

**Fire Department Station Officer Development,  
Identifying and Evaluating the Essential Elements  
of an Effective Program**

**Executive Leadership**

**A Research Study**

**By: Henry Young  
Killeen Fire Department  
Killeen, Texas**

**An applied research project submitted to the National Fire  
Academy as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program**

**January 2002**

## **ABSTRACT**

The problem was that the Killeen Fire Department had no station officer development program. Promotion to the rank of station officer with little or no training for the position was common. To be effective in today's fire service a station officer must be able to lead personnel through a diverse set of situations demanding team building and interpersonal skills as well as industry specific knowledge.

The purpose of this applied research project was to develop professionally recognized fire service training criteria to assist in the development of a station officer training program.

In conducting this research the author utilized descriptive and action research methodologies to answer these questions:

1. What are the professionally recognized fire service minimum training standards for station officers?
2. What are the critical tasks and requirements of station officers in the fire service and in the Killeen Fire Department?
3. What are the Station Officer development standards practiced by the fire departments of the ten comparable cities to the City of Killeen as established by the Killeen City Council?

The procedures used in this research project included a review of literature to gain a national perspective of the issue. The study of a station officer's job duties for the Killeen Fire Department, and surveys to determine expectations of the Killeen Fire Department personnel and current training practices of comparable fire departments.

Results of this study indicated a high importance is placed on station officer development and that NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, was the most widely accepted standard in the industry.

Recommendations made were to establish an action committee. Use as guides both NFPA Standard 1021 and the IFSTA Company Officer Development manual to develop a station officer training program and suggest implementation strategy and a follow up evaluation process.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Background and Significance.....	2
Literature Review.....	4
Procedures.....	13
Results.....	18
Discussion.....	24
Recommendations.....	26
References.....	29
Appendix A External Survey and Results.....	31
Appendix B Internal Survey and Results.....	34

## **INTRODUCTION**

The problem is that the Killeen Fire Department has no system in place to train station officers or those who would strive to become station officers. Training of fire station officers has been a matter of “on the job training” learned after the promotion to station officer was effected. Shift commanders have been pretty much left to their own strategies in brining a new officer up to speed. No one checked to make sure the new officers were being guided in the same direction from one shift to the other or even from one new officer to the next under the same shift commander.

Today’s society has significantly changed from one generation to the next in ideas of what workers expect from themselves and from their job. The demands on, responsibilities and expectations of supervisors in today’s workplace are far from what they were two or three decades ago. The fire service has not escaped this transformation in workers attitudes. The resulting effect is that within the span of one career a station officer can expect to see new employees far different with respect to attitudes and job expectations than he or she had when new to the industry. In addition to changes in the employee side of the work equation, advances in technology and other changes in the industry have had a far greater effect on the fire service during the last twenty years than at any other time in history. To be effective in today’s fire service a station officer must be able to lead his or her people through a constantly changing and diverse set of circumstances. This places a higher demand on interpersonal skills and industry specific knowledge than can reasonably be expected of a person left to his or her own initiative.

More today than ever before companies, fire departments, and managers across the board realize their most valuable resource by far is their employees. To not develop

an employee to his or her maximum potential is to waste some part of your most valuable asset. “With the diverse and complex issues facing the fire service today, the one challenge agencies cannot ignore is the development of their human resources” (Shouldis, 1996, p.22).

The purpose of this applied research project was to develop professionally recognized fire service training criteria to assist in the development of a station officer training program. Three research questions were developed to assist the author in finding answers necessary to accomplish the purpose.

1. What are the professionally recognized fire service minimum training standards for station officers?
2. What are the critical tasks and requirements of station officers in the fire service and in the Killeen Fire Department?
3. What minimum training standards do comparable sized fire departments in Texas utilize to develop Station Officers?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Since first formed in 1920 the Killeen Fire Department has grown to include 7 stations staffed by 118 on shift firefighters and 12 support staff. The department serves a population of 88,000 plus City of Killeen residents as well as a significant population of County residents under a contractual arraignment with Bell County. The City of Killeen Texas has grown to be the largest city in Bell County and as one might expect the Killeen Fire Department has grown to be the largest fire department. Despite the department’s success in maintaining a high approval rate of its citizens evidence of growth without the benefit of planning is easy to find.

- Absence of an ICS system at emergency scenes.
- No personnel accountability system in place.
- The fire chief being called on to routinely make decisions better suited at lower ranks.
- A history of not much if any participation in planning sessions or budget preparation efforts by anyone other than the fire chief and secretary.
- No formal training program designed to teach station officers what is expected of them either prior to or after promotion.
- No standard set between shift commanders on what issues station officers should be held accountable or what levels of performance should be achieved.

These situations provide evidence that the Killeen Fire Department's existing practice of training fire officers under the guidance of a shift commander, without formal guidelines in place has resulted in an unsatisfactory situation. Further, none of the situations listed above can be remedied without an effective station officer training program in place.

The resulting effect on the department has been reduced morale, decreased personnel safety, loss of efficiency during emergency operations, an increased lack of employee "buy in" or job ownership among the officers, improper handling of personnel issues and a host of other problems. Without specific action being taken to intervene in the current practice it is expected that the existing problems will continue.

