

**IDENTIFICATION & EVALUATION OF TRAINING CRITERIA
FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF
VOLUNTEER FIRE OFFICERS – A KEY TO SUCCESS
IN A 21ST CENTURY FIRE SERVICE**

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The problem was there were no standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services (WMTFD), thereby resulting in inconsistent leadership within the organization. Regardless of pay status, fire officers shoulder immense responsibilities in their roles as company commanders, division chiefs, and emergency services managers. All too often in the volunteer fire service, officers are promoted by election or appointment without the benefit of formalized leadership or management training. The lack of a robust training program for volunteer fire officers can have an adverse affect on the officer and his/her subordinates, supervisors, and customers.

The purpose of this applied research project was to identify and evaluate standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services and their anticipated impact on the organization. The author utilized descriptive and evaluative research methods to analyze this problem. The following five questions were used to guide the research:

1. What are the existing professional standards that fire departments utilize to develop fire officers at the local, state, and national levels?
2. What professional standards are like-sized fire departments using to develop company level fire officers?
3. Are there any comparative standards for supervisory personnel in service organizations that primarily utilize volunteer staffing?

4. What are the potential impacts with implementation of professional development standards on the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services?
5. How will the implementation of a professional development program for volunteer officers improve the delivery of services to the citizens of West Manchester Township?

The procedures utilized in this applied research project included a review of available literature located at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center, the author's personal library, and the WMTFD reference library. A personal interview was conducted with the American Red Cross – York County Chapter Emergency Response Manager to identify what training requirements existed for supervisory positions staffed by volunteers. Lastly, two survey instruments were employed to help determine what professionally recognized training standards were used by like-sized fire departments and to gauge the value placed on professional development of fire officers by members within the department.

Results indicated that an overwhelming majority of fire departments surveyed value professional standards and training programs for volunteer fire officers. Internal survey feedback validated the need for the development of a professional development training program for current and future volunteer fire officers of the WMTFD. Both the literature and survey data found that NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, was the predominant benchmark document used to develop standards for the professional development of fire officers – both volunteer and career.

Recommendations made were to develop and implement a professional development training program for the volunteer fire officers in the WMTFD and to utilize NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, as a reference guideline for all program curriculum.

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Introduction

The fire service of the 21st Century is facing a plethora of new challenges including domestic and international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction (WMD's), and managing the rising costs of providing existing services. Gone are the days where the sole function of the fire officer was to command fire suppression activities. The problem is there are no standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services (WMTFD), thereby resulting in inconsistent leadership within the organization.

Although the WMTFD does have minimum pre-requisite criteria for its officers, there is no program in place to further enhance the professional development after appointment. During the past decade, the fire service has experienced a myriad of new perils thereby mandating higher levels of training and expertise. The 21st Century fire officer is faced with much more than just fires.

The fire service has evolved from an organization whose single responsibility was fire suppression to an emergency services organization that provides fire suppression, fire prevention, fire code enforcement, fire investigation, fire inspection, emergency medical services (basic and advanced life support) hazardous materials mitigation, and specialized rescue operations (urban search and rescue, wilderness search and rescue, high angle rescue, confined space rescue, and trench collapse rescue).

With these increased responsibilities come some of the greatest response challenges in our history. Professionalism is the key to our present and to our future (Strickland, 1995, p. 311).

The role of the 21st Century fire service manager is to prepare firefighters for advancement to the position of fire officer and to ensure the continued professional development of those officers to meet the ever-changing demands of the position that they hold. The purpose of this applied research project is to identify and evaluate standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services and their anticipated impact on the organization. The author will utilize descriptive and evaluative research methods to analyze this problem. The following five questions will guide the research:

1. What are the existing professional standards that fire departments utilize to develop fire officers at the local, state, and national levels?
2. What professional standards are like-sized fire departments using to develop company level fire officers?
3. Are there any comparative standards for supervisory personnel in service organizations that primarily utilize volunteer staffing?
4. What are the potential impacts with implementation of professional development standards on the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services?
5. How will the implementation of a professional development program for volunteer officers improve the delivery of services to the citizens of West Manchester Township?

Background and Significance

The West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services (WMTFD) provides service to a population of nearly 18,000 people in a diversified community covering 20.2 square miles. The Department is staffed by 50 active volunteer professionals and 1 career fire chief. Volunteers staff the positions of firefighter, lieutenant, captain, assistant chief, and district chief. The career Fire Chief serves as the Chief Administrative Officer with responsibility for management oversight. Each District Chief is responsible for management of a fire station along with its assigned equipment and personnel. The Assistant Chiefs provide general oversight in the areas of training, prevention, technology services, and communications. Captains are responsible for vehicle maintenance and Lieutenants maintain all equipment in ready state. Firefighters serve in various roles to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization.

The WMTFD provides emergency services from its 2 stations with 4 engines, 1 heavy rescue, and 1 truck. Services include fire suppression, public education, codes compliance, hazardous materials operations level response, technical rescue, and basic life support (BLS) assistance. Staffing per call averages 15 personnel for dual station responses and 6 per call for single station responses. In addition to township coverage, the WMTFD provides automatic aid to each of our adjoining jurisdictions and receives reciprocal assistance as necessary. The WMTFD responds to approximately 800 calls for service annually.

In the past, promotion above the rank of firefighter was based loosely on the premise that the candidate had 2 years of service in good standing and was elected by a majority vote of his/her peers.

Oftentimes in the volunteer fire service, officers assume positions (through elections or appointments) they are not qualified to hold. Very few volunteer departments have a plan for officer succession or a formal training program for those who aspire to be officers. More often, it is assumed that the new officer will develop the needed skills through on-the-job training. Contrary to what some would like to believe, a helmet with a different color doesn't automatically make someone competent. Competence must be developed (Gasaway, 2003, p.14).

Currently, all fire officers are required to have completed the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy's (PSFA) 88-hour Essentials of Firefighting Basic Module (EBM), the National Fire Academy's Incident Command System (ICS), Hazardous Materials First Responder – Operations (HMO), and cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). No additional or continuing education requirements exist to maintain current line officers or for advancement to higher ranks within the organization.

Although the above-mentioned training and certification requirements are indeed relevant to the position of fire officer, only the ICS exceeds the minimum level for the rank of firefighter. The absence of a robust training and professional development program for the volunteer fire officer creates a multi-dimensional dilemma – past, present, and future. The lack of a formalized training program for volunteer fire officers can have a negative impact on the overall performance and productivity of the entire organization.

Everything occurring in a department that affects its members influences productivity and personal satisfaction. The actions and attitudes of line officers often have the greatest direct impact on the firefighters. Whether members are

career or volunteer, company supervisors are responsible for the command and control of personnel in both emergency and routine situations. This means that lieutenants, captains, and chief officers are in key positions either to improve or diminish positive attitudes and skill levels of personnel. Not only are these officers typically the first step in the personnel management chain, they are in prime positions to improve the ability and professional development of their unit members (National Fire Academy Open Learning Fire Service Program [NFAOLFSP], 1997, pp. 1-3 & 1-4).

In the past, the fire service focused on a relatively narrow scope of responsibilities. “A change of mission has occurred since the early days when fire departments were viewed as combat organizations, focusing an inordinate amount of resources, time, attention, and training on fire suppression operations” (Coleman and Granito, 1988, p. 473). In addition to the changing scope of responsibilities, the number of incidents managed annually by the WMTFD has more than doubled over the past 20 years.

Currently in the WMTFD, as with most other fire departments in the United States, the list of responsibilities of the fire officer can be overwhelming. The fire officer is responsible for transforming the department’s mission, vision, and goals into the direct delivery of services in an effort to meet the needs of its customers.

The fire service is now a profession, requiring professional competencies on the part of its members. Whether it is a volunteer, career, or paid on-call fire department, members are expected to receive professional training and to respond to calls in a professional manner. Fire officers must become administrators,

understanding and using theories and techniques appropriate for the operation of an organization staffed by professionals (Grant and Hoover, 1994, p. 8).

Probationary firefighters and apparatus operator candidates are each required to attend and complete a rigorous training itinerary. Probationary firefighters must successfully complete a minimum of the PSFA's 88-hour EBM program within 18 months of appointment. Operator candidates must complete a checklist of minimum competencies for each class of vehicle and log a minimum of 8 hours of driving time behind the wheel of each vehicle. These mandatory training requirements were selected in an effort to ensure achievement of those minimum competencies as addressed in NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications and NFPA 1002, Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver / Operator Professional Qualifications. The goal of compliance with these national consensus standards is to promote professionalism within our agency and minimize potential legal liability arising out of providing services. Ironically, it is the line officers that require lower ranking members to show evidence of completion of those mandatory programs but fail to promote a professional development program for their own officer corps.

