of Labor that on average employees accrue annual leave for the following service times, (a) 13 days after the first year; (b) 19 days after 10 years; (c) 22 days after 20 years; and (d) 23 days after 30 years of service (EBRI, 2005). The dilemma that employers face is balancing employees’ vacation time off with the staffing requirements and productivity of the company (AllBusiness, 2007).

Sick leave is another paid-time-off benefit offered to employees. The literature review had much information regarding this topic—much of it concerning abuse. EBRI (2005) indicates
state and local employees accrued an average of 13 to 17 days of sick leave per year. Employees generally are allowed to accumulate unused sick leave from year to year; however, some programs place a cap on the amount accumulated or compensate the employee for unused leave at their time of retirement (EBRI, 2005).

Private industry offers leave programs similar to their public sector counterparts. On average businesses offer employees vacation/annual leave, (a) 15 days after five years of tenure, (b) 20 days after 20 years of tenure, (c) 25 days after 25 years of tenure (EBRI, 2005). Private industry offers sick leave as well in similar fashion. Sick leave serves an important function in today’s world including the fire service. Peacock (1998) notes sick leave was a provided benefit in 100% of the responding fire departments in a survey taken from the membership of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

The literature review reveals abuse of sick leave benefits is a major problem for employers. Unscheduled absences, or absenteeism, is increasing in general and is most notably increasing in governmental agencies (Smith, 2003). More and more employees in all areas of employment are changing their attitude about sick leave and now see it as an entitlement to be used whenever they see an opportunity to do so. Sources reflecting reasons for sick leave include, (a) personal illness, (b) family issues, (c) personal needs, (d) entitlement mentality, and (e) stress from the job (CCH Survey, (2007); Mathis and Jackson, (2003); & (Fryss,2004).

One of the research questions of this project asks how other fire departments and agencies have identified patterns of leave usage in their organizations. Much of the information found indicated scheduling software programs for staffing and attendance. The information found about patterns of leave usage focused on sick leave. However, there was some information regarding this subject that provides guidance to this researcher. TeleStaff™ is a commercially
available software program designed to provide staffing, record keeping, and report writing functions. Hayes (2003), Johnson (2002) and Parker (2003) denote using this software to track their organization’s trends and usage of leave, particularly sick leave. Their Executive Fire Officer (EFO) research reports were centered on the issue of sick leave abuse. They identified trends and patterns of leave usage in their reports using the features of TeleStaff™. Since this author’s department also uses TeleStaff™, their information will help formulate the data points for this research paper.

Clack (2001) used a combination of a computerized analysis of department sick leave records and an internal survey of firefighters to determine patterns of abuse involving sick leave. His results produced a list of sick leave use trends by fire department employees. Clack identifies the following trends: (a) increased sick leave use on weekends and holidays, (b) use of sick leave to attend to personal business, (c) use of sick leave as revenge against unpopular administrative policy, and (d) supplementing existing leave scheduled for vacations (Clack, 2001, p. 18).

Dwayne Orrick, Chief of Police for Cordele, Georgia, suggests “In order for an agency to effectively manage sick leave and ensure compliance with their policy, good records are essential” (Orrick, 2007). His supervisors create tables with officers’ names on one side and types of leave across the heading. Then, the amounts of leave taken during each month are recorded and soon thereafter patterns of use become readily apparent (Orrick, 2007).

Most of the information regarding patterns of leave usage for fire departments and other agencies focused on tracking sick leave. Some information was provided on how those entities tracked sick leave patterns and trends, which will be beneficial to this research. However, this researcher decided to conduct a convenience survey from representative fire departments on their patterns of leave usage in order to complete this research paper.
A third research question that this project seeks information on is how other fire departments and agencies manage leave usage against staffing needs. Again, this question challenges the researcher since this topic has not had much research completed. However, some information is available in context for this research in order to proceed forward. Fire departments must use different levels of staffing in order to “balance cost with the need for an adequate number of fire units and firefighters for structure fires and other emergencies” (Freeman, 2002, p. 126). Departments use different staffing models based on budgetary constraints, fire risks, and other demands for service, thus establishing minimum staffing levels to deliver those services (Freeman, 2002).

Several shift models for staffing fire departments are popular throughout the country. The most popular one is the 24/48 shift where firefighters work 24 hours followed by 48 hours off. This equates to an average of 56 hours per week (Freeman, 2002). In another example, Freeman provides another method some fire departments use for staffing fire stations by establishing two shifts that work 10 hours (day shift) followed by 14 hours (night shift)—this arrangement generally requires four platoons of firefighters producing an average workweek of 42 hours (2002).

Criteria for managing the work shifts and ensuring adequate staffing exists include limited budgets, minimum staffing levels, and availability of human resources. Tulsa Fire Department (TFD) does not hire back firefighters to fill their vacancies (Hayes, 2003). TFD finds itself reducing service delivery as Hayes explains “when a minimum staffing threshold is met, every three firefighters who call in sick will result in another company out of service for the day (2003, p. 9). His research on the abuse of sick leave revealed that at times TFD had potentially five companies being placed out of service.
Overtime is another method of ensuring that staffing levels are maintained, including offsetting leave usage. The overtime pay involved to replace absent firefighters is a major concern for fire departments that provide constant manning minimums for fire companies. Research found that the Niles Fire Department (NFD), the Fort Worth Fire Department (FWFD), and the City of West Covina Fire Department (WCFD) all utilize overtime to hire back personnel, at a one and one-half rate of the employee’s current salary, to meet the demand of their respective fire departments (Johnson, 2002; Mueller, 2002; & Parker, 2003). Each of their Applied Research Projects (ARPs) was written in efforts to control the overtime spending and finding solutions for those measures. In addition to the overtime expense issue, Clack (2001) also brings out another important point by stating “Full time emergency service organizations must manage reduced service delivery and increased emergency response time as a result of shortages in daily staffing” (2001, p.6). Again, the author felt that more relevant information could be provided to this project by developing a convenience survey asking the cities/counties identified as comparable to VBFD questions relative to this research question.

Another research question of the research project inquires what policies and procedures exist for giving employees leave opportunities of other fire departments. The literature review provided information of fire departments of various sizes. College Station Fire Department, College Station, Texas uses a seniority based system for members to obtain leave. A list is created of all members based on their hire date, followed by rank, followed by coin flip in case of ties (College Station Fire Department [CSFD], 2001a). The policy calls for the shift commander to schedule vacation leave during the month of September each year. Three rounds of selections are made by each member, in the list order, picking the consecutive dates of leave needed for vacation—providing the member has accrued enough time to cover the leave. After
the third round, leave is available equally to all members and must be taken in a minimum three hour time block (CSFD, 2001a).

Columbia Fire Rescue Services (CFRS), Columbia, South Carolina uses a different approach to their seniority based system. Their leave policy states:

Initial leave selection shall be by rank first then seniority within the department, within the shift or work unit, regardless of assignment. In the event of equal seniority, employee numbers will be used in descending order. If a further tie-breaker is required, a coin shall be tossed by the scheduling supervisor unless one of the parties concedes. Clerical staff shall provide seniority lists prior to the selection process (Columbia Fire Rescue Services [CFRS], 2005, p. 2).

CFRS adds another dimension to leave opportunities for their members by basing each member’s number of requested days to their years of service (CFRS, 2005, p. 2). This allows more senior members to get better opportunities to gain time off from work. Like CSFD, CFRS provides opportunities for its members to take leave after the initial leave selection process is completed.

Leawood Fire Department (LFD), Leawood, Kansas has a seniority based program similar to CFRS with two differences. First, leave must be taken in 24-hour blocks and they only allow two personnel to be scheduled off during the leave selection period (Leawood Fire Department [LFD], 2006). However, LFD allows members to take leave on a daily basis, subject to the approval of the shift commander, if staffing allows.

Another interesting approach for providing opportunities to fire department members is found in Washington Fire Department’s (WFD), Washington, Indiana policy. It uses the hire date of each employee regardless of rank, but uses a chart with a fixed number of days (24 hour) available for vacation based on length of employment. For example, members with less than 2
years of service receive 3 vacation days, members with 2 to 10 years of service receive 7 vacation days, members with 10 to 15 years of service receive 8 vacation days, and so forth (Washington Fire Department [WFD], 2007). WFD’s policy is a use-it-or-lose-it one. Members are not allowed to carry forward any vacation days from one year to the next.

A research topic of the ARP that requires exploring is what policies and procedures have been implemented by other fire departments and agencies to increase leave opportunities for its members. Information on this issue was hard to find from the traditional resources. Information gathered generally came from the policies of fire departments reviewed.

One concept that provides opportunities for members to gain time off from work is known as “trades”. LFD explains the benefit provided to employees who trade time by “having another equally qualified person assume their duties when they might not otherwise be able to take time off from work due to Fire Department staffing requirements” (LFD, 2000, p. 1). This concept is further supported by CFD, CSFD, and WFD by adding that the “trade” time—also referred to “swap” time—is the responsibility of the trading partners to resolve when discrepancies develop (CFRS, 2007; CSFD, 2001b; & WFD, 2007). Also, penalties are imposed for failing to show up for duty.

Another leave concept revealed in the literature review is a departure from the traditional concepts of separate vacation and sick leave. In this type of system, the person is given a specific number of days to be used as a unified bank or paid-time-off (PTO) when needed or wanted by the employee (Harroch, 2006). Hayes (2003) points out that the concept of PTO is not universally accepted and provides information which indicates the reductions in absenteeism from PTO programs are not impressive.
Another research topic explored in the literature review is the current policies addressing the use of leave by the members of VBFD. Three significant local documents are available for review. The *City of Virginia Beach Annual and Personal Leave Policy* (Appendix A) for the employees in the City of Virginia Beach (City of Virginia Beach, 2006a). The second is the *Virginia Beach Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures* for the employees in the fire department (Virginia Beach Fire Department [VBFD], 2002). The pertinent sections of this document are SOP SS/HR 2.04, Leave (Appendix B). The third is the *City of Virginia Beach Sick Leave Policy* (Appendix C) for all city employees (City of Virginia Beach, 2006b).

Finally, data from the electronic records of VBFD through its TeleStaff™ program (VBFD, 2007) is examined for information relating to leave use on the fire department.

**Literature Review Summary**

The literature review provides much information pertinent to this ARP. Information is found that leave in all of its forms, with the exception of Family and Medical Leave, is a benefit and not required by FSLA requirements (Harroch, 2006). Information from several sources indicates that good benefits are important for recruitment, employee satisfaction and employee retention (Beam and McFadden, 2001; Freyss, 2004; & Harroch, 2006).

The literature review reveals that staffing requirements of fire departments places a strain on the ability of members to gain time off from work. Information from sources indicate how these departments manage leave usage against staffing needs, however, more information in the form of convenience samples is need to complete the research in this area.

Finally, the literature review has information addressing the question of what policies and procedures have been implemented to increase paid-time-off opportunities to the workforce.
Together, the above information provides enough information to proceed with this research project.

**Procedures**

**Research Methodology**

This research project utilizes action research to investigate the issue of identifying patterns of leave usage, and developing recommendations for VBFD. The research consists of a review of published literature, information from Internet sources, and information gained from the electronic databases of VBFD. Internal and external convenience survey instruments are used to gather information from fire departments in cities comparable to VBFD. The purpose of the research is to identify patterns of leave usage by fire department members and to develop recommendations to address the opportunities for the members to use vacation leave.

**Literature Review**

The research for this project began in February 2007 at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Additional research continued at both the Central and Municipal Reference libraries in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Informational sources for the literature review included periodicals, books, Internet sites, information obtained from Applied Research Projects (ARPs) of other Executive Fire Officer (EFO) participants, data collected from other departments, and data obtained from the electronic databases of VBFD. The literature review focuses on sources of information addressing the standards for providing leave/vacation time, identification of leave use patterns, management of staffing and leave demands, and recommendations for providing time off from work to employees.
Identifying and Addressing

Cathy Anderson, Human Resource Manager with the Virginia Beach Fire Department, provided initial information to this researcher regarding vacation policy, its history, and the relevance of paid-time-off to today’s employers (C. Anderson, personal communication, March 13, 2007). Anderson’s input provided a baseline of information from which this research proceeded.

In an interview with Donna Aydlette, Administrative Assistant to the District Chief’s Office of VBFD, Aydlette provided this researcher with an initial overview of how VBFD tracks attendance, leave, and overtime costs (D. Aydlette, personal communication, July 24, 2007). In the discussion with Aydlette, she agreed to review the information available through VBFD databases and extract pertinent information for this research project.

Survey Instrument

One of the first objectives of the research is to establish what other cities were doing to identify and address the issue of leave usage and staffing. An email (Appendix D) indicating the purpose of the convenience survey and the link to the site where the external survey (Appendix E) was located were sent to fire departments of 10 cities or counties comparable to Virginia Beach’s size and demographics. The cities and counties include, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Hampton, Virginia; Mesa, Arizona; Newport News, Virginia; Norfolk, Virginia; Richmond, Virginia; Chesterfield County, Virginia; Hanover County, Virginia; Henrico County, Virginia; and Prince William County, Virginia. These cities/counties are used by other departments in Virginia Beach to compare Virginia Beach’s business practices. Seven of the 10 surveys were completed and returned.
The external survey was developed by this author on the Internet site SurveyMonkey.com and consisted of 20 questions. In general, the questions inquire about what the department policies are concerning granting and managing leave, minimum staffing guidelines, and identification of any trends of leave demand by members. Questions also inquired about how effective the respondents felt the record keeping process of their department was in documenting time and attendance issues. The respondents’ answers were collected, categorized and analyzed by SurveyMonkey.com and the results were downloaded to the author’s computer. Comments were also recorded for consideration and analysis. The survey responses are available in Appendix F.

