Staffing and training of the Essen Fire Department Incident Management Team

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where 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.

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Abstract

A good functioning all hazard incident management team is vital for the successful mitigation of large scale incidents. The reason for this applied research project was that the Essen Fire Department has no selection criteria in place and no training requirements described to select and train their staff members. The problem is that all fire officers of the Essen Fire Department can be appointed as IMT personnel in command and general staff functions despite their different backgrounds, training and experience. It is assumed that this causes uncertainties and a lack of motivation for some officers to be willing to participate as IMT staff members.

The descriptive research method was used to identify: (a) Which training is required to work in the Essen FD IMT? (b) Which selection criteria exist for selecting staff personnel in the Essen FD? (c) What have others done to select and train their IMT staff? (d) What should be done to select and train the Essen FD IMT staff? A literature review, interviews, an online survey, and a data analysis were conducted to complete this research project. The obtained results showed that indeed lots of uncertainties exist, the training could be more structured and selection criteria would help to find adequate IMT staff personnel.

Recommendations were made to the Essen Fire Department to implement selection criteria based on training, experience, and personal skills, to offer intensive further training for their respective functions and to rework the preplanning for large scale incidents. Additional recommendations were made to create work aids like check lists and manuals and to revise the alerting of the IMT.
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Introduction

The work as a member of an Incident Management Team (IMT) is multifaceted and incidents where IMTs are needed are very rare, though threats of large scale incidents are very real. Natural catastrophes and manmade events can overwhelm the communal fire department. The possibility of terrorism attacks is not unrealistic anymore. The Essen Fire Department (FD) needs a well functioning all hazard incident management team to be prepared for these threats. The command and general staff positions of the Essen FD IMT are primarily staffed with fire officers who have different training and experience backgrounds.

The problem is that all fire officers of the Essen Fire Department can be appointed as IMT personnel in command and general staff functions despite their different backgrounds, training and experience. Further training was not mandatory so far and adequate classes for IMT training are not available for everyone. The Essen FD management assumes that this causes uncertainties and a lack of motivation for some officers to be willing to participate as IMT staff members.

The purpose of this applied research project is to find out which kind of training, experience, and additional information is required to select the right personnel and train the staff members to manage incidents with an IMT and ensure a consistent high standard of work.

This project uses the descriptive method with interviews, a literature review, an online survey, and a data analysis to answer the following research questions: (a) Which training is required to work in the Essen FD IMT? (b) Which selection criteria exist for selecting staff
personnel in the Essen FD? (c) What have others done to select and train their IMT staff? (d)
What should be done to select and train the Essen FD IMT staff?

Background and Significance

The Essen Fire Department (FD), founded in 1894, is located in the State of Northrhine Westphalia in the western part of Germany. It serves a population of nearly 600 thousand and is part of the 5.4 million citizens Ruhr Area. Essen is together with Istanbul (Turkey) and Pécs (Hungary) the European Capital of Culture 2010. The Essen FD provides fire and EMS with 10 fire/EMS stations, 7 ALS stations, and a dispatch center, and employs 714 emergency operations personnel. In addition to the full time personnel, there are 16 volunteer fire companies with 513 firefighters. The career and the volunteer companies have a total of 270 apparatus. The covered area is about 210 km². In 2009 the Essen FD had a call volume of more than 123,000 with nearly 113,000 EMS calls and more than 10,000 fire/technical rescue calls. Only one large scale incident with the activation of the IMT occurred in 2009. (Jahresbericht 2009 [annual report])

Dividing the workload between different persons and working as a staff with special work assignments isn’t an invention of the fire service. In 1795, the French general Berthier established a support staff of the French army in Italy. Napoleon Bonaparte adopted the staff system for his own command group. The Prussian army followed this idea and since 1806 officers were trained as staff members (Görlitz W. (1977). *Kleine Geschichte des deutschen Generalstabes* [short history of the German general staff] Haude & Spener.

The idea of working as a staff was adopted by many armies and also the police, the fire service, and other agencies. After severe wildland fires in the seventies the Feuerwehrdienstvorschrift (FwDV) [Fire Service Regulation] 12/1 “Command and Command-
System” was developed and established staffs as IMTs in the fire service. As a follow-up the FwDV 100 Führung und Leitung im Einsatz - Führungssystem – [German Regulation 100 - Leadership and Command in Emergency Operations - Command and Control System] was implemented in 1999, first as a fire service regulation, later adopted by other agencies like the Technisches Hilfswerk (THW) [Federal Agency for Technical Relief] or the German Red Cross and became the DV 100 (regulation 100).

The command and general staff described in the DV 100 has the same roots as the ICS. The tasks are the same, but the assignments to the different staff functions differ. The DV 100 knows an IC like the ICS but there are no command staff functions like liaison officer (LO), public information officer (PIO) and safety officer (SO). The general staff consists of different staff functions like the ICS. They are called S1 to S6, an abbreviation of staff function or staff section. The staff function S1 is personnel and internal administration. The S1 has to maintain an overview about the deployed personnel and mobilization and demobilization of relief personnel. The S1 is also responsible for the incident command post (ICP) facilities, equipment and supply. In the ICS the S1 would be part of the logistics section. The S2 is situation and is responsible for the incident assessment and an overview about the incident status and the status of all resources. The S2 would be part of the planning section in the ICS. The S3 function is operations and is accountable for the analysis of the situation assessment, the development of a plan to handle the incident, and to dispatch and monitor the needed units. The S3 is a combination of the ICS sections planning, except for the situation assessment, and operations. The S4 is the supply and logistics section of the DV 100 and is responsible for food and drinks, medical units and quarters for the deployed personnel and for fuel and maintenance for all technical resources. The S4 would be part of the ICS logistics section. The S5 is the PIO in the
DV 100. The PIO is part of the general staff and would be a command staff member in the ICS with the same duties. The S6 section is the *communications unit* of the IMT. The S6 leader has to set up and maintain all needed communication resources. The S6 would be part of the logistics section in the ICS. The SO is not described in the German DV 100. The task would be accomplished by the S3 and the on-scene division and group supervisors. Finance and administration is not provided for in the DV 100 and would be part of the administrative staff (EOC) or, if needed, would be accomplished by a technical specialist within the staff. As in the ICS the DV 100 knows technical specialists depending on the type of incident and the different tasks.