Today's company officer must know about and be able to deal with concepts such as gender equity and cultural diversity. They must know about planning, budgeting, and time management. In short, today's company officer must be a more versatile and better-informed supervisor than in the past. Today – more than ever – company officers are in the people business. In many departments, a small percentage of a company officer's time is spent dealing with emergencies. The majority of their on-duty time is spent dealing with people. Regardless of

whether they are career officers or volunteers and whether they are called fire officers, company officers, or whatever, according to the International City Management Association (ICMA), first-line supervisors (company officers) are responsible for the following:

- Getting the job done (meeting the organization's goals/objectives)
- Keeping the work area free of health and safety hazards
- Building teamwork and cooperation
- Developing member's skills
- Keeping records and making reports

(International Fire Service Training Association [IFSTA], 1998, p. 1)

The WMTFD has relied on a somewhat laissez fare philosophy for preparing and developing its operational line officers. "The transition from firefighter to company officer is perhaps the most important and potentially the most difficult change in your entire fire service career...because the company officer is the vital connecting link between the fire company and the rest of the organization" (IFSTA, 1998, p. 7). Without a structured program, fire officers are expected to attend training courses that they view as beneficial to their career development. "Company officers are responsible for turning a department's mission statement into actions and assuring that the goals of the mission are met. The company officer has the responsibility of leading and directing the activities of a department's personnel and resources" (Lastinger, 1996, p. 6). "As the fire service's scope and mission have broadened, the need for enhancements in both training and education have grown proportionately" (Kramer, 1995, p. 326). The current policy of "status quo" may no longer be an acceptable form of doing business. The "standard of

care” of the modern fire service will not tolerate this type of static philosophy regarding professional doctrine.

As the past has proven, the fire service is a constant and ever-changing profession. The future will continue to challenge the volunteer fire officer to add new knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as the continuous refinement of existing ones. “There is no doubt that fire officers of the future will need a much larger array of skills if they expect to be fully effective” (Steidel, 1994, p. 24). “The incorporation of a number of new services into the daily operations and responsibilities of many fire departments requires a more modern and professional management approach” (Grant and Hoover, 1994, p. 7). Regardless of the rank, officers must develop a dynamic “tool box” of resources to safely manage those challenges that lie on the horizon. “Thus, the new services not only require new response techniques and training, but also increasingly demand more administrative and management skills” (Grant and Hoover, 1994, p. 9). “One common-sense approach to this dilemma is to properly prepare present and future leaders through a comprehensive professional development program” (Shouldis, 1996, p. 22).

This applied research project is relevant to the *Executive Development* course in the areas of professional development, personnel management, and providing quality services. By systematically identifying the industry standards for education and professional development of fire officers, the WMTFD will be capable of developing a relevant and comprehensive training program to assist both current and future officers realize a higher level of excellence. A formal program to strengthen officer

professionalism will serve to better prepare aspiring officer candidates and enhance the performance of those incumbent members within our ranks.

This applied research project directly relates to the following 5-year operational objectives of the United States Fire Administration (last updated October 20, 2000):

1. By reducing by 25% the loss of life of firefighters.
2. To appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues.

These objectives will be accomplished by ensuring the current corps of officers and the future cadre of candidates are capable of safely fulfilling the duties bestowed upon them as a volunteer line officer. The line officer must be able to safely and efficiently respond to the ever-expanding array of tasks required of today's fire service professional.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to locate, review, and identify those sources that specifically address the professional development of fire service line officers. Regardless of their pay status (volunteer, career, or paid-on-call), fire officers are equals in their responsibility to lead and manage a designated fire company. The review will provide this author with the necessary pertinent sources and data to strengthen the proposal for the implementation of a formal professional development training program for the line officers of the WMTFD. Literary research will identify the professionally accepted criteria from throughout the industry and compare the responsibilities of WMTFD line officers to that of volunteer supervisory personnel in the American Red Cross. And finally, the review may shed light on the impact(s) on the organization and its customers after the implementation of an officer development program.

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 (12) 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 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)

A chain is said to be only as strong as its weakest link and a sound structure is said to begin with a strong foundation. These analogies can be applied directly to the fire services. In an effort to strengthen weak links and build strong foundations, fire service leaders began addressing professional qualifications over 30 years ago. To this end, retired Director of the Delaware State Fire School Louis Amabili (1992) stated:

...on September 1, 1970, in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Joint Council of National Fire Service Organizations was formed...One of the national goals of the fire service identified by the Joint Council at that time was “to develop nationally

recognized standards for competency and achievement of skills development, technical proficiency and academic knowledge appropriate to every level of the fire service career ladder”. In 1972, the National Professional Qualifications System was devised by the Joint Council as the first step in the establishment of national standards of professional competence for the fire service (p. 16).

If we believe the axiom that the fire department is built on the foundation of good companies, why have we not provided our company officers with adequate training for this responsible position? Instead we assume that they will learn either by the osmotic process from their peers or from their immediate supervisors (who in all probability, had no more formal training than they did). We’ve developed the continuing process of the blind leading the blind (Masten, 1987, p. 61).

The foremost guide on subjects to be taught in company officer development programs is the NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. This standard identifies the job performance requirements for four levels of fire officers, including company officer. It is stated in the standard that the Fire Officer I is the supervisory level officer (Kirtley, 1996, p. 4)

The first edition of NFPA 1021 was adopted in 1976. Early versions of the 1021 standard outlined the fire officer career ladder to include six levels. The 1992 edition of NFPA 1021 reduced the number of levels of progression in the standard to four. The most current edition, published in 1997, continues the use of the job performance

requirement or JPR. Each JPR includes the task to be performed; the tools, equipment, or materials that must be provided to complete the task; evaluation parameters and / or performance outcomes; and lists the prerequisite knowledge and skills necessary to complete the task.

With this edition, NFPA 1021 is converted to the job performance requirement (JPR) format to be consistent with the other standards in the Professional Qualifications Project.... The intent of the technical committee was to develop clear and concise job performance requirements that can be used to determine that an individual, when measured to the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as a fire officer. The committee further contends that these job performance requirements can be used by any fire department in any city, town, or private organization throughout North America (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 1997, p. 1).

The overall goal of NFPA 1021 is to provide professional criteria to evaluate fire officers or officer candidates that is applicable to any local fire department, state or provincial government, or to provide a basis for a national acceptable standard.

A collateral benefit of certification systems is that they standardize our education and training programs. The standards we recognize today are performance standards, many of which have become the core of our education and training programs.... A survey conducted in 1992 by the University of Illinois, and additional information compiled in 1993 by the University of Maryland, revealed that some type of certification system exists in each of the 50 states. Since certifications systems can be created at the local, county, regional, and state level

as well as nationally, credible systems based on acceptable standards can be used and recognized in different formats. States can develop their own sets of standards and criteria or states can adopt any or all of the nationally recognized standards published by the National Fire Protection Association (Strickland, 1995, pp. 313 & 314).

The U. S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) promulgates rules that regulate safety in the workplace. Although only a few of these regulations directly mention fire service training, others incorporate minimum requirements for worker and supervisory education. OSHA 1910.156(c)(1) states, "fire brigade leaders and training instructors shall be provided with training and education which is more comprehensive than that provided to the general membership of the fire brigade" (1998). Within federal agencies, OSHA mandates that supervisors are directly responsible for workplace safety. OSHA's standard 29 CFR 1960.55 Training of Supervisors states:

Each agency shall provide occupational safety and health training for supervisory employees that includes: supervisory responsibility for providing and maintaining safe and healthful working conditions for employees...and agency procedures for the abatement of hazards, as well as other appropriate rules and regulations. The supervisory training should include introductory and specialized courses and materials which will enable supervisors to recognize and eliminate, or reduce, occupational safety and health hazards in their working units (1995).

One area of importance while reviewing the current standard of professionalism in the fire service is a comparison of like-sized departments. In order to justify one's

policies or actions, you may be asked to compare your department against one of similar composition. The NFPA 1021 standard was developed in an effort to provide a mechanism for fire departments to adopt a certification process for its line officers. Estep (1995) said, “In its most simple form, certification means that an individual has been tested by an accredited examining agency on a body of clearly delineated materials and found to meet or exceed the minimum standards.... Another reason to certify is the increasing litigious nature of our society” (p. 312).

When conducting an external survey, this author solicited feedback from like-sized fire departments in York County, PA. Eight (8) out of 23 of the respondents indicated they did utilize some type of standard training regimen to prepare and enhance volunteer fire officers. Two (2) use NFPA 1021, 1 uses IFSTA training manuals, and 5 utilize NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications. More in-depth survey data will be discussed in the Results section of this document.