The internal survey was, again, developed by this author at SurveyMonkey.com and distributed to VBFD’s 375 members of the Operations Branch. An email (Appendix G) indicating the purpose of the convenience survey and the link to the site where the internal survey (Appendix H) was located was sent to the members of VBFD. The survey was structured in a manner to ensure the respondents’ confidentiality. Thirteen questions were posed to the respondents inquiring about their actions, attitudes and beliefs in how they use vacation time and other leave methods, shift work schedules, and trading of time among members. The respondents’ answers were collected, categorized and analyzed by SurveyMonkey.com and the results were downloaded to the author’s computer. Comments were also recorded for consideration and analysis. The survey responses are available in Appendix I; however, the comments are too numerous for collation by this researcher and inclusion to the ARP. The aggregate response of comments is available electronically to readers of this ARP by this author. Of the 375 surveys sent, 103 were returned to the internet site.
Data Review

Another important objective of this research project is to determine if the attendance records of VBFD can be used to identify patterns of leave usage on the department. Donna Aydlette, Administrative Assistant to the District Chief’s Office of VBFD, provided this researcher with a database of the leave and overtime use of fire department members specifically designed for this purpose (D. Aydlette, personal communication, July 24, 2007). The database included the records from July 1, 2005 to June 31, 2007 to coincide with the fiscal year. Researching this information required numerous meetings with Aydlette to discuss information provided by the computer database between August 6, 2007 and August 17, 2007.

Assumptions and Limitations

The information taken from the literature review in this project is taken as reliable. It is assumed the respondents of both convenient surveys understood the questions asked, and their responses are factual and represent their department’s true policies and their own individual opinions. Also, it is assumed that the cities and counties used by the City of Virginia Beach for comparative purposes represent valuable information for this research project. It is also assumed the electronic time and attendance records available to this researcher are accurate and representative of the actual reported attendance of the department that reflect the use of leave and overtime.

A limiting factor for this ARP is the small sample size used to determine what other cities and counties, comparable to Virginia Beach’s demographics and size, are doing to address leave/vacation usage on their fire departments. Those particular cities and counties are used by other departments within the City of Virginia Beach when doing comparisons and bring credibility to this research.
The most limiting factor of this research is that the method of tracking leave demands and the associated patterns of use are difficult to extract from the database. There is some difficulty in calculating the events since VBFD allows leave to be taken in as little as one-hour time frames. However, averaging the number of events helps to formulate a standard of leave usage which can provide information pertinent for this research. Also, it is assumed that the percentage of record keeping is high enough to consider the records and database as factual for the purposes of this ARP.

Finally, this research is limited by this researcher’s lack of technical expertise in evaluating electronic databases and performing statistical analysis on the findings of those evaluations. A more detailed data analysis may provide a correlation between leave use opportunities and the occurrence of sick leave usage that would have been beneficial to this project. As such the data review is limited to identifying trends of leave usage rather than delve deeply into the statistical analysis of the leave records.

Definition of Terms

**Category One Leave Slots.** Slots used for annual/vacation leave, compensatory leave, and birthday leave.

**Category Two Leave Slots.** Slots used for vacancies, long-term injuries, physicals, meeting, temporary duty assignments (TDAs), military leave, training, realignment, and any other demands on manning,

**Emergency Leave Slots.** Slots used for sick leave and family and medical leave. Also referred to as E-bodies.

**PTO.** Paid time off. Refers to a leave system that does not distinguish between vacation, sick, or other types of leave.
**EmpID.** A unique VBFD tracking number assigned all department members.

**Telestaff.** A commercially available software product designed to provide automatic staffing, record keeping, and report writing functions.

### Results

One area of concern to VBFD management was how its members were beginning to use inappropriate methods of leave in order to obtain a day off from work. The problem was vacation leave opportunities for the members in the VBFD were decreasing, causing some members to use sick leave inappropriately. This increased the administrative overhead for scheduling staffing and increased the overtime required in order to maintain deployable forces. While the daily attendance reports provided evidence of high occurrences of sick leave use, the problem has not been investigated to determine the nature and scope of the issue.

The results of the research project are found from the literature review, information gained from the electronic databases of VBFD, and information gained from internal and external convenience survey instruments. They were sent to members of VBFD and ten cities/counties with fire departments comparable to VBFD.

### Answers to Individual Research Questions

The combined results of the literature review, both the internal and external surveys, and a review of the time and attendance records of VBFD are used to address the research questions.

**Research Question 1.** What standards from associations and governmental agencies exist for giving members leave opportunities?

The research finds vacation, sick and other paid-time-off arrangements are provided by employers as a benefit to the employee. Paid leave is a common benefit offered by employers because employers see these benefits as a method to retain employees once hired (Mathias and
Jackson, 2003). The fact that all types of paid-time-off and other leave benefits are not mandated by law, but provided to employees was originally learned from Cathy Anderson, Human Resource Manager with the City of Virginia Beach Fire Department (C. Anderson, personal communication, March 13, 2007).

The results of the literature review support that leave benefits are not mandated by law but provided since they are important for recruitment, employee satisfaction and employee retention (Beam and McFadden, 2001; Freyss, 2004; & Harroch, 2006). Mandated benefits prescribed by law include social security, worker’s compensation, unemployment compensation and family and medical leave; however, paid-time-off benefits are generally a matter of agreement between the employer and the employee (Harroch, 2006).

More and more members of the workforce are demanding time off from work. Research provided that employers provide vacation leave, often referred to as annual leave, on an accrual basis according to the employee’s length of service (EBRI, 2005). EBRI found that the average annual/vacation leave days per length of service are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Vacation Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After the first year</td>
<td>13 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 10 years</td>
<td>19 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 20 years</td>
<td>22 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 30 year</td>
<td>23 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sick leave is another paid-time-off benefit offered to employees. The literature review had much information regarding this topic—much of it concerning abuse. EBRI (2005) indicates state and local employees accrued an average of 13 to 17 days of sick leave per year. Employees generally are allowed to accumulate unused sick leave from year to year; however, some programs place a cap on the amount accumulated or compensate the employee for unused leave at their time of retirement (EBRI, 2005).

Sick leave abuse is becoming a major problem for employers, including fire departments. More and more employees in all areas of employment are changing their attitudes about sick leave and now see it as an earned benefit. Sources reviewed reflected the reason for sick leave use are (a) personal illness, (b) family issues, (c) personal needs, (d) entitlement mentality, and (e) stress from the job (CCH Survey, 2007; Freyss, 2004; & Mathis and Jackson, 2003). Appropriate sick leave, however, provides an important function in today’s world as employers want their employees to stay home in times of illness (Smith, 2003).

In review, the literature review indicates there is no legal precedence for providing leave of any type, except family and medical leave, to employees. It is merely a benefit provided by employers.

**Research Question 2.** How have other fire departments and agencies identified patterns of leave usage in their organizations?

Results for how fire departments and agencies identified patterns of leave usage in their organizations are derived from the literature review and the external survey responses. Initially, most of the information regarding identifying patterns of leave usage focuses on identifying sick leave abuse trends and patterns. Also, information returned from commercial software programs that provide staffing and attendance functions including identifying patterns of use.
ARPs from participants of the Executive Fire Officer Program reported using a program called TeleStaff™ which they used to track their respective organization’s trends and usage of leave, particularly sick leave (Hayes, 2003; Johnson, 2002; & Parker, 2003). The results on the use of TeleStaff™ from these sources provides further guidance for this research to continue since VBFD also uses Telestaff™.

Organizations also use internal tracking methods to identify patterns of leave usage as well. Clack (2001) utilizes a combination of computerized analysis of his department’s sick leave records to identify trends and patterns of sick leave usage. Clack’s results include the following trends of sick leave use: (a) increased sick leave use on weekends and holidays, (b) the use of sick leave to attend to personal business, (c) use of sick leave as revenge against unpopular administrative policy, and (d) supplementing existing leave scheduled for vacations (Clack, 2001, p. 18).

The results from the literature review for this research question emphasizes the importance of identifying patterns and trends to public safety agencies. Orrick points out that good record keeping is essential to effectively manage leave and ensure compliance with policies (Orrick, 2007). Creating tables from simple methods that record leave activity will provide information on trends and patterns of usage.

Several of the questions from the external survey to the cities comparable to Virginia Beach are relevant to this research question. The results of the information from the survey helps put in perspective the issue for this ARP.

Survey question eight asks the respondents how their departments document attendance and leave records. Also, the respondents are asked to note the use of specific computer software if applicable. The responses are included in Table 2.
Table 2

Method Used to Document Leave Use by City/County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield County, VA</td>
<td>TeleStaff, a software program and the company officer is responsible for maintaining records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton, VA</td>
<td>Weekly attendance records, annual, and sick leave balances are maintained by supervisors. Information emailed to payroll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico, VA</td>
<td>In-house database system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport News, VA</td>
<td>Daily time sheets electronically submitted to Department of Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk, VA</td>
<td>TeleStaff and PeopleSoft, a software program that manages the payroll of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William County, VA</td>
<td>TeleStaff, employee maintains own record that is checked and approved by the supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>In-house database system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another question relevant to research question two is question nine, which asked if the respondents felt the record keeping system of their department is adequate to document the attendance and leave of their employees. Five of the respondents replied that their system is adequate—some interesting comments from the survey were Chesterfield has a staffing office to facilitate the documentation and Norfolk enjoys the additional benefit of running queries on each employee. Two departments, Hampton and Richmond indicated their systems were inadequate
for their needs. Hampton added that their pen and paper system was cumbersome, but they are in the process of purchasing a computerized leave and attendance program.

Survey question ten asks if the responding fire departments have experienced identifiable trends or patterns of leave demand by their members. All responding departments indicated they have. Survey question eleven asks what patterns or trends had been noted by the responding departments. The results from the departments on those patterns are: (a) people close to retirement, (b) FMLA requests, (c) Wednesdays and weekends, (d) first and last day of the work period, (e) summer and holiday seasons, and (f) hunting season. Each respondent’s patterns can be found in Appendix J.

Survey question twelve requests if the departments experienced inappropriate use of leave, such as employees using sick leave or FMLA in order to have off. Six respondents of the seven cities/counties that returned the survey indicated they had. One respondent indicated that their city/county had not.

Survey question thirteen inquires what methods have the departments used to identify and document the abuse. The six cities/counties which responded to the question provided information found listed in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hampton, Virginia</td>
<td>No response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico, Virginia</td>
<td>Intuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport News, Virginia</td>
<td>Validation and verification of health care provider certificates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk, Virginia</td>
<td>Using TeleStaff to document leave requests, review of leave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
identifying and addressing denials versus sick leave, and overtime versus sick leave.

Prince William County, VA  Review of employee’s calendar and leave balances records.
Richmond, Virginia  In-house leave records are reviewed.

Another survey question relevant to this research question came from question fourteen, which inquires what patterns/trends of leave abuse were noted. Six of the respondents indicated that the patterns were the same as found in Appendix J. Hampton revealed that they had not looked into the trends of abuse. Norfolk added that they had seen trends before and after vacation times as well.

A review of the results for research question two reveals other researchers and departments have used computer analysis, supervisor attention, and manual documentation to establish patterns of leave usage on their departments. The trends/patterns of leave usage identified in the research are as follows:

1. Summer vacations.
2. Holidays.
3. Seasonal activities.
4. Use of sick leave before or after holidays.
5. Use of sick leave to avoid job assignments.
6. Use of sick leave on the first or last day of a work cycle.
7. Inappropriate leave usage on specific days of the week based of shift schedules.
8. Increased use of sick leave prior to retirement.
9. The use of sick leave due to denials of vacation/annual leave.
10. Increased use of inappropriate leave during specific seasons of the year such as hunting season.

This significance of this research question to VBFD is leave records for department members are available, but developing analytical reports for supervisors are lacking.

Research Question 3. How do other fire departments and agencies manage leave usage against staffing needs?

Several methods to staff fire department resources so personnel are ready for firefighting and other emergencies are available from the literature review and the external survey. Freeman (2002) indicates that proper staffing balances costs with the need for adequate number of firefighters to accomplish the mission. Several of the shift models to staff fire departments include: (a) 24 hours on followed by 48 hours off, (b) 10/14 where two shifts work a day and night rotation, and (c) a 21-day cycle with a combination of days (24 hours) on followed by differing days off (Freeman, 2002).

Overtime is becoming an increasing method to help offset leave usage and ensure staffing levels are maintained. Johnson, Mueller, and Parker have completed ARPs discussing the issue of overtime usage to offset sick leave abuse. All three of their departments utilize overtime to hire back personnel to meet the demand of their respective fire departments (Johnson, 2002; Mueller, 2002, and Parker, 2003). The alternative of not funding overtime for staffing is a reduced service delivery and increased response times (Clack 2001). The ARP provided by Hayes (2003) reveals that Tulsa (Oklahoma) Fire Department places units out of service when vacancies occur during the shift.