The training of staff members is regulated in the FwDV 2 – *Ausbildung der Freiwilligen Feuerwehren* [training in the volunteer fire service] and the training regulation for career fire officers. The *IMT class* is a two week course at the state fire academy and is called F/B V. The F stands for freiwillig [volunteer], the B for beruflich [career] and indicates the target audience of the class. The roman number V is the internal serial number of classes within the fire service in Northrhine-Westphalia. The F/B V is similar to the EAFSOEM class and for senior fire officers, which has to be attended after the mid-level fire officer training. The first part of the F/B V, the *F/B V-I* imparts basic IMT work as a small staff on-scene. The second part, the *F/B V-II*, is the actual IMT class where the actual IMT training takes part. Since the revision of the training of middle level officers in 2008 the IMT staff training became mandatory for all career fire officers; for upper level fire officers it was always mandatory. The F/B V class qualifies to work in an all hazard IMT. There is no obligation for further training of command and general staff members.

To become a fire officer in the career fire service two possibilities exist in Northrhine-Westphalia and also in other German states. The first one is to start as a firefighter and then apply
for the company officer class (B III) at the state fire academies with usually at least five years experience on the job. To get a position in the B III an internal selection process is conducted. After two years as a company officer one can apply for the middle level fire officer class (B IV) and again a selection process will take place. Since the beginning of 2009 the F/B V is part of the fire officer training. The second possibility is to apply for a fire officer trainee position with a bachelor degree in a technical subject area like electrical or civil engineering as a prerequisite. The trainee time is 24 months and consists of the initial firefighter training of six months and the B III, the B IV, and the F/B V classes with practical periods in various fire departments after the respective classes.

Advanced training is offered by the Akademie für Krisenmanagement, Notfallplanung und Zivilschutz (AKNZ) [Academy for Crisis Management, Emergency Planning and Civil Protection] which is similar to the emergency management institute [EMI]. The classes are open to all fire officers with the basic F/B V qualification and emergency management personnel from other authorities with a similar qualification. Additional seminars are offered by the state fire academy. They are called S (staff) seminars.

In the Essen FD all middle level fire officer will have the IMT qualification by the end of 2010. The Essen FD has 73 middle level and 7 upper level fire officers of whom 31 are working as day shifters in the different fields like fire prevention, training or technical services. They are the assigned IMT command and general staff. The line personnel are assigned as incident commanders (IC) and branch managers, division or group supervisors, task force or strike team leaders on scene. That would mean that every staff position and every auxiliary position can be staffed 1 1/2 times. Because there are also some company officers without F/B V training as auxiliary staff personnel, the IMT could be staffed 3 times. That’s the theory. In reality not all
personnel is reachable all the time. In the case of a large scale incident, the staff personnel will be alerted via text message. Also the line personnel officers will be alerted for additional functions on scene. The arrival of alerted personnel is varying, depending on where they live, what they do and if they’re available. During the last large scale incident in July 2009 the first arriving officers were originally planned as IMT staff personnel but during the initial phase of the incident they were assigned as division or group supervisors. Other officers, originally planned as on scene personnel, were working in the IMT. The incident was managed successfully but afterwards some discussion took place about selection and training of staff personnel.

The initial IMT training of many officers was several years ago. Advanced training was rare and internal training was not provided on a regular basis. Since the beginning of 2009 further internal training for staff members became mandatory within the Essen FD but not all members were able to attend. For the last few years there have been special seminars for a few staff positions at the state fire academy, but vacancies for these classes are rare.

So far there is no selection process or special selection criteria in place to choose qualified personnel for the IMT staff. It is expected from every mid and upper level officer to take part regardless of interest, experience, capability, or further training. Especially because of the lack of training and experience some officers express reservations about participation in the IMT (U. Sieger, personal communication, January 12, 2010)

Additional to the IMTs of communal fire departments there are 5 IMTs, one for each region in Northrhine Westphalia, in place who can be alerted for mutual aid to replace some staff functions or support the local incident commander with a complete IMT with all command and general staff functions. These IMTs are similar to NIMS compliant type 3 IMTs. These IMTs are called Mobile Führungsunterstützung (MoFüst) [mobile command support]. The MoFüst concept
says that every municipality has to send personnel for one staff position so no FD will be weakened. These positions are pre-assigned. The Essen FD is part of the Rhein-Ruhr-Wupper Area MoFüst and staffs either the IMT leader (that is not necessarily the IC) or the staff function 3 S3 (Haller F. (2007, January) Mobile Führungsunterstützung Rhein-Ruhr-Wupper im Regierungsbezirk Düsseldorf [Mobile command support in the Rhein-Ruhr-Wupper Area]).

Due to the very different training and experience backgrounds and discussions following the last large scale incident, the unwillingness and the uncertainty of some fire officers in taking part as a staff member in the IMT the idea for this project was born. Also the fact that some senior fire officers have pre-assigned functions in MoFüst but only basic training was offered and no continued training was available, they feel uncomfortable in their positions and this applied research project might offer some solutions for these personnel (A. Böhm, personal communication, January 15, 2010).

Improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA’s) required of the fire service leaders when applied to large-scale multiagency incidents can be linked to the goal of the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management class, “to prepare senior fire officers in the administrative functions necessary to manage the operational component of a fire department effectively”. This project supports the operational objectives of the United States Fire Administration “Improve the fire and emergency services’ capability for response to and recovery from all hazards” and “Improve the fire and emergency services’ professional status”.

Literature Review

To learn and to get a better understanding of how the Essen FD and others ensure the selection of qualified staff personnel and provide adequate training a literature review was
conducted. The research included books, articles, journals, magazines, interviews, a survey, and internal documents to answer the applied research project questions.

1. Which training is required to work in the Essen FD IMT?
2. Which selection criteria exist for selecting staff personnel in the Essen FD?
3. What have others done to select and train their IMT staff?
4. What should be done to select and train the Essen FD IMT staff?

The Gesetz über den Feuerschutz und die Hilfeleistung in Nordrhein Westfalen (FSHG NRW) [fire and rescue service law of Northrhine Westphalia] of 1998 states in section V, § 22 preparation for large scale incidents that communities and counties have to install IMTs. In section VI, § 30 incident command during large scale incidents it is said that in the case of a large scale incident the mayor or the county commissioner establishes an IMT and appoints an IC. Formal selection criteria or training requirements for IMTs or ICs are not mentioned.

