



Board of Visitors Annual Report

National Fire Academy

Fiscal Year 2003



FEMA

Fiscal Year 2003 Meeting Schedule

October 7-8, 2002; January 15, 2003; April 28-29, 2003;
July 28, 2003

The National Fire Academy (NFA) Board of Visitors (BOV) reviewed the NFA in three areas of responsibility and submitted the following report.

“An examination of Academy programs to determine whether these programs further the basic missions which are approved by the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).”

The NFA is a mission-driven organizational unit of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and is positioned to support the accomplishment of the strategic goals of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). During 2004, a curriculum review is planned to ensure that all of the programs and initiatives of the NFA are reconciled with the strategic goals of USFA and DHS. The findings of this curriculum review will provide essential direction in future programmatic decisionmaking processes.

The comprehensive curriculum of courses that the NFA offers to ensure the preparedness of our Nation's first responders is delivered through a highly effective and efficient training system. In addition to the resident courses offered on the campus of the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmitsburg, Maryland, courses also are delivered through regional deliveries, local deliveries, and distance education offerings.

The NFA continues to serve as the cornerstone for fire service training, working in collaboration with the State and metropolitan fire department training systems through the Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE) program and in supporting the Prevention Advocacy Resources and Data Exchange (PARADE) network, which was established recently by the USFA and is based on the successful TRADE model.

The NFA has taken the lead in further enhancing cooperation and reciprocity between State fire training systems, fire service certification agencies, and institutions of higher education through hosting the Fire and Emergency

Services Higher Education (FESHE) conferences. These conferences serve as the catalyst for the development of a standardized fire science curriculum for adoption by colleges and universities, as well as a National Professional Development Model. This multiyear process has involved all key stakeholder groups, including representatives of State fire training, fire service certification agencies, 2- and 4-year colleges and universities, and publishers who are committed to the development of the necessary textbooks to support the model curriculum. This initiative is just one of many examples of how the NFA involves key stakeholders and attains synergies through collaboration with other organizations.

The NFA has recognized the importance of exploring alternative delivery mechanisms and adopting those that are found to be appropriate. Rather than engage in distance education as an end in itself, the NFA staff is committed to developing a virtual campus that provides a seamless access. Various courses are being delivered through an array of distance education technologies.

The enhancements made in the Simulation Lab will enable the NFA to support both residential and off-campus training programs. Through the use of new technologies, the NFA delivers virtual reality simulations that offer the increased flexibility of object-based scenarios. In addition to working with the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), NFA's training counterpart on the NETC campus, NFA has partnered with other organizational units of DHS and the U.S. Forest Service.

The National Fire Programs (NFP) Office and the NFA hosted a symposium for alumni of the Harvard Fellowship Program. This successful initiative was patterned after the continuing yearly Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) Graduate Symposium. The EFOP for key leaders has been implemented successfully and is enhancing opportunities for present and future fire service leaders.

In all of its course deliveries, the NFA continues to maintain its relevance in both content and methodologies. Representative examples of this would be recent curriculum activities in the information management and planning area, the enhanced use of command exercises, and the use of field-user tools. Precourse materials are now used to prepare NFA students for the maximum

learning experience. Throughout its course development and delivery activities, the NFA is addressing Section 508 compliance issues.

The BOV commends the NFA staff on its commitment to evaluation and to developing the most appropriate short- and long-term evaluation instruments and processes to ensure instructor and program excellence. The approach that has been developed and implemented appropriately balances “teaching” with “learning outcomes.”

“An examination of the physical plant of the Academy to determine the adequacy of the Academy facilities.”

The facilities housed at the NETC in Emmitsburg, Maryland, provide the infrastructure that is essential to accomplishing the NFA mission and supporting the strategic goals and objectives of USFA and DHS.

The planned facilities expansion is crucial. The need for additional classrooms, dormitory rooms, and support structures and systems has been demonstrated clearly and is related directly to the NFA’s role in preparing our Nation’s first responders for the diverse incidents to which they are called to respond, including acts of terrorism.

Those responsible for facilities have researched and developed an appropriate security solution for the Emmitsburg campus which will be both functional and aesthetic. The preventive maintenance plan for the campus continues to ensure stewardship while protecting capital assets.

Enhancements have been made to the Student Information System that will enable the USFA to register students for courses more effectively and efficiently, provide registered students with course materials and information, assign student housing, maintain student course records, and facilitate programmatic evaluation. This administrative system was designed to be responsive to the unique system requirements of the NFA and EMI.

“An examination of the funding levels for the Academy programs.”

The NFA continues to demonstrate stewardship in its use of limited resources. It has achieved a high degree of success in leveraging its appropriations to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in each of its programmatic initiatives. Adequate operational and capital funding will be necessary to enable the NFA to continue to fulfill its expanding training mission with respect to the development and delivery of the courses that will be essential in preparing our Nation’s first responders. The growing number of partnerships that the NFA has established with governmental agencies and related organizations, as well as its continuing commitment to expand its use of alternative training delivery mechanisms, will further enable the NFA to leverage its limited resources.

In closing, the BOV commends Secretary Tom Ridge and Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response Michael Brown for their recognition of the integral role that the NFA has within DHS. Their willingness to visit the NETC campus and learn about the ongoing work of NFA and EMI attest to their commitment to ensuring the preparedness of each and every one of our Nation’s “domestic defenders.”

The BOV additionally acknowledges the leadership provided by Mr. R. David Paulison, U.S. Fire Administrator; Mr. Charlie Dickinson, Deputy Fire Administrator; Dr. Denis Onieal, NFA Superintendent; and Dr. Kirby Kiefer, NFA Deputy Superintendent, for their daily role in providing the direction and empowerment that enable an outstanding staff to fulfill the NFA training mission and both meet and exceed the expectations of its stakeholders.

National Fire Academy

Fiscal Year 2003 Board of Visitors

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