How to Consistently and Officially Reward Muscatine Fire Department Employees and Citizens for Distinguished Service and Heroic Acts.

Executive Leadership

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NFA CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, what 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: ___________________________
Abstract

The problem is Muscatine Fire Department (MFD) lacks an award program to reward members and citizens for distinguished service and heroic acts. The purpose is to review reward programs in other fire departments, public and private sector, along with governmental agencies. This action research will assist in drafting a reward program for the MFD. Questions posed were:

1. What programs and/or criteria are used in other fire departments?
2. What programs and/or criteria are used in private and government agencies?
3. What are the opinions of MFD members in regards to a reward program?
4. Are there programs in place that MFD could adopt and/or modify?
5. What would be the cost for implementing an award program?

Procedures included surveys, personal communications, and literature review. Results showed employees would like to see MFD implement an award program. Recommend proposing draft reward program with criteria for approval and implementation.
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How to Consistently and Officially Reward Muscatine Fire Department Employees and Citizens for Distinguished Service and Heroic Acts.

Introduction

The Muscatine Fire Department (MFD) provides fire, hazardous material response and emergency medical services to the city of Muscatine, Muscatine County, and portions of Western Illinois. Muscatine, Iowa is located on the Mississippi River, which separates Iowa and Illinois. MFD has 37 members that operate out of two stations. Annual run volume averages over 3,000 calls for service, which 84% being ambulance in nature (Muscatine Fire Department, 2007). The MFD is no different than other departments of our size, whereas we have large working fires, successful rescues of fire victims, acts of bravery, and are constantly working in adverse and dangerous environments.

The problem is the Muscatine Fire Department lacks a system and/or program that properly rewards and recognizes employees and citizens for acts of bravery and heroism. This lack of a system results in disservice to the employees and citizens of Muscatine. Even Firehouse, a prominent fire service magazine, has a program which announces heroism and community service awards in their magazine (“Heroism,” p. 82). The purpose of this action research project is to investigate reward programs in other fire departments, along with public, private, and government agencies, to determine what types of award programs have been successful in recognizing and rewarding citizens and employees. Additionally, the research will assist in drafting an award program, along with award criteria, that can be implemented in the MFD.

The action research method was used. The following research questions were posed:

1. What programs and/or criteria have been utilized in other fire departments for awards?
2. What programs and/or criteria have been utilized in the private sector and government agencies for awards?

3. What are the opinions of MFD members in regards to an award program?

4. Are there current programs in place that Muscatine could adopt and/or modify to assist in properly recognizing and rewarding employees and citizens?

5. What would be the cost of implementation of an award program?

Background and Significance

The City of Muscatine, Iowa, is a small community along the Mississippi river covering 15 square miles and 22,697 citizens (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The city is the county seat of Muscatine County and has a mayor-council form of government. Day-to-day operations are carried out under the supervision of a City Administrator. MFD is a paid department with 37 members operating out of two stations. In July 2000, MFD was awarded the ambulance contract to provide advanced life support (ALS) ambulance service to The City of Muscatine, Muscatine County, and portions of Western Illinois. MFD’s Hazardous Material unit provides coverage for our community and has contracts for coverage for two other counties in Iowa.

Currently, MFD lacks a formalized award program to properly recognize acts of bravery. MFD employees have had numerous successful rescues of civilians from burning structures where the individual, or team, have made these rescues under severe fire conditions. But, no recognition has taken place in the past, present, and probably will not take place in the future unless a formalized program is implemented.

Civilians in Muscatine have also made significant impacts to fire department operations and have made rescues, or have made significant impacts to incidents, while putting themselves in extreme personal risk. But, no recognition has taken place in the past, present, and probably will not take place in the future for these civilians unless a formalized program is implemented.
Muscatine experienced the unthinkable on the night of September 14, 2002, which was the first line-of-duty death (LODD) in Muscatine’s 128 year history of organized fire protection (Vanwey, 2003). While at a working structure fire Mike Kruse, a 27 year veteran of the MFD, fell through the roof. Interior crews along with the RIT team encountered heavy fire conditions and extreme heat during this search, but even though they rescued him quickly and removed him from the structure Mike was pronounced dead at the hospital. Since MFD lacks an award program, the interior fire crews and RIT that rescued Mike was not officially honored for their heroic acts and Mike Kruse who gave his life, or his surviving family, was not officially honored because Muscatine lacks such a program.

Many fire departments all over the world have some sort of awards committee, award criteria, or boards set up to review acts of bravery, but Muscatine isn’t one of them (Vigiano, 1999).

According to an internal fire department survey, the majority of members would like to see a program in place, but some are leery that such a program will encourage unsafe acts (see Appendix E).

This applied research project (ARP) ties into one of the United States Fire Administrations (USFA) operational goals, which is “to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues” (NFA, 2003, p. II-2). This ARP also relates to several units in the National Fire Academy’s (NFA) Executive Leadership course, such as integrity, feedback, influencing, and persuasion (NFA, 2005, SM 1-16).

Overall, the author believes the MFD could, and should, be doing more for our employees and citizens in the area of awards and recognition for meritorious acts. If the MFD had a formalized award program with award criteria plan in place, we could properly and officially recognize our employees and citizens.
This research will investigate, review, and evaluate other fire departments that have established award programs in place. The non-fire service, such as government, private and public sector will also be reviewed. The author plans to approach this problem utilizing the action research method. This will include personal communications, literature reviews, and internal and external surveys. This research will help draft an award program that can be submitted for approval and implemented into the MFD.