At the state level, fire services training is developed and validated by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (PSFA) under the auspices of the Office of the State Fire Commissioner. The mission of the PSFA is “to deliver quality training and education” by “providing a means of professional certification through the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications” (2001). The PSFA is accredited through the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (NBFSPQ). In October 1985, the NBFSPQ approved the certification processes and procedures established by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner. Since that time, the PSFA has certified over 6,000 Pennsylvania fire fighters. The PSFA is accredited to issue certification at the Fire Officer I and Fire Officer II levels. “The service that can be

offered to the citizens and communities of the Commonwealth will be enhanced by the professional competency attained through this certification process” (PSFA, 2001).

As it may be easy to implement a professional development career ladder in a paid fire department, volunteer fire companies may find it difficult to mandate this type of training. Many volunteer firefighters may not have adequate time to attend and complete a rigorous professional development training program. Since many volunteer fire departments are struggling to maintain acceptable staffing levels, it is imperative that more people find time to volunteer. During his 2002 State of the Union address, President George W. Bush called upon every American to get involved in strengthening America's communities. “My call tonight is for every American to commit at least two years - 4,000 hours over the rest of your lifetime - to the service of your neighbors and your nation. America needs...volunteers to help police and fire departments” (2002). The hope was that more people would volunteer in their local communities or with emergency service organizations.

The most notable national level emergency service organization is the American Red Cross (ARC). Many positions within the ARC are designed to be staffed by volunteers. In 2002, the York County Chapter of the ARC conducted an internal staffing needs assessment to determine the number of trained volunteers that would be needed to staff a level III disaster. According to Emergency Response Manager Robert Straw, a level III disaster is defined as one that affects more than 1 municipality and requires the establishment of 2 or more mass care centers. The assessment revealed that a total of 143 trained volunteers are needed to successfully manage a level III disaster in York County (personal communication, June 11, 2003). ARC staff positions include administrative,

mass care, mass feeding, logistics, damage assessment, and other family related disaster services. The York County Chapter follows national guidelines to facilitate filling staffing needs at the local level.

At the national level, the ARC publishes “*ARC 4417 - Criteria and Career Development Charts*” for each position within the organization. Each chart indicates the position name, required training, number, level, & type of experiences, and demonstrated knowledge, skills, & abilities (ARC, 2000). One example of a mid-level supervisory position is the “*Specialist – Leadership*” within the mass care organizational chart (contained in Appendix A-2). Minimum requirements for individuals serving in this role include:

Training:

- Mass Care: An Overview
- Shelter Operations
- Supervision in Disaster
- Mass Care II
- Emergency Response Vehicle Training
- Shelter Operations Simulation
- Serving the Diverse Community

Experience:

- 2 Technician experiences in sheltering
- 3 Technician experiences in feeding

Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Supervise 4 – 14 staff

- Provide feedback to workers about their performance
- Accurately document workers' performance
- Communicate effectively orally and in writing
- Implement and support ARC regulations and procedures
- Develop and support volunteers

When assigned as an officer:

- Communicate function status effectively to the relief operation director
- Provide information for inclusion in the budget
- Provide information for the development of the relief operation service delivery plan
- Direct, staff, plan, organize, control, and manage work settings within established procedures.
- Provide accurate relief operation reports, as required

(ARC, 2000, p. 93)

When asked if he believes that professional development is an asset to the organization, Straw responded with an emphatic – “Yes”. Additionally, when asked, “Does the mandate for prerequisite or post requisite training programs hinder the ability of the ARC to staff key supervisory positions with volunteers?” Straw indicated – “Yes”. To reduce this potentially negative impact Straw stated, “one program the local ARC is exploring is the use of loaned specialists from the private sector to fill key positions during a disaster. In doing so, the specialists could receive credit for work expertise in lieu of completing ARC training programs in comparable areas” (personal communication, June 11, 2003). A copy of the interview questions and answers is

included in Appendix A-1. The ARC management recognizes the value that formal training and experience can bring to the organization.

As with any new program in the fire service, resistance may be encountered. Implementation of a mandatory standards program can have a negative backlash, especially in a volunteer staffed organization. With higher demands for time within society, people do not have as much time to volunteer.

Volunteering in the fire service is one of the most time demanding volunteer activities today.... Many factors, with origins both inside and outside of the fire service, have combined to make the problem of time demands one of the most critical problems facing the volunteer fire service today (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 1998, p.3).

Pennsylvania Fire & Emergency Services Institute Executive Director John Brenner (as cited in USFA, 1998, p. 2) stated, "Between 1986 and 1996, Pennsylvania experienced a 54 percent decrease in the number of volunteers". "It is safe to say that some departments will be facing reduction, consolidation, or extinction within the next five to 10 years" (Fitzwilliam, 1994, p. 14). The stresses of additional required training on the already strapped volunteer may become the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back.

In contrast, elevating the level of professionalism within an organization can be a welcomed addition. "While some personnel may view these training and education requirements as barriers to their advancement, others will see them as opportunities" (Smoke, 1997, p.8).

Standards establish a framework for organization and performance, and often instill pride and confidence, which are qualities that are good for retention.... A major role of department leadership is to promote a favorable image of the department throughout the community and among its members. One of the principle reasons that volunteers stay with a department is their desire to become members of an organization with a good reputation and positive image (USFA, 1998, pp. 30-31).

In addition to improving the image and morale of the organization, the concern of legal liability can be better managed. According to Rukavina (1995), "Generally, courts look to what a "reasonable fire officer" or a "reasonable fire chief" would have done under the same or similar circumstances" (p. 168). Literally, thousands of laws and professional standards affect the fire services. It will be these same laws and standards that will form the basis for litigation, and more importantly, a legal defense. "The legal climate of the 90's requires fire officers to be accountable for their actions and the safety of the firefighters they lead" (Armstrong, 1997, p.10). The implementation of an officer development program will strengthen the overall professionalism of the organization and its officers.

As the demands and responsibilities of the fire service have expanded, so has the expectation of the customer. Today's citizens have access to a vast array of information via the media, the Internet, and personal contacts. Even once rural communities are experiencing growing pains from suburban sprawl. As the socioeconomic status of our community is elevated, the services provided must be raised as well. Expanded services can place a strain on the system, its members, and especially the leadership. As the fire

service's scope and mission have broadened, the need for enhancements in both training and education have grown proportionately. "Training in all its forms is the single most important ingredient in the readiness of firefighters and emergency responders to fulfill their assigned missions" (Kramer, 1995, p. 335). "Fire service leaders need a new dimension of managerial expertise to balance risks and benefits across this multidimensional organization.... To be successful in this expanded mission, fire service leaders of today must be educated" (Kramer, 1995, p. 326). Fire officers who possess a balanced repertoire of education, training, and experience are best suited to meet the needs of a modern community. "A healthy mix of all three is required for an effective fire officer, but as he moves through a career, the mix and proportion of each tend to vary, with education becoming more and more important" (Kramer, 1995, p. 328). "An effective fire officer must, at the same time, possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be a manager and a leader" (Coleman, 1995, p. 15).

The ability of an emergency services organization to meet the expanding needs of its external customers is vital to its future existence. According to Granito (1995), "the driving forces behind fire service change have more to do with finances and the general direction of society than with the tools of our trade" (p. 1131).

External pressures for organizational change will need to be matched by internally sponsored change.... Whenever fire departments become more intrinsically involved in the many disciplines that influence public safety, then the helping power of "fire protection" grows, and so too does the perception that fire departments are an essential and key element in the community protection package (Granito, 1995, p. 1134).

One method to ensure the future viability of the organization is to staff key leadership positions with educated, trained, and experienced fire officers. These same officers must ensure that the next generation of leaders within the WMTFD is provided with all the necessary tools to exercise more expert influence on the future.

In summary, the referenced literature has influenced this applied research project by solidifying the need for the development and implementation of a professional development training program for volunteer line officers in the WMTFD. The research has identified local, state, and national criteria for the establishment of a program, contrasted the training between volunteer fire officers & volunteer supervisors within the American Red Cross, compared existing programs utilized by like-sized agencies, and addressed the impact that a program might have on its members & customers. Data obtained from this literary research may be used to assist in the development and implementation of a formal program that is based on professionally recognized standards.

Procedures

The purpose of this applied research project was to identify standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services and their anticipated impact on the organization. Descriptive and evaluative research methods were utilized to help guide this applied research project to find answers to the research questions and to develop applicable conclusions.