Several of the questions from the external survey to the cities comparable to Virginia Beach are relevant to this research question. Survey question four asks the responding agency if
their department has a minimum staffing policy. All seven respondents indicated they have minimum staffing levels. Question five of the survey seeks how the department manages staffing shortfalls. All seven respondents use overtime. However, Richmond Fire Department adds that they are experiencing the need to “brownout” companies and is considering implementing a pool/part-time position program to offset the overtime expenditures. Hampton asks for volunteer part-time members to fill the shortfall, and, if necessary, call in members on their Kelly day (a scheduled day off with pay) on overtime.

Survey question seventeen asks the responding departments to describe their shift working schedule. The results from the seven departments indicate that a 21-day cycle of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday work days is popular and supports the results of the literature review. Other respondents work 24 hours on duty followed by 48 hours off duty. A listing of each city/county work schedule can be found in Appendix K.

In review the literature indicates that staffing an organization requires balancing costs with the need for adequate number of firefighters to accomplish the mission (Freeman, 2002). Overtime is a method often employed by organizations. Different work schedules also exist to accomplish these demands.

**Research Question 4.** What policies and procedures exist for giving employees leave opportunities of other fire departments?

The literature review and the external survey provide the results for research question four. Survey questions one, two, and three asks respondents if they have a policy regarding leave to its members; where is the policy, if they have one, found; and what types of leave is included in the policies. All seven of the departments responded that they indeed have such policies for (a)
annual/vacation, (b) sick, (c) military, (d) funeral, (e) compensatory, and (f) family and medical leave to name a few. They all also indicated their policies were located in the employee’s handbook, on the internet site for their city or department, or their City’s Personnel Manual.

The literature review provided results to this research question that mirrors what the external convenience survey revealed as well. The literature review from the College Station (Texas), Columbia (South Carolina), Leawood (Kansas), and Washington (Indiana) fire departments detail how their members are afforded leave by policy (CSFD, 2001a; CFRS, 2005; LFD, 2006; & WFD, 2007). These departments’ policy is based on members having a period of time to select their vacation schedules in advance through a round robin approach. CSFD uses a seniority based system that uses the employee’s hire date to create a list (2001a). CFRS creates its list based on rank then seniority (2005).

LFD has a seniority based program similar to CFRS with two differences. First, leave must be taken in 24-hour blocks and they allow only two personnel to be scheduled off during the leave selection period (LFD, 2006). However, LFD allows members to take leave on a daily basis, subject to the approval of the shift commander, if staffing allows.

WFD has a unique policy for giving members leave that differs from most of the literature review and external survey. The previous departments’ policies indicate that leave is accrued by an hourly rate based on length of service (CSFD, 2001a; CFRS, 2005; LFD, 2006; & WFD, 2007). WFD has a seniority based system using the employee’s hire date to establish a list or “pecking order” for vacation selection. However, members receive a block of days based on their service time. The policy requires the employee to use the blocks of days or lose it at the end of the selection period (WFD, 2007). The leave policy indicates that leave accrual is kept at
manageable levels. This result provides this researcher with some information that requires further research at a later timeframe.

The leave policy for VBFD is found in *Virginia Beach Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)*, SS/HR 2.04 (Appendix B) and is the main document addressing how department members leave. The policy establishes the types of leave available to members and how to request the appropriate leave (VBFD, 2002).

In addition to VBFD’s SOP, the *City of Virginia Beach Annual and Personal Leave Policy* also addresses leave in Policy Number 3.01 (Appendix A). It is a benefit extended to all City employees and provides results in how VBFD can accrue and use all leave benefits (City of Virginia Beach, 2006a).

The final local document that affects members of VBFD is *City of Virginia Beach Sick Leave Policy*, Policy Number 3.10 (Appendix C). This policy provides guidance on how sick leave is accrued and used. It also references the procedures for employees abusing the use of sick leave (City of Virginia Beach, 2006b).

A review of the results for question four reveals that there are policies for providing leave to members. There are many leave types offered to employees, but most types appear universal to most fire departments, including VBFD. Different methods of obtaining leave are revealed and provide much information to this research project.

**Research Question 5.** What policies or procedures have been implemented by other fire departments and agencies to increase leave opportunities for its members?

The literature review and external survey provide limited results on what policies or procedures have been implemented by other fire departments and agencies to *increase* leave opportunities.
One concept that provides opportunities for members to gain time off from work is known as “trades.” LFD explains the benefit provided to employees who trade time by “having another equally qualified person assume their duties when they might not otherwise be able to take time off from work due to Fire Department staffing requirements” (LFD, 2000, p. 1). This concept is further supported by CFD, CSFD, and WFD by adding that the “trade” time—also referred to “swap” time—is the responsibility of the trading partners to resolve when discrepancies develop (CFRS, 2007; CSFD, 2001b; & WFD, 2007). Also, penalties are imposed for failing to show up for duty. The response from the external survey to question six regarding “trades” supports the results of the literature review. All seven respondents indicated that they allow “trades” among their members which gives them more opportunity to get a desired day off.

Another leave concept revealed in the literature review is a departure from the traditional concepts of separate vacation and sick leave. In this type of system, referred to as paid-time-off (PTO), the person is given a specific number of days—regardless of type—that can be used when needed or wanted by the employee (Harroch, 2006). Hayes, however, points out that the concept of PTO is not universally accepted and provides information which indicates the reductions in absenteeism from PTO programs are not impressive (2006).

Finally, question eighteen from the external survey provides results of the impact of work schedules for leave usage and any identifiable trends. The question asks if the respondents feel their work schedule contributes to inappropriate use of leave, and question nineteen asks to provide comments if it does. Of the seven respondents, Chesterfield County, Hampton, Henrico County and Newport News indicate that their respective schedules have no impact on inappropriate use of leave. This result is interesting to this research and requires evaluation of their work schedules. Norfolk, Prince William County, and Richmond indicate their respective
schedules do contribute to inappropriate use of leave. Norfolk finds that their schedule has produced a pattern of inappropriate leave usage on Wednesdays so members can achieve eight days off. Also using inappropriate leave on Mondays or Fridays will give employees another five or eight day break depending on which day leave is taken. Prince William County indicates that their work schedule of long work days and work weeks produce inappropriate leave usage as well. Richmond provided no comment to the question.

The results of this research question indicate that trades, paid-time-off, and shift schedules provide opportunities for members to obtain leave. However, the results also indicate an opportunity for members to use inappropriate leave to gain more time off than the policies allow.

**Research Question 6.** What are the leave usage patterns of Virginia Beach Fire Department members?

The results of this research question were obtained from the administrative assistant in the District Chief’s Office. She provided this researcher with a comprehensive spreadsheet derived from data retrieve from the department’s attendance and leave tracking program called TeleStaff™. The data was converted into another database using the Microsoft’s Access program and customized by the administrative assistant to fit the needs of this research. The spreadsheet contains 24 months of data from July 1, 2005 until June 30, 2007 which corresponds with the fiscal year of VBFD. By separating out pertinent data from the master spreadsheet into smaller specific queries and reports, information about the leave patterns of VBFD can be established. The research into the data began by using the results from the literature review and both the internal and external surveys to establish a list of leave demand patterns.
Specific days of the week

Information from the literature review indicates that there are certain days of the week in high demand. The research of the database reveals that Friday and Saturday are in peak demand for category one leave (annual/vacation). The rest of the week has consistent usage patterns with little variances between them. Actual values for category one leave from the research are as follows: Sunday, 1119; Monday, 1001; Tuesday, 1033; Wednesday, 1041; Thursday, 1118; Friday, 1343; and Saturday, 1244.

One result from the research on sick leave usage, however, provides an astonishing fact. The usage of sick leave is almost that of annual leave. For example, Monday’s category one leave occurrence (1001 events) is 90 events ahead of Monday’s 911 sick leave events. Sick leave usage on Fridays and Mondays indicate the highest use, while the rest of the week indicates consistency. Sunday has the lowest usage by 174 events.

The results from the database indicate the category two leave events are much lower than the other two categories, however, vacancies are not calculated in the database which significantly skews the appearance of use. The findings of category one and sick leave are consistent with the findings of other departments. The results are graphically illustrated in Appendix L.

Specific months of the year

The findings of the literature review and the external survey indicated specific months of the year have high leave usage. After a review of the data on monthly usage, the results are that high use of category one (vacation) leave is indicated during the summer months and December. However, the highest month of category one leave is April. This is inconsistent with the findings of others regarding annual leave usage. The lowest demand of leave usage occurs on September,
October, and January. Category two leave results indicate a steady use pattern with a slight dip in usage occurring in June and July.

Results of the review for sick leave usage are interesting. The results indicate a pattern of usage correlating with the use of category one leave with two exceptions. First, sick leave usage deviates from the trend during the months of April and August. The other difference occurs during September, October, and November. The sick leave data indicates a declining trend while category one leave shows an increasing pattern of usage. In fact, the month of September outpaces category one leave usage.

The results of leave usage indicate that category one leave is high during summer months and sick leave use patterns follow the trend of category one leave except in the fall months where sick leave use decreases. A graph depicting these patterns can be found in Appendix M.

**Sick leave use by years of service**

An assessment of the leave usage as it relates to years of service in the department provides predictable and unpredictable results for VBFD. The length of service is broken down into five-year groups and dividing the number of members in each group to create an average of use for each type of leave. Predictably, the results of category one leave indicate that less senior members are using less leave than their senior counterparts. Members with 16 or more years on the job are using category one leave at a rate of two and one-half times that of the 0-5 group.

The results for category two leave indicate the opposite pattern of category one leave, except for the 16-20 group. Two groups usage rates are moderately lower that the other groups for unknown reasons.

Examination of the sick leave usage produces an unpredictable pattern. While the results indicate an increasing use of sick leave as members lengthen their years of service, the 0-5 group
uses more sick leave than they use category one leave. However, the 21-25 group uses the most sick leave. The actual research findings by are shown in Table 4. The table represents an average use of leave per firefighter over the 2005-2007 period. A graph indicating the trends is included in Appendix N.

Table 4

Average Leave Events per Firefighter by Years of Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Sick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>9.68</td>
<td>14.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 Years</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>15.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 Years</td>
<td>26.70</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>13.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 Years</td>
<td>27.98</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>16.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Results

Interviews.

Results from the research include information gained from interviews with people knowledgeable about leave policies, how VBFD tracks attendance and leave, and standard procedures for staffing VBFD. An interview with Cathy Anderson, Human Resource Manager with the VBFD (C. Anderson, personal communication, March 13, 2007) resulted in the information that leave is a benefit by the City and is not mandated by any local, state or federal law.

An interview with Deputy Chief Steve Cover (S. Cover, personal communication, February 27, 2007) resulted in the impact of reducing the category one leave slots as a result of an average of seven vacancies per shift due to retirements and the lengthy training time of new
recruits. In addition, overtime expenditures focused mainly on hire backs for staffing ALS providers.

An interview with Donna Aydlette, Administrative Assistant for VBFD District Chief’s Office (D.Aydlette, personal communication, July, 24, 2007) resulted in her knowledge, skills and abilities providing a database of VBFD leave usage and overtime records for this research. The database included VBFD leave record information from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007. These timeframes reflect the City of Virginia Beach two consecutive fiscal years.

Internal Survey.

An internal survey was developed by this author at SurveyMonkey.com and distributed to VBFD’s 375 members of the Operations Branch. 103 respondents completed the internal survey. The results of the thirteen questions provided insight for the author to develop queries from the database of the information gathered from VBFD leave and attendance records. The respondents’ answers were confidential in the hope that their answers were candid and honest. Question two of the survey inquires whether or not the department affords the members enough opportunities to take leave. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents indicated they had enough opportunities.

Survey question one provided results on the service length time that the respondents had with VBFD. This question provided a foundation for collating the survey data in order to answer research question six. The results of the respondents by percentage are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of VBFD Service</th>
<th>0-5 Years</th>
<th>6-10 Years</th>
<th>11-15 Years</th>
<th>16-20 Years</th>
<th>Over 20 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internal survey questions three and four provides results in determining the hardest timeframes to obtain leave in VBFD. Results include that Saturday (30.9%) is the hardest day for obtaining leave, followed by Friday (21.7%), and Sunday (18.6%). It is interesting to note that the respondents ranked the weekend as hard to get leave with 60.8% providing the results. Also, the results of the comments indicate summer and holiday seasons were difficult to receive leave opportunities.

Results for questions five and six involving staffing indicate the desire of the respondents to see VBFD develop a policy to have dedicated leave slots regardless of the staffing implications. Of the 103 respondents, 79.6% indicated this desire. When asked whether companies should be placed out of service to accommodate leave requests even if there was no overtime available, 88.4% indicated in the negative. The result of the questions indicate that members want time off from work, but are not willing to sacrifice service delivery to obtain it.

Another result from the survey indicate that some members have abused leave policies in an effort to obtain leave. Question eight asks the respondents what actions they take when vacation leave is denied. The results are found in Table 6.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Report to Work</th>
<th>Use Comp Time</th>
<th>Use Sick/FMLA</th>
<th>Trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>31.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, when asked what reasons did the respondents have for using sick leave, 22.8% (24 respondents) indicate they use it because they were unable to obtain leave. This information conflicts with the results of question eight.

The results of research question five indicate trades are an option for increasing time off from work. Internal survey questions ten and eleven investigates the respondents’ opinions of trading opportunities in VBFD. The results indicate that 88.2% of the respondents use trades to offset leave denials, and 81.6% believe the trade policy has flexibility that meets their needs. The results of the comments, however, indicated that the policy should be even less restrictive.

Finally, survey twelve inquires whether a change in work schedule that offers a four or five day break each month would alleviate leave denials and insure the respondents’ personal needs for time off are met. The results of the question by the respondents (47.6%) indicated a change in the current work schedule would. However, 26.2% of the respondents did not believe a change would help and another 26.2% were not sure either way.