The FwDV 2 only knows the F/B V as a mandatory training for IMT staff personnel. No other courses and seminars for this kind of work are described.

The DV 100 doesn’t know any training for IMT personnel. It is only described that in the case of a large-scale incident an IMT should support the IC and how an IMT is built up, but selection criteria or training requirements are not depicted.

The course and seminar descriptions of the state fire academy, Institut der Feuerwehr of Northrhine Westphalia (IdF NRW) , show that the classes F/B V-I: Verbandsführer [F/B V-I: Division management] and F/B V-II: Einführung in die Stabsarbeit [F/B V-II: Introduction command and general staff functions] are giving a broad overview about working as an on scene IMT and the mitigation of large scale incidents as an IMT. For further training seminars for the sections 2 situation and 4 logistics and seminars for handling the media, stress, and
communication problems are offered. For MoFüst members the courses MoFüst A and B are part of the training offered at the IdF.

The personnel assignment of the IMT command and general staff of the Essen FD is written down in the Dienstanordnung Großschadensereignis (DA-GSE) [Essen FD regulation for large scale incidents]. All 73 mid-level and seven upper level fire officers have to participate in large-scale incidents. Thirty-six of the officers are working in day shifts in areas such as fire prevention, training or technical service. They are assigned as the primary command and general staff members. They are supported by 18 company officers. With this number of personnel every staff function can be staffed three times. The other 37 mid and upper level fire officers are line personnel and are assigned as additional or relief incident commanders, branch managers, division or group supervisors in case of large scale incidents. The selection of the fire officers is based on the required formal training which is the two week F/B V class (similar to EAFSOEM) at the state fire academy, rank, seniority, and the section the officers are working in. The highest ranking officers are holding the section chief position, regardless of their experience, knowledge, or training. No further selection criteria for staff personnel are documented.

On May 21, 2008 the Amtssteuerungsitzung (ASS) [department management meeting], the regular chief officer meeting, decided that after the new dispatch center and the ICP were put into service, the rooms for IMT training are now available and further education should be offered. The chief of training got the assignment to implement IMT training in the next mid and upper level officer training in 2009. Every fire officer has to take part in a four day training event every year. The topics differ from year to year and include both fire service related and other subjects like human resources, leadership or IT training.
On July 16, 2008 the ASS meeting minutes pointed out that every mid and upper level fire officer has to take part as IMT staff or line personnel in the case of large scale incidents. No exemptions will be made. A member of the operations division was assigned to create a roster and select the staff members based on the division they’re working in. The next issue of the DA-GSE should provide phone numbers of all relevant personnel.

On May 27, 2008 the Essen FD Kontinuierliche Arbeitsgruppe Leitstelle (KALST) [continuous workgroup for the dispatch center], an internal workgroup meeting regularly to improve the work of the dispatch center and implementing new technology and procedures, indicated in the meeting minutes that the Dräger documentation software drägerware.act was chosen for the IMT. All staff personnel will be instructed in the usage of the program and that IMT forms similar to ICS 213 should only be used as a backup in case of computer problems.

The meeting minutes of the division 2 – operations – meeting on April 21, 2008 states that in the near future five drägerware.act training sessions for all staff personnel are planned.

On May 26, 2008 the meeting minutes of the division 2 meeting indicated that a two day IMT training during the four day officer training was envisioned for 2009. During the first day a theoretical class session will be held to revise the basics of IMT work. On the second day a large scale incident simulation with the activation of the IMT is planned. To ensure the participation of all fire officers five training sessions will be held.

The evaluation of the severe weather incident on July 3, 2009 showed that many fire officers complained that they were not appointed in the functions they are planned for according to the DA-GSE. This caused resentments and the sense of the preplanning was questioned. They also stated that due to non-existing check lists, work aids, and manuals the work in a different staff section as preplanned was hard to accomplish. Another point was that the only criterion to
staff a function within the IMT was rank and seniority and no experience or special training was considered. The alerting of the staff via text messages also turned out to be unsatisfactory. No one knows if the respective function is still needed or if the position is already staffed and the number of the total respondents is also not known.

The Stabsdienstordnung (StDiO) [IMT staff regulations] says that only if all personnel cooperate fast, organized and coordinated and possess a consistent understanding of leadership is an efficient mitigation of large-scale incidents possible. The StDiO therefore is the basic regulation to master such incidents on all levels.

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Leiter der Berufsfeuerwehren (2004) (AGBF) [federal workgroup of fire chiefs] writes in the theses about mobile command support staff in point number four that it is crucial that nationwide all IMTs work on the basis of the DV 100 and that structures have to be standardized and be compatible throughout the nation.

Von Kirchbach (2002), a former army general and head of the independent commission of the Saxon state government, analyses in the report of the independent commission of the Saxon state government – flood disaster 2002 the work of the different IMTs during the incident. He states that the work of the IMTs was generally good but not all staff personnel had enough training and experience to operate in their respective functions. Especially because of the long duration of the incident and the shift work, not enough fire officers with IMT training were available and less qualified personnel had to fill in.

Buchner (2006) is a commander in the German Navy and docent at the Bundeswehr Zentrum für Innere Führung (armed forces center for leadership) in Koblenz. Writing for the Notfallvorsorge, a quarterly journal, he says that a profound training for staff officers is more important than all technical resources and computer programs.
The chief of the Münster Fire Department Fritzen (2006) writes in the *Homeland Security* journal that leadership in disaster management needs highly qualified personnel. He also states that incident management has to be trained and past large scale incidents have to be evaluated. The training of leaders in disaster management and IMTs has to be developed academically.

Fritzen (2005) also writes that the success of complex incidents depends crucially on a dependable IMT with reliable command and general staff personnel. Because every jurisdiction is different concerning geography, size, population, and target hazards the DV 100 can just be understood as a framework and has to be adapted for the respective community. In the Münster FD the DV 100 was adopted and complemented with further standard operating procedures (SOP) to meet the needs of the FD. All staff members and fire officers were adequately trained in theoretical and practical sessions.