Research and data collection methods included a literature review conducted at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC) in February 2003. Materials available for review at the LRC were reference books, technical reports, articles

published in fire service periodicals, previous Executive Fire Officer ARP's, and training manuals. A second literary review was conducted on-site at the LRC in June 2003. In addition to reference materials contained at the LRC, research incorporated literary sources contained in the personal library of this author and the library of the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services. Literary research also encompassed a search via the Internet for additional relevant data that was deemed too current to appear in published works.

Collateral investigation involved a review of any applicable local, state, or federal regulations relating to the certification and training of fire officers. This involved research of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and state or federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) mandates that relate to employee or supervisory training requirements.

In an effort to ensure the significance of this ARP, all sources of data had to meet the following criteria. First and foremost, the validity of all data, regardless of the source, must be verifiable. Second, all information had to be relevant to the subject matter and the intent of the project. Third, the information must be as recent as possible. If the data source was greater than 10 years old, it was utilized when the context had not significantly changed or the content was historically significant. And finally, if the findings identified performance criteria or standards germane to the subject matter, they had to be consistent with current accepted fire service professional standards or principles.

One primary source included an interview with the Emergency Response Manager of the York County Chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC). This interview

provided a comparative evaluation of one of the most recognized national level disaster response agency that primarily utilizes volunteer staffing. The interview was conducted on June 11, 2003. The intent of the interview was to determine if the ARC has training standards for volunteer supervisory staff members and if so, what, if any, impact do they have on the ability to achieve their mission, vision, and goals. Information collected in the ARC interview was compiled and is contained in Appendix A-1 and A-2. The following questions were used to focus the interview.

1. How many and what classifications of volunteer positions are staffed at the ARC / York Chapter?
2. Are there any prerequisite standards for volunteer supervisors at the ARC?
3. Are there any continuing professional development programs offered or mandated of volunteer supervisory personnel?
4. Is this a local, regional, or national standard?
5. May I get a copy of the policy / standard for volunteer supervisors?
6. Do you believe that professional development is an asset to your organization?
7. Does the mandate for prerequisite or post-requisite training programs hinder the ability of the ARC to staff key supervisory positions with volunteers?

In addition to the literature review and the interview, two surveys were conducted. The first survey instrument involved an external questionnaire that was sent to the chief or training officer from each of 54 volunteer or combination fire departments located within York County, Pennsylvania. The survey was designed to identify what, if any, training criteria were being used to appoint or train volunteer fire officers by like sized

fire departments at the local level. The goal of this survey was to ascertain which departments currently had policies regarding pre-requisite standards for their volunteer fire officers or professional development programs for existing volunteer officers. Of those that indicated *YES* to pre-requisite or professional development programs, they were requested to identify those standards or briefly explain the process. The external survey also requested that each respondent, regardless of whether or not their department utilized an officer development program, if they believed that incorporation of a formalized training program would benefit the individual and/or the organization.

A total of 54 surveys were mailed on April 27, 2003 with a return date of May 16, 2003. The list of fire departments that received a survey questionnaire is included in Appendix B-1. Each agency included in the external survey process identified themselves as either a volunteer or combination fire department. One career fire department from York County was excluded from the external survey, as their responses would not address training of volunteer officers. Twenty-three (23) surveys were completed and received by the deadline.

The results for the external survey were tabulated by the number of Yes, No, or blank responses. Each question that requested some form of feedback was compiled according to the information that the respondent wrote. If these written answers were deemed similar in nature, they were simply combined and the number of respondents was indicated in parentheses. The complete external survey instrument and its compiled results are included in Appendix B-2.

The second survey instrument, an internal questionnaire, was designed to solicit feedback from all members of the WMTFD. The survey requested each respondent to

answer Yes or No to a series of 3 “*set up*” questions pertaining to their perception of the need for prerequisite training and professional development training for volunteer fire officers within the organization. In addition, each member was asked to rank or rate the level of importance and/or need for a particular knowledge, skill, or ability as it pertains to the job of volunteer fire officer. Respondents were forced to rate the importance in each category from 5 being “*essential*” to 1 being “*not important at all*”. A total of 16 different areas were included in the survey list. The list of knowledge, skills, or abilities included in this survey was derived from an informal consensus polling of members. In addition to the pre-designated list, an area was provided for each respondent to write in a trait that they feel is important.

This in-house survey was a tool to gather feedback from members in an effort to identify the thoughts and position of the internal customers. In addition to developing a method to gauge opinion, the results will help to prioritize the type and number of classes necessary to design an effective and palatable professional development program for our volunteer fire officers. Not only is the training important, but also acceptance by the membership is imperative to program success.

The final piece of data collected was the rank or position of the individual completing the internal survey. This information was solicited to contrast any variation in the scoring by rank. The data could then be segregated by rank to determine if there was any trend(s) based on their level within the organizational structure. A deviation based on rank would signal a difference in perception of the importance of a particular skill. For example, chief officers may rank a particular skill as somewhat important,

whereas firefighters might indicate the same skill as essential when moving up the career ladder.

At the regular business meetings in May 2003, a total of 40 members completed the internal survey instrument. The breakdown by rank was 6 Chief Officers, 7 Company Officers (Captains & Lieutenants), 22 Firefighters, and 5 Fire Police Officers. All the data and feedback collected in the internal survey was compiled, tabulated, and is shown in Appendix C.

As with many types of research or survey instruments, there were limitations encountered. For the literature research component, this author was limited to materials located at the LRC, in a personal library, the WMTFD library, available publications, and additional sources located via the Internet. Speaking to the survey instruments, a total of 23 responses were received versus 54 surveys sent out. This reflects a 43% return rate. This relatively low response limited the overall representation of the survey. It is unknown if the balance of the non-respondents would have dramatically changed the results. Due to time, staffing resources, and financial limitations, only York County fire departments were included in the survey audience. York County's 54 volunteer or combination fire companies reflect a very small percentage of the more than 2,000 fire service agencies from across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The overall results may vary if the size of the survey pool were expanded outside of the immediate area.

Lastly, due to the research abilities of this author, additional sources of data related to this topic may have been overlooked or gone undetected. Inclusion of otherwise undetected relevant or collateral sources of information may have altered the results of this applied research project.

Definition of Terms:

Career Fire Department – A fire department whose emergency response personnel are comprised of full-time paid employees.

Combination Fire Department – A fire department whose emergency response personnel are comprised of a combination of career (full-time paid) employees and volunteer (non-paid) employees.

Essentials Basic Module – The basic firefighting curriculum offered by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy that consists of 88 hours of lecture and practical instruction based on the NFPA 1001 Firefighter I job performance requirements.

Job Performance Requirement (JPR) – A statement that describes a specific job task, lists the items necessary to complete the task, and defines measurable or observable outcomes and evaluation areas for the specific task (NFPA, 1997, p. 5).

Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (PSFA) – The PSFA is a division of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and is responsible for managing fire services training and accreditation within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Standard of Care – The standard of care is determined by what the reasonable prudent fire officer, of similar training, skill, and experience, would do in like or similar circumstances and is determined by the recognized training programs, policies, and protocols for the profession. The fire officer is expected to perform in a reasonable and prudent manner, with due regard and consideration of the reasonably foreseeable consequences of those actions taken.

Volunteer Fire Department - A fire department whose emergency response personnel are comprised of volunteer (non-paid) employees.

Results

The results of the literary review and the external survey instrument provided the following data regarding research question 1: What are the existing professional standards that fire departments utilize to develop fire officers at the local, state, and national levels?

At the local level, 2 of the respondents who require some type of formalized officer training utilize NFPA 1021 as the benchmark standard. Of those who do not require officer training, 18 out of 21 respondents (86%) do offer training to their fire officers. Of the training programs mentioned, PSFA Fire Officer I and National Fire Academy courses were indicated by a majority.

In reviewing Pennsylvania's fire officer certification program and several other contiguous states' fire officer training and certification programs, NFPA 1021 is again the predominate standard. The West Virginia University Fire Service Extension offers a series of courses to meet the NFPA Fire Officer I standard. In doing so, "the Extension has compared the courses to the NFPA Fire Officer 1 standard." Completion of these courses "would enable a candidate...to apply for and receive Pro-board certification as a Fire Officer 1" (Regional Education Service Agency V, 2003). The Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board has adopted the 1992 edition of NFPA 1021 (Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, [MFRI] 1996). The Delaware State Fire School (DSFS) has been approved by the National Professional Qualifications Board to certify at the Fire Officer I and II levels per NFPA 1021 (DSFS, 2002).