Literature Review

The literature review for this research project involved searching fire and emergency medical services (EMS) journals and technical reports at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in April of 2007. Information was also gathered through personal communication with superiors, peers, and subordinates who will be directly involved and affected with this ARP. Internet searches were also performed along with literature review at the Muscatine Public Library. The literature review and personal communications also examined non-fire service arenas to get another view of how the military, public, and private sector award’s their members. The Encarta Dictionary (2003) defines an award as “something such as a prize that is given in recognition of somebody’s merit or an achievement.” This applied research project involved examining five different areas related to award criteria and programs.

The first area examined what programs and/or criteria have been utilized in other fire departments for awards. The second examined what programs and/or criteria have been utilized in the private sector and government agencies for awards. The third examined the opinions and thoughts of MFD members in regards to an award program for the department. The fourth examined all the programs available and/or in use in other departments for components that could be adopted and/or modified to assist in creating criteria for awards and an award program.
The last area examines the associated costs for implementing such an award program for the MFD.

The first topical area of review examined the programs that have been initiated in other fire departments. According to Vigiani (1999), the FDNY has had a program in place for over twenty years where a written report of a meritorious act is submitted to a “board of merit” for review and acts are then classified by category. These can be for an entire unit or an individual. A medal board is then assembled and an appeals board is available if necessary. Vigiani (1999) believes individuals should be recognized when they are in danger and they save another’s life (p. 66).

Camden County Fire Chief’s and Fire Officer’s Association has an awards program called “Awards Committee – Awards Criteria.” The membership of this county and association has adopted criteria for the awards, which is presented through a “valor committee” (“Camden,” n.d.). The highest award is the “medal of honor,” which is presented for a LODD and is acknowledged by an engraved plaque (“Camden,” n.d.). The second highest award is the “purple heart,” which is presented for a serious injury sustained in his/her performance of duty, which is also acknowledged by an engraved plaque (“Camden,” n.d.). The membership also has four categories of “meritorious award” that ranges from Class I, where a member exposes himself to extreme personal risk to a Class IV, where a member is awarded for outstanding performance. Camden County (n.d.) also acknowledges awards for units, such as ladder, engine, or rescue companies along with “Public Safety Awards” and “Civilian Awards.”

The Urbandale Fire Department (2000) in Iowa has an SOG on exceptional performance, which describes how a member of the department, a member of the explorer post, or a citizen of the community can be nominated for a “blue sheet” for exceptional performance (p. 2). The blue
sheet is a department form, which becomes a record, for documenting exceptional performance and then the form is placed in the individual's personnel file.

The Ankeny Fire Department (n.d.) in Iowa has a detailed policy for Recognition/Commendation, which is policy # 4306. The Ankeny Fire Department (n.d) believes that acts of heroism and performance beyond the call of duty should be recognized. The nomination procedure involves nomination criteria, nomination committee functions, committee chair functions, and award objections, if any. The nomination committee submits the findings of the nomination and recommendations to the Chief for final approval. The highest award is the “Award of Valor” and awards can either be for an individual, a company, or a team. If a member was awarded a “Life Saving Award” or an “Award of Valor,” this would occur during a scheduled City Council meeting; otherwise the awards are presented internally (Ankeny Fire Department, n.d.).

The Beatrice Fire Department (1993) in Nebraska has an award policy that describes the award criteria and types of awards (p. 1-2). The recommendation for an award needs to be in writing and submitted to the chief describing the act, or performance, which is to be cited (“Beatrice,” p. 1). The highest award is the “Medal of Honor,” which is presented in the form of a medal and certificate (“Beatrice,” p. 1). Other awards include the “Medal of Merit,” “Meritorious Service Award,” “Certificate of Appreciation,” and “Citizens Certificate of Merit” (“Beatrice,” p. 2). Chief B. Daake (personal communications, September 18, 2007) states the department plans on eliminating the “Medal of Merit” award and adding more detail and content for the “Citizens Certificate of Merit.”

The Cedar Falls Fire Department (2004) in Iowa also has a commendation policy, called SOG 1.06, which acknowledges exceptional performance or bravery during emergency or non-emergency situations (p. 1). The fire chief has appointed a commendation committee that is
responsible for developing criteria for commendations, which includes the “Certificate of Honor” and the “Award of Valor” (p. 1). After a written commendation is submitted, the committee reviews the commendation and recommends to the chief the “Certificate of Honor,” the “Award of Valor,” or disapproves the commendation (p. 1). Lastly, the Chief grants or denies the award. Any commendation becomes a permanent part of the employee’s personnel file (p. 1).

The Ottumwa Fire Department in Iowa issues certificates for fire department members stating the particulars of the event, which are then placed in the employees personnel file along with copies being distributed to council members and the Mayor (S. O’Connor, personal communication, September 18, 2007).

In summary, the literature describes that fire departments do have programs and criteria in place that recognize employees and civilians in their communities for actions above and beyond the normal duty. An award, certificate, plaque, and/or ribbons for Class A uniforms are part of the written policy, SOG, or procedure describing the award process. Many departments award these to employees or civilians at city council meetings or internally in their own departments with copies of the award placed in their personnel files along with copies sent to council members, city administrator, and mayor.