Currently promotion to the rank of station officer requires three years of employment as a FRO (Fire Rescue Officer) which is the entrance level firefighter position. Promotions are determined by competitive written examination with no other

qualifying criteria in place, simply stated the highest score wins. There are no personal developmental objectives or specified courses of study set for firefighters prior to being eligible to test for the station officer rank. Developing an effective officer training program mandating certain achievements prior to being eligible for promotion is not consistent with state civil service laws. These laws plainly state that to be to be eligible for promotion only requires two years of service in the rank below that being tested not counting the probationary year, no other requirements to test are permitted. It is permissible to set certain training achievements, successful completion of course of study, etc. mandatory for each rank.

The subject of officer training deals directly with developing leaders in the fire service. In this way the subject matter of this report is directly linked to the course of study in the 4<sup>th</sup> EFOP class Leadership. It also satisfies objective C. of the USFA's operational objectives namely "Reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters."

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this applied research project was to develop professionally recognized fire service training criteria to assist in the development of a station officer training program for use in the Killeen Fire Department.

The concept of fire officer development can be traced back to the Wingspread Conference held in Racine, Wisconsin, in February 1966. The ad-hoc group identified twelve statements of national significance. Half of these statements alluded to fire officer development.

- Professional status begins with education

- The scope, degree and depth of the educational requirements for efficient functioning of the fire service must be examined
- Increased mobility at the executive level of the fire service will be important to the achievement of professional status; the career development of the fire executive must be systematic and deliberate
- Governing bodies and municipal administrators generally do not recognize the need for executive development of the fire officer
- Fire service labor and management, municipal officers, and administrators must join together if professionalism is to become a reality (Amabili, 1992, p.16).

It appears the fire service has generally recognized the need for officer development and training for many years but has not yet been able to turn that recognition into practice.

In his article, Chief Daniel B. C. Gardiner wrote, “The officer is the most important link in the proactive fire service chain. It is the officer that “sets the pace” for thousands of fire companies throughout this country, and it’s the officer that serves as the role model for future generations of firefighters” (1992, p. 5) In the same article Chief Gardiner provides a sample of his thoughts on a fire officers’ basic needs to develop by listing the basic job functions of a fire officer when he states “ It’s the Officer’s job to educate, supervise, and train the firefighters within their command” (1992, p.5). He also provides the reader with a list of subjects / resources to utilize in getting or keeping his or her own officer training program on track. The list is presented here without the explanatory commentary.

- National Professional Qualifications Standard for Fire Officers (NFPA Standard 1021)
- Initial Fire Attack (NFPA Standard 1410)
- The ISFSI's Instruct-O-Gram
- The IFTA manuals
- The monthly publication of ISFSI The Voice
- The individual department's own pre-fire plans and SOP's (1992, p.5)

Chief Gardiner concludes the article with a comment this author believes is evidence of the value he places on training "The greatest contribution a Fire Chief can make in their career is the development of the people within their command" (1992, p. 6).

In an article Chief Dan Jones list 6 things needed for individuals to take responsibility of their own professional development as fire officers.

- Preparation
- Performance
- Determination
- Opportunity
- Luck (1992, p. 6)

Chief Jones concludes the short article by stating, "So there you have it – do it yourself development!" The topics on the list and his related comments for each led this author to consider the idea that subject matter alone is not adequate in training fire officers. An effective program must also include training on such topics as proper study habits and techniques, character, the setting of personal goals, etc.

In an answer to the question “What does the Fire Officer of the future need to be?

Deputy Chief (retired) Morton D. Shurtleff presented four things fire officers feared most about becoming a leader.

- Being promoted without attending a company officer course.
- Handling discipline problems without having department SOP’s or any written guidelines.
- Many departments do not have guidelines for alcohol and drug abuse problems. As company officers how do we know if we make the right decisions? Many times we are not sure that anyone will back us up.
- How do we handle grievances? We are caught between the firefighter and higher administration. (1994, p.22)

Deputy Chief Shurtleff went on to state “ The answer to all of the above is a sound Company Officer Development program” (1994, p.22).

Asst. Chief James E. Kefalas states in his article that “Contrary to what you might think, technology won’t be the problem, because our people are educated they’ll master it. It’s the changing human relations, however, that officers must recognize and cope with” (1997, p.62). He goes on to state “This next generation of firefighters, coming from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, will bring a whole new set of values to the fire service. Their supervisors will need an array of management styles and techniques to apply. Only through proper education can we expect these managers to be prepared” (1997, p.62)

In his article William Shouldis presents the results of his efforts to develop an effective fire officer development curriculum for the Philadelphia Fire Department, he list the following five major categories;

- Management – 18 periods of instruction covering leaderships, supervision, coaching for performance, managing change, and communications.
- Operations – 35 periods of instruction covering hands-on evolutions for SCBA maintenance, emergency procedure using the PASS device, Fire protection systems, along with lectures on strategy and tactics, emergency medical control, contagious diseases and the proper disinfecting techniques.
- Safety – 8 periods of instruction covering analysis of local and national injury and accident trends, and fire ground survival philosophy
- Fire Cause and Determination – 10 periods taken from the NFA’s Fire /Arson Detection Course
- Fire Prevention – 4 periods of instruction covering community interaction, cultural diversity, creating effective prevention programs at the company level, and insights into “the intent” of fire and building codes. (1996, p.22-23)

Each period consisted of one hour and twenty minutes of class time. Shouldis explains the program has received a 92.7% approval rating from attendees. In the same article, Mr. Shouldis reveals his thoughts on the importance of having an effective fire officer training program with several comments.