All literary sources reviewed either utilized the NFPA 1021 standard as written or developed a training program with the intent on meeting the minimum requirements of

NFPA 1021. The predominant reference text used for instruction of fire officers is IFSTA's Fire Department Company Officer. The Preface states, "this third edition of Fire Department Company Officer has been updated to conform to the requirements of NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 1997 Edition, Levels I, and II" (IFSTA, 1997, p. vii).

The intent of the technical committee (NFPA 1021) was to develop clear and concise job performance requirements that can be used to determine that an individual, when measured to the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as a fire officer...and these can be used in any fire department in any city, town, or private organization throughout North America (NFPA, 1997, p.1).

Research indicates that an overwhelming majority of the literature and data support the use of NFPA 1021 as the standard for professional development of fire officers at the local, state, and national levels.

The results of the external survey instrument provided the following data regarding research question 2: What professional standards are like-sized fire departments using to develop company level fire officers?

The external survey instrument polled 54 fire companies from across York County, PA. Each of those surveyed was identified as a volunteer or combination fire services agency. Those agencies included in the external survey are to be considered like-sized agencies for the purposes of research question 2. Twenty-three (23) surveys were completed and received by this author. Two (2) of the respondents who require some type of formalized officer development training utilize NFPA 1021 as the benchmark standard. For the agencies that do not require mandatory officer training, 18

out of 21 respondents (86%) do offer training to their fire officers. The type of voluntary training programs that are encouraged include the PSFA Fire Officer I program and various officer development courses offered at the National Fire Academy.

Research data gleaned from the external survey in relation to question number 2 again indicate that NFPA 1021 is the benchmark standard when discussing mandatory and voluntary fire officer professional development programs utilized by like-sized fire departments.

The results of the interview with the American Red Cross Emergency Response Manager provided the following data regarding research question 3: Are there any comparative standards for supervisory personnel in service organizations that primarily utilize volunteer staffing?

When asked if there are any prerequisite standards for volunteer supervisors at the ARC, Straw answered yes (personal communication, June 11, 2003). Standards for all personnel, career or volunteer, are based on ARC's Criteria and Career Development Charts. A copy of the ARC 4417 position description for the position "*Specialist-Leadership*" is provided in Appendix A-2. A review of this knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) included in the position description indicate that the Specialist-Leadership position functions in a manner consistent with a company level fire officer. Volunteer personnel who desire to serve in this capacity must possess minimum prerequisites (KSA's) and experience. Straw also stated that in his professional opinion, minimum standards for volunteer personnel are an asset to enhancing the supervision of employees and more importantly, the delivery of services to its customers (personal communication, June 11, 2003).

Information gathered from this interview indicates that volunteer personnel in other community based service organizations do require prerequisite and continuing career development training programs. The standards are based on a national model that will ensure volunteers from any ARC chapter possess the minimum KSA's to perform the required duties of their assigned position.

The results of the internal survey instrument collected the following data regarding research questions 4: What are the potential impacts with implementation of professional development standards on the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services? and 5: How will the implementation of a professional development program for volunteer officers improve the delivery of services to the citizens of West Manchester Township? This internal survey was used to help identify the personal feelings and views of the members of the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services. Results will assist WMTFD management in the identification of those key areas of responsibility for the volunteer fire officer as perceived by the membership. The feedback will also help in the development of the training criteria for fire officers and prioritize the delivery of the individual subject modules. The summarized results of the internal survey are as follows:

- Question 1. 100 percent of all respondents answered yes, that they feel a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment.
- Question 2: 100 percent of all respondents answered yes, that they feel the implementation of a professional development training program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer.

- Question 3: 97.5 percent of respondents answered yes, that they believe a professional development training program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers. The breakdown was 100 percent of Chief Officers, 100 percent Company Officers, 95.5 percent of Firefighters, and 100 percent of Fire Police Officers.

A matrix consisting of 16 key knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) were developed as the result of an informal survey of a representative sampling of members. The respondents were asked to rank these 16 areas based on their perceived importance as related to the job of fire officer. The results were tabulated and each ranked as an average numerical score. The scores were broken down as overall membership and by chief officer, company officer, firefighter, and fire police.

The overall results were compiled from 40 respondents. Leadership skills, management skills, emergency scene operations, oral communications, and emergency management concepts were identified as very important or essential skills needed by fire officers. All remaining areas were rated as moderately important to very important by the sample group. Overall results are shown in Appendix C-2.

A total of 6 chief officers (2 District Chiefs & 4 Assistant Chiefs) participated in the survey. They rated leadership skills, management skills, emergency scene operations, oral communications, written communications, problem solving, customer service, and fire reports as very important to essential skills. The remaining 8 areas were rated as moderately important to very important by the chiefs. Chief officer results are shown in Appendix C-3.

There were 7 company level officers (3 Captains & 4 Lieutenants) who identified leadership skills, management skills, emergency scene operations, training & presentation skills, problem solving, and emergency management concepts as very important to essential. The remaining 10 areas were ranked as moderately important to very important. Company officer results are shown in Appendix C-4.

Twenty-two (22) firefighters completed the internal survey instrument. Firefighters rated leadership skills, management skills, emergency scene operations, oral communications, problem solving, and emergency management concepts as very important to essential. The remaining 10 areas were ranked as moderately important to very important. Firefighter results are shown in Appendix C-5.

The final sampling group was made up of 5 fire police officers. The fire police grouping ranked leadership as an essential skill. Management skills, emergency scene operations, time management, oral communications, problem solving, fire reports, and emergency management concepts ranked as very important to essential. The remaining 8 areas were ranked as moderately important to very important. Fire police results are shown in Appendix C-6.

All 4 sampling groups rated leadership skills, management skills, emergency scene operations, and problem solving as very important to essential. The lowest score in the survey was a 3.16 out of 5, indicating moderately important. All respondents, based on overall or sampling groups, rated all 16 areas moderately important, very important, or essential. The results were broken down into the 4 sampling groups to identify if there were any differences or discrepancies between rank. Surprisingly, there were no great differences in ratings between chief officers, company officers, firefighters, or fire police.

The feedback from those members that completed the internal survey instrument indicates that an overwhelming majority value training of fire officers. As shown, 100% of members polled believe that fire officers should possess certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment and that a professional development program will benefit an individual seeking or serving in the role of fire officer. Only 1 respondent believes that a professional development program will not enhance the ability of the fire officer versus 39 who do (97.5%). Relating these survey results to questions 4 & 5, any potential impacts on the organization will likely be positive and professional development training programs will likely improve delivery of services to our customers.

The effectiveness and efficiency of a fire department is dependent on having an adequate number of personnel with the necessary skills to perform a variety of tasks both on and off the incident scene. The strategies and tactics developed by an incident commander are only as effective as the human resource capabilities of the units to which functional responsibilities are assigned under the incident command system. Successful human resource planning requires always having individuals who are qualified and willing to assume new positions of responsibility in the fire department. This isn't easy to do in career departments, and is an even more difficult task in combination and volunteer departments.... effective human resource management further contributes to fire department effectiveness and efficiency through the identification of firefighters with the knowledge and skills to advance to the rank of line officer (Fleming, 2002, p. 50). With tremendous internal support for professional development training, planning for the design and implementation are essentially the next logical steps in the program's process.

Discussion

The results of this applied research project clearly indicate that there is both a need and a desire to implement a professional development training program for current and future fire officers of the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services. It is imperative that a fire officer, whether career or volunteer, has the ability to enhance his or her professional competence by attending courses designed specifically for their position. The literary review and data gathered clearly support the idea that a fire officer's job entails more than just managing fire suppression operations.

A line officer serves as the supervisor of a crew. He or she is responsible for a limited number of firefighters and is assigned a specific task to perform.... The success of a unit is based in large part on the leadership of the line officer.... The line officer is responsible for motivating firefighters to perform both on and off the incident scene.... The line officer must have the technical knowledge required to perform assigned tasks, but he or she also should have advanced knowledge and skills in technical areas such as building construction, rescue and hazardous materials.... The preparation of line officers involves more, however, than technical training.... Successful line officers must complement 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. Supervisory training should be designed to provide line officers with a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a line officer, and should provide the knowledge and the opportunity to develop their skills in management and leadership.... Supervisory

training for a line officer should include the inter-related management functions of planning, organizing, directing and controlling. Decision-making and communication should also be addressed, as should the distinction between management and leadership. The use of case studies and experiential exercises are prevalent in these courses (Fleming, 2002, p. 51).