The second area of review examined what programs and/or criteria have been utilized in the private sector and government agencies for awards. HNI Corporation, which is a fortune 500 company located in Muscatine, is heavily involved in rewarding and recognizing employees, which they call “members.” HNI, formally known as HON Industries Inc., is the parent company for several other local office manufacturing plants in Muscatine, such as “Allsteel” and “The HON Company,” which are involved in making office furniture, workspace accessories, and hearth products.
HNI supports the members of the company and specifically values community and community involvement of its members (M. Stumpf, personal communication, November 26, 2007). HNI offers awards for years of service to members, dinners, certificates, and salaried members who are involved in Boy Scouts, Junior Achievement, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters actually get paid time off work for being involved (M. Stumpf, personal communication, November 26, 2007).

HNI doesn’t specifically have a policy for life saving or meritorious recognition, but they do value the members and offer numerous programs and incentives for safety, quality, ISO, production and community involvement (M. Stumpf, personal communication, November 26, 2007). Members are recognized with dinners, certificates, plaques, company newsletter, and announcements in morning meetings, which are called “stand ups” (M. Stumpf, personal communication, November 26, 2007).

Muscatine Power and Water, a local municipal utility, doesn’t specifically have a policy on life saving or meritorious recognition neither, but according to C. Hazen, an employee services specialist, they give out awards, gift cards, plaques, and place letters in employees personnel files (personal communication, November 26, 2007). The employee’s deed, or award, is also mentioned internally and in the company’s bi-monthly news letter (C. Hazen, personal communication, November 26, 2007). C. Hazen (personal communication, November 26, 2007) also believes these awards and recognition boosts morale at Muscatine Power and Water.

The United States Military has been involved in recognizing the soldiers during combat, non-combat, war, peace, and soldiers wounded in action for a long time (Army Regulation, 2006). The “Medal of Honor” is the highest medal available, which is only awarded by the President. The “Medal of Honor” is awarded to US armed forces only during combat conditions
where a soldier is at risk of life, went above and beyond the call of duty, and the deed must have been one of personal bravery or self sacrifice (Army Regulation, 2006).

A few of the other awards are the “Distinguished Service Cross,” “Distinguished Service Medal,” “Silver Star,” “Legion of Merit,” “Distinguished Flying Cross,” “Soldiers Medal,” “Bronze Star,” “Purple Heart,” “Meritorious Service Medal,” “Air Medal,” “Army Commendation Medal,” and “Army Achievement Medal” (Army Regulation, 2006).

In 1970 the State of Iowa implemented the “Governor’s Lifesaving Award Program.” This program is to recognize Iowans who have performed courageous acts while trying to save another’s life or for assisting someone in an emergency situation (“Iowa,” 2006). There are three types of awards, the “Lifesaving with Valor,” “Meritorious” and “Outstanding” (“Iowa,” 2006). The criteria of eligibility for the “Lifesaving with Valor” award are that the situation was extremely hazardous, strong possibility for serious injury or death, and that the act was not reckless (“Iowa,” 2006). This award requires a nomination from the department, or city, and then the commendation committee for the State of Iowa will review the nomination and supporting documents (“Iowa,” 2006). If the criteria is met and the “Lifesaving with Valor” is given, then a plaque, medallion, and uniform lapel pins are awarded to the recipient or surviving family by the Governor (“Iowa,” 2006).

In summary, the fire service is not alone in recognizing and rewarding employees and citizens for acts of bravery or other service related issues. General industries perform more recognition for safety, years of service, and community involvement, whereas government entities along with the fire service are more apt to rely on medals and awards.

The third topical area of review examined the opinions of Muscatine Fire Department employees in regards to an awards program, or lack of a program. Muscatine Fire Department employees would like to see the MFD have a written award/citation program for acts of bravery
and/or heroism (see Appendix E). Some of the positive comments include, it would increase the department’s morale, recognition would be nice, a good way to show the public what we do, the local police department has had an award program for a long time and we should also, would like to see something for citizen’s awards, and decoration of metal ribbon bar sets would be nice on the Class A uniform (see Appendix E).

Some of the negative comments include, don’t like it because it promotes risk taking, shouldn’t get a reward for just doing your job, there are more appropriate ways to promote the department and profession, not sure how the criteria would be set and afraid it seems like someone would get overlooked for an award and wondering if this would be retroactive or not, may jeopardize safety if firefighters are taking chances just to get an award, doesn’t want the award program to be like the police department’s because the general opinion is that they hand them out like candy, and the actions of true bravery or heroism shouldn’t violate the department’s safety guidelines in the process (see Appendix E).

Fire Chief S. Dalbey (personal communication, October 8, 2007) is also concerned with rewarding unsafe behavior based on outcomes and that evaluating heroism is a very subjective thing. Chief Dalbey is mainly concerned about promoting and rewarding a level of bravery and courage that borders on an unacceptable level of risk (personal communication, October 8, 2007). Chief Dalbey is not against a written program and believes heroic acts haven’t been overlooked in the past and that awards can be given without a formal program (personal communication, October 8, 2007).

A Firehouse article was also attached with an internal survey describing a critical view of U.S. firefighters. Stefan Svensson (Snowden, 2007), a PhD and Swedish firefighter and Research and Development Engineer, stated:
American firefighters take pride in being heroes - sometimes putting a heroic act ahead of a safe one. He said American firefighters think it is heroic to die saving someone else’s life. But, Svensson contends, ‘it’s not ok to die from anything but old age.’ ‘We aren’t heroes – it’s a job,’ he told attendees. ‘It’s not a mission – it’s a job.’ (¶, 8-9)

In summary, the fire department employees as a whole would like to see an award program implemented in the department. The positive comments include increasing morale, being recognized by peers and community, wanting to see something for citizens, along with a metal ribbon bar set for the Class A uniform (see Appendix E). The negative comments included concerns that it would promote risk taking and was afraid it wouldn’t be taken seriously like the perception of the Muscatine Police Department’s program that it isn’t taken seriously (see Appendix E). The MFD is still able to give out awards whether the MFD has a policy in place or not, according to Chief Dalbey (personal communication, October 8, 2007).