Hauser (2008) states in his thesis about *tactical simulations for training in fire departments* that the training of staff personnel should be accomplished in three steps. The first step will be theoretical sessions to get an understanding of the decision making process and the contents of the DV 100. The second step is realized with table top or virtual classroom simulations where the trainees are learning to manage incidents and corroborate the theoretical knowledge. The third step contains practical hands on training sessions to put the acquired knowledge into practice. He also writes that it is crucial for fire officers get a comprehensive training to function as a reliable member of an incident management team in the mitigation of large-scale incidents.

Voscul (2008) states in his thesis about the training of IMTs in the Fire Service, Police Service, and the THW that all staff personnel have to be trained to effectively support the IC. He also writes that the only mandatory qualification in Northrhine-Westphalia is the F/B V class at the state fire academy. He questions if a staff member with this basic training will be able to
function in a staff position after several years without further education. Voscul writes that the quality of IMT work highly depends on the quality of basic and advanced training. Regarding the selection of staff personnel he writes that in the fire service generally no selection criteria other than the F/B V exist. Fire officers who are part of the MoFüst IMT are usually selected by their respective departments. The training for MoFüst staff members is the F/B V class and the MoFüst A, B and C classes. MoFüst A is a revision of the F/B V, MoFüst B is a leadership and team building class and MoFüst C is a class where the whole IMT is training in several simulations. No further selection criteria are described or required.

The police in Northrhine-Westphalia is organized differently from the fire service. The responsibility for the PD is by the state, for the FD by the local communities. The training of the police staff consists of a familiarization and an IMT class. The familiarization is two months for permanent staff members and depending on prior experience for part time staff members. All staff members have to attend an IMT class where regulations, decrees, guidelines, and policies related to staff work are taught. Once a year an incident simulation training takes place involving the whole staff and two times a year a smaller scenario will be played through and evaluated. Part of the PD IMT consists of the 

Ständiger Stab (permanent staff), police officers who work on a daily basis in their respective staff functions. They have to apply for the staff positions and are selected upon knowledge of the position, experience, training, and personal skills. The additional staff members pass through an internal selection process. The THW qualifies the staff members at the THW Bundesschule [THW national training academy] in Neuhausen in an eight day class. The participants get a familiarization with the staff function S1 to S4 and S6 and do practical simulations for each staff function. No trainings for a complete IMT are provided. The advanced training is not regulated, and the THW state associations are offering and conducting further education for staff members.
In Northrhine-Westphalia every year two or three training exercises are held for several THW units. The local sections also offer internal trainings for their IMTs, but attendance is not mandatory. The THW staff consists of volunteer personnel. The selection is conducted by the local branches. No formal selection criteria have been determined.

U. Sieger, head of the training division said on January 27, 2010 that all senior officer staff members at least successfully attended the F/B V class, though it might have been several years ago for some members. The junior fire officers will have completed the F/B V class by the end of 2010. The staff members designated for MoFüüst additionally received the MoFüüst A and B training. The MoFüüst C training wasn’t provided so far because the state government hasn’t had the capacities to offer the class. Some staff members who are assigned to the S2, S4 and S6 positions were qualified at the AKNZ and the state fire academy, but not everyone who could fulfill these functions attended. Also, several fire officers attended the operational-tactical classes 1 and 2 (OPT1 and 2) at the AKNZ. These classes are designed for staff members who took at least the F/B V in the fire service or a similar qualification in other agencies. Until now it wasn’t mandatory to attend further training; fire officers who were interested applied for AKNZ and other classes; others never set foot in a classroom again. The evaluation of the last fire officer training with the two-day IMT exercise showed that many officers complained that their F/B V was too long ago and that they felt uncertain in their respective positions. Due to personnel availability ca. half of the staff members had to fulfill positions they are not planned for according to the DA-GSE. Most officers appreciated the offered training and demanded exercises on a more regular basis but some made clear that they only attended because they had to. In the future more large scale incident simulations are planned and at the next fire officer training in November 2010 another IMT exercise will be offered. Also, in 2010 an unannounced IMT
exercise is planned where the IMT will be activated and the availability of personnel and the staffing of the different positions will be tested. The company officers assigned to the IMT also demanded an internal IMT class to be prepared better for the upcoming tasks. In the future it is envisioned that further training for the respective staff functions would be offered. The courses are provided by the state fire academy, and internal education will be continued.

A. Böhm stated on February 17, 2010 that the selection of the IMT staff members in Essen is primarily based on rank and seniority because every middle and upper level officer has to complete the F/B V as the basic staff training by the end of 2010. An attempt has been made to select the fire officers for staff functions which reflect their day to day work, like someone who works in supply would staff the S4 section or someone from communications the S6, but that doesn’t always work. No further selection process is in place. Every fire officer has to participate in the IMT to guarantee enough personnel. The alerting of MoFüst in a large-scale incident in Essen is not planned because the staffing level should be good enough to staff every position three times. He also refers to the fact that there are motivated and interested IMT members as well as much unmotivated personnel and that most of the fire officers are complaining about a lack of training. The last large-scale incident occurred on July 3, 2009 and was a severe weather incident with a thunderstorm, heavy rainfall, and 50 cm of sleet in the streets in the northern part of Essen despite the temperature of more than 30°C during the day. The IMT and backup dispatchers were alerted. Only 20 members responded and about 25 more called back that they were not available at that moment. The first arriving officers had to support the on-scene personnel to do a thorough assessment of the damages. The next arriving personnel staffed the IMT, even though a part of them were not originally planned to be part of the staff. After the incident an evaluation was written, and it became clear that many people weren’t working in their
preplanned functions. Many complained about the lack of training and that no extensive work material like check lists or manuals were available to fulfill the required positions. Up to the present moment there is no plan to implement a selection process to choose IMT staff personnel.

T. Dittmar from the Mülheim FD reported on February 21, 2010 that not all fire officers have to participate in the IMT, but most are taking part. Due to the fact that attendance is voluntary the partaking staff personnel is highly motivated. So far the number of IMT personnel was adequate in respective incidents, but in the case of a longer duration it might be a problem to get enough relief personnel within the Mülheim FD. Every IMT member attended the F/B V and most of them also OPT 1 and 2 at the AKNZ and several seminars at the state fire academy. Three IMT members are also part of the MoFüst Rhein-Ruhr-Wupper and attended the MoFüst A and B classes. Internal trainings are mandatory for all IMT personnel; after the completion of the new main fire station with head quarters and ICP, IMT exercises will be held at least once a year.