The internal survey results provided this researcher ample information to proceed with this ARP. The answers that the responding members gave support the literature review information about leave usage patterns, abuse of leave, leave opportunities and policy guidance in order to give employees the maximum opportunities for receiving time off from work.

**Final Product.**

A result of this research is a final product that consists of a PowerPoint presentation designed to provide information about VBFD leave use trends and the effect it is having on the employees of VBFD. The presentation will be presented to the senior staff of VBFD to increase the awareness of the issue. The identified trends, thus the focus of the presentation, are a result of the information gained through the research of the VBFD leave records. Additional information
gained in the literature review and both internal and external surveys is used to indicate the need to provide time off for VBFD employees in included in the presentation. The PowerPoint is found in Appendix O.

Discussion

The first research question asks what standards from associations and governmental agencies exist for giving members leave opportunities. Information indicates that leave such as vacation, sick, and other paid-time-off benefits are matters between the employer and employee (Harroch, 2006). Paid leave is a common benefit offered by employees and VBFD offers much of the same benefits that most public safety agencies offer. Benefits offered to employees are done so in order to keep them from going to work someplace else (Mathias and Jackson, 2003). Researched information from Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) indicates that, on average, employees are accruing enough vacation and sick leave to give them the opportunity to take leave (EBRI, 2005). Additionally, taking vacation leave is becoming a necessity for employees to recharge themselves and become more productive at work (Liddick, 2006).

For VBFD, the leave policy *Virginia Beach Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)*, SS/HR 2.04 (Appendix B) provides the employee the ability to take leave, but the demands of staffing the department has restricted that opportunity. This could cause members to burn out and leave the organization and find to work at another department that has more opportunities for leave. The policy indicates that leave of less than 12 hours can only be requested one month in advance. The internal survey revealed that the policy restricts those employees attending college and should be reconsidered in order to provide more leave opportunities.
Also, employees may continue to use sick leave as a method to gain leave since the culture of VBFD is to ignore patterns of abuse. VBFD’s policy *City of Virginia Beach Sick Leave Policy*, Policy Number 3.10 (Appendix C) indicates that supervisors can require an employee to bring in medical certification at any time; however, the organization does not monitor how effective the policy is enforced.

Research question two seeks how other fire departments and agencies have identified patterns of leave usage in their organizations. Several ARPs from participants of the Executive Fire Officer Program reported using a program called TeleStaff™ which they used to track their respective organization’s trends and usage of leave, particularly sick leave (Hayes, 2003; Johnson, 2002; & Parker, 2003). Others methods to identify patterns of use include developing in-house tracking methods that can reveal trends from charts and graphs (Orrick, 2007 & Clack, 2001).

From the research provided and the survey results from the external survey of cities/counties comparable to VBFD, a list of leave use patterns is established and used to research VBFD’s patterns. The trends/patterns of leave usage identified in the research are as follows:

1. Summer vacations.
2. Holidays.
3. Seasonal activities.
4. Use of sick leave before or after holidays.
5. Use of sick leave to avoid job assignments.
6. Use of sick leave on the first or last day of a work cycle.
7. Inappropriate leave usage on specific days of the week based of shift schedules.
8. Increased use of sick leave prior to retirement.

9. The use of sick leave due to denials of vacation/annual leave.

10. Increased use of inappropriate leave during specific seasons of the year such as hunting season.

This significance of this research question to VBFD is leave records for department members are available, but developing analytical reports for supervisors are lacking. Also, VBFD retains a report of the amount of leave usage on a daily basis, but does not collate the information into any trends for evaluation. This research project has impressed upon the author the need for more detailed analytical reports. This will benefit the department in determining how best to manage leave opportunities and staffing issues.

Research question three seeks how other fire departments and agencies manage leave usage against staffing needs. Several methods of staffing departments exist from the results of the external survey and literature. Several of the shift models to staff fire departments include: (a) 24 hours on followed by 48 hours off, (b) 10/14 where two shifts work a day and night rotation, and (c) a 21-day cycle with a combination of days (24 hours) on followed by differing days off (Freeman, 2002). These findings were also the result of the external survey sent to ten cities/counties comparable to VBFD.

External survey question seventeen asks the responding departments to describe their shift working schedule. The results from the seven departments indicate that a 21-day cycle of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday work days is popular. This schedule is popular because it has strings of days off arranged to benefit the employee’s time from work activities. Arranging schedules this way benefit the employee without measurably increasing the costs to the organization (Freeman, 2002). In this case, the schedule
has a five-day, a three-day, and a two-day break built into the 21-day cycle. The schedule that Newport News uses consist of one day on, one day off, one day on, one day off, one day on, four days off. This gives their employees four days twice in the 21-day cycle.

These two schedules appear to offer employees much more latitude to accomplish personal matters than VBFD’s one day on, two days off schedule. The implication to VBFD is that the internal survey question twelve revealed members were unsure if they preferred another schedule to theirs. The survey indicates that 47.6% of the respondents feel a four or five day break built into the schedule would meet their needs. The other 52.4% were either against or unsure whether a change would benefit them. This is interesting considering the majority of respondents were the more senior members.

Overtime is becoming a method to help balance the staffing versus leave issues facing most fire departments. Results from the research of several EFO participants reveal overtime is being used by fire departments to balance staffing shortages Johnson, 2002; Mueller, 2002, & Parker, 2003). Tulsa (Oklahoma) Fire Department provides the method used by departments that do not have overtime provisions by placing units out of service when vacancies occur (Hayes, 2003). The results of the VBFD survey indicate that the employees are not in favor of placing units out of service to meet staffing shortages. However, they do want dedicated leave slots available to them ensuring they can get time off when requested. This would most likely require overtime, move resources from other divisions to the Operations Branch, or place units out of service on a temporary basis—this is the case with RFD as they use a “brownout” system in extreme cases.

Fire departments must use different staffing levels to meet their needs plus balance the cost of staffing to provide the resources necessary for fighting structure fires and other
Identifying and Addressing emergencies (Freeman, 2002). For VBFD, the implication is that minimum staffing is a must, but how many units and where they are placed could be reconsidered based on a risk/benefit assessment.

The final area of discussion for this research is the topic of research question six; what are the leave usage patterns of Virginia Beach Fire Department members? The results of VBFD records show a high demand for vacation leave on Friday and Saturday. There is also a pattern of increased sick leave usage on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Members want the weekend off to be with their families. This is significant to VBFD since balancing the needs of employees’ vacation time off versus the staffing requirement of VBFD is driving some of the decisions to use sick leave (AllBusiness, 2007). Surveys and published information from the literature review provides the sentiment of today’s workforce regarding the use of sick leave. The results given for using sick leave is (a) personal illness, (b) family issues, (c) personal needs, (d) entitlement mentality, and (e) stress from the job (CCH Survey (2007); Fryss, 2004; & Mathis and Jackson, 2003). This is significant to VBFD since its policy expects members not to use sick leave other than for periods of illness (City of Virginia Beach, 2006b). By providing more opportunities for being off work, VBFD may reduce sick leave usage and the associated overtime costs. Further research into this possibility is recommended.

The monthly use of leave indicates high demand during the summer months and December. Findings from the external survey reveal the same information, however, VBFD records revealed that April was the highest month of usage for the two-year period for reasons unknown. This is also true for sick leave. Clack’s results from his computerized analysis of department sick leave records and internal survey produced a list of trends of sick leave use by fire department employees (Clack, 2001). His trends included increased sick leave use on
weekends and holidays and use of sick leave to attend to personal business. His findings are consistent with the records of VBFD. The review of sick leave for VBFD is significant because the use of sick leave appears to follow the demand of annual leave (category one).

The most significant result of the research is that VBFD must provide more opportunities for vacation leave to its members. The decision to reduce category one leave due to vacancies in the department is hurting the opportunity for members to receive time off during the shift. Options from the research and surveys are abundant for consideration. The trends and patterns of use indicate that members will get time off if necessary. Members who come to work as a result of leave denials are an element that has not been tracked, so the true impact of those missing opportunities has not been determined.

Recommendations

The research established that all types of leave are benefits to the employee. Most of them are offered as paid benefits. Even though the ability to accrue leave is established, getting time off from work has its challenges. Policies usually govern how members are to manage their leave, but fire departments, in particular, have the difficult task of maintaining minimum staffing levels. Employers want their employees to receive the time from work that is necessary to refresh them for the next day’s work.

The final product of this research is a PowerPoint presentation that will be presented to senior staff. It will provide an overview of the issue, data to support the issue, identified trends and patterns, and recommendations. Hopefully, this presentation will generate some dialogue and transcend into decisions for implementation. By doing so, VBFD may find solutions for providing more opportunities for members to gain leave or time off from work.
The research establishes patterns of leave usage, both appropriate and inappropriate, that VBFD needs to monitor more closely than in the past. VBFD records indicate high sick leave usage that paralleling the trends of annual leave, which implies members are using sick leave to receive a day off from work. Also, VBFD needs to review its policy of reducing category one leave slots due to vacancies created by retired members.

This researcher recommends VBFD implement a team of members to research the different shift schedule models that was presented in this ARP. The study should include all impacts of making a shift schedule change including, (a) determining if a string of days off will provide the necessary relief from work members want, (b) determining if a change in the schedule would create new high demand days that would cause the use of inappropriate leave, (c) what are the fiscal impacts of changing shifts, and (d) what potential benefits of changing the work schedule exist for VBFD and its members.

The second recommendation of this research is for VBFD to examine the feasibility of hiring part-time members to offset the overtime costs of recalling a full time member. Richmond is looking into this option and can provide VBFD with further data. Overtime costs are paid at the one and one-half time rate, and, for VBFD, considering part-time employees will reduce overtime, therefore possibly providing more opportunity for members to gain leave.

A third recommendation is for VBFD to develop more extensive reports to monitor the usage patterns of leave. These reports should be given to all levels of supervision in the organization ensuring an understanding of any issues or concerns that develops. The culture of VBFD regarding inappropriate use of sick leave has been to overlook it. By providing reports to the supervisors noting the overall leave use and documenting the trends identified in this research, awareness by the employees that the reports exists will help to deter any
inappropriateness. The research identified software programs such as TeleStaff—which is currently used by VBFD—and deserves further investigation of their capabilities.

A final recommendation is for other researchers who are considering studying the correlation of leave benefits and maintaining minimum staffing levels. This ARP sought only to identify patterns of leave usage by VBFD members and develop recommendations to address the opportunities for members to use vacation leave. Considering the scope of this project, other researchers should expand on the issue. More extensive research on the impacts of benefits and minimum staffing should be considered. The hope is to develop a national standard for ensuring adequate leave opportunities for fire departments, similar to the four-person staffing standard, which could be recommended to fire departments and city governments across the nation.
References


Parker, G.J. (2003). *Analysis of the impact on vacation usage on overtime expenditures within the Operations Division of the Fort Worth Fire Department*. Unpublished manuscript.


*Virginia Beach Fire Department database for leave usage* [Data file]. Virginia Beach, VA: Fire Department.

*Virginia Beach Fire Department strategic business plan*. July 2002.

1.0 PURPOSE:
To set forth guidelines under which annual and personal leave shall be credited, utilized, and recorded in accordance with the Code of the City of Virginia Beach.

2.0 DEFINITION:
Annual and personal leave is approved time off from work with pay for the purpose of vacation, personal reasons, etc.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY:
All full-time employees and all part-time permanent employees converted to part-time as of July 1, 1996 are eligible to accrue annual leave. All part-time employees, excluding those part-time permanent employees converted to part-time as of July 1, 1996, are eligible to accrue and use personal leave.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT:
4.1 Annual leave shall be earned at the appropriate rates specified in the Annual and Personal Leave Ordinance when an individual is employed in a pay status for an entire calendar month. Individuals employed with the City of Virginia Beach in a pay status for portions of a calendar month (excluding leave without pay and suspension time) shall earn annual leave on the following basis:

4.11 Individuals beginning employment after the first day of the month but prior to, or on, the fifteenth (15th) day of the month, and/or terminating employment after the fifteenth (15th) day but before the last day of the month, shall receive one-half the normal annual leave accrual rate for that month.

4.12 Individuals terminating employment prior to the fifteenth (15th) day of the month and/or beginning employment after the fifteenth (15th) day of the month shall not earn any annual leave for that month.
4.13 There shall be no pro-ration of annual leave for fractions less than one-half of the normal rate earned.

4.2 Individuals must be employed for the entire month either in a paid status or in a non-pay status for less than fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days or less in a calendar month in order to receive the normal monthly annual or personal leave accrual rate.

4.3 Individuals who are employed in a non-pay status (i.e., leave without pay or suspension without pay) for more than fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days in a calendar month shall not accrue one-half of the monthly portion of the annual or personal leave accrual rate for each fifteen (15) day period the employee is in a non-pay status. In other words, the employee will not receive annual or personal leave for each fifteen (15) consecutive calendar day period the employee is in a non-pay status.

4.4 All full-time and part-time permanent employees converted to part-time as of July 1, 1996 shall earn annual leave as follows:

4.41 All full-time employees or appointees who work forty (40) hours per week, excluding firefighters assigned to fifty-six (56) hour per week positions, shall be credited with:

4.411 Eight (8) hours per month for each month of employment having accrued the equivalent of less than five (5) years of full-time employment.