The fourth area of review looked at current award programs in other departments or companies that could be adopted and/or modified for the Muscatine Fire Department in order to assist in properly recognizing and rewarding employees and citizens in Muscatine. The MFD could adopt any portion of a number of programs that was reviewed during this research, which includes the Muscatine Police Department (1999) Policy and Procedures Directive B-5, Beatrice Fire Department (1993) in Nebraska award policy DP 316, Ankeny Fire Department (n.d.) in Iowa Recognition/Commendation Program # 4306, Urbandale Fire Department (2000) in Iowa Exceptional Performance SOG, Camden County Fire Chief’s and Fire Officer’s Association (n.d.) in New Jersey Awards Committee-Awards Criteria, or Upland California’s Police Department (2007) Awards and Award Criteria. Any one of these award policies could easily be adopted and/or modified to create a draft program for submittal in the MFD.
The MFD could also adopt language from the military on our awards and associated criteria and could even use their metal ribbon bar set for examples of size, color, and other verbiage for displaying on Class A uniforms (US Armed Forces Awards, n.d.). The private sector awards more on attendance, productivity, safety, quality, years of service, and announcements in newsletters as compared to the fire service (M. Stumpf, personal communications, November 26, 2007). But, the fire service could learn from this and do more in these areas, such as dinners, banquets, gift cards, and prizes.

In summary, any one of the above mentioned policies could be easily modified and incorporated into a draft policy for the Muscatine Fire Department.

The fifth area of review examined the associated costs, if any, for drafting, creating, and implementation of an award program for Muscatine. The cost would be minimal in nature. The MFD could review and accept and/or edit the proposed MFD Award Program described in Appendix E. The man hours needed for editing and/or modifying the draft policy in Appendix E would be less than 4 hours, or approximately equivalent to $120.00. No cost would be assigned to the office supplies, such as paper, printer ink, and copier machine. The average cost for a custom engraved wooden plaque would be $100.00 per award. Custom metal ribbon bar sets for the MFD Class A uniform would be approximately $15.00 per award. No cost would be associated for attending a city council meeting for management to give out an award, but the union contract would require the union member to be paid for a minimum of 2 hours at a cost of approximately $40.00 in overtime, unless they would opt to take the comp time instead of pay.

In summary, the cost would be minimal at about $155.00 an award. This could be easily budgeted for within our current line item budget. The total cost of implementation would be dependant on how many awards would be issued annually, if any.
Overall, the literature review helped with the ARP and the findings of others in the context of policies and personal communications influenced the project as a whole and impacted the MFD draft award policy (see Appendix F).

Procedures

The research procedures used to complete this applied research project consisted of literature reviews conducted at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in April of 2007. Additional literature review was conducted in the summer of 2007 at the Musser Public Library located in Muscatine, Iowa, along with numerous internet searches on this topic throughout the calendar year. This additional literature review resulted in obtaining more literature through interlibrary loan. All the literature was read and reviewed in advanced, which was all very helpful for this topic area. None of the research that was obtained was excluded, which means it was all relevant to the topic of awards and recognition for employees.

Personal communications were conducted with a few local companies that were private, public, or governmental in nature. The purpose of the questioning was to gather what they did internally for rewarding employees. The interviewing took less than 15 minutes and what was also helpful was that the author has personal knowledge of HNI policies and procedures due to family members being employed with HNI. The interview was very informal and no written questions were used. The human resource representatives were just asked to describe what they do internally for rewarding and recognizing their employees.

External surveys consisted of mailing out surveys to all 48 paid fire departments in the state of Iowa. The mailed survey was titled “Fire Department Award/Citation Program Survey” (see Appendix A and B). Mailing lists were obtained from the Iowa State’s Fire Marshal office. The mailing list that was received from the state of Iowa was supposed to only include paid
departments, but the list included all of the fire departments in the state. So, the list had to be sorted to remove the combination and volunteer departments. Of those paid departments on the list, the Army National Guard, two airport fire departments, and the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau were removed from the list that was used to mail out surveys.

The purpose of the survey was to examine how many paid fire departments in Iowa had an award/citation program for employees and citizens and if they believed such a program boosted morale. The survey was developed by drafting a list of items that the author wanted to obtain about award programs, which avoided loaded questions so the author was not leading a respondent to answer a specific way. The author selected the survey sample size by including every paid department in the state of Iowa. A random sample of the paid departments in Iowa was excluded, because a random sample according to Muscatine’s population would have been too small. So, the survey was conducted in the entire state of Iowa, which should represent the Midwest area fire service well.

The results of the surveys were entered into a spreadsheet, which was then tabulated and analyzed (see Appendix C). The results of the survey were then reviewed and utilized to assist with answering the research questions posed in the literature review. Several departments were interested in this topic and requested results of the survey.

As for limitations, consideration was made to mailing surveys to all the volunteer fire departments and combination departments in Iowa, but the author thought it would not give a true representation of the majority of departments concerning the topic of awards and citations. But, this is not to speculate that these departments don’t have a written award and/or citation program. But, for the reasons mentioned above, only paid departments were surveyed.