B. Gessman of the Cologne FD says on March 16, 2010 that all middle level and upper level fire officers of the Cologne FD are designated IMT staff members to obtain enough personnel in case of a large-scale emergency. The participation is mandatory for every fire officer working dayshifts. The line personnel should provide backup for the on-scene crews. If the IMT is put into service, the staff will be alerted via text message and pagers. After the collapse of the city archive on March 3, 2009, the IMT was working 24/7 for several months. It became clear that staffing the S functions with always the same group of people is beneficial for the work, because these staff members can gain a lot of experience. In the future it is envisioned that each IMT section will be assigned to one division within the Cologne FD like fire prevention, technical service, training, administration or operations. It is anticipated that people who are working together on a daily basis function also better while working in an IMT section during a
large scale incident. Within this structure the staff personnel is selected by rank and seniority. All IMT personnel have as a minimum qualification the F/B V class. Many fire officers also attended AKNZ and MoFüst classes. As internal further education two large scale incident simulations per year are planned.

On March 16, 2010 W. Rheinfelder of the German Red Cross state academy describes the training of Red Cross IMT members. Until 2009 members of the medical services usually worked as technical specialists in IMTs, because the incidents are managed by either the fire or the police department, depending on the situation. In 2009 two pilot courses for staff members were organized. The contents are aligned with the state fire academy and match the F/B V. The selection of the participants takes place in the local branch. A prerequisite is that the participant is a candidate for a staff position. For further training IMT members attend the AKNZ classes and the local branches also conduct exercises. Red Cross members who are designated technical specialists in an IMT usually train with that IMT. The Red Cross state academy is planning additional training possibilities for the future. Rheinfelder also states that a thorough continued training is crucial for the effectiveness of an IMT in the mitigation of large scale incidents.

T. Gehner from the Duisburg FD states on March 16, 2010 that all 25 mid and upper level fire officers of the Duisburg FD have to participate in the IMT. Due to the small number of staff personnel participation is mandatory, but the availability is very unpredictable. No other selection criteria are in place. The training consists of the F/B V class for all and AKNZ OPT 1 and 2 classes for some IMT members. Some personnel also attended seminars at the state fire academy for the sections S2 and S4. In 2010 the Love Parade, an annual popular street parade for electronic dance music with more than 1 million participants in last years’ event takes place in
Duisburg. To prepare for this event an IMT exercise will be held in spring 2010. To support the staff members check lists and work aids are available for every S section.

M. Gahlen from the Dortmund FD states on March 16, 2010 that all middle level fire officers with F/B V and all upper level fire officers have to take part in the IMT. In the near future all remaining fire officers will obtain the missing qualification. The participation is obligatory and no selection process is in place. Within the IMT the functions are staffed based on rank and seniority. The preplanning says that every IMT member has a certain function but the last incidents showed that not always the respective personnel were available, and that other staff members had to fulfill the vacant positions. To still guarantee a high level of work quality work aids like check lists, manuals, and computer programs are available for the staff members. The continued training consists of state academy and AKNZ seminars and internal IMT exercises.

On March 25, 2010 T. Hemmelmann of the Essen-Mülheim PD says that the police in Northrhine-Westphalia use a different system in staffing their IMT positions as the fire departments. The Ständige Stab (permanent staff) consists of 11 police officers. Their day to day work is related to their staff functions in the IMT. In case the IMT is needed, the permanent staff starts to work, and the part time staff members will also be alerted to support the IMT and the IC. To become a permanent staff IMT member police officers have to apply for this position and will be selected because of the technical, personal, and task related skills. The initial training for a permanent staff member is a two-month familiarization by senior staff members. After that a five-day class for permanent staff members at the state police academy takes place. The part time IMT members also apply for their respective positions but they don’t work in a related area during their normal work. The training of these staff members consists of a familiarization and an internal seminar about IMT work and IMT exercises. Usually they are not section chiefs within
the IMT but staff the deputy positions. The continued training of the staff consists of smaller exercises within the Essen-Mülheim PD and a larger exercise at least once a year. The large exercise is always developed by the IMT of a neighboring PD, so every IMT will have an incident simulation for training, and the development of exercises for others is also a form of training. Additionally past incidents are reviewed and improvement suggestions are made.

In summary all the findings of the literature review indicate that many other fire departments and other agencies have or had the same problems with selecting and training their IMT command and general staff members; solving these issues leads the fire service towards a better and an even more capable customer service.

Procedures

The methodology for this applied research project was the descriptive research method and included interviews, a literature review, an online survey, and a data analysis.

*Literature review*

The first step of the research was a literature review at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center of EFO Papers and articles. The searched keywords have been *Incident Management Team, IMT, staff, training, recruiting, and personnel*. The results of this research could not be transferred to German conditions.

The literature was expanded to the library *Fachdokumentation Brandschutzwesen* [documentation of fire and rescue science] of the University of Karlsruhe. The Fachdokumentation Brandschutzwesen offers a very comprehensive collection of journals, books, articles, magazines, and research papers from the German EMS, Fire and Rescue service. The researched topics were “FwDV 100” [german regulation 100], “Stab” [staff], “Stabsarbeit”
“Stabsarbeit” [staff work], “Stabsausbildung” [staff training], “Stabsdienstordnung” [staff regulation], and “Stabspersonal” [staff personnel].

Internal resources of the Essen Fire Department were also searched. The focus was on information about the IMT and staff personnel like chiefs directives, meeting minutes, IMT staff regulations, and feedbacks of large-scale incidents and IMT trainings.

Additionally an internet research was conducted. The used search engines were Google and MetaGer. The keywords were “FwDV 100” [german regulation 100], “Stab” [staff], “Stabsarbeit” [staff work], “Stabsausbildung” [staff training], “Stabsdienstordnung” [staff regulation], “Stabspersonal” [staff personnel], and variations of these.

Online Survey

A survey was developed to gather information about staff training and IMT personnel selection in other fire departments (Appendix A). The survey was created with surveymonkey and was distributed to 35 fire officers of different fire departments via email. The selection of the different fire officers was based upon personal knowledge. Twenty six surveys were completed and returned, that’s 74.3 %. The survey also gathered general information about IMT staff work of the different fire departments.