“For any organization or group, the timing of transitions and the pace of change are critical elements in shaping the future. Unfortunately, today many fire departments face the urgent need to reframe their organizational priorities or face

being banished from the emergency response field” and shortly thereafter “ One common sense approach to this dilemma is to properly prepare present and future leaders through a comprehensive officer development program” (1996, p.22)

“A well-planned officer development course no longer can be viewed as a luxury or mere formality” (1996, p. 24)

Kirby Lastinger in his article describing company officers writes “Good officers are not born, nor do they happen by chance they are developed through training, education, experience, and a sincere desire to do well” (1996, p.6). In the same article Lastinger also list a number of other roles company officers must be trained to do well besides that of being a leader on the emergency scene and a director of station duties. These duties and responsibilities are director, trainer, coach, counselor, and willing listener. (1996, p.6)

In an article, John F. Fitzwilliam states, “Read any textbook or journal article on the volunteer fire service and you will learn where the weaknesses is. The most common weakness is not in the area of technical ability but in that of management skills- supervision, leadership, motivation, human relations, counseling, finance, and communication” (19994, p. 14). Fitzwilliam also states “Conventional wisdom held that if you were a good firefighter, it automatically followed that you would be a good company captain. The unfortunate result of such a policy, the subject of Tom Peter’s book The Peter Principle, is that employees are promoted in an organization until they have reached the level of their incompetence” (1994, p14)

“The success of a crew is based in large part on the leadership of the line officer. An appropriate leadership style must be selected based on the situation at hand”

“Successful line officers enhance their ability to lead others through their leadership abilities and expertise” (Fleming, 2002, p.50).

“The preparation of a line officer involves more than technical training. Successful line officers must compliment their technical training with supervisory and leadership training. Line officers need the same type of training that’s provided by businesses and other organizations to individuals accepting first line supervisory positions” (Fleming, 2002, p. 51)

“Supervisory training for a line officer should include the inter-related management functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. Decision and communications should also be addressed, as should the distinctions between management and leadership” (Fleming, 2002, p. 51)

IFSTA’s second edition of Fire Department Company Officer establishes 15 topics or areas of responsibility for company officers as outlined in the Table of Contents. Each area of responsibility or topic is the subject of a whole chapter. They are principles of organization, organizational structure, communications, the company as a group, leadership, as a group influence, elements of management, company motivation, career counseling, problem solving, pre-incident surveys, fire ground management, size-up, incident command and communications, firefighter safety and company officer liability.

In an article describing modern day training needs of fire departments Anne Huff states “I believe the most effective way of bridging the gap between line and management personnel is through expanding the scope of officer training. For many departments officer development training has centered on incident strategy and tactics. While this training is important the fire service culture in general has not placed value in attaining

competency in supervision and administrative functions. A clearer understanding and appreciation of the functions by personnel in all ranks would help alleviate recurring problem, especially labor-management issues and resource allocations” (2002, p.66)

“Problems between management and firefighters are often a symptom of a lack of trust between the two. Many times, the cause is promotions of people to officer ranks who are not perceived as competent or ready for the assignment” “Formal leadership and management training can help bridge this gap and bring the two sides together” (Montgomery, 2002, p. 67)

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has established a nationally recognized standard for fire officer certification generally well known in the fire service as NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.

The NFPA Standard # 1021 identifies six areas of training for Fire Officer I and II certification: Human Resource Management, Community and Governmental Relations, Inspection and Investigation, Emergency Service Delivery, and Safety.

“The NFPA 1021 Standard is a professionally recognized standard that has been specifically designed to identify concise job performance requirements that can be used to determine that an individual, when measured against the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as fire officer” (NFPA 1021, 1997). NFPA standards carry the weight of being law in some fire organizations and are generally considered a “guidepost” of professional standards throughout the fire service industry. As such these guidelines can comfortably be relied on to provide a guide in designing a fire officer development program within a fire department.

The Killeen Fire Department Policy Manual has a section listing the duties of each position on the department. In the lieutenant' section there are eight duties listed.

1. The lieutenant will be assigned their station, district and/or territory and the respective duties connected with each by the Captain and shall, at all times, assist in enforcing current rules, regulations and policies of the fire department and the city.  
The lieutenant shall report any infractions to the Captain for investigation.
2. The lieutenant shall be responsible for the conduct of the fire fighters assigned to their station. They shall have full charge of the operations of those personnel and the station under the jurisdiction of the assigned Captain or Deputy Chief.
3. All lieutenants shall be responsible for the personal appearance and neatness of the firefighters assigned to their station.
4. The lieutenant shall see that the apparatus committed to their care, the building in which they are located, and all things in and belonging to the same are kept clean, neat and in working order. The lieutenant shall report any defects to his/her Captain or Deputy Chief.
5. The Lieutenant shall not permit any person other than the members of the fire department to ride on apparatus, unless by direction of the Captain or Deputy Chief.
6. The Lieutenant shall immediately report to the Captain all tardiness and failure to report for duty, injuries, in the performance of duty, special leave of absence, members off duty due to sickness, injury or emergency and all other circumstances by which members are rendered unfit for duty.

7. The lieutenant shall verbally, when possible, and on the written daily report form all information as to status of equipment, projects, and information that is forwarded from their Captain, Deputy Chief, or Fire Chief.
8. Normal daily duties shall be carried out and it shall be the responsibility of the officer on duty to see they are performed. In the absence of a station officer, the shift Captain or Deputy Chief shall see work is completed. Failure to complete an assignment will be reported to the shift coming on duty.