The American Red Cross – York Chapter has identified the need to develop all volunteer personnel, including supervisory positions. The ARC has gone to great lengths to develop job descriptions for each staff position within their organization. Whether volunteer or career, all classifications are required to achieve or possess mandatory knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's). Personal communications with Emergency Response Manager Robert Straw indicate that the system is relevant in support of the mission and goals of the ARC. One example of a first line supervisory position is the *Specialist - Leadership*. The ARC utilizes a concise job description to identify all required KSA's for the *Specialist - Leadership*. In comparing the ARC with the volunteer fire services, the duties for the position of *Specialist – Leadership* are closely related to the company officer as a first line supervisor. It would only seem prudent that the American fire service adopt a minimum standard for the training and career development of fire officers, regardless of whether they are career or volunteer.

The data compiled from an external survey supports the argument that minimum standards are needed for volunteer fire officers. Although only 48 percent of fire departments responding have prerequisite standards for fire officers and a mere 9 percent provide a program for the development of current or future fire officers, 86 percent do offer some form of professional development training to its fire officers. In a unanimous

response, 100 percent of the external survey respondents believe that a professional development training program will benefit their organization.

The results of an internal survey of current WMTFD members supported the need to design and implement a professional development training program for fire officers. Every member who completed the survey indicated that volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment. Regarding the benefits of professional development, 100 percent of the respondents believe such a program will improve the ability of the individual seeking or serving as a fire officer. And 97.5 percent reported that a professional development program for fire officers would benefit the organization by enhancing the abilities of our fire officers. The position of the membership regarding the professional development of fire officers, as supported by the internal survey results, is crystal clear. A simple solution to this problem would be to adopt NFPA 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications as the standard for training fire officers in the WMTFD.

In the dynamic world of the 21st Century, fire service leaders must strive to keep ahead of the operational, management, technologic, and cultural curves. History has proven that the fire service cannot exist as a stagnant or status quo business. Our field cannot simply mark time – we either move forward or fall behind. Snook (1988) stated,

Management theory is being viewed as a series of closely intertwined possibilities that must be addressed and integrated if the manager is to be successful in an ever-changing environment.... To meet this challenge, managers and those around them have to become more skilled. Education and learning need to be continuous and to take place both in the classroom and in the work place (p. 53).

In recent years, the American fire service has become comfortable with comparing itself to private industry. Many of the modern management philosophies and command concepts in use today were adapted from the business world. Although we like to compare what we do to the private sector, the selection, training, and development of our human resources have failed to catch up. In the private sector, training of employees and managers is common practice and widely accepted. According to DeSimone and Harris (1998), “Recent surveys indicate that almost 90 percent of organizations provide training and on-the-job experience as part of their efforts to develop managers. The majority of organizations use a combination of externally provided and internally developed courses and programs to achieve this goal” (p.417).

One area of recruitment and career development that the fire service cannot share with the business world is the hiring of supervisors and managers who do not have sufficient years of direct experience. Without a solid foundation, fire officers will be unable to safely supervise and manage a crew of firefighters. A fire officer must possess the minimum prerequisite KSA’s, supported by years of experience. A career development program for the fire officer must begin with a solid foundation firmly grounded by direct experience as a member of a firefighting team.

In many organizations, it’s possible for a first-level supervisor to be hired without technical knowledge of the business of the organization. This isn’t the case in fire departments. The first-level supervisor, or line officer, must be an experienced firefighter who understands the technical aspects of firefighting, rescue operations and hazmat response. There’s no substitute for experience when it comes to being a firefighter or line officer.... Those who commit to engage in continuous

education also will make successful line officers. They seek to continually increase their skills and knowledge to enhance their ability to supervise and lead the firefighters assigned to them (Fleming, 2002, p. 51).

Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the visionary fire service leader to ensure that subordinate personnel have the opportunity to enhance their professional development regardless of their rank. It is generally agreed that doctors, lawyers, police officers, paramedics, and many other careers need to possess professional credentials. Within the WMTFD, we support and provide for the certification of firefighters and apparatus operators. However, we do not have a process to engage aspiring or incumbent fire officers into a career path to attain professional certification. In order to eliminate this flaw in our organizational structure, we must take the next step to design a professional development training program for our volunteer fire officers.

As responsible fire service managers, we must provide company officers and personnel aspiring to be company officers the direction and the ability to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the challenges of a company officer in today's fire service. If we, as fire service managers, expect to survive and prosper in the many challenges and opportunities facing the fire service we must deliver efficient, quality, and effective services to our customers and our employees have to be trained in the latest techniques and skills to optimize the delivery of these services (Ott, 2000, p. 306).

By providing a standardized career development methodology, personnel will be more likely to become engaged in the process. If left to chart their own path without

solid guidance or direction, the fire officer's road to success will likely be marred with potholes and littered with the wreckage of previous candidates.

While the individual is ultimately responsible for his or her own career, which includes developing a clear understanding of self and the environment in order to establish career goals and plans, the organization can assist the individual by providing information, opportunities, and assistance. By doing so, the organization can enhance its internal labor market and be more effective (DeSimone and Harris, 1998, pp. 390-391).

A successful organization will have a mechanism in place to ensure for the continued progression of personnel up the career ladder. A clearly defined career progression pathway, although not a guarantee, will improve the percentage for success. According to Peter Drucker, as cited by Snook (1988),

...any organizational structure needs to provide for the following: clarity in position and assignments for employees, economy of effort in control and supervision, "direction of vision" toward ends rather than means, understanding of individual tasks and how they are related to the organizational goals, effective decision making, stability and adaptability, and means for its own continuation (p. 58).

The results of this APR have identified that NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, is the predominant benchmark document used by or referenced by most fire service organizations as the guideline for the design of a professional development program for fire officers.

NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, prepares firefighters to qualify for leadership positions within the fire service.... It is a comprehensive standard that requires candidates to perform to the highest levels of both fireground command and fire department administration and management. As officers move through the fire officer series, they are expected to augment their fire training with knowledge gained from other disciplines, including psychology, public administration, local, state, and national government, and legal issues, and to demonstrate the ability to communicate within and outside the service. Today's fire officers, at all levels, must command culturally diverse suppression forces as well as be prepared to assume leadership roles within the community (Strickland, 1995, p. 316).

To facilitate success in staffing of key leadership positions, the WMTFD needs to design, develop, implement, and evaluate a program for the professional development of its volunteer fire officers. Numerous literary sources support the need for such a program and hale its success. Not only will the individual become more astute at his or her job, but the organization as a whole will benefit from the candidate's efforts to broaden their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The department and its members need to view this program as an investment in the future of the organization.

It is only logical that if a fire department offers training to personnel aspiring to be a company officer that the organization will profit from this effort as much as the individual will profit from the training. Clearly, if these trained personnel promote to company officer they will have a better understanding of their responsibilities as a company officer and have a better understanding of how to

manage their crew's activities to accomplish the fire department's goals and objectives. They will have developed and refined their emergency and non-emergency management and leadership skills giving them a much greater opportunity for success in meeting and carrying out the job responsibilities of the company officer position (Ott, 2000, p. 307).

Data gathered during this APR also identified IFSTA's Fire Department Company Officer, Third Edition as a key reference book for the training of personnel to NFPA 1021 compliant Fire Officer I and Fire Officer II.

Fire Department Company Officer is written for firefighters and driver / operators who aspire to the position of company officer; for company officers determined to remain versed in essential and innovative management, leadership, and human relations concepts; and for training officers responsible for teaching and developing officers and officer candidates (IFSTA, 1998, p.3).

Through the use of the currently acceptable industry standard and text (NFPA 1021 and IFSTA Fire Department Company Officer), the 21st Century Fire Service Executive can facilitate a process to develop the present and future managers and leaders of their organizations. The implementation of a professional development training program will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our fire officers. By raising the professional abilities of our fire officers, we will be able to better serve both our internal and external customers. The results of the applied research project have provided a plethora of justification supporting the development of a comprehensive company officer training program for the volunteer fire officers of the WMTFD. The basis for such a program will include NFPA 1021 and IFSTA's Company Officer text.

Recommendations

The problem, as previously stated, is that there are no standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services (WMTFD), thereby resulting in inconsistent leadership within the organization. The purpose of this applied research project is to identify standards for the professional development of volunteer fire officers in the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services and their anticipated impact on the organization.

The research contained in this ARP has identified that NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, is the predominant standard for the development of fire officer training programs. The internal survey data indicated support for minimum training criteria for fire officers prior to appointment and for those already serving in the capacity of line officer. Based on the literary review, interview, survey data, and the analysis of the results, the following recommendations have been developed to facilitate the process for improving the preparation and continued professional development of volunteer fire officers for the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services.

1. Solicit WMTFD members to serve on a professional development steering committee whose mission is to affirm the professional standards in order to facilitate the design, development, and implementation of a formalized training program for aspiring and current fire officers.