Interviews

The third part of the applied research project involved interviews with a training officer and the chief of operations of the Essen FD, both also IMT members. To get broader knowledge of how others are selecting and training their staff members, interviews with four fire officers from the Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg, and Mülheim FD were conducted. Also, officials from the German Red Cross state academy and the Essen-Mülheim Police Department were interviewed.
The interviewed fire officers were selected because of their function as command or general staff members. The interview partners from Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg, and the Red Cross are also members of the *Work Group Disaster Management Northrhine Westphalia*.

The first interview took place on January 27, 2010. Uwe Sieger is a chief officer and the head of the Essen FD training division. He serves as the S 3 in the IMT. The questions that were asked Mr. Sieger were “How are staff members in the Essen FD trained?”, “Is this training mandatory for every staff member?”, “What are the results of the evaluation of the last IMT training in November 2009?”, and “What kind of training is planned for the future?”.

The second interview was with Albert Böhm on February 17, 2010. Chief Böhm is the head of executive planning in the Essen FD since April 2008. He is a former member of the *Work Group Disaster Management Northrhine-Westphalia*. The questions asked Chief Böhm were “How are IMT staff members in the Essen FD selected?”, “What was the experience of the last large scale incident with activation of the IMT?”

The third interview was with Tanja Dittmar from the Mülheim FD on February 21, 2010. Dittmar is a fire officer in fire prevention and IMT member since 2004. She is also a MoFüst member serving in the S1 function. The questions asked Ms. Dittmar were “How are the staff members in the Mülheim FD selected?”, “Is the participation voluntary or mandatory?”, “How are the staff members trained?”, and “Are there internal training possibilities offered?”

The fourth interview took place on March 16, 2010 with Bernd Gessman of the Cologne FD. Mr. Gessmann works in the division of crisis management and civil protection and is a member of the Cologne IMT. He is also a member of the *Work Group Disaster Management Northrhine-Westphalia*. The questions asked Mr. Gessmann were “How are the staff members in
The fifth interview took place on March 16, 2010 with Wilfried Rheinfelder of the German Red Cross state academy where he is responsible of the training of staff personnel. He is a member of the Work Group Disaster Management Northrhine-Westphalia. The questions asked Mr. Rheinfelder were “How are the IMT staff members in the German Red Cross selected?”, “Which kind of training are the IMT members receiving?”, and “Are there internal training possibilities offered?”

The sixth interview was with Thorsten Gehner from the Duisburg FD on March 16, 2010. Mr. Gehner is a fire officer in disaster management and civil protection and IMT member since 2005. He is also a member of the Work Group Disaster Management Northrhine-Westphalia. The questions asked were “How are the staff members in the Duisburg FD selected?”, “Is the participation voluntary or mandatory?”, “Which kind of training are staff members receiving?”, and “Are there internal training possibilities offered?”

The seventh interview was with Matthias Gahlen from the Dortmund FD on March 16, 2010. Chief Gahlen is the head of the division of disaster management and civil protection and IMT member. He is a member of the Work Group Disaster Management Northrhine-Westphalia. The questions asked were “How are the staff members in the Dortmund FD selected?”, “Is the participation voluntary or mandatory?”, “How are the staff members trained?”, and “Are there internal training possibilities offered?”

The eighth interview took place on March 25, 2010 with Thomas Hemmelmann of the Essen-Mülheim PD. Officer Hemmelman is the PD PIO and a member of the permanent staff. The questions asked Officer Hemmelmann were “What is the difference between the permanent
and the part time staff members in the Essen-Mülheim PD?”, “How are staff members selected in the Essen-Mülheim PD?”, “Which kind of training are staff members receiving?”, and “Are there internal training possibilities offered?”

Data Analysis

To get an idea about how often a large scale incident with the summoning of an IMT occurs the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system was searched. Also, large fires with the internal classification Brand 3 (B3) [fire 3] were searched. At B3 incidents the IC works with a basic staff consisting of an S2/S3 section chief and an S1/S4 section chief. Also, during the preparation for and the mastery of the possible influenza subtype A H1N1 swine flu pandemic outbreak a basic staff was alerted and these occasions were searched to get knowledge of how often at least a basic staff comes into service.

The records of the training division were searched to understand how many fire officers got basic staff training at the state fire academy and advanced training at the state fire academy, the AKNZ, MoFüst training, or other relevant staff training.

Limitations

The structure of the fire service in the United States and in Germany is different. The legal prerequisites for disaster management are not the same. The rank structure and the training fire officers also differ. Therefore the few findings of the literature research in the learning resource center were hard to compare. This was the reason why the literature research was focused on German findings.

The literature review provided very little information about how others are selecting and training their IMT staff personnel. The information gained wasn’t comprehensive enough to answer research question number 2 satisfactorily.
The records of the training division turned out to be incomplete. Several fire officers attended IMT classes, but no records were found. The lists are now updated.

An assumption was that all individuals selected for the survey were able to understand the questions and that all interview and survey questions were answered truthfully.

There is no special German – English fire service dictionary. Due to this reason there are many technical terms which cannot be translated word-for-word. The author tried the best to translate everything, but some words still have to be paraphrased.

Results

The literature review produced answers to all four research questions. The internal interviews gave answers for questions number 1, 2 and 4. The external interviews returned answers to research questions number 3 and 4. The results of the survey also answered questions number 3 und 4. The data analysis showed responses to questions number 1 and 2.

Question # 1: Which training is required to work in the Essen FD IMT?

To answer this question, internal literature and data were searched and internal interviews were conducted. The only formal training requirement is the F/B V class at the state fire academy. This is derived from the FwDV 2 and the training decree for career middle level fire officers. The FSHG and the DV 100 don’t recognize any training requirement to work as an IMT staff member. This is the reason that company officers can also work in IMT sections as support personnel. Most of the fire officers will have attended the F/B V by the end of 2010 and therefore are required to take part in the IMT as staff personnel. It is envisioned that the personnel of the respective sections are getting a further training to be prepared for their duties. This further
education is provided by the IdF NRW and the AKNZ and will be continued with internal
trainings.