To best summarize the influence the reviewed literature has had in the development of this research project is to state that virtually all of the resources checked have unanimously agreed in two primary aspects. The first point of agreement is a formalized officer development program plays a critical role in aspects of service delivery, crew efficiency, and other vital components of a fire department. Secondly, an effective officer development program must contain aspects other than the traditionally accepted technical aspects of strategy and tactics. The information gained from the literature review also pointed out specific courses that can be considered in developing a departmental officer training program.

## **PROCEDURES**

The purpose of this applied research project was to develop professionally recognized fire service training criteria to assist in the development of a station officer training program for use in the Killeen Fire Department.

To accomplish this purpose the author conducted a review of professional journals, monthly publications and other literature, conducted written surveys of professional firefighters, and interviews of area fire service leaders.

The descriptive and action research methodologies were used to help process the research project through the study of the answers found to a logical conclusion and recommendation.

The research of literature began in the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy progressed through the Killeen Public Library Adult Research Section. The review of trade journals, published Applied Research Projects by other Executive Fire Officer Program students, books on coaching and employee development, and nationally recognized standards was the primary focus of the literature research. The basic criteria relied on to sort the information gathered in the literature review process was that the information needed to address the job functions of first line supervisors. Data was also considered valuable if it spoke to the characteristics necessary to be a successful first line supervisor, or the courses of instruction important for first line supervisors.

An action research process was also accomplished by conducting a survey within the Killeen Fire Department. The survey was delivered to all 115 line members of the department regardless of rank. The survey asked Killeen firefighters to rank the importance of a number of skills, task and responsibilities of a station officer as it related to the Killeen Fire Department. The purpose of the survey was to determine what the general perception of Killeen Fire Department line personnel was toward the importance

of a formalized officer development program. The survey was also utilized to gain an understanding of the areas of training that the employees felt to be important.

The survey was divided into two sections. The first section consisted of four questions. Question #1 gave the respondent a chance to express his or her view as to whether or not an officer training program would be valuable to the individuals of the department aspiring to become station officers. Question #2 asked the respondent for his or her opinion as to whether or not an officer training program would be valuable to the Killeen Fire Department. Question #3a and #3b asked if they felt an officer training program would be valuable should it be offered prior to obtaining officer rank and should participation be mandatory. A place for the respondent to list his or her rank as either officer or firefighter was also provided in the first section. The purpose of asking the respondents for a rank classification was to determine if perception of the importance of officer development changed with attaining the station officer or higher rank. In the second section the firefighters were asked to rank from 1 – 4 using the following scale the relative importance of a set of 22 different station officer job related skills, tasks or responsibilities.

1= Not important at all

2= Moderately important

3= Very important

4= Essential

At the end of the survey the respondents were given a chance to include anything of importance they felt was not covered in the other questions. The total points earned by

each skill, responsibility or task was used to determine that skills relative importance as perceived by line firefighters on the Killeen Fire Department.

An external survey of fire departments in the ten cities chosen by the Killeen City Council as being comparable to the City of Killeen was conducted via telephone. The survey consisted of seven potential questions, answering questions 2 through 67 was applicable only if question #1 was answered in the affirmative. Question#1 asked the respondent if there was an officer development program currently in place. Question #s 2 through 6 asked in order if the existing program was based on a national standard, which national standard, developed in house, whether or not the program was offered prior to promotion and was it mandatory. Question #7 asked if the responding fire department considered such a program to have value.

Lastly, in an effort to help identify critical task the Killeen Fire Department Policy Manual was studied to determine the listed job functions for a Lieutenant. On the Killeen Fire Department, Lieutenant is the title of the station officer rank.

Assumptions made in this research study included the prospect that respondents to the surveys understood each question they chose to answer and that they took each question seriously. The surveys were distributed on duty and therefore the assumption is made that fellow co-workers did not overly influence the answers to the survey questions and represents each respondent's true perceptions. A limitation of the survey research process is that not all 115 firefighters responded to the survey. Of the 115 surveys sent out to the Killeen firefighters only 38 were returned filled out. Although the survey reflected a significant degree of agreement in the perception of Killeen firefighters, it is considered a limiting factor to have a return rate below 50%.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Firefighter.** Member of an engine or truck company. A person who performs emergency related duties in the areas of fire fighting, EMS, hazardous material mitigation and rescue. This term is generally used to signify all members of the crew regardless of rank.

**First Line Supervisor.** This term signifies the first level supervisor of fire department personnel. In this report the term is used to indicate the first officer level supervising a crew. In the Killeen Fire Department this position holds the rank/title of Lieutenant.

**Formalized Officer Training / Development Program.** A standardized course of study or list of achievements established by the fire department in question, to professionally develop those individuals either seeking promotion or achieving promotion to the station officer level.

**IFSTA.** The International Fire Service Training Association

**Line Personnel / Member.** As used in this report the term signifies any or all fire department employees who routinely respond to emergencies regardless of rank held. Anyone working on shift and assigned to a fire station.

**National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)** An association made up of professionals from the construction and fire industries to develop standards that can be used in virtually all phases of those industries

**Officer.** This term designates any level of supervisor of fire personnel. In Killeen these ranks are designated as Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Chief and Chief.

**Non – Officer.** As used in this report this term indicates all line personnel who are not responsible for typical supervisory duties such as directing the activity of others and filling out performance reports of those individuals.

**Station Officer.** The supervisor of a crew of firefighters assigned to a single station on a single shift. In the Killeen Fire Department this term signifies a lieutenant by title.