4.412 Ten (10) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of five (5) or more years, but less than ten (10) years, of full-time employment.

4.413 Twelve (12) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of ten (10) or more years, but less than fifteen (15) years, of full-time employment.

4.414 Fourteen (14) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of fifteen (15) or more years, but less than twenty (20) years, of full-time employment.

4.415 Sixteen (16) hours per month for each month of employment having accrued the equivalent of twenty (20) or more years of full-time employment.
4.42 All firefighters assigned to fifty-six (56) hour per week positions shall be credited with:

4.421 Eleven point two (11.2) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of less than five (5) years of full-time employment.

4.422 Fourteen (14) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of five (5) or more years, but less than ten (10) years, of full-time employment.

4.423 Sixteen point eight (16.8) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of ten (10) or more years, but less than fifteen (15) years, of full-time employment.

4.424 Nineteen point six (19.6) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of fifteen (15) or more years, but less than twenty (20) years, of full-time employment.

4.425 Twenty-two point four (22.4) hours per month for each month of employment for employees having accrued the equivalent of twenty (20) years or more of full-time employment.

4.43 The accrued annual leave balances of a firefighter transferred between a forty (40) hour per week position and a fifty-six (56) hour per week position, or vice versa, shall be converted on a proportionate basis so that the firefighter will maintain an equivalent number of accrued days of leave.

4.44 All part-time permanent employees converted to part time as of July 1, 1996 shall be credited with annual leave on a basis proportionate to that awarded full-time employees as set forth below:
### PART-TIME PERMANENT EMPLOYEES HIRED PRIOR TO JULY 1, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of hours worked per month</th>
<th>Six months, but less than five years (1,040 hours)</th>
<th>Five years but less than ten years (10,400 hours)</th>
<th>Ten years but less than fifteen years (20,800 hours)</th>
<th>Fifteen years but less than twenty years (31,200 hours)</th>
<th>20 years and over (41,600 hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 1/4</td>
<td>1 1/2</td>
<td>1 3/4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 1/2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-119</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 1/2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10 1/2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.45 Former full time temporary, part time temporary and part-time employees employed on or after July 1, 1996, will accrue a maximum of eight (8) hours personal leave per month prorated on the number of hours worked. (See Chart Below). Employees who have worked the equivalent of six (6) months (1,040 hours) may utilize accrued personal leave, with supervisory approval.

### PART-TIME EMPLOYEES HIRED AFTER JULY 1, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of hours worked per month</th>
<th>Personal leave hours accrued per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-39</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-79</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-119</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-159</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 and above</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Part-time permanent employees converted to part time as of to July 1, 1996 who convert to full-time status shall have all prior time worked in a part-time status credited towards probation, annual leave, service awards and merit increases. Employees converting from full-time status to part time status will no longer accrue annual leave; however, employees may use any accrued annual leave with supervisory approval. Former full-time temporary, part-time temporary
employees and employees hired on or after July 1, 1996 who convert from part-time status to full-time status will have their personal leave balance converted half each (50/50) to annual and sick leave.

4.51 The following schedule shall be used when calculating the proportionate period of full-time service a part-time permanent employee hired prior to July 1, 1996 would need in order to satisfy the required probationary period and to satisfy each five full-time year equivalent thereafter:

**TABLE 1. MONTHS OF SERVICE CREDIT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permanent Number of Scheduled Hours Worked per Week (Exclusive Proportionate of Overtime)</th>
<th>Varied Number of Amount of Full hours</th>
<th>Time Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Hours Worked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 9</td>
<td>1 - 39</td>
<td>1/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>40 - 79</td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>80 - 119</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>120 - 139</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 &amp; Above</td>
<td>140 &amp; Above</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 All full-time employees who have worked one full month may utilize accrued annual leave, with supervisory approval. Annual or personal leave shall be taken in increments of no less than one-half hour periods for all full-time and part-time employees, except that firefighters working a fifty-six (56) hour workweek shall be allowed to take annual leave in increments of eight-tenths (0.8) and six-tenths (0.6) hours. Employees taking annual or personal leave for a full workday shall be charged with leave for the actual number of hours they are regularly paid for having worked that day (exclusive of non-regularly scheduled overtime rates); for example, eight (8) hours for eight (8) hour days, ten (10) hours for ten (10) hour days, and four (4) hours for four (4) hour days.
4.7 No employee shall be allowed to carry more than four hundred (400) hours of accumulated annual leave from one calendar year to the next if the employee works a forty (40) hour workweek, or five hundred sixty (560) hours of accumulated annual leave from one calendar year to the next if the employee works a fifty-six (56) hour workweek, nor shall any employee who terminates employment receive pay for more than four hundred (400) hours of accumulated annual leave if the employee works a forty (40) hour workweek, or five hundred sixty (560) hours of accumulated annual leave from if the employee works a fifty-six (56) hour workweek.

4.8 Part-time employees accruing personal leave shall not be allowed to carry more than forty-eight (48) hours of accumulated personal leave from one calendar year to the next, nor receive any monetary payout upon termination of employment for accumulated personal leave.

5.0 REVISIONS:

The City Manager, or designee, may revise or rescind this policy at any time.
Appendix B

Virginia Beach Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures

SOP SS/HR 2.04
Revision Date: May 1, 2002

LEAVE

PURPOSE

To provide additional procedures beyond those established by the Department of Human Resources for the administration of leave and changes in work status.

SCOPE

The procedures apply as specified to both 40-hour and 56-hour “shift” department personnel.

CONTENT

DEDICATED LEAVE SLOTS (SHIFT PERSONNEL)

Total available leave slots will be established, in writing, by the Operations Division. Leave slots will be designated Category 1, Category 2, and Emergency Slots.

Category 1 leave slots are used for annual leave, comp leave, flex leave, and birthday leave.

Category 2 leave slots are used for vacancies, long term injuries (on or off-duty), physicals, meetings, TDAs (including ALS), military leave, training, realignment, and any other demands on manning that would not be eligible for Category 1. Any remaining Category 2 leave slots will be held available for scheduling up to 0800 hours of the shift date and may be used for Category 1 at that time.

The third leave category—Emergency Slots—will be held until 0800 hours of the shift date. At that time, two of the emergency bodies will be retained in the event they are needed during the shift. Any remaining emergency bodies would become available to the shift members for any type of leave request.

If Category 2 leave requirements for a particular date exceed the allotted slots, uncommitted Category 1 leave slots may be utilized. If all Category 1 and 2 leave slots have been utilized for any particular date and demand for Category 2 leave slots has not been met, Emergency Slots may be utilized at the discretion of the District Chiefs.

If there is a demand for more than the allotted leave slots of any type on any particular date and changes in scheduling cannot be made to redistribute the demand to other days, the demand will be covered as prescribed in SOP O/A 5.04/Personnel Recall/Callback.

Minimum number of officers required (for the Operations Division at the beginning of each shift) to be on Non-Leave Status:

Battalion Officers: 2 Battalion Officers city wide (may include formal “acting” but would not include
administerative, or “day” Battalion Officers)
Company Officers: 2 per Battalion (may include formal “acting” Company Officers)

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE (SHIFT PERSONNEL)

All requests for leave will be entered in TeleStaff, followed by submission of departmental form 16-2 to immediate supervisors.

Shift personnel will make entries in TeleStaff and submit leave cards at least 120 consecutive hours in advance of the shift for which leave is requested. Leave requests may not be entered in TeleStaff prior to the dates set forth in this policy for prescribed blocks of leave. Remaining authorized leave slots may be approved as available. Circumstances may warrant an exception to the 120-hour notice; however, approval is at the discretion of the supervisor.

All leave should be planned and submitted as far in advance as possible. Consecutive leave dates within the same pay period will be submitted on one leave card.

PRIORITIZATION OF REQUESTS FOR LEAVE (56 HOUR UNIFORMED)

On the first day of each month, and all subsequent days of that month, only leave requests for three or more consecutive shifts beginning in the same month one year later will be accepted.

Example: On January 1 of any year a leave request for any three or more consecutive shifts of leave beginning in January of the following year may be submitted. This block of leave may extend into February of the following year as long as the first day of the three or more shift block of leave begins in January.

Leave requests of 12 or more hours annual leave, flex leave, and birthday leave will be accepted no earlier than 11 months in advance of the requested leave date.

Example: On any given date in January of one year, leave requests for the corresponding date in December of that year may be submitted.

If the month you are making the request for has more days in it than the month in which you are submitting the request, those requests may be submitted on the last day of the month. Example: If you are making a request for a 12 hour block of annual leave, birthday leave or flex leave for January 28, 29, 30 or 31 of the following year, these requests can be submitted on February 28.

A single 11.20 hour block of flex or birthday leave, the only exception to the 12 hour minimum, is eligible for the 11 month advance request and WILL NOT require the addition of a partial hour to meet the 12 hour minimum.

Leave requests of less than 12 hours will be accepted no earlier than 10 shifts in advance of the requested leave date.

The above procedures pertain only to Category 1 leave slots.

LEAVE APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL FOR SHIFT PERSONNEL

After entering a leave request in TeleStaff, a leave card (department form 16-2) will be submitted and initialed by the employee’s supervisor to ensure accuracy and for planning purposes. At no time shall leave hours requested total more than hours earned as of the date of the requested leave.
Identifying and Addressing

The following criteria will be used in approving Category 1 leave requests.

- First come, first serve by TeleStaff time date stamp
- If there is a tie by TeleStaff time date stamp for the last available Category 1 leave slot, the following tie breakers will be used in the following order:
  - Length of request (longer time prevails)
  - Seniority - by date of hire

Leave requests will be approved or disapproved within two shifts of receipt of the card by the Battalion Officer. If leave is denied, the employee may choose to leave his/her name in TeleStaff. Denied leave requests remaining in TeleStaff will be given priority for approval using the same criteria listed above. Requests on the denied list in TeleStaff MUST be reconfirmed by the employee to his/her Battalion Officer by the end of the shift preceding the requested leave.

The Battalion Officer will approve or disapprove the leave request with his/her signature on the leave card. If the request is disapproved, the Battalion Officer will write disapproved in the remarks section of the card. The white copy will be filed with the division’s TeleStaff gatekeeper. The yellow copy will be returned to the employee via his/her immediate supervisor. If the request is approved, the Battalion Officer will approve the leave request in TeleStaff and the white copy will be forwarded to the division’s TeleStaff gatekeeper. The yellow copy will be forwarded to the employee via his/her immediate supervisor.

The Battalion Officer will advise the Company Officer of the leave request status. It will be the Battalion Officer’s responsibility to maintain adequate staffing of all stations within his/her Battalion, to verify the availability of leave slots in TeleStaff, to assign reliefs when required (if possible, make assignments at least one shift in advance), to maintain TeleStaff accuracy, and to advise the District Chief or immediate supervisor of any staffing difficulties.

Leave requests for emergencies will be granted or denied by the Company Officer, who, in turn, will be responsible for notifying the Battalion Officer as soon as possible to insure staffing issues are addressed.

All officers with the rank of Battalion Officer and higher will comply with the above guidelines. However, his/her immediate supervisor will approve or disapprove requests for leave.

**LEAVE CANCELLATION**

Any block of leave granted during the month open for blocks of three or more consecutive days may be moved (adjustment of dates) within that month without the need to cancel all leave requested. After the month ends any employee wanting to change his/her leave must cancel all leave granted in that block.

Any leave granted during the time frame in which only 12 hours or more annual, flex or birthday leave are accepted, can be canceled down to 12 hours prior to 30 days before the leave date. If an employee wishes to cancel down to less than 12 hours or wishes to cancel less than 30 days prior to the granted leave date, he/she must cancel all leave granted on a single card that includes the desired date of change and reapply.

Any leave granted during the time frame in which less than 12 hours of leave are accepted can only be canceled by canceling the entire 12-hour or less block originally requested and approved.

Leave cancellations will be accepted up to 0715 hours of the granted leave date by submitting a cancellation card to the assigned Battalion Officer prior to the leave date, or calling in to the Company Officer on the leave date (Company Officer shall contact the respective Battalion Officer by 0730 hours of the date of cancellation).
Once an employee has initiated leave during a shift or block as approved (i.e. three or more shifts), portions of that approved shift/block may not be canceled.

If an employee wishes to resubmit any portion of the canceled leave, his/her name will be entered in TeleStaff and the leave will be approved/disapproved using the leave granting criteria listed in this SOP.

ANY AND ALL LEAVE MAY BE CANCELED IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY OR RECALL

SICK LEAVE REQUESTS

PRIOR TO 0715 HOURS

Employees

• Prior to 0715 hours on the date of requested sick leave, the employee must call the Company Officer at the employee’s assigned station and specifically advise whether he/she will be out on sick or family sick leave. If the employee was scheduled on relief to another station, he/she must call the station he/she was expected to report to that morning. Should the Company Officer be out of the station, the employee shall call the District Chief’s Office. If the answering service answers the call, a message is acceptable.

• Sick and sick family leave cancellation requires no notification; however, as a courtesy, notification should be given to the immediate supervisor if the employee expects to return to work during the shift. The supervisor should contact the Battalion Officer as soon as possible to insure appropriate staffing adjustments can be made in a timely manner.