2. Ensure those knowledge, skills, and abilities identified in the internal survey instrument are incorporated into the development of a fire officer professional development training program for the WMTFD.
3. Formally adopt NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, as the benchmark standard for program development.
4. Amend the policy manual and officer position descriptions to require minimum competencies and/or certifications that directly relate to NFPA 1021 and all incorporated standards. Each officer position description will be linked to an appropriate NFPA 1021 fire officer level based on the responsibilities contained therein.
5. Support the process toward the implementation of a formalized fire officer professional development training program.
6. Provide a mechanism to promote open lines of communication between management, fire officers, membership, and the steering committee during the development process to minimize any possible negative perceptions.

It is recommended that the process toward the implementation of the volunteer fire officer professional development training program begin as soon as practical. The program guidelines will be incorporated into the WMTFD 5-year strategic plan. The benchmark to begin program development will be by the end of 2003. If the schedule remains valid, the first pilot offering may begin by the fall of 2004. The next logical step in the implementation process will be to adopt an existing program or design one that meets the specific needs of the WMTFD. With the committee and membership support, management can implement a complete program by the end of 2005.

It is imperative that the current and future leaders of the WMTFD are adequately trained, educated, and experienced. The responsibility for ensuring future leadership rests with the present fire chief and senior staff members. “The future of the fire service, then, is most likely going to be determined by the actions of its managers and leaders today” (Coleman & Granito, 1988, p. 476).

The fire officer, and most importantly the company level officer, represents the vital link in the fire services delivery system. In order to facilitate the effective and efficient staffing of these key positions, we must have a cadre of willing and qualified candidates. Training of aspiring fire officers and continued professional development of incumbents is imperative to the future growth of our department. Now that we have identified the key components of a professional development training program, it is the responsibility of the leadership to shepherd the plan to the next level. Eventual success of the program will ultimately depend on the support and involvement of all personnel within the West Manchester Township Department of Fire & Emergency Services.

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Appendix A-1
American Red Cross, York County Chapter
Interview Data from Emergency Response
Manager Robert Straw
June 11, 2003

1. How many and what classifications of volunteer supervisors are staffed at the ARC / York Chapter?

A total of 143 individuals serving in 33 positions are identified within the Chapter to staff a Level II disaster.

2. Are there any prerequisite standards for volunteer supervisors at the ARC?

Yes, refer to ARC 4417 (Rev. 6/00) for a breakdown of position titles, required training, experience, and demonstrated knowledge, skills, & abilities.

3. Are there any continuing professional development programs offered or mandated of volunteer supervisory personnel?

Yes, all volunteer positions within the ARC structure have required training. Additional professional development training is available to all ARC volunteers.

4. Is this a local, regional, or national standard?

All training requirements for ARC staff are developed at the National level.

5. May I get a copy of the policy / standard for volunteer supervisors?

Yes ** Copy of ARC 4417 page 93 provided in Appendix A-2**.

6. Do you believe that professional development is an asset to your organization?

Yes.

7. Does the mandate for prerequisite or post-requisite training programs hinder the ability of the ARC to staff key supervisory positions with volunteers?

Yes. We are exploring the possibility of utilizing "loaned volunteers" from private industry. These will be individuals with existing specialized skills that mirror ARC positions. An example will be to assign professional accountants into volunteer positions that require accounting expertise.

Appendix A-2
American Red Cross
ARC 4417

Specialist – Leadership (Level II Officer) Job Chart

DSHR Criteria and Career Development		MASS CARE – OFFICER AND GENERALIST TRACK			
DSHR Position	Training	Number	Level	Experience	Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
				Type/nature of experiences	
Technician	Required: <input type="checkbox"/> MC I <input type="checkbox"/> SO Recommended: <input type="checkbox"/> ERVT <input type="checkbox"/> SOS <input type="checkbox"/> SDC	3		Three experiences participating in any type of local disaster response or drills. Be flexible, adaptable to change, and accept direction, as required, in varied work settings, weather conditions, cultures, and geography.	Represent the organization during service delivery. Exhibit a general understanding of the Red Cross disaster relief operation structure. Be flexible, adaptable to change, and accept direction, as required, in varied work settings, weather conditions, cultures, and geography.
Specialist-Leadership (Level II officer)	Required: <input type="checkbox"/> SID <input type="checkbox"/> MC II <input type="checkbox"/> ERVT <input type="checkbox"/> SOS <input type="checkbox"/> SDC Recommended: <input type="checkbox"/> LOG I <input type="checkbox"/> LS	2	II+	Technician experiences in sheltering AND Technician experiences in feeding	Supervise 4-14 staff. Provide feedback to workers about their performance. Accurately document workers' performance on F5383. Communicate effectively orally and in writing. Implement and support regulations and procedures in ARC 3041. Develop and support volunteers. When assigned as an officer Communicate function status effectively to the relief operation director. Provide information for inclusion in the budget. Provide information for the development of the relief operation service delivery plan. Direct, staff, plan, organize, control, and manage work settings within established procedures. Provide accurate relief operation reports, as required.

Appendix B-1
List of Fire Departments Surveyed during the External Survey

Reliance Fire Co. of West York	Lincoln Fire Co. of Thomasville
Friendship Fire Co. of Spring Grove	Union Hose Co. of Dover
York New Salem Fire Company	Dover Twp. Fire Department
Nashville Fire Co.	North Codorus Twp. Fire Dept.
Spring Garden Twp. Fire Dept.	Springettsbury Twp. Fire Dept.
Jacobus Fire Co.	York Twp. Fire Dept.
York County Hazardous Materials Team	Hellam Twp. Fire Dept.
Mount Wolf Borough Fire Dept.	Manchester Borough Fire Dept.
Manchester Twp. Fire Dept.	North York Borough Fire Dept.
Strinestown Fire Co.	York Haven Fire Co.
Goldsboro Fire Co.	Lewisberry Fire Co.
Newberry Twp. Fire Dept.	Leo Fire Co. of Red Lion
Rescue Fire Co. of Dallastown	Yoe Fire Co.
Windsor Twp. Fire Dept.	Yorkanna Fire Co.
New Bridgeville Fire Co.	Wrightsville Fire Co.
East Prospect Fire Co.	Felton Fire Co.
Craley Fire Co.	Winterstown Fire Co.
Hanover Borough Fire Dept.	Fairview Twp. Fire Dept.
Jefferson Fire Co.	Penn Twp. Fire Dept.
Pleasant Hill Fire Co.	Porters Sidling Fire Co.
Eureka Fire Co. of Stewartstown	Airville Fire Co.
Fawn Grove Fire Co.	Delta-Cardiff Fire Co.
Rose Fire Co. of New Freedom	Glen Rock Borough Fire Dept.
Shrewsbury Fire Co.	Seven Valleys Fire Co.
Loganville Fire Co.	Dillsburg Fire Co.
Franklintown Fire Co.	Wellsville Fire Co.
Monaghan Twp. Fire Co.	York City Fire-Rescue Dept.

Appendix B-2
Results from External Survey

54 Surveys Sent Out; 23 Completed Surveys Returned = 43%

Volunteer Fire Officer Professional Development Program Survey:

1. Does your fire department have prerequisite standards prior to election or appointment to the position of line officer?

11 Yes = 48% 12 No = 52%

2. Does your fire department offer a formalized professional development training program to volunteer officers after election or appointment?

2 Yes = 9% 21 No = 91%

3. If you answered YES to either question 1 or 2, are your standards or program based on recognized fire service training standards? _____ YES _____ NO

8 Yes = 67% 4 No = 33%

4. If you answered YES to question 3, what are the standards it is based on? Choose all that apply:

NFPA 1021 = 2 or 25% National Fire Academy = 0 or 0%
 IFSTA = 1 or 13% Other, briefly explain = 5 or 62%
 Pennsylvania State Fire Academy (PSFA) Classes, NFPA 1001 Firefighter
 1 & 2, As required in Company By-Laws.

5. If your department does not require or provide a formalized training program for volunteer officers, does your department offer other training to its officers?

18 Yes = 86% 3 No = 14%

If YES, please briefly describe the training. Fire Officer Courses, PSFA,
 Community College, NFA ICS, Volunteer Incentive Programs @ NFA,
 NFA Leadership Series, Command School.

6. Whether or not your fire department requires prerequisite training or offers a company officer professional development program, do you believe there is value in a formalized training program to assist volunteer fire officers to be more effective leaders in their positions?