## **RESULTS**

The author sought the answer to three questions to help accomplish the purpose of this research project:

1. What are the professionally recognized fire service minimum training standards for station officers?
2. What are the critical tasks and requirements of station officers in the fire service and in the Killeen Fire Department?
3. What are the Station Officer development standards practiced by the fire departments of the ten comparable cities to the City of Killeen as established by the Killeen City Council?

The results of the literature review, and action research techniques provided the following answers to those questions.

Question # 1. What are the professionally recognized fire service minimum training standards for station officers?

The NFPA Standard number 1021 is a nationally recognized standard that in many organizations not only operates as a guideline but also carries the weight of being law. NFPA 1021 was designed to identify job performance criteria that can be used as guides to evaluate the operational readiness of fire officers. As quoted from the standard

“The NFPA 1021 Standard is a professionally recognized standard that has been specifically designed to identify concise job performance requirements that can be used to determine that an individual, when measured against the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as a fire officer” (NFPA 1021, 1997).

IFSTA (International Fire Service Training Association) has developed fire service training criteria for the company officer position. The curriculum for the training is published in the book *Fire Department Company Officer*. Review of the book shows the company officer responsibilities as recommended by IFSTA. In that publication IFSTA also recognizes the NFPA 1021 and utilizes that standard for comparison to its curriculum.

Individual authors found and studied in the literature research primarily stated their opinions of the importance of officer development within the fire service and some provided their thoughts on areas of responsibility and the skills necessary to perform the job. One of these authors provided a little more in depth look at his recommendations for a curriculum or training standards. In his article, William Shouldis presented an effective fire officer training curriculum he developed for the Philadelphia Fire Department.

The results of the literature review and action research provided the following answers to question number 2.

Question #2. What are the critical tasks and requirements of station officers in the fire service and in the Killeen Fire Department?

Eight job duties are currently listed in the Killeen Fire Department Policy Manual for Lieutenant (station officer). These duties are described in language that is quite

general in nature and tend to be all encompassing. Some specifically mentioned duties are enforcement of all department policies, responsibility for appearance of firefighters assigned, responsibility for accomplishing the daily duties and record and time keeping. This listing of job duties clearly states that station officers are supervisors. Reading between the lines on this section might incline someone to assume a lieutenant needs to be proficient in all of the typical supervisory skills. However, the list does not provide a lot specific data suited to building a station officer training curriculum.

IFSTA's second edition of Fire Department Company Officer establishes 15 areas of responsibility for company officers. They are principles of organization, organizational structure, communications, the company as a group, leadership, as a group influence, elements of management, company motivation, career counseling, problem solving, pre-incident surveys, fire ground management, size-up, incident command and communications, firefighter safety and company officer liability.

In his article, William Shouldis presents five major categories of curriculum for officer development within the Philadelphia Fire Department.

- Management – 18 periods of instruction covering leaderships, supervision, coaching for performance, managing change, and communications.
- Operations – 35 periods of instruction covering hands-on evolutions for SCBA maintenance, emergency procedure using the PASS device, Fire protection systems, along with lectures on strategy and tactics, emergency medical control, contagious diseases and the proper disinfecting techniques.
- Safety – 8 periods of instruction covering analysis of local and national injury and accident trends, and fire ground survival philosophy

- Fire Cause and Determination – 10 periods taken from the NFA’s Fire /Arson Detection Course
- Fire Prevention – four periods of instruction covering community interaction, cultural diversity, creating effective prevention programs at the company level, and insights into “the intent” of fire and building codes. (1996, p.22-23)

Each period consisted of one hour and twenty minutes of class time. Shouldis explains the program has received a 92.7% approval rating from attendees.

To determine the Killeen Fire Department’s line personnel’s views of officer training an internal survey was conducted. Those results are presented below.

Question #1. 100% of all respondents (both officer and non-officer) said they felt a formalized station officer development program would be of value to personnel aspiring to become a Lieutenant on the Killeen Fire Department.

Question #2. 100% of the respondents (both officer and non-officer) said the felt the Killeen Fire Department would benefit from a station officer training program.

Question # 3a. Only 50% of the non-officers felt that station officer training should be offered prior to promoting to the position while 89% of the officers felt that it should be offered prior to promotion.

Question #3b. As in question #3a only 50% of the non-officers felt like the training should be mandatory while 89% of the officers felt that it should be made mandatory.

The second set of questions was utilized to determine the relative importance of 25 different skills, task or job functions of station officers, as the employees perceive them. Again officers and non-officers were separated for comparison purposes. To

determine the relative value of each item the total score for each item was determined by adding the overall points. A rating of 4 from a respondent earned 4 points for that particular task or skill, while a rating of 3 would only earn 3 points, etc. The highest total point value indicated most important skill or task for that group. No attempt was made to distinguish between ties.

In the Officers survey 36 points was the maximum rating that could have been earned by each task or skill area listed. A total score at or near 36 was considered an indication of an essential task or skill by the officers. Ratings of 3 from each officer would net 27 points for that subject and a total score at or near 27 was considered to indicate a very important rating for that task among the officers. Of the 25 station officer task or skills surveyed the officers rated 16 of them at 30 or higher. These 16 tasks are considered valued between very important and / or essential by Killeen Fire Lieutenants. They are listed in order of highest rated first as emergency scene operations, leadership, policies and procedures, discipline, oral communication, customer service, interpersonal skills, management skills, computer use, reports, training and presentation skills, written communications, and problem solving.

At the bottom of the officers list were four tasks earning 24 points each, they are performance appraisals, budget / project management, fire investigation, and fire code inspection. One subject critical incident stress debriefing earned 26 total points.