The Company Officer shall enter the sick/family sick leave in TeleStaff and then notify the District Chief’s Office of the reported sick leave by 0730 hours of the day sick leave is taken.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITY IN REPORTING OF SICK LEAVE

• The Company Officer shall notify the District Chief’s Office of an employee calling in for sick/sick family PRIOR TO 0730 hours on the day the leave is taken.
• The Company Officer shall notify the on-coming Company Officer and arrange for a holdover, as necessary.
• The Battalion Officers will arrange for staffing and reliefs and notify the affected station and personnel by 0800 hours.
• The immediate supervisor of the employee calling in sick is responsible for assuring that the sick leave is entered in TeleStaff, assuring any holdovers are entered in TeleStaff, and for the completion of the leave request form which should be forwarded through the chain of command as soon as possible. If the employee was scheduled to work on relief at another station, the supervisor at the relief station shall complete the leave request form, log the holdover information in TeleStaff, and advise the employee’s normal supervisor of the sick leave type and hours requested for entry in TeleStaff.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE (40 HOUR UNIFORMED AND CIVILIAN)

All requests for leave will be entered in TeleStaff, followed by submission of departmental form 16-2 to immediate supervisors.

All leave should be planned and submitted as far in advance as possible. Consecutive leave dates within the same pay period will be submitted on one leave card.
If necessary, procedures regarding minimum staffing and leave management pertaining to specific 40 hour groups will be maintained by the functional manager in a written, dated format available to all members of that functional group.

**TYPES OF LEAVE**

**ANNUAL LEAVE**

All personnel refer to HR/PPM 3.01/Annual and Personal Leave Policy.

Annual leave and comp leave cannot be taken until earned.

**COMP LEAVE**

All personnel refer to HR/PPM 2.02/Overtime Policy and Annual Leave.

**BIRTHDAY LEAVE**

Non-shift personnel refer to HR/PPM 3.05, Section 4.9/Holidays.

**SHIFT PERSONNEL** - 24 hour shift personnel eligible for a ten year and above service award (see HR/PPM 5.03/Service Awards Policy) shall receive 11.20 hours paid leave each year to be used during the work cycle of his/her birthday. In the event comp time is not available, annual leave may be used to cover the fraction of an hour for Birthday leave.

This leave cannot be accrued nor shall employees be compensated for unused birthday leave should employment be terminated.

**FLEXIBLE HOLIDAY LEAVE**

Non-shift personnel refer to HR/PPM 3.03/Flexible Holiday.

**SHIFT PERSONNEL** - 24-hour shift employees shall be granted two 11.20-hour blocks for use as flexible holidays per calendar year.

The flexible holiday may not be broken into portions of a day. In the event comp time is not available, annual leave may be used to cover the fraction of an hour for the flexible holiday. Such day(s) shall be utilized by the employee during the calendar year in which it is earned or it shall be lost for that respective calendar year.

This leave cannot be accrued nor shall employees be compensated for unused flexible holiday leave should employment be terminated.

At no time will an employee earn comp time or overtime pay from the City of Virginia Beach while on leave (annual, comp, birthday, sick, and flex) status.

**FUNERAL LEAVE**

All personnel should refer to HR/PPM 3.04/Funeral Leave.
INJURY LEAVE

All personnel shall refer to HR/PPM 3.07/Injury Leave

It is the immediate supervisor's responsibility to insure all leave cards are completed and entries made in TeleStaff for an employee who is out on injury leave. See SOP SS/HR 2.06/Limited Duty for Fire Fighters, for information on Limited Duty and changes in work status.

MILITARY LEAVE

All personnel shall refer to HR/PPM 3.09/Military Leave Policy and Procedure

Employees shall be eligible for 15 "working days" of annual military training leave. Regularly scheduled employees, 40-hour work week, are eligible for 120 hours of leave; shift personnel are eligible for 168 hours of leave. This leave shall be available during each federal fiscal year (October 1 - September 30). Approved military leave shall be charged against this balance until no longer available. Leave required in excess of the prescribed amounts shall be the responsibility of the employee to cover with personal Category 1 leave or leave without pay.

SICK LEAVE/FAMILY SICK LEAVE

All personnel shall refer to HR/PPM 3.10/Sick Leave Policy

Sick leave shall be defined as leave with pay granted during periods of personal illness, temporary disability (including maternity), medically required confinement, and medical and dental appointments, provided none of the above are a result of a job-related injury; or the illness of an employee's immediate family, defined as spouse, parent, spouse's parent, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparents, great-grandparents, step-grandchildren, grandchildren, step-children, step-parent, guardian (do not have to live in same household), and any other person who can be demonstrated as residing in the same household as the employee.

40-hour employees shall earn sick leave at the rate of 8 hours per month. 56-hour employees shall earn sick leave at the rate of 11.2 hours per month.

Requests for sick leave for medical and dental appointments shall be submitted as far in advance as possible.

Supervisors may, at any time, request that the employee present a doctor's note. Medical documentation shall be required when an employee’s sick leave exceeds 40 consecutive working hours (40 hour employee) or 56 consecutive working hours (56 hour employee).

All doctor's/medical notes/excuses/statements will be forwarded to the Payroll Account Clerk at Fire Administration for placement in the employee's department personnel file.

In the event an employee is on Category 1 leave and requests that Category 1 leave be changed to sick leave, the department will require medical documentation when such a change of leave status is requested. Without the medical confirmation, a change of leave status will not be considered.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE REQUESTS

All personnel shall refer to HR/PPM 3.03A/Family and Medical Leave

Family and Medical Leave Request Forms must be signed by a Battalion Officer or above. Forms are available from the Payroll Clerk in Fire Administration. Upon completion, copies should be made for the employee and the originals forwarded to the Fire Department Human Resources Manager.
ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE/TARDY

The following procedures cover instances when an employee fails to report to his/her designated duty assignment on time, in the proper uniform, and ready to work; or without an acceptable excuse for being late. With the exception of the “warning” for the first occurrence of tardiness, all further occurrences shall be considered AWOL and governed by the City’s HR/PPM 4.01/Absence Without Leave (AWOL) Policy.

1. Warning: the FIRST occurrence of LESS THAN ONE HOUR. The warning will be documented in writing.

2. A Written Reprimand: SECOND occurrence of less than one hour or FIRST occurrence of greater than one hour within a 12 month consecutive calendar period. This occurrence coincides with HR/PPM 4.01(a).

3. Suspension: THIRD occurrence of less than one hour or SECOND occurrence of greater than one hour within a 12 month consecutive calendar period. This occurrence coincides with HR/PPM 4.01(b).

4. Subject to Dismissal: FOURTH occurrence of less than one hour or THIRD occurrence of greater than one hour in a 12 month consecutive calendar period. This occurrence coincides with HR/PPM 4.01(c).

ALL hours recorded as tardy or AWOL shall be recorded in the station log book and in TeleStaff as hours NOT worked and shall be deducted from the total hours worked at the end of the time cycle.

SUBSTITUTIONS/TRADES

All uniform personnel assigned to Fire Operations are allowed to participate in acquiring substitutions/trades for his/her working hours.

It shall be the policy of the Fire Department to allow substitutions/trades between eligible employees. Employees shall follow the procedures in this policy.

1. Substitutions/trades shall be considered a privilege and as such may be suspended on an individual basis upon receipt of written notification from a supervisor.

2. Supervisors are responsible for their subordinates; therefore, they have the authority to approve or reject substitution/trade requests. Substitution/trade requests will be made by submitting VBFD Form 16-2. Supervisors will ensure the trade is entered in TeleStaff.

3. The employee who is scheduled to work is responsible for the work time if the substitute employee is unable to work. The employee requesting the substitution/trade must have sufficient leave accrued to cover the time of the substitution/trade. The substitute who fails to show up for the substitution/trade (unexcused) will be restricted from initiating substitutions/trades for 30 days for the first offense, six months for a second offense, and permanently for a third offense within a year from the date of the first occurrence. Employee restrictions will be documented by the immediate supervisor. The substitute who fails to appear for substitution/trade will still be obligated to the scheduled worker if this is a “payback.”

4. Substitution/trades shall only be allowed between peers (Battalion Officers for Battalion Officers, Company Officers for Company Officers, Firefighters for Firefighters).
5. An individual can work no more than 48 continuous hours as a result of a substitution/trade.

6. All time worked as a result of a substitution/trade shall be excluded from computation of overtime and holiday pay. Both employees will receive their normal compensation.

7. Substitution/trades shall be time for time. Monetary payment by one party to another in lieu of working shall not be permitted.

8. All personnel who utilize substitutions/trades must satisfy the agreement with the substitute employee within one year from the date of the initial trade/substitution.

9. Tracking of substitutions/trades will be the responsibility of the employees involved. TeleStaff may be used as a tool to assist employees in tracking substitution/trade time.

10. In order to facilitate department planning, members are required to submit shift substitution/trade requests to the supervisor as soon as possible.

11. Substitutes/trades between Operations (56 hours) and Support/Administrative (40 hours) personnel is not permitted.

The substitution/trade is a mutual agreement in which one individual is voluntarily working for another; therefore, payback of that time is the responsibility of those persons involved and will not accrue any obligation to the city.

**TEMPORARY DUTY ASSIGNMENTS**

TDAs are temporary duty assignments that take employees away from their normal duty assignments. For shift personnel, approval is based upon one of the available Category 2 leave positions or the approval of a callback depending upon the urgency. Approval for non-shift personnel depends upon the needs of the department, individual, division assigned, and staffing.

The Operations District Chiefs will approve or disapprove TDA requests from shift personnel based upon the following criteria:

1. Training and certifications which are related to an individual’s current assignment and rank.

2. Departmental mandatory training and supported activities such as ALS, Honor Guard, accreditation program, Procedures Review Team, appointments to promotional processes, FEMA mandated programs and meetings, haz mat mandated programs and meetings, etc.

3. Requests for other activities, such as fire service related conferences, seminars and additional training which the department and District Chiefs consider relevant to an individual’s career.

All other non-shift department divisions or functional groups will use the same criteria for TDA approval; however, approval will be granted by the established division/functional manager.

**APPLICATION FOR TDA APPROVAL**

All TDA requests require submission at least 60 days prior to the date requested. Short notifications may occur from time to time; however, these approvals will be based upon need, availability of leave, and the importance of the desired TDA.
TIME ALLOCATED FOR ASSIGNED TDA

One to three day assignments for shift and non-shift personnel are hour for hour.

Consecutive four or more day assignments out of the immediate area requiring overnight lodging for shift personnel, 11.2 hours per assigned day; non-shift personnel, 8 hours per assigned day.

Consecutive four or more day assignments in the area allowing in-home lodging for shift and non-shift personnel are hour for hour.
1.0 PURPOSE:

To provide paid leave time to eligible employees when health and/or dental care is required during scheduled work hours.

2.0 DEFINITION:

Leave with pay granted during periods of personal illness, the illness of an employee's immediate family member, temporary disability (including maternity), medically required confinement, and medical and dental appointments, provided none of the above are a result of a job-related injury. The immediate family member is defined as: spouse, parent, spouse's parent, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparents, great-grandparents, step-grandparents, step-grandchildren, grandchildren, step-children, step-parent, guardian, as well as any person who can be demonstrated as residing in the same household as the employee.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY:

All full-time permanent and full-time probational merit employees, as defined by the Code of the City of Virginia Beach, shall be eligible to accrue and use sick leave.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT:

4.1 Eligible employees will accrue sick leave at the rate of eight (8) hours per month. Firefighters assigned to fifty-six (56) hour per workweek positions shall be credited with sick leave at a rate of eleven and two-tenths (11.2) hours per month. The accrued sick leave balances of a firefighter transferred between a forty (40) hour per week position and a fifty-six (56) hour per week position, or vice versa, shall be converted on a proportionate basis so that the firefighter will maintain an equivalent number of accrued days of leave.

4.2 Sick leave taken by an employee for the purpose of attending to the illness of an immediate family member will not exceed five (5) days per calendar year unless eligible and approved in accordance with the Family Medical Leave Policy or the Sick Leave Bank Policy.
4.3 Individuals must be employed for the entire month either in a paid status or in a non-pay status for fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days or less in a calendar month in order to receive the full monthly sick leave accrual rate. Employees who are in a non-pay status for more than fourteen (14) consecutive calendar days in a calendar month will accrue one-half the monthly sick leave accrual rate for that month. In other words, the employee will not receive sick leave for each fifteen (15) consecutive calendar day period if the employee is in a non-pay status. Employees beginning employment after the first day of the month but prior to or on the fifteenth (15\textsuperscript{th}) day of the month, will accrue four (4) hours sick leave for that month.

4.4 Sick leave shall be taken in increments of no less than one-half hour periods, except that firefighters working a fifty-six (56) hour workweek shall be allowed to take sick leave in increments of eight-tenths (0.8) and six-tenths (0.6) hours. Each sick leave request will be submitted as far in advance as possible for medical and dental appointments. A doctor's statement may be required by the department Director, or designee, at any time regardless of whether the sick leave usage was for the employee or the employee's immediate family member. However, the obtaining of a doctor's statement will not automatically guarantee the granting of sick leave. Written medical authorization of an employee's illness will be mandatory when an employee's sick leave usage exceeds forty-eight (48) consecutive working hours. This statement will include:

4.41 The nature of the employee's condition;

4.42 The approximate anticipated date of medical release by the physician with specific limitations (i.e., no standing for more than two hours at a time, no lifting of more than ten pounds); and

4.43 The expected date on which the employee will no longer be able to perform his or her normal work duties, where applicable.

4.5 Employees must have a return to work authorization from their personal physician or Occupational Health Services before returning to work if the employee has been out for more than forty-eight (48) consecutive working hours or as required by the department.
4.6 An employee's abuse of granted sick leave will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

4.7 Employees will not earn sick leave during their absence from City employment under the Veteran's Reemployment Policy.