Question # 2: Which selection criteria exist for selecting staff personnel in the Essen FD?
This question was answered by an internal literature review, a data analysis and internal
interviews. All middle and upper level fire officers are obliged to participate in the Essen FD
IMT. The participation is mandatory and no formal selection criteria are in place. Within the IMT
the functions are staffed upon rank and seniority. The company officers working in day shifts are
also required to take part in the IMT as support personnel.

Question # 3: What have others done to select and train their IMT staff?
This question was answered by conducting a literature review and an online survey and by
performing external interviews. The literature review didn’t retrieve enough information to
answer this research question entirely. Only Voscul (2008) wrote that no formal selection criteria
for IMT staff members exist within the fire service and the THW. The police is selecting their
staff members upon knowledge, experience, training, and personal skills but the criteria are not
described further. The interviews showed that no FD has a selection process for their IMT
personnel in place. Most FD expect of their middle and upper level fire officers that they
participate in an IMT. Only the Mülheim FD asks their fire officers to take part in the IMT, but it
is not mandatory for everyone. All other interviewees stated that cooperation in the IMT is
obligatory. All interviews showed that no formal selection criteria are in place. Within the IMTs
the staff functions are staffed according to rank and seniority. Experience and training usually
play a minor part. In the Cologne FD it is envisioned that in the future the IMT sections would be
assigned to the respective divisions within the FD. The German Red Cross IMT personnel are all
volunteer members and no credentialing is in place. Concerning training Voscul writes that the
full-time permanent and part-time IMT members of the PD pass through an internal familiarization period within their own department. The permanent staff members also attend a week long class at the state police academy. The part-time staff members are qualified within their respective departments. This is also stated by Hemmelmann. Voscul also reports that the THW IMT personnel have to attend an eight day IMT class. All interviewees said that the F/B V is the basic training to become an IMT member. Further education like AKNZ classes or the S seminars at the state fire academy are not mandatory to staff a certain position within an IMT but rather are attended based upon interest and availability.

The survey showed that in 76.5 % of the FDs the participation in an IMT is obligatory and in 23.5 % it is voluntary. It has to be taken into account that only 84.5% of the participants are working in a career department and 15.5 % are members of a volunteer FD; 23% are company officers, 46 % middle level officers and 31 % upper level officers. One hundred % of the respondents said that no selection criteria are in place. To the question if they’re members of an MoFüst IMT 35% answered with yes. In 81.3 % the F/B V was the basic qualification to work in an IMT. In 18.7 % internal training was sufficient to take part in the IMT. 42.3 % of the participants indicated that they attended at least one further training like the S seminars at the state fire academy or AKNZ classes. Of all FDs 78.6 % offered internal education like large scale incident simulations and in 50 % participation was mandatory. The frequency of internal trainings varied between 1 and 3 times a year.

Question # 4: What should be done to select and train the Essen FD IMT staff?

The approach to finding an answer to this question was to conduct internal interviews and compare them with the literature review, the survey, the data analysis and the external interviews. Because other FD, the THW, and the German Red Cross don’t have selection processes in place
and don’t offer other training like the Essen FD, no new insights were gained. The police in Northrhine- Westphalia have a different structure than the fire service, and the findings through the literature review and the interview with Hemmelmann aren’t comparable with the Essen FD. The internal literature review and the internal interviews showed that most of the fire officers are willing to participate in the IMT, but they expect to get a comprehensive training and to be deployed in their preplanned functions.

Discussion

The operation of a well functioning IMT is an important instrument to mitigate large scale incidents. The better the staff members are trained and the more thorough they are selected the higher the quality of work will be.

The basic training for all staff members is the F/B V. This two week class is divided into two parts. The first part is the qualification for working in a small staff on scene; the second part is the real IMT training with a full scale staff. During this second week three incident simulations take place, so the class members don’t have the opportunity to work in every staff section. Without further training it is not likely that the fire officers are prepared to function reliably within an IMT. This may lead to uncertainty and unwillingness to participate. Large scale incidents are too seldom to gain a lot of experience. The data analysis showed that in 2009 12 B3 incidents occurred where a basic staff was involved and 2 times a basic staff met to do some preplanning for the possible pandemic flu outbreak. No incident with more than one operational period happened in 2009.

Further education is not mandatory for the staff members. There are no legal requirements for a continued training or special qualifications for certain IMT functions. The classes and
seminars offered at the AKNZ and the state fire academy are open to everyone. That means that, of course, the fire officers with the respective staff functions can attend these classes but it also means that there might not be enough vacancies to satisfy all applicants or that some aren’t interested in further education and don’t apply for them. The outcome can be that staff members have to fulfill functions they’re not adequately trained for. The amount of training an IMT member gets highly depends on the personal motivation to apply for these courses.

Training and exercises on a regular basis are vital for a well functioning IMT. Sieger and Böhm as well as all other interviewees stated that large scale incident simulations are important training opportunities for the staff members. The evaluation of the last large scale incident and the last fire officer training week showed that most of the IMT members are thinking positively about the offered training and that it has a positive impact on the quality of work within the staff. They also reported that more large scale incident simulations should be conducted in the future to strengthen the acquired knowledge. Theoretical lessons about legal requirements and as a revision of the F/B V classes were also requested.

The evaluation of the last large-scale incident and the last IMT training showed that many fire officers complained that they were not appointed in the functions they were planned for according to the DA-GSE. Some of them applied for respective classes at the AKNZ or the state academy to be prepared for their assignment and were put into different functions during the last large scale incident or the IMT training. This caused dissatisfaction, and some questioned the sense of the DA-GSE and the preplanning.

There are no predefined selection criteria for IMT staff personnel existing in Germany. The DV 100 just recognizes the staff but doesn’t describe the prerequisites to become a staff member and no legal requirements are stated. Derived from the FwDV 2 and the training decree for career
fire officers the F/B V class can count as the only selection criteria. In addition to the missing legal selection criteria there are also no criteria for the respective staff functions. Everyone with the successful F/B V class is qualified for every staff function within an IMT. No further training is required. Also no experience is required to fulfill higher functions. Within an IMT rank and seniority usually qualify for a higher position. This means that fire officers who are not qualified because of the lack of training, experience, knowledge, or personal skills could occupy a vital staff position, because no selection criteria are in place. Establishing internal selection criteria based upon training and experience would lead towards an even better mitigation of large scale incidents but the implementation this kind of criteria without any statutory basis needs further research beforehand to obtain the needed acceptance. This is a mandatory prerequisite, though a thorough selection of personnel would contribute to a good functioning IMT.