If at or near 27 points is considered very important, the four subjects listed above are the only subjects out of all 25 that are considered moderately important. All of the other 21 subjects qualify as very important in the officers opinion.

In the non-officers survey the total number of points that could have been awarded to any one task was 120. A total score at or near 120 was considered to indicate a skill that is essential in the minds of the non-officers. A total score at or near 90 in the non-officers survey was considered to indicate a very important task in the minds of the non-officers. Of the 25 tasks, skills or responsibilities listed 22 of them earned total points at 88 or higher and are considered as very important in the minds of those seeking to become officers. Fifteen of the responsibilities on the survey earned total scores of 105 or higher. These tasks are considered to be very important to essential and are listed in order of highest score first; management skills, written communications, oral communications, leadership, problem solving, interpersonal skills, discipline, emergency scene operations, time management, training and presentation skills, organizational policies and procedures. Only three subjects scored less than 88 points fire investigation, computer use, and budget / project management. These subjects earned 86, 84 and 74 points respectively.

The complete survey results for both officer and non-officers are presented in the appendix section of this report.

An external survey was conducted to help find appropriate answers to question number three. The Literature review also shed light on appropriate standards of training on a nation wide scale, which the author felt was applicable to the State of Texas as well.

Question # 3. What are the Station Officer development standards practiced by the fire departments of the ten comparable cities to the City of Killeen as established by the Killeen City Council?

The Station Officer Development survey concentrated on those cities that have been established by the City Council of Killeen as those comparable cities suitable for all comparison purposes. The Council because of the similarities of certain economic and demographic statistics chose these cities to the City of Killeen. Comparison to these cities is required for any new project being requested in the budget process, raises for employees, additional manpower, etc.

The results of the external survey revealed that only one out of the ten fire departments responding actually had an established officer training program in place. All of the other nine answered that there was no officer development program in place. However, all nine indicated they believed there is value in such a program. The only fire department reporting an officer development program in currently place was College Station. That program was developed in house with standards they believed to be important and the development of their program was not modeled after any other particular source.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study clearly indicate a need for a formal station officer development program as part of the Killeen Fire Departments' normal course of business. As noted in the Literature Review section of this report officer training has been discussed as a subject of high importance within the fire industry as far back as 1966 during the wingspread conference.

The concept of fire officer development can be traced back to the Wingspread Conference held in Racine, Wisconsin, in February 1966. The ad-hoc group

identified twelve statements of national significance. Half of these statements alluded to fire officer development. (Amabili, 1992, p.16).

The research done for this study indicates to the author that although the importance of officer development has long been discussed within the fire industry, the fact remains that fire officer development remains an unmet need. “Problems between management and firefighters are often a symptom of a lack of trust between the two. Many times, the cause is promotions of people to officer ranks who are not perceived as competent or ready for the assignment” “Formal leadership and management training can help bridge this gap and bring the two sides together” (Montgomery, 2002, p. 67)

The results of the internal survey indicates agreement on the concept of officer development between the Killeen Fire Department line personnel and virtually every source studied in the literature review and in the survey of comparable cities. Virtually 100% of those who responded indicated they felt such a program would be beneficial to their department. Study of the current listed job duties of a lieutenant on the Killeen Fire Department did not provide much help in determining critical task of station officers on the Killeen Fire Department. Neither did the data collected from the comparable cities. The original anticipation of this author was that from among the ten comparable cities at least a few of them would have would have a formalized training program in place with regards to officer development. The results of the comparable city survey confirms the opinion often repeated in the data studied during the review of literature in that even though many departments acknowledge the importance of setting formalized officer training standards, few actually follow through.

The implications of the research to the Killeen Fire Department is that time, effort and some expense will need to be expended to develop and implement an effective station officer development program. The internal survey indicates the employees are 100% in favor of the program so finding people to work on the project should not be a major concern. Virtually, all of the literature reviewed indicated that such a program is beneficial and even essential to fire departments not already practicing an officer training program. The Killeen Fire Department falls into that category and should consider the development effort and expense as an investment in its' future.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As stated previously the purpose of this research project was to develop professionally recognized fire service training criteria to assist in the development of a station officer training program to be used in the Killeen Fire Department. The research presented in this study has demonstrated the need for the Killeen Fire Department to be deliberate in the development of an effective station officer training program. Based on an analysis of the results of this research project the following recommendations have been designed to provide guidance for the Killeen Fire Department in creating and implementing an effective station officer development program.

- Involve the training department in planing a focus group or action committee with the stated goal of creating an officer development curriculum and strategy for implementation.
- Obtain the support of department members, gather volunteers to work on the focus group from the department as a whole, insure all ranks are represented, seek an

outside participant as well to gain an overall view possibly someone from the cities  
Human Resources Department

- Recommend the committee concentrate on the NFPA Standard 1021 and the IFSTA's Fire Department Company Officer text to develop a reasonable curriculum for station officer training / development. The curriculum should be sufficient to satisfy NFPA 1021 performance requirements for Fire Office I & II.
- The committee should also be asked to consider the issue of mandating participation, if the program is made mandatory who should be included.
- Recommendations of the committee should also consider suggestions for offering a variety of methods to accomplish the training standard. For example, self study, classroom, computer course on the department's network, outside courses when available, etc.
- Request a time line and strategy for implementation of the program.
- Request a recommendation for a future follow-up procedure and date to insure the effectiveness of the program once implemented.