Another limitation included the mailed “Fire Department Award/Citation Program Survey” (see Appendix B). First, question # 3 could have been worded differently because the
author didn’t offer choices for how they are recognized internally or didn’t list it as an open-ended question. This was evident when the survey results showed comments in the comments section. Second, more questions could have been asked about some of the negative aspects of a program, such as, “Do you think it promotes risk taking?” Some respondents actually wrote in “N/A” on some answers, which either means it did not apply or they felt they didn’t have an appropriate choice to pick from on the survey.

One last limitation was that the author didn’t ask anything in regards to certificates, plaques, letters placed in personnel file, or announcement in local newspaper. This omission was a flaw on the part of the author and maybe will even have an impact on the MFD draft policy (see Appendix F). This wasn’t apparent until the surveys were returned.

Internal surveys were placed in fire department members individual mailboxes in the fire station, which consisted of 36. The internal surveys (see Appendix D) were titled, “Muscatine Fire Department Internal Survey.” As for limitations, more thought should have gone into the internal survey and it was evident by all the written comments on the returned surveys along with many fields that were unanswered. Question # 6, should not have listed bystander CPR in the question and should have just asked if the MFD should give awards/citations to citizens, and if so, for what? This type of questioning would have received more answers that could have been helpful in drafting the MFD Award Program (see Appendix F).

The results of the surveys were entered into a spreadsheet, which was then tabulated and analyzed (see Appendix E). The results of the survey were then reviewed and utilized to assist with answering the research questions posed in the literature review.

Results

A total of 48 external surveys were mailed out and 20 respondents completed and returned the surveys, which represents a 42 % return rate (see Appendix C). A total of 35 surveys
were distributed internally and 27 employees completed and returned the surveys, which represents a 77% return rate (see Appendix E).

Question #1: What programs and/or criteria have been utilized in other fire departments for awards?

Literature review, internet searches, and personal communications were utilized to answer this research question. FDNY has had a program for awards for over 20 years, which can be for an individual or a unit (Vigiani, 1999). Beatrice Fire Department (1993) in Nebraska has had an awards policy since 1993 and is in the process of revamping it to add more wording for citizen awards. Camden County (n.d.) in New Jersey has a very detailed program with specific criteria for awards, assigned committee, along with description of awards and plaques that are awarded. Several Iowa fire departments, such as Ankeny (n.d.), Cedar Falls (2004), Ottumwa (S. O’Connor, personal communication, September 18, 2007), and Urbandale (2000) all have programs in place that deal with criteria and awards for fire fighters and civilians.

No canned program, state or national, or policy was found during the research for an awards program. The departments that had award programs had committees to oversee the nominations, detailed description of types of awards for firefighter and civilian, and description of plaque, certificate, metal ribbon bar set, and that a copy of the award is placed in the individuals personnel file.

Beatrice Fire Department (1993) utilizes the “Medal of Honor” for the highest award; Ankeny Fire Department (n.d.) utilizes the “Award of Valor” for the highest award, while the FDNY (Vigiano, 1999) utilizes the “Medal of Valor” for the highest award.

No fire department program and/or policy was found to show a picture of the award or the metal ribbon bar set for a visual in the document.
The external survey’s showed that only 30% of the paid fire departments in Iowa had a written award/citation program for acts of bravery and/or heroism (see Appendix C). In summary, programs are modified to meet the department’s needs for an individual, unit and/or civilian award.

Question #2: What programs and/or criteria have been utilized in the private sector and government agencies for awards?

The private sector generally recognizes employees for safety, quality, production, community service, and years of service, but not for acts of bravery and/or heroism (C. Hazen, personal communication, November 26, 2007). The philosophy in the private sector is mainly safety, so the safety managers are trying to avoid risky behavior, which would eliminate bravery and/or heroism (A. Ewers, personal communication, November 25, 2007). But, the private sector appears to cater to employees in regards to safety dinners, annual banquet dinners, safety and quality giveaways, t-shirts and mug giveaways, free parking spots in front of building, and cash and/or gift cards (C. Hazen and M. Stumpf, personal communication, November 26, 2007).

The government has had the longest award program in place than any other organization researched during this past year. The U.S. military has a comprehensive program for awards along with details on criteria, nomination procedures, and description of award along with a photo of the award (U.S. Armed Forces Award, n.d.). The army regulation dealing with awards is 210 pages long and the steps for preparing and processing the award, which is DA Form 638, has 38 steps (Army Regulation, 2006).

Question #3: What are the opinions of MFD members in regards to an awards program?

Overall, according to the internal surveys (see Appendix E), fire department employees are in favor of a written award/citation program. Seventy-eight percent would like to have a program (see Appendix E). The majority (84%) would like to be recognized internally, whereas
only 56% would like to be recognized publicly at a city council meeting (see Appendix E). More than half (56%) would like to have some sort of a ribbon or bar, if awarded an award or citation, for display on the members Class A uniform (see Appendix E).

Written comments on the internal surveys mentioned that the metal ribbon bar set on the Class A uniform would be good public relations and let other departments know that they were recognized internally, but not everyone has a Class A uniform (see Appendix E). More than half (62%) thought citizens should be awarded for acts of bravery and that 68% thought awards should be given for bystander CPR saves (see Appendix E). Increased morale was also mentioned as a positive comment for if an award program was to be implemented into the department (see Appendix E).

A few of the negative comments concerning an award program that were written on the internal surveys were that an awards program may increase risk taking, or encourage unsafe acts, and that it may overlook an employee who should have received an award, but didn’t (see Appendix E). Another written comment wondered if the nomination for the awards would be retroactive for previous heroic acts that have occurred in the past if this award program is implemented into the department (see Appendix E).