Nearly all FD anticipate that all their fire officers participate in the IMT. Very few allow them the possibility to choose if they partake as a staff member. This can result in the lack of motivation which would have an impact on the quality of the work of an IMT. Personnel who participate on a volunteer basis would be far more motivated with a positive impact on the staff. They are more likely interested in training and the availability during large scale incidents would be improved. The decision of the FD to compel all fire officers to participate in the IMT is fully understandable, because they wouldn’t have enough personnel to staff the IMT more than once. The alerting of MoFüst could be a solution for FD with staffing problems.

A very important point of the above mentioned evaluations showed that some younger fire officers with a low rank but some experience and a lot of training were put into supporting functions within the staff, because all staff functions were filled based on rank and seniority. These young officers wished a little bit more appreciation of their experience and their training
efforts. It is very demotivating to work for a section chief who doesn’t esteem their contribution to the IMT.

The thesis of Voscul and the interview with Hemmelmann showed that the police in Northrhine-Westphalia have a different approach to staffing their IMTs. The problem is that the structures of the PDs and the FDs are different with different legal backgrounds and therefore the PD IMT staffs are not fully comparable with the FD IMT staffs. The 47 PDs in Northrhine-Westphalia are larger and have more personnel than the FDs, and the employer is the state. This implies that the permanent staff usually is responsible for more than one city, and it can also be deployed to other jurisdictions within Northrhine-Westphalia. This also leads to a higher incident frequency and more experience for the staff members. A permanent staff like in the PD would be beneficial for the Essen FD, but the staffing level is not sufficient enough, and the number of incidents is too low to afford a permanent staff.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this applied research project different recommendations can be made. The findings show that different approaches should be considered depending on the time frame they can be accomplished and the priority with which they should be implemented.

Short-term recommendations:

1. To ensure a sufficient amount of personnel, especially during long term incidents with more than one operational period the alerting of MoFüst could minimize personnel shortages. The Essen FD is a relatively large FD, but even with the possibility to staff the IMT three times the availability of personnel is not always guaranteed. This
recommendation can be accomplished very easily. The decision just has to be made, and the dispatch center and all potential IC have to be informed.

Medium-term recommendations

1. A selection of IMT members based on training, experience, and personal skills would be beneficial, but so far there is no legal basis for a formal selection process in place. To guarantee, nevertheless, a highly motivated and interested staff, the participation could be on a voluntary basis. This would ensure that the IMT members participate because of interest.

2. Many IMT members complained that they were not working in their preplanned role during the last incident and training. With the revision of the DA-GSE the assignment of fire officers to staff functions should also be reviewed. Personal backgrounds like interest, acquired training and experience should play a role. A query about who is interested in which function could also be conducted and should be considered at the revision.

3. During the interviews it became clear that many IMT members didn’t feel comfortable with the amount of training they got so far. The staff personnel should get an intensive further training for their respective functions. The requirements for each role should be stated and a personal development system could be implemented. This would ensure a high quality of work within the IMT. To minimize the problem of the availability of staff personnel each member could be cross trained in a second function.

4. To this date many fire officers question the sense of preplanning, if the personnel has to fill in different functions they’re not properly trained for. The actual deployment to the
preplanned functions according to the DA-GSE would avoid demotivation throughout the staff members.

5. The interviews showed that some fire officers feel uncomfortable in their respective function because of the missing experience and the lack of work aids like check lists and manuals. Developing this kind of material could provide more confidence throughout the IMT and would ensure a more consistent quality of work.

Long-term recommendations

1. To this date the alerting of the IMT is conducted via text messages. There is no possibility to collect responses and give feedback who is needed or where problems occur due to lack of responding personnel. During the last large scale incident it also became clear that mobile phones are not always reliable, especially if the infrastructure is affected by the incident. An alternative alerting system, independent from public infrastructure would be beneficial. Because special technical hard- and software would be necessary to accomplish this, extra research concerning the possibilities and the feasibility of this recommendation has to be conducted.

2. There is so far no legal basis for a formal selection process for staff personnel in place, but the implementation of something like that could be beneficial for the quality of work within the IMT. The Essen FD would have to develop relevant selection criteria. Further research about the possibilities and the benefits would have been accomplished beforehand.

Some recommendations, like the first medium-term recommendation, will become obsolete when the second long-term solution is implemented, but nevertheless, it would be a good start. The other medium-term recommendations will need more time and a thorough revision of
existing regulations and can be accomplished with their own resources. The long-term
suggestions need further research and surely some financing for the implementation. At any rate,
they hold the promise of better and more permanent results in ensuring a consistent high-level
quality of work in the Essen Fire Department Incident Management Team.
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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Dear Colleague!

I am currently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy, United States. I am writing an applied research paper about staffing and training of incident management teams. It would be helpful if you could participate in the survey. All information will be treated confidentially. Please feel free to contact me, if you have any questions.

Sincerely
Susanne Klatt

1. Are you a member of a
   - Career fire department
   - Combined fire department
   - Volunteer fire department
   - Private fire department
   - Other (please indicate)

2. Is the participation in the IMT
   - voluntary
   - obligatory

3. Are you a
   - Company officer
   - Middle level fire officer
   - Upper level fire officer

4. What are the requirements to participate in the IMT?
   - IMT training according to FwDV 2 (F/B V)
   - Selection process
   - Other (please indicate)

5. Are you a MoFüst member?
   - Yes
   - No

6. What kind of training did you get?
   - IMT training according to FwDV 2 (F/B V)
   - AKNZ
   - Internal Training
   - Other (please indicate)
7. Did you get any further education?
   - OPT 1 (AKNZ)
   - OPT 2 (AKNZ)
   - OPT 3 (AKNZ)
   - S Stress (state fire academy)
   - S PIO (state fire academy)
   - S Rhetoric (state fire academy)
   - Seminar S2
   - Seminar S4
   - Seminar S6
   - S Stab MoFüst A (AKNZ)
   - S Stab MoFüst B (state fire academy)
   - Other (state fire academy)

8. Is your FD providing internal training?
   - Yes
   - No

9. Is the internal training
   - voluntary
   - obligatory

10. How often is internal training offered?

Thank you!

Susanne Klatt