The recommended process should begin as soon as possible. All personnel should be encouraged to participate even if they are not required to attend.

“The future of the fire service, is most likely going to be determined by the actions of its managers and leaders of today” (Coleman & Granito, 1988, p.476).

The most valuable asset of any organization is its employees. To not develop an organization's employees to their fullest potential is to waist some part of that organizations most valuable asset. Complete performance can not be achieved by anyone who is not fully prepared for the task at hand. Relying completely on a process that

requires an individual to learn through living the experience requires much more time and energy to achieve the same standard than a process created to do both train and learn by experience.

Those departments who wish to achieve the highest standards of customer service, safety, employee happiness and job ownership, will not be able to accomplish their goals without paying specific attention to an effective company officer development process.

## REFERENCES

- Amabili, L. J. (1992, June). Fire Officer Development – An Historical Overview As I See It. *The Voice*, p. 16-17.
- Coleman, R. J., & Granito, J. A. (1998). Chapter 3, Managing *Fire Services*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), ICMA, Washington DC.
- Fitzwilliam, J. F. (1994, February). Improving Volunteer Officers Through Management Training. *Fire Engineering*, p. 14.
- Fleming, R. S. (2002, January). Rising Above The Pack. *Fire Chief*, p. 50-51.
- Gardiner, B. C. (1992, June). Officer Development. *The Voice*, p. 6.
- Huff, A. (2002, March). Train In Vain? *Fire Chief*, p. 66.
- International Fire Service Training Association. (1993) *Fire Department Company Officer*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Stillwater, OK: Fire Protection Publications.
- Jones, D. (1992, June). Career Development...On Your Own. *The Voice*, p. 7.
- Kefalas, J. E. (1997, August). Coalition Steps Up Officer Development. *Fire Chief*, p. 64-67.
- Killeen Fire Department Policy Manual. (2000, August) Policy 002. *Chain of Command*. P. 2/3.
- Kirby, L. (1996, June). Company Officers: An Essential Role Within A Fire Department. *The Voice*. P. 6-7.
- Montgomery, M. (2002, March). Train In Vain? *Fire Chief*. P. 66-67.

National Fire Protection Association. (1997). *NFPA 1021-Standard for the fire officer professional qualifications*. Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association.

Shouldis, W. (1996, August). Overhauling Your Organizational Goals. *Fire Engineering*. P. 22-24.

Shurtleff, M. D. (1994, August). What Does The Fire Officer Of The Future Need To Be? *The Voice*. P. 22,

## APPENDIX A EXTERNAL SURVEY AND RESULTS

### APPENDIX A -1

#### Station Officer Development Survey

Name of Fire Department Surveyed \_\_\_\_\_

1. Does your department offer a formalized officer training program? \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO
1. If your department offers a formalized station officer training program, is it based on nationally recognized fire service training standard? \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO
2. If the answer to #2 is yes what recognized standard does your department use?  
(NFPA, IFSTA, National Fire Academy, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
3. If your department offers an officer training program other than a nationally recognized standard, was it developed in house? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO.  
If yes, was there another standard was used as a guide? \_\_\_\_\_
4. If your department utilizes a formal officer training program is it offered prior to promotion, after promotion or both? Prior to; \_\_\_\_\_ After: \_\_\_\_\_ Both: \_\_\_\_\_
5. If the answer to #5 is yes, does your department make attending the training program mandatory? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO.
6. Whether or not your department offers a station officer training program do you believe there is value in a formalized training program to assist potential station officer candidates prepare for the position? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

## APPENDIX A-2

### Results From External Survey

Names of Fire Departments Surveyed:

Baytown, TX	Longview, TX
Bryan, TX	San Angelo, TX
College Station, TX	Temple, TX
Copperas Cove, TX	Tyler, TX
Galveston, TX	Waco, TX

1. Does your department offer a formalized officer training program?

YES = 1    NO = 9

2. If your department offers a formalized station officer training program, is it based on a nationally recognized fire service training standard?

YES = 0    NO = 10

3. If the answer to #2 is yes what recognized standard does your department use?

(NFPA, IFSTA, National Fire Academy, etc.)

YES = 0    N/A = 10

4. If your department offers an officer training program other than a nationally recognized standard, was it developed in house?

YES = 1    N/A = 9

If yes was there another standard was used as a guide?

YES = 0    NO = 1

5. If your department utilizes a formal officer training program is it offered prior to promotion, after promotion or both?

Prior to = 1 After = 0 Both = 0 N/A = 9

6. If the answer to #5 is yes, does your department make attending the training program mandatory?

YES = 1 NO = 0 N/A = 9

7. Whether or not your department offers a station officer training program do you believe there is value in a formalized training program to assist potential station officer candidates prepare for the position?

YES = 10 NO = 0

## APPENDIX B INTERNAL SURVEY AND RESULTS

### APPENDIX B -1

#### Killeen Fire Department Station Officer Development Survey

Below is listed several skills, responsibilities, and tasks of a station officer. Please answer the questions based on your perception of the subject's relative importance to the Lieutenant's position in the Killeen Fire Department. Your answers will help our department in developing a meaningful station officer training program.