In conclusion, the majority of the department is in favor of an awards program. The biggest concern for the Chief (S. Dalbey, personal communications, October 8, 2007) and certain members of the department is that an awards program may increase risk taking, or reward unsafe behavior, and/or acts (see Appendix E).

Question #4: Are there current programs in place that Muscatine could adopt and/or modify to assist in properly recognizing and rewarding employees and citizens?

The Muscatine Fire Department could adopt anyone of the policies or procedures that were discovered and reviewed during the literature review process and external survey
evaluation. Written concerns from fire department employees on the internal surveys wondered how the criteria would be designed and if it would be fair, but anyone of the programs or policies could be reviewed by an awards committee representing management and labor for consensus on the criteria.

In summary, the Muscatine Fire Department is able to use any part, or any combination, of the military’s, private sector, government, or fire service award program, criteria or procedure. The results of the research and literature review assisted the author in drafting an Awards Program for the Muscatine Fire Department that will be submitted for review and implementation (see Appendix F).

Question #5: What would be the cost of implementation of an award program?

The cost for implementation would be insignificant. This could easily be budgeted from the current budget, with no revision or approval from outside the department. The approximate cost for a nomination and actual presentation of an award to a fire department member would be approximately $155.00 per award recipient. Another possibility concerning the costs of this program would be to have it paid for by donations or other sources besides the fire department budget.

Discussion

The literature review and the results supported the idea that several departments have award programs and that over 78% of the MFD employees would like to have an award program implemented (see Appendix E). The criteria for meeting an award ranged from a LODD to a good deed, or gesture, which also included individual awards, unit or company awards, and civilian awards.

The research clearly showed that the private and public sector deals more with appreciation than with rewards, since their employees rarely do heroic acts in their line of work.
The public and private sector recognizes their employees with awards, dinners, banquets, and gift cards for years of service, community involvement, safety, quality, and production.

The U.S. government, such as the military, has the most detailed and explicit award criteria, explanation, and photos describing the award or bar ribbon than any other program discovered during this research. The U.S. Army Regulations (n.d.), such as AR 600-8-22, will aid in the process of drafting the MFD award program (see Appendix F).

In my opinion, an awards committee needs to be established to review the other programs discovered in other agencies so they can be adopted and/or modified for use in the MFD, such as criteria, nomination procedures, and award presentation. The awards committee would actually be an integral part of the success and continuity of the awards program. Pictures and/or examples of plaques, awards, and metal ribbon bar sets need to be implemented into the policy for visualization.

Many of the comments from the survey mentioned that an awards program will improve department morale (see Appendix E). The potential for increased risk taking, or violating safety rules, will have to be addressed internally, or mentioned in the draft MFD award policy, to address the issue raised.

The cost for implementing such a program is minimal, so the cost would not have an impact on the success or failure of the program for the fire department. Plus, the cost could be shared with other agencies, entities, charitable contributions, and/or donations.

As for my personal interpretation of the results, I believe that MFD should assemble an awards committee to review the draft award program in Appendix F and make the necessary modifications for submission to the Chief for approval. The awards committee should be represented by personnel from labor and management.
In summary, based on the findings, Muscatine should implement an award program to properly and officially reward employees for acts of bravery and heroism, along with rewarding citizens. Currently, this lack of an awards program for the Muscatine Fire Department results in a disservice to our employees and citizens of our community.

Recommendations

In order to effectively address the issue of an awards program for the Muscatine Fire Department, the following recommendations should be considered.

- Create a Draft MFD Award Policy (see Appendix F).
- Obtain permission from the Fire Chief to assemble an Awards Committee, which will represent labor (Local # 1672) and management.
- Once an Awards Committee is selected a time and date for an initial meeting will be assigned.
- Prior to the Awards Committee first meeting, a copy of the MFD draft award policy (see Appendix F) and copies of the other award programs, policies, and award criteria that was reviewed for this ARP will be distributed in advance to the committee members for review.
- The goal of the committee is to review the draft policy and either adopt and/or modify the program, which will include the types of awards, criteria for awards, nomination procedures, and pictures of awards, pins and/or bars.
- Once the program is finalized and has group consensus, it will be forwarded to the Fire Chief for approval.
- If implemented, copies of the award program will be distributed to all members with members signing off on a form stating they received the program/policy and reviewed it.
- If implemented, it should be reviewed annually for revisions and/or editing.
Reference List

Ankeny Fire Department (n.d.). Policy # 4306 – Recognition / Commendation. Ankeny, IA.


Camden County Fire Chiefs and Fire Officers Association (n.d.). Awards Committee – Awards Criteria.

Cedar Falls Fire Department (2004). SOG 1.06 Commendation Policy. Cedar Falls, IA.


September 17, 2007

Dear Chief,

My name is Jerry Ewers and I’m an Assistant Fire Chief in Muscatine, Iowa. I’m an EFOP student working on my applied research project for the Executive Leadership class. I need your help gathering information on Fire Department Awards/Citation Programs. The reason for my research is because Muscatine does not have a written program to reward members of the department and citizens for acts of bravery and/or heroism.

Enclosed is a “Fire Department Award/Citation Program Survey.” This survey should take less than five minutes to complete. I am requesting that you, or someone that you designate, take a few minutes to complete this survey and return it to me as soon as possible. You can fax the completed survey to me at (563) 263-5534 or e-mail it to me at jewers@ci.muscatine.ia.us.