4.8 Employees will be allowed to accrue an unlimited number of sick leave hours and will retain all benefits and seniority while on paid sick leave. Upon retirement, on a Virginia Retirement System service or disability retirement provision, an employee will have a one time payment for all accrued sick leave at $28 per day.

4.9 An Extended Sick Leave Bank has been created to provide a voluntary program of sharing sick leave with employees who are unable to work in any capacity due to non-job related injuries, temporary disabilities, and/or illnesses or providing medical care or assistance to eligible family members.

4.10 Employees converted from full-time status to part-time status will have their accrued sick leave held in abeyance until such time as the employee either returns to full-time status or retires. Upon return to full-time status, the employee's accrued sick leave will be restored. Part-time employees whose status change to full-time will have their personal leave balance converted half each (50/50) to annual and sick leave.

5.0 REVISIONS:

The City Manager, or designee, may revise or rescind this policy at any time.
From: Randy Journigan  
Sent: Wed 9/26/2007 2:32 PM  
To: Bruce McGregor; Edwin W. Smith; Fred Crosby; James A. Gray, Jr.; James Eddy; Ken Jones; Kevin McGee; Loy Senter; Paul Mauger; Robert A. Creecy  
Cc: Randy Journigan  
Subject: EFO survey for leave usage

Chief,

Below is a link to a survey that is part of an Applied Research Project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. Your cooperation in completing the survey is requested and greatly appreciated.

The person completing the form needs to have knowledge of any policies and procedures of leave utilized by members of your department. If you are not the appropriate person to complete this survey, I would appreciate it if you would forward it to the appropriate person.

The purpose of the Applied Research Project is to develop a procedure to identify patterns of leave usage by members of the Virginia Beach Fire Department and to develop recommendations to address inappropriate leave usage.

This survey will identify what other departments have done to identify and resolve the inappropriate use of leave in hopes the Virginia Beach Fire Department can benefit from your experiences.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your input and I thank you in advance for your effort in completing the survey.

If you need to contact me directly, my office number is (757) 385-8581.

Thank you.

Randy Journigan  
Acting Deputy Chief  
Virginia Beach Fire Department  
Cell 615-9392

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=t6heO0_2fuHZeZMehc3g7sw_3d_3d
Appendix E

Identifying Leave Usage by Fire Department Members

The following survey is to seek information concerning how fire departments have dealt with the problem of identifying and addressing leave usage by employees in relation to maintaining staffing. Please complete the following survey using information from the operation of your department.

1. Does your department have a policy for granting leave to its members?
   Yes  No

2. Where is the policy found and what is it based on? (Department policies and procedures, state law, municipal policies, etc.)

3. What types of leave does your department offer its employees? Please check all that apply.
   - Annual/Vacation
   - Sick
   - Military
   - Funeral
   - Compensatory
   - Family and Medical

4. Does your department have a minimum staffing level policy?
   Yes  No

5. If yes to question four, how does your department manage staffing shortfalls? (Hirebacks, Overtime, Companies place out of service, volunteers, etc.)

6. Does your department allow employees to “trade” shifts amongst members?
   Yes  No

7. If yes to question six, please briefly describe your policy or procedure.
8. How does your department document attendance and leave records for your employees? (Please note the use of any commercially available software if applicable.)

9. In your opinion, is the record keeping of your department adequate when it comes to documenting attendance and leave of employees, especially sick leave?
   Yes  No
   Comments

10. Has your department experienced identifiable trends/patterns of leave demand by members of the department?
    Yes  No

11. What were the trends/patterns noted in your department? (Specific day of the week, months of the year, seasonal events, etc.)

12. Has your department experienced inappropriate use of leave, i.e. employees using sick leave or FMLA in order to have off?
    Yes  No

13. If leave abuse has occurred in your department, what methods were used to identify and document the abuse?

14. If your department has identified leave abuse, what were the trends/patterns of abuse noted in your department? (Specific days of the week, months of the year, before and after holidays, before retirement, etc.)
15. What policies or procedures has your department implemented to reduce the inappropriate use of sick leave by members of the department in order to obtain leave?

16. Which of those policies or procedures (from question fifteen) have been successful in reducing the sick leave taken by members of the department?

17. Please describe the shift schedule that your department works.

18. Do you feel your schedule contributes to inappropriate use of leave?

   Yes   No

19. If yes to question 18, please explain.

20. Please provide any recommendations you feel would help a fire department more successfully allow members the ability to take leave thereby reducing the use of inappropriate leave.
Appendix F

Identifying Leave Usage by Fire Department Members Results

The following survey is to seek information concerning how fire departments have dealt with the problem of identifying and addressing leave usage by employees in relation to maintaining staffing. Please complete the following survey using information from the operation of your department.

1. Does your department have a policy for granting leave to its members?
   - Yes 7  No 0

2. Where is the policy found and what is it based on? (Department policies and procedures, state law, municipal policies, etc.)
   - Chesterfield County – Leave usage is based on County and Departmental policies and procedures.
   - Hampton – Municipal policy.
   - Henrico County – SOG based on experience.
   - Newport News – Personnel Administrative Manual, City policy for FMLA, and Va. Industrial Commission
   - Norfolk – Housed electronically on secure Internet site. Departmental policy that mirrors city policy with exceptions that deals specifically with the Department.
   - Prince William County – County personnel policy handbook.
   - Richmond – In our Policies, Procedures, & Guidelines (PPGs), past practice over the past decades.

3. What types of leave does your department offer its employees? Please check all that apply.
   - Annual/Vacation 7
   - Sick 7
   - Military 7
   - Funeral 7
   - Compensatory 6
   - Family and Medical 7

4. Does your department have a minimum staffing level policy?
   - Yes 7  No 0

5. If yes to question four, how does your department manage staffing shortfalls? (Hirebacks, Overtime, Companies place out of service, volunteers, etc.)
   - Chesterfield County – We fill our vacant slot with overtime or people that owe payback time ie. called in on sick leave while on traded time.
Hampton – volunteer, Part Time, reschedule “Kelly day” overtime.
Henrico County – Overtime.
Newport News – Minimum staffing is met with mandatory overtime assignments.
Norfolk – Overtime usually covers the shortages, but we also have a policy if the need arises to place companies out of service through a prioritized order.
Prince William County – We utilize a computer based staffing program that maintains rosters and sets limits to leave. Employees are allowed to sign up for overtime in advance. Should excessive unscheduled leave be taken, those individuals that have signed up for overtime would be called in.
Richmond – Currently overtime is hired on a rotating basis. We have experienced the need to brownout companies. We are currently exploring implementation of pool/parttime positions.

6. Does your department allow employees to “trade” shifts amongst members?
   Yes 7  No 0

7. If yes to question six, please briefly describe your policy or procedure.

Chesterfield County – Personnel may trade hour for hour but, may not owe more than seventy two hours. Also, a person may not trade more that 360 hours per calendar year.
Hampton – Complete a trade time form which obligates you to pay the time back. Repayment should occur within the same cycle.
Henrico County – Initiated by the individual, approved by the effected battalion chief.
Newport News – Must be similarly placed in rank and skill set and must have approval of the duty Battalion Chief prior to the execution of the trade. Employees may "trade" up to 3 incidents per month for no more than 24 hours per month unless extenuating circumstances are present.
Norfolk – Employees can request through TeleStaff for an exchange of duty. They are required to name the covering firefighter, who must meet the qualifications required of their position during the exchange. Once submitted, the BC or BC Aide will approve the exchange and both persons will be notified through TeleStaff notifications. Currently, we restrict exchanges to a maximum of 48 hours each month per employee. Also, we currently do not factor this into FLSA and allow the employees to work amongst themselves regarding the pay back of exchanges; however, the data is kept in TeleStaff in the event any problems should arise.
Prince William County – Trade time must be made during the same pay period. Persons trading must have the same qualifications to avoid negatively effecting staffing levels.
Richmond – Mutual Exchange of Tours is an application form process requiring approval of supervisors and BC's.

8. How does your department document attendance and leave records for your employees?
   (Please note the use of any commercially available software if applicable.)

Chesterfield County – Each Company Officer is responsible to maintain records and they can use TeleStaff (software) to confirm. We use TeleStaff as our main program for Staffing.
Hampton – Weekly attendance records are completed by the supervisor and e-mailed to payroll. Supervisors maintain annual and sick leave balances.
Henrico County – computer software developed in-house (County IT department).
Newport News – Daily time sheets electronically submitted. Time sheets based on 27-day duty cycle signed and submitted. Signed leave request for any leave benefits used and charged to the employee. The Personnel Human Resource System maintains the leave accruals, earnings and usage for all City employees.

Norfolk – We keep all leave balances for employees in TeleStaff. Our city uses PeopleSoft as our payroll system. Currently, we use an electronic interface between the two systems that sends payroll codes, hours, employee numbers, names, etc... from TeleStaff to PeopleSoft, and in return, PeopleSoft sends back leave balances for each employee to TeleStaff. The process occurs twice each month. Employees can view their own balances in TeleStaff, and BC’s and above can view the payroll data in PeopleSoft.

Prince William County – We utilize TeleStaff a commercially available program. This has been tailored to meet department needs. Each employee maintains their own calendar and this is checked and approved by their supervisor.

Richmond – In-house database using adaptation of MS product is currently in use, but we are in the process of implementing a records management system from FDM.

9. In your opinion, is the record keeping of your department adequate when it comes to documenting attendance and leave of employees, especially sick leave?

   Yes  5  No  2

   Comments

   Chesterfield County – Yes, we have a Staffing Office that fills all positions and if a person is not placed off duty using the TeleStaff program that slot would not get filled.
   Hampton – The pen and paper system is too cumbersome for 274 employees. We are preparing to purchase a new time and attendance recordkeeping systems that integrates with the City's payroll system.
   Henrico County – All leave is recorded and each employee signs there sheet tri-weekly, it is then reviewed and signed by the station captain and battalion chief.
   Newport News – No Comment
   Norfolk – Until now, we had to research paper leave records in order to track sick leave usage. Now, we have the ability to run queries on each employee, station, battalion, platoon, etc... And the data is more accurate. We have not used the data to our advantage, but plan to in the future.
   Prince William County – All sick leave is recorded on the employee’s individual calendar. This is always available to the supervisor for review and reference. Employees are required to leave a voice mail to the staffing office and their supervisor when reporting sick for work.
   Richmond – No Comment

10. Has your department experienced identifiable trends/patterns of leave demand by members of the department?

    Yes  7  No  0

11. What were the trends/patterns noted in your department? (Specific day of the week, months of the year, seasonal events, etc.)
Chesterfield County – People getting close to retirement age. Some people who are detailed or assigned to ride an ambulance.
Hampton – FMLA requests for maternities and other family related medical issues.
Henrico County – Wednesdays and weekends.
Newport News – 1st or last day of cycle use of medical leave. The use of medical leave to cover denied requested vacation days. Falsification of time records and claims of overtime.
Norfolk – In the past, many days within the week were not full with leave; however, all days are full now and many days we turn personnel down for leave. Historically, sick leave was the third most used leave behind annual and holiday, but currently it ranks second amongst leave usages. Like most, weekends are still the most popular and the periods hit hardest with staffing shortages.
Prince William County – Holidays, summer vacation season, hunting season, weekends.
Richmond – Weekends typically clustered around holidays and summer vacation season, hunting season, and Wednesdays due to its place in our shift rotation.

12. Has your department experienced inappropriate use of leave, i.e. employees using sick leave or FMLA in order to have off?

   Yes   6   No    1

13. If leave abuse has occurred in your department, what methods were used to identify and document the abuse?

   Chesterfield County – This is hard to prove, just an assumption.
   Hampton – No Response
   Henrico County – Intuition
   Newport News – Validation and verification of health care provider certificates.
   Norfolk – We are using TeleStaff to document this and the Chief is awaiting approval for a policy dealing with this issue through discipline. We look at leave denial versus sick leave, overtime versus sick leave, etc....
   Prince William County – Leave patterns or excessive leave use would be easily identifiable on that employee's individual calendar and through leave balances. If identified, employee counseling would be followed with progressive discipline. Inadequate leave balances would lead to leave without pay.
   Richmond – Leave records reveal patterns when analyzed.

14. If your department has identified leave abuse, what were the trends/patterns of abuse noted in your department? (Specific days of the week, months of the year, before and after holidays, before retirement, etc.)

   Chesterfield County – No Response
   Hampton – We haven't studied the trends.
   Henrico County – definitely use of sick leave before and close to retirement.
   Newport News – Excessive use prior to retirement.
Norfolk – Usually before and after vacation times. Also, employees who have nearly the same amount of sick leave used as overtime worked. Weekends are certainly a peak time for sick leave use, and as noted above, we can look sick leave used versus leave requests that were denied. Prince William County – Monday/Friday leave use. Summer time leave use. Prior to or after regular days off. Prior to retirement.
Richmond – All of the above and then some.

15. What policies or procedures has your department implemented to reduce the inappropriate use of sick leave by members of the department in order to obtain leave?