1. Do you believe that a formalized station officer development / training program would be of value to personnel aspiring to be a Fire Lieutenant in the Killeen Fire Department? \_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_NO
2. Do you believe the Killeen Fire Department would benefit from a station officer training program? \_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_NO
3. If you do believe there is value in an officer training program, please answer the following question.
  - Should it be offered prior to promoting to officer? \_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_NO
  - Should participation in the training program be mandatory?  
\_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_NO

On the next series of questions please circle the numbers based on the following scale:

1 = Not important at all

2 = Moderately important

3 = Very Important

4 = Essential

Training and Presentation Skills	1	2	3	4
Performance Appraisals	1	2	3	4
Counseling/Mentoring	1	2	3	4
Discipline	1	2	3	4
Oral Communication	1	2	3	4
Written Communication	1	2	3	4
Leadership Skills	1	2	3	4
Management Skills	1	2	3	4
Diversity/Harassment Management	1	2	3	4
Time Management	1	2	3	4
Problem Solving	1	2	3	4
Customer Service	1	2	3	4
Computer Use	1	2	3	4
Reports	1	2	3	4
Budget/Project Management	1	2	3	4
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics	1	2	3	4
Fire Investigation	1	2	3	4

Organizational Policies and Procedures	1	2	3	4
Fire Code Inspection Regulations and Inspection Techniques	1	2	3	4
Stress Management	1	2	3	4
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	1	2	3	4
Interpersonal Relationship and Communication Skills	1	2	3	4

Other: Please Use The Rest Of This Page To List Any Important

Subjects Not Covered By A Category Above And Assign

The Proper Value Scale:

## APPENDIX B-2

### Results From Internal Survey

- Nine fire officers completed the survey out of a possible 15.
- 30 firefighters out of a possible 100 completed the survey.
- Section 1 is intended to gain an overall perspective of the relative importance of officer development / training from the officer's view point.
- Section 1 results are displayed after each question with the number of officers responding in each category and the relative percentage after the number.
- Section 2 is intended to gain a perspective of the relative value of each of 22 different skills, task, or job functions of a station officer from the employees' point of view.
- The tasks in section two are rearranged to represent the relative value of each task.
- The total score / value is represented by each item.

### Officers Survey

#### Results from Section #1

1. Do you believe that a formalized station officer development / training program would be of value to personnel aspiring to be a Fire Lieutenant in the Killeen Fire Department?

YES = 9 (100%)                      NO = -0- (0.0%)

Do you believe the Killeen Fire Department would benefit from a station officer training program?

YES = 9 (100%)                      NO = -0- (0.0%)

2. If you do believe there is value in an officer training program, please answer the following question.

- Should it be offered prior to promoting to officer?

YES = 8 (89%)                      NO = 1 (11%)

- Should participation in the training program be mandatory ?

YES = 8 (89%)                      NO = 1 (11%)

Results from section #2

- The relative value scale assigned to section #2 is as follows:

1 = Not important at all = 1 point

2 = Moderately important = 2 points

3 = Very Important = 3 points

4 = Essential = 4 points

- Maximum points for any one subject on the officer survey is 36. At or near 27 points a subject is considered “very important”. At or near 18 points a subject is considered only “moderately important”.

Ranking	Item	Total Points
1.	Emergency Scene Operations / Tactics	36
2.	Leadership Skills	35
3.	Organizational Policies and Procedures	33
4.	Discipline	33

5.	Oral Communication	32
6.	Customer Service	32
7.	Interpersonal & Communication Skills	32
8.	Management Skills	31
9.	Computer Use	31
13.	Reports	31
14.	Training and Presentation Skills	30
15.	Written Communication	30
16.	Problem Solving	30
17.	Diversity/Harassment Management	29
18.	Time Management	29
19.	Counseling/Mentoring	28
20.	Stress Management	28
21.	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	26
22.	Performance Appraisals	24
23.	Budget/Project Management	24
24.	Fire Investigation	24
25.	Fire Code Inspection / Inspection	24
Other:	No comments received	

## Non-Officers Survey

### Results from Section #1

1. Do you believe that a formalized station officer development / training program would be of value to personnel aspiring to be a Fire Lieutenant in the Killeen Fire Department?

YES = 30 (100%)                      NO = -0- (0.0%)

2. Do you believe the Killeen Fire Department would benefit from a station officer training program?

YES = 30 (100%)                      NO = -0- (0.0%)

3. If you do believe there is value in an officer training program, please answer the following question.

- Should it be offered prior to promoting to officer?

YES = 15 (50%)                      NO = 15 (50%)

- Should participation in the training program be mandatory ?

YES = 15 (50%)                      NO = 15 (50%)

## Results from section #2

- The relative value scale assigned to section #2 is as follows:
  - 1 = Not important at all = 1 point
  - 2 = Moderately important = 2 points
  - 3 = Very Important = 3 points
  - 4 = Essential = 4 points
- Maximum points for any one subject on the non-officer survey is 120. At or near 90 points a subject is considered “very important”. At or near 60 points indicates the subject is only “moderately important”.

Ranking	Item	Total Points
1.	Management Skills	116
2.	Written Communication	114
3.	Oral Communication	114
4.	Customer Service	113
5.	Leadership Skills	113
6.	Problem Solving	112
7.	Interpersonal & Communication Skills	112
8.	Discipline	110
9.	Emergency Scene Operations / Tactics	109
13.	Time Management	106
14.	Training and Presentation Skills	105
15.	Organizational Policies and Procedures	105

16.	Counseling/Mentoring	100
17.	Diversity/Harassment Management	100
18.	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	97
19.	Performance Appraisals	97
20.	Reports	96
21.	Stress Management	95
22.	Fire Code Inspection / Inspection	88
23.	Fire Investigation	86
24.	Computer Use	84
25.	Budget / Project Management	74
Other:	No comments received	