Your responses will be kept confidential and your department will not be identified by name in the research. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please make a note on the form, fax, or e-mail and I will send you a copy when the survey results are compiled.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance. If you would have any questions about this survey, or departmental awards and citations, please feel free to call me at (563) 263-9233.

Sincerely,

Gerald P. Ewers
Assistant Fire Chief

Enclosure
Appendix B

Fire Department Award/Citation Program Survey

1. Does your department have a written award/citation program for acts of bravery and/or heroism?
   Yes _____  No _____

2. If not, would you wish you had one in place?
   Yes _____  No _____

3. If so, are personnel recognized internally?
   Yes _____  No _____

4. If so, are personnel recognized during city council meetings?
   Yes _____  No _____

5. If so, do you issue a ribbon/bar for use on Class A uniforms?
   Yes _____  No _____

6. If so, does your program address citizen acts of bravery and/or heroism, such as rescues and bystander CPR?
   Yes _____  No _____

7. If so, do you feel that it boosts morale in your department?
   Yes _____  No _____

If you have any feedback and/or comments on the topic of departmental awards/citation program please write those comments in below:

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

NOTE:
Your responses will be kept confidential and your department will not be identified by name in the research.

You may fax your survey response to me at 563-263-5534 or e-mail it to me at jewers@ci.muscatine.ia.us

If you would like a copy of the survey results, please make a note on the form with your name and address, or e-mail address, and I will send you a copy when the survey results are compiled.
Appendix C

Award Survey Results

48 Mailed Out  20 Returned = 42 % Return Rate

1. Does your department have a written award/citation program for acts of bravery and/or heroism?
   Yes ____6___ (30%)  No ____14___

2. If not, would you wish you had one in place?
   Yes ____11___ (85%)  No ____2___

3. If so, are personnel recognized internally?
   Yes ____12___ (92%)  No ____1___

4. If so, are personnel recognized during city council meetings?
   Yes ____6___ (55%)  No ____5___

5. If so, do you issue a ribbon/bar for use on Class A uniforms?
   Yes ____1___ (8%)  No ____11___

6. If so, does your program address citizen acts of bravery and/or heroism, such as rescues and bystander CPR?
   Yes ____4___ (33%)  No ____8___

7. If so, do you feel that it boosts morale in your department?
   Yes ____7___ (88%)  No ____1___

Written Comments

Not a formal written policy, but we have recognized firefighters at City Council meetings; in addition we have sent letters of appreciation to their home. As for citizens, we have submitted names for the Governors Award, and they were recipients of the award. Sounds like a great project for the EFO. We at times struggle at what is appropriate, firefighters are suppose to perform their duties, but at what time do we recognize acts of courage and strength. I feel public recognition reinforces positive acts and we should recognize the firefighters efforts. Good luck.

We have an internal program to recognize acts that go above and beyond the normal job descriptions, but it is not tied to emergency responses.
Basically we do not have a written program but we do informally recognize people. We have done department awards and have also had members presented awards at council meetings. I don’t personally feed a need for a written program but if people do well why not recognize them.

We have no formal program in place and we only recognize performance issues in the employee’s personal file. In addition we no longer have what would typically be classified as a Class A uniform, cost issues etc. have prevented us from providing this type of uniform.

We have a program for outstanding performance but not specifically for acts of bravery and/or heroism. Like so many things, some people like the recognition and others could care less. I do believe that people appreciate being recognized for outstanding performance.

We recognize years of service. Bravery and heroism usually are a group effort of the fire department crews or the total department. Individuals are forwarded to the states program.

Firefighters created five categories of awards and the criteria needed to achieve consideration for an award. A committee meets annually to review nominations (there are team and individual awards). Under special circumstances I am sure the City Council would support public recognition for those types of cases.
Appendix D

Muscatine Fire Department Internal Survey

I’m currently researching the topic of departmental award/citation program for my last EFOP class that could be created and/or adopted for the Muscatine Fire Department for acts of bravery and/or heroism. This may even include citizens. Please answer the questions below and place the survey in my department mailbox. This survey will be confidential. If you would like to see the results of the survey it will be posted in the Captain’s office. Thanks in advance for your time and help on my research paper.

Jerry Ewers
Assistant Fire Chief

1. Would you like to see the MFD have a written award/citation program for acts of bravery and/or heroism?
   Yes ________  No ________

2. If so, would you like to be recognized internally?
   Yes ________  No ________

3. If so, would you like to be recognized at a city council meeting?
   Yes ________  No ________

4. If so, would you like to be issued a ribbon for your Class A uniform for acts of bravery and/or heroism?
   Yes ________  No ________

5. Should the MFD give awards to citizens for acts of bravery, such as rescues from house fires and car fires?
   Yes ________  No ________

6. Should the MFD give awards/citations for bystander CPR?
   Yes ________  No ________

If you have any feedback and/or comments on the topic of departmental awards/citation program please write those comments in below:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix E

Internal Survey Results

35 Handed Out 27 Returned = 77 % Return Rate

1. Would you like to see the MFD have a written award/citation program for acts of bravery and/or heroism?
   Yes 21 (78%) No 6

2. If so, would you like to be recognized internally?
   Yes 21 (84%) No 4

3. If so, would you like to be recognized at a city council meeting?
   Yes 14 (56%) No 11

4. If so, would you like to be issued a ribbon for your Class A uniform for acts of bravery and/or heroism?
   Yes 14 (56%) No 11

5. Should the MFD give awards to citizens for acts of bravery, such as rescues from house fires and car fires?
   Yes 16 (62%) No 10

6. Should the MFD give awards/citations for bystander CPR?
   Yes 17 (68%) No 8

Written Comments

I don’t know how you would set the criteria and it seems like someone always gets missed when this is done. Do you go back and recognize past acts or does it start on a certain date?