Chesterfield County – No Response
Hampton – New policy effective July 1, 2007. Employees are now required to contact their BC directly to request unscheduled leave such as sick or other. A medical certificate from a physician is required for more than one sick leave request in a 90 day period. This does not apply to FMLA and deaths.
Henrico County – None.
Newport News – No Response
Norfolk – Currently, we do not have any policies that deal with this issue, but we are moving towards having a policy that would use different forms of discipline (loss of overtime, time off, etc...) to deal with this issue. We still use the normal methods, such as doctor's notes, fit for duty testing, etc..., but these methods are no longer effective deterrents like they once were. Several years back the HR department publicly stated that it was the "employees benefit" to use sick leave and took a "hands off" approach, thereby essentially crippling any methods we had in place to deal with potential sick leave abuse.
Prince William County – Leave misuse is a violation of county personnel policy. Abuse would be managed with progressive discipline which would lead to dismissal if uncorrected.
Richmond – Still looking.

16. Which of those policies or procedures (from question fifteen) have been successful in reducing the sick leave taken by members of the department?

Chesterfield County – No Response
Hampton – We have seen a reduction in the first 90 days but we need more time to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the new policy.
Henrico County – No Response
Newport News – No Response
Norfolk – None at this point.
Prince William County – Our department does not have systemic leave abuse problems. Individual problems are managed on an individual basis.
Richmond – No Response

17. Please describe the shift schedule that your department works.

Chesterfield County – 24 hours on duty and 48 hours off.
Hampton – 21 day cycle,
Henrico County – 7/21, three week schedule working 24 hour shifts. Below is the sequence
Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, Wednesday then it repeats.
Newport News – No Response
Norfolk – We work a 21 day cycle schedule. Employees work 24 hour shifts and the cycle is as
follows: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday. Following
Wednesday's shift employees are off for five days and start the schedule over on the next
Tuesday. Within the cycle, each employee receives a rotating "Kelly Day", which is 12 hours of
approved leave. The Kelly system maintains FLSA work hours.
Prince William County – Our department utilizes several work weeks to meet the needs of our
community. We work in a combination department utilizing volunteer personnel heavily on
nights and weekends so staffing requirements vary. Our 24 hour coverage works a24on/48off
schedule, with “Kelly” days to maintain a 48 hour week. Daytime personnel work 4-12 hour days
with rotating days off. Administrative personnel work a 5 day 48 hour week. And,
Communications supervisors work 2-12 hour days, 2-12 hour nights with a four day break.
Richmond – Tue - Thu - Sat - Mon - Fri - Sun - Wed on 21-day interval.

18. Do you feel your schedule contributes to inappropriate use of leave?

Yes 3 No 4

19. If yes to question 18, please explain.

Chesterfield County – No Response
Hampton – No Response
Henrico County – No Response
Newport News – No Response
Norfolk – If you march our schedule out, it is very easy to use sick leave on a Wednesday to
achieve eight days off. Also, using leave on Monday or Friday will give the employee another
five or eight day break depending on the leave usage. The schedule is very easy to manipulate
into more time off.
Prince William County – Long work days and long work weeks for daytime personnel.
Richmond – Yes and no. It is hard to pin down because it has been a problem with this and the
previous shift rotation.

20. Please provide any recommendations you feel would help a fire department more
successfully allow members the ability to take leave thereby reducing the use of
inappropriate leave.

Chesterfield County – Be flexible and creative with ways to allow people to get off.
Hampton – No Response
Henrico County – Compensation for accumulated sick leave at retirement.
Newport News – No Response
Norfolk – The use of counting hours worked towards overtime instead of hour accrued would
help reduce sick leave abuse. Accurate staffing ratios by HR and the ability to hire and get
employees to the floor quicker should help staffing and reduce inappropriate leave usage.
Probably the biggest issue is the ability to accrue leave that you cannot use. I think incentive
programs for employees that do not use their leave would help. Also, a Paid Time Off (PTO) system, with employee paid short and long-term disability insurance policies, would allow managers the ability to better predict leave usage, and would force employees to make better decisions about leave usage, because they would only get a certain amount of leave versus an unlimited amount of leave.

Prince William County – Calculate leave requirements into staffing plans and personnel budgeting and requests. Have fair and equitable leave policies that are applied consistently. Deal with leave abuse consistently and predictably.

Richmond – Paid-time-off, use it or lose it. Please share your solution because I have not found a department yet who has solved this one.
Greetings,

Below is a link to a survey that is part of an Applied Research Project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. Your cooperation in completing the survey is requested and greatly appreciated.

The purpose of the Applied Research Project is to develop a procedure to identify patterns of leave usage by members of the Virginia Beach Fire Department and to develop recommendations to address inappropriate leave usage.

This survey will be kept confidential and your input should provide some insight to help create opportunities to obtain appropriate leave or other methods to receive time off from work.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your input and I thank you in advance for your effort in completing the survey.

If you need to contact me directly, my office number is (757) 385-8581.

Thank you.

Randy Journigan
Acting Deputy Chief
Virginia Beach Fire Department
Cell 615-9392

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=TDHsqjJY0_2boRSnpClNULYQ_3d_3d
Appendix H

Identifying Leave Usage Patterns in the VBFD

Q1. How many years of service with VBFD do you have?

0-5
6-11
11-15
16-20
Over 20

Q2. Based on your annual leave earnings, does the department afford you enough opportunities to take leave?

Yes
No

Q3. If you have experienced the inability to get leave, which days are you unable to get leave the most?

Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Weekend
Not Sure

Q4. Which times of the year do you feel are the hardest to get leave? (Summer, winter, hunting season, holidays, etc.)

Q5. Should the department have a minimum number of annual leave slots available regardless of staffing levels?

Yes
No
Not Sure
Q6. In regards to question 5, should companies be placed out of service to accommodate leave requests if there is no overtime available?

Yes
No

Q7. Have you ever used other leave mechanisms such as FMLA or sick leave to get time off?

Yes
No

Q8. Rate the percentage of the following actions you take when vacation/annual leave is denied. The total should be 100%.

Report to work
Use Comp Time if available
Use Sick/FMLA leave
Trade with another member

Q9. Which of the following reasons have you used sick leave?

Illness/Injury of self
Illness/Injury of a family member
Unable to receive annual/vacation leave
Retirement

Q10. Do you use trade opportunities to offset leave denials?

Yes
No
Q11. Is the trade policy flexible enough to meet your needs?

Yes
No

Q12. Would a change in work schedule that offers either a 4 or 5 day break each month alleviate leave denials and insure that your personal needs are met?

Yes
No
Not Sure

Q13. Please enter any additional comments you have concerning this subject.
Appendix I

Identifying Leave Usage Patterns in the VBFD Results

Q1. How many years of service with VBFD do you have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answer options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2. Based on your annual leave earnings, does the department afford you enough opportunities to take leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answer options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3. If you have experienced the inability to get leave, which days are you unable to get leave the most?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answer options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 103
skipped question 0

answered question 97
skipped question 6
Q4. Which times of the year do you feel are the hardest to get leave? (Summer, winter, hunting season, holidays, etc.)

Response Count

101 responded
101 skipped question

Q5. Should the department have a minimum number of annual leave slots available regardless of staffing levels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6. In regards to question 5, should companies be placed out of service to accommodate leave requests if there is no overtime available?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7. Have you ever used other leave mechanisms such as FMLA or sick leave to get time off?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q8. Rate the percentage of the following actions you take when vacation/annual leave is denied. The total should be 100%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answer options</th>
<th>Response Average</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report to work</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>7040</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Comp Time if available</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Sick/FMLA leave</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade with another member</td>
<td>31.14</td>
<td>2958</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 103
skipped question 0

Q9. Which of the following reasons have you used sick leave?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answer options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illness/Injury of self</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness/Injury of a family member</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to receive annual/vacation leave</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 101
skipped question 2

Q10. Do you use trade opportunities to offset leave denials?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>answer options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 102
skipped question 1
Q11. Is the trade policy flexible enough to meet your needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please comment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12. Would a change in work schedule that offers either a 4 or 5 day break each month alleviate leave denials and insure that your personal needs are met?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment answered</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question</td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q13. Please enter any additional comments you have concerning this subject.

Response Count

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Identified Patterns of Leave Usage by City/County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield County, Virginia</td>
<td>People close to retirement and assigned to the ambulance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton, Virginia</td>
<td>FMLA requests for maternities and other family related issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico, Virginia</td>
<td>Patterns established are on Wednesdays and weekends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport News, Virginia</td>
<td>Patterns identified are first or last day of a work period, Use of medical leave to cover denied vacation days, and falsification of time records and claims of overtime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk, Virginia</td>
<td>Weekends are the hardest hit. Sick leave ranks second amongst leave usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William County, Virginia</td>
<td>Holidays, summer vacation season, hunting season and weekends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond, Virginia</td>
<td>Weekends clustered around holidays and summer vacation season, hunting season, and Wednesday due to its place in our shift rotation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K
Shift Schedules by City/County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield County, Virginia</td>
<td>24 hours on duty and 48 hours off duty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton, Virginia</td>
<td>21 day cycle of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday work days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrico, Virginia</td>
<td>21 day cycle of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday work days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport News, Virginia</td>
<td>A cycle of working 1 day on and 1 day off, 1 day on 1 day off, 1 day on followed by four days off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk, Virginia</td>
<td>21 day cycle of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday work days. Each employee has a “Kelly” day scheduled in the cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William County, VA</td>
<td>Use volunteer heavily during nights and weekends. Career members work 24 hour on and 48 hours off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond, Virginia</td>
<td>21 day cycle of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Monday, Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday work days.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix L

Leave Usage by Day

July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2007

Leave by Day

![Bar chart showing leave usage by day with categories labeled as Category 1 Leave (Vacation), Emergency Slots (Sick Leave), and Category 2 Leave (Other).]
Appendix M

Leave Usage by Month

July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2007

Leave by Month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Cat 1 Leave Vacation</th>
<th>Cat 2 Leave Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Events

0  50  100  150  200  250  300  350  400

Month
Appendix N

Average Leave Usage per Firefighter by Years of Service
Virginia Beach Fire Department

Leave Usage

Randy Journigan
Acting Deputy Chief of Operations

Mission Statement

- The Virginia Beach Fire Department is a customer service organization partnering with the communities, members, citizens, and visitors to foster the feeling of safety anyplace, anytime through planning, mitigation, response and restoration
Purpose of Presentation

- Increase awareness on vacancy rate
- Impact of vacancies on leave demand
- Leave policy issues
- Demonstrate leave trends
  - Cat 1 leave
  - Cat 2 leave
  - Sick leave

Purpose of Presentation

- Create dialogue for change
- Consider leave opportunities
- Address leave abuse
Current Reality

- Overtime is increasing
  - ASL demands
  - Call backs for sick leave
  - Departmental activities
- Vacancy Rate
  - Average of 7 firefighters per year
  - Retirement rate is not decreasing

Policy

- Cat 1 leave was decreased from 13 to 9
- Cat 2 is non existent due to vacancies
  - Department still has many Cat 2 activities
- Sick leave is increasing
  - Little supervisor scrutiny
  - Increasing FMLA requests
VBFD Impacts

- Budget reduction are looming
- Overtime will be impacted
- Members want time off from work
- Leave demand is increasing
- Vacancies continue to occur

The Problem Is...

- Inappropriate leave is being used to gain time from work.
- There are not enough Cat 1 leave opportunities.
- Management is responsible for welfare of employees
  - They are our customers
Identifiable Trends

- Peak demand for Cat 1 leave is Friday and Saturday
- Rest of the week is constant
- Astonishing fact is sick leave is almost that of annual leave
  - Are we a sick department?
  - Is FMLA becoming an factor?
- Cat 2 leave does not include vacancies

Leave Usage by Day of Week
Identifiable Trends

- High use of Cat 1 leave in summer months and December
- The highest month is April
  - Reasons unknown
- Lowest demand is September, October, and January

Identifiable Trends

- Sick leave usage correlates with Cat 1 leave
  - SL deviates from the trend during April and August
  - There is a upward trend during Sept, Oct, and November
  - September has more SL than Cat 1 usage
Identifiable Trends

- Newer members are not using Cat 1 leave
  - They are not earning as much
- Members with >16 years use Cat 1 leave 1.5 times more than <5 years
- However, <5 year group is using the most Cat 2
Identifiable Trends

- Sick leave usage by age groups is indicating an increase by seniority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Sick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 Years</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>9.68</td>
<td>14.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 Years</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>15.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 Years</td>
<td>26.70</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>13.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leave Usage by Years of Service
Identifiable Trends

- Sick leave use of Mondays and Fridays
- Sick leave use before and after holidays
- Research reveals sick leave usage to “Super size” vacations
- Research also indicates sick leave use at the beginning and end of work cycles
- Use of sick leave for Cat 1 denials
  - Hard to track currently

What can be done?

- VBFD must impress upon the officers their duty in regards to leave abuse.
- VBFD needs to monitor leave patterns more closely.
- VBFD needs to reconsider its Cat 1 leave availability.
What can be done?

- Implement a team to research different shift schedules
  - Will they “string” days off to meet the needs of its members
  - Are new “hot” days created and what is the impact
  - Fiscal implications of other shift schedules
  - Potential benefits of changing shift schedules

What can be done?

- Investigate the feasibility of part-time firefighters.
  - Richmond is considering this option
  - Reduction of overtime or increase a Cat 1 slot by .5 or more
**Recommendations**

- Develop more extensive reports from Telestaff
- Inform supervisors of inappropriate leave usage
- Consider better incentives for not using sick leave
- Consider paid-time-off programs

**Final Thoughts**

- Demands of Leave
- Costs of overtime for inappropriate leave
- Members deserve time off from work
  - Cat 1 slots should allow for leave
- If nothing is done, the trend will worsen
Questions