23 Yes = 100% 0 No = 0%

Appendix C-1
West Manchester Twp. Fire & Emergency Services
Fire Officer Development Internal Survey

Please answer the questions based on your perception of the relative importance as related to the position of volunteer fire officer. Your feedback may be used to assist the Department in the development of a Professional Development Training Program.

1. Do you believe that a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment? ____ YES ____ NO
2. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer? ____ YES ____ NO
3. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers? ____ YES ____ NO

Below are listed various knowledge, skills, or abilities. Please indicate its importance as it relates to officer job performance by placing a X in the appropriate column based on the following scale:

- 5 = essential
4 = very important
3 = moderately important
2 = somewhat important
1 = not important at all

KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, OR ABILITY	5	4	3	2	1
Leadership Skills					
Management Skills					
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics / ICS					
Time Management					
Training & Presentation Skills					
Counseling / Mentoring					
Oral Communications					
Written Communications					
Problem Solving					
Customer Service					
Technology / Computer Skills					
Fire Reports					
Budgeting / Financial Management					
Fire Investigations					
Fire Safety Surveys / Pre Plans					
Emergency Management Concepts					
Other:					

Rank / Position of member completing survey: _____

Appendix C-2
West Manchester Twp. Fire & Emergency Services
Results from Internal Survey – Overall Ratings

1. Do you believe that a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment? **100% Answered YES**
2. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer? **100% Answered YES**
3. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers? **97.5% Answered YES**

Qualifying Information:

- 40 members completed the internal survey at the May 2003 company meetings.
- Rated on a scale of 1 – 5: 5 = Essential, 4 = Very Important, 3 = Moderately Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 1 = Not Important at All.
- 200 points maximum score → 5 x 40 participants.
- average would represent the highest possible score and an essential knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 4.0 average would represent a very important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 3.0 average would represent a moderately important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 2.0 average would represent a somewhat important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 1.0 average would represent a knowledge, skill, or ability that was deemed as not important at all.

Knowledge, Skill, or Ability	Points	Average
Leadership Skills	191	4.78
Management Skills	171	4.28
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics / ICS	186	4.65
Time Management	149	3.73
Training & Presentation Skills	155	3.88
Counseling / Mentoring	139	3.48
Oral Communications	170	4.25
Written Communications	145	3.63
Problem Solving	171	4.28
Customer Service	145	3.63
Technology / Computer Skills	135	3.38
Fire Reports	157	3.93
Budgeting / Financial Management	137	3.43
Fire Investigations	149	3.73
Fire Safety Surveys / Pre Plans	152	3.80
Emergency Management Concepts	163	4.08
Other:	N/A	-

Appendix C-3
West Manchester Twp. Fire & Emergency Services
Results from Internal Survey – Chief Officer Ratings

1. Do you believe that a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment? **100% Answered YES**
2. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer? **100% Answered YES**
3. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers? **100% Answered YES**

Qualifying Information:

- 6 chief officers (2 District Chiefs & 4 Assistant Chiefs) completed the internal survey at the May 2003 company meetings.
- Rated on a scale of 1 – 5: 5 = Essential, 4 = Very Important, 3 = Moderately Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 1 = Not Important at All.
- 30 points maximum score → 5 x 6 participants.
- 5.0 average would represent the highest possible score and an essential knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 4.0 average would represent a very important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 3.0 average would represent a moderately important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 2.0 average would represent a somewhat important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 1.0 average would represent a knowledge, skill, or ability that was deemed as not important at all.

Knowledge, Skill, or Ability	Points	Average
Leadership Skills	29	4.83
Management Skills	24	4.00
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics / ICS	28	4.67
Time Management	23	3.83
Training & Presentation Skills	20	3.33
Counseling / Mentoring	23	3.83
Oral Communications	27	4.50
Written Communications	24	4.00
Problem Solving	27	4.50
Customer Service	26	4.33
Technology / Computer Skills	23	3.83
Fire Reports	27	4.50
Budgeting / Financial Management	21	3.50
Fire Investigations	20	3.33
Fire Safety Surveys / Pre Plans	19	3.16
Emergency Management Concepts	20	3.33
Other:	N/A	-

Appendix C-4
West Manchester Twp. Fire & Emergency Services
Results from Internal Survey – Company Officer Ratings

1. Do you believe that a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment? **100% Answered YES**
2. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer? **100% Answered YES**
3. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers? **100% Answered YES**

Qualifying Information:

- 7 company officers (3 Captains & 4 Lieutenants) completed the internal survey at the May 2003 company meetings.
- Rated on a scale of 1 – 5: 5 = Essential, 4 = Very Important, 3 = Moderately Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 1 = Not Important at All.
- 35 points maximum score → 5 x 7 participants.
- 5.0 average would represent the highest possible score and an essential knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 4.0 average would represent a very important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 3.0 average would represent a moderately important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 2.0 average would represent a somewhat important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 1.0 average would represent a knowledge, skill, or ability that was deemed as not important at all.

Knowledge, Skill, or Ability	Points	Average
Leadership Skills	33	4.71
Management Skills	30	4.29
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics / ICS	33	4.71
Time Management	27	3.86
Training & Presentation Skills	29	4.14
Counseling / Mentoring	27	3.86
Oral Communications	27	3.86
Written Communications	26	3.71
Problem Solving	30	4.29
Customer Service	27	3.86
Technology / Computer Skills	23	3.29
Fire Reports	25	3.57
Budgeting / Financial Management	25	3.57
Fire Investigations	26	3.71
Fire Safety Surveys / Pre Plans	26	3.71
Emergency Management Concepts	29	4.14
Other:	N/A	-

Appendix C-5
West Manchester Twp. Fire & Emergency Services
Results from Internal Survey – Firefighter Ratings

4. Do you believe that a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment? **100% Answered YES**
5. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer? **100% Answered YES**
6. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers? **95.5% Answered YES**

Qualifying Information:

- 22 firefighters completed the internal survey at the May 2003 company meetings.
- Rated on a scale of 1 – 5: 5 = Essential, 4 = Very Important, 3 = Moderately Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 1 = Not Important at All.
- 110 points maximum score → 5 x 22 participants.
- 5.0 average would represent the highest possible score and an essential knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 4.0 average would represent a very important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 3.0 average would represent a moderately important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 2.0 average would represent a somewhat important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 1.0 average would represent a knowledge, skill, or ability that was deemed as not important at all.

Knowledge, Skill, or Ability	Points	Average
Leadership Skills	102	4.64
Management Skills	92	4.18
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics / ICS	103	4.68
Time Management	87	3.59
Training & Presentation Skills	87	3.95
Counseling / Mentoring	72	3.27
Oral Communications	93	4.23
Written Communications	77	3.50
Problem Solving	91	4.14
Customer Service	76	3.45
Technology / Computer Skills	73	3.32
Fire Reports	85	3.86
Budgeting / Financial Management	75	3.41
Fire Investigations	81	3.73
Fire Safety Surveys / Pre Plans	87	3.95
Emergency Management Concepts	90	4.09
Other:	N/A	-

Appendix C-6
West Manchester Twp. Fire & Emergency Services
Results from Internal Survey – Fire Police Ratings

7. Do you believe that a volunteer fire officer should have certain prerequisite training prior to election or appointment? **100% Answered YES**
8. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the individual seeking or serving in the capacity of fire officer? **100% Answered YES**
9. Do you believe that a Professional Development Training Program will benefit the Department by enhancing the abilities of its fire officers? **100% Answered YES**

Qualifying Information:

- 5 fire police completed the internal survey at the May 2003 company meetings.
- Rated on a scale of 1 – 5: 5 = Essential, 4 = Very Important, 3 = Moderately Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 1 = Not Important at All.
- 25 points maximum score → 5 x 5 participants.
- 5.0 average would represent the highest possible score and an essential knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 4.0 average would represent a very important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 3.0 average would represent a moderately important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 2.0 average would represent a somewhat important knowledge, skill, or ability.
- 1.0 average would represent a knowledge, skill, or ability that was deemed as not important at all.

Knowledge, Skill, or Ability	Points	Average
Leadership Skills	25	5.00
Management Skills	23	4.60
Emergency Scene Operations / Strategy & Tactics / ICS	22	4.40
Time Management	20	4.00
Training & Presentation Skills	18	3.60
Counseling / Mentoring	18	3.60
Oral Communications	20	4.00
Written Communications	19	3.80
Problem Solving	21	4.20
Customer Service	17	3.40
Technology / Computer Skills	16	3.20
Fire Reports	20	4.00
Budgeting / Financial Management	15	3.00
Fire Investigations	18	3.60
Fire Safety Surveys / Pre Plans	18	3.60
Emergency Management Concepts	22	4.40
Other:	N/A	-