Firefighter of the year and EMT/Paramedic of the year award.

Would like to be issued a Class A first.

Ribbons are for little kids. Give pins on bars. I think the city council should know about the act, but appearance is not necessary. I think bystander CPR should be recognized on CPR saves only, not just someone doing CPR on every call.

Not everyone has a Class A uniform. What about a pin or some type of medal.

This is our job— you should not expect an award for doing your job. I feel there are more appropriate ways to promote our department and profession.

If some people don't have a class A uniform could they still receive a ribbon? I think it is good for us to get notice of our brave work and I think it is important to let the public see so they know how hard we work
and how we put our lives on the line everyday to help people in need. This may also boost morale here at
the station.

Can be given without a formal program. My other concern has to do with rewarding unsafe behavior
based on outcomes.

I think it’s a good idea and maybe a morale booster. My only concern is that it may jeopardize safety if
people are taking chances to just get an award.

Don't like it. Promotes risk taking.

For citizens CPR, it depends on the outcome

I believe recognition is important for acts people do beyond their normal everyday life. Bystander CPR is
a fine idea, but acts of bravery may lead to other issues. I think it would do wonders for department
morale if the chief showed interest in the firefighter’s efforts.

I think we should receive buttons for our button up uniforms, like MPD has.

Could help with morale. Be nice to be recognized for going above and beyond. Open up city halls eye on
what we do. Could this be incorporated into the EMS side also?

Only for true action of bravery or heroism. Not against department safety guidelines. Depends, not for
going back into a structure, this is against all pub ed teaching.

We don't need a program like the cops where an award is handed out for a B.S. reason, but recognition of
true acts would be nice.

Even though some people say it’s out job, or that’s what we do, recognition for a job well done promotes
pride and honor. To have an outward sign of awards on uniforms is good PR and a sign to other
departments (when wearing a uniform with decorations) that they, the employee have been recognized by
their dept. Citizen Awards are a great way to promote our dept. as leaders of life safety. That we
recognize citizens for life safety.
Appendix F

MFD Draft Recognition and Awards Program

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for identifying and nominating perspective award recipients.

Policy:

It is the policy of the Muscatine Fire Department to acknowledge exceptional performance, achievements, and acts of heroism by its members.

Awards Committee:

An awards committee will be selected and appointed by the Chief, which will represent two personnel from management and two personnel from labor. If an award nomination is for a committee member, that committee member will not be involved and the Chief will temporarily appoint a replacement for that award review.

The purpose of the awards committee is to provide integrity and continuity of the award program.

The awards committee will forward the recommendation to the Chief for the final action.

Nomination Procedure:

Any department member, or citizen, may be nominated for an award by any other member of the department. The nomination must be in writing describing the incident, deed, act, or accomplishment and submitted to the awards committee. Nominations will be reviewed and forwarded to the Chief for final approval.

Awards / Awards Criteria:

Medal of Honor

Is awarded posthumously to a member of the department through his/her surviving family, in any, who meets his or her death as a result of an injury received in the performance of his or her duty. The next of kin will be awarded:
a. A medal of honor Ribbon
b. A wooden engraved plaque
c. A certificate of award
d. A letter from the Fire Chief with a description of the incident

d. A letter from the Fire Chief with a description of the incident

Medal of Valor

Is awarded to a member of the department who intelligently and in the line of duty, conscious of the danger and at great risk of imminent personal harm or hazard, distinguishes himself or herself by the performance of an act or gallantry and valor above the call of normal duty. Recipients of the Medal of Valor will be awarded:

a. A Medal of Valor Ribbon
b. A wooden engraved plaque
c. A certificate of award
d. A letter from the Fire Chief with a description of the incident
e. Will occur during a city council meeting, if recipient doesn’t object

Life Saving Award

Is awarded to a person, who acts within his or her scope of duty, when such an action is believed to have saved the life of another, when that life is in danger. Recipients of the Life Saving Award will receive:

a. A Life Saving Ribbon
b. A wooden engraved plaque
c. A certificate of award
d. A letter from the Fire Chief with a description of the incident

e. Will occur during a city council meeting, if recipient doesn’t object

Unit / Company Citation

Is awarded for actions termed as “Outstanding Performance.” In the course of action, members of a company demonstrate remarkable performance related to the protection of
life and/or property, with a degree of personal hazard. Recipients of this Unit / Company Citation will receive:

a. A Unit / Company Citation  
b. A letter from the Fire Chief with a description of the incident

**Meritorious Civilian Award**

Is awarded for actions termed as “Outstanding Performance.” In the course of action, a civilian(s) demonstrates remarkable performance relating to the protection of life and/or property. Recipients of Meritorious Civilian Award will receive:

a. A wooden engraved plaque  
b. A letter from the Fire Chief with a description of the incident  
c. Will occur during a city council meeting, if recipient doesn’t object

**Award Objections:**

Objections to nominations shall be in writing and submitted to the award committee. The objection should include a brief narrative stating the objection. The award committee has the right to deny any submission. If denied, a brief summary as to why it was denied is to be submitted to the Fire Chief.

**Draft Policy**  
Submitted by: Assistant Fire Chief Jerry Ewers  
Date: November 27, 2007