

HOW DO VOLUNTEERS VIEW COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION?

Leading Community Risk Reduction

Reactionaries to Visionaries – A Change in Philosophy

What role will the Avon Volunteer Fire Department play in Community Risk Reduction?

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

This paper was written to help incorporate a potentially controversial community risk reduction (CRR) program into the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD). My purpose was to evaluate viewpoints about CRR and identify leadership roles.

A descriptive research model was utilized to answer questions that defined CRR, current views, potential obstacles and likely roles of the department. A literature review was completed of relevant articles, books and papers and a survey was administered to 120 members; 42.5% returned the survey.

Since 90% of respondents support a clearly outlined CRR program, the AVFD leadership is compelled to investigate the concept further. Recommendations were made to perform a risk assessment, identify stakeholders, develop and implement action plans, evaluate progress and modify as necessary.

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For the Avon Volunteer Fire Department, change has not always been widely accepted by the membership. The AVFD has had many leaders come and go in the last 45 years and many of their ideas were met with apathy and disinterest to the point that members would rather quit than change. Many accepted changes were never implemented in order to maintain peace within the organization.

The old cliché that the Fire Service is an organization built on "two hundred years of tradition unhampered by progress" can still occasionally be observed in the AVFD. The leadership of the AVFD has once again found itself at another crossroad in the department's development. Many of the department's progressive leaders believe that the department should adopt a comprehensive Community Risk Reduction Program (CRRP) that will better reflect the national fire service paradigm shift away from suppression capabilities to more of a concentration on reducing or even preventing certain types of emergencies in the community. This view also supports the United States Fire Administration's (USFA) operational objectives. The problem facing the leadership is how to introduce and gain acceptance for this program from a membership that believes they exist primarily to provide response, mitigation and recovery activities, and still minimize losing any members in the process.

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) is to evaluate the department's view about CRR and to identify the visionary role that the AVFD membership will be asked to play in reducing risk in the community. Based on the research and findings, recommendations will be made about the changes the department and membership must make to implement a successful program.

A descriptive research model will be utilized to determine the membership's views about

CRR and identify any existing obstacles that might hamper program implementation. The following research questions were developed:

1. What is Community Risk Reduction as it relates to the fire service?
2. What is the current philosophy of the AVFD towards risk reduction?
3. What obstacles exist in the AVFD that will hinder implementation of a CRR program?
4. What role will the AVFD play in Community Risk Reduction in the Town of Avon?

An internal survey that would analyze the membership's current thoughts about CRR was considered to be an important first step in this study. The second section of the survey was to focus on the membership's perceived top three areas of risk in the community, the problems that might hinder implementation and the membership's potential solution to the perceived problems. Analysis of the membership's feedback was performed to see if the data supported the problem statement.

Background and Significance

The AVFD was incorporated in July of 1960 and chartered with the responsibility to provide fire protective services to the Town of Avon. The Town of Avon is a thriving residential community on the outskirts of Hartford Connecticut. The department consists of 120 active volunteer members in four fire stations using five engines, one ladder truck, two rescues, a brush truck and two support vehicles to protect 22.6 square miles and over 15,500 people. Ten years ago the department rewrote its mission statement to better reflect the demands of residents, the continued evolution of fire service, and requirements placed on the department by outside organizations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The AVFD leadership is comprised of two distinct groups. The first group is voted to serve on the Board of Directors by members of their individual companies and many are active firefighters. The Board has the responsibility of overseeing the financial and administrative obligations of the department. The second group, again voted by their respective companies, consists of all the company officers and five chief level officers. This group is primarily responsible for mentoring, coaching and counseling their subordinates through active participation in the creation, implementation and enforcement of the department's Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG). However, both groups came together to create the department's vision and establish goals and objectives based on their areas of responsibilities. One of the main objectives has been to maintain a completely volunteer fire department, at almost any cost.

During early 1990, as a volunteer organization in an affluent community, the AVFD was experiencing a decrease in membership. Using Table 1, the study looked at the retention of all department members in all classifications. From 1990 to 1997 the department recruited 103 members; in January 2005 only 26 of them were still involved. In the past 8 years the department's recruitment process has remained constant; it has experienced a 37.50% increase in retention. Even with this increase, the organizational fear of losing members can still be seen in many policy decisions.

Two major factors have significantly impacted the department's growth; resistance to change and support of the Avon Town Council. An example of the resistance to change occurred in July of 1997, when the Training Division tried to change the level of training required to operate at emergency incidents. Making this change was thought to be a minor adjustment but turned out to be a major campaign. Pre 1997, every new member, within two

years, had to obtain the minimum qualifications of Firefighter 1 according to the NFPA 1001 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications and hazardous materials training at the operational level. Once the member received this training they never had to recertify and could operate and even direct fire operations. The proposed change was to significantly increase the level of required training based on fire ground responsibilities, and remove the two year requirement, the new program would better mirror the NFPA 1001 standard.

It took over five years for the program to be implemented and due to membership resistance a few still left the department or transferred to other companies to avoid the requirements. Even after eight years the entire program has yet to be implemented due to the resistance to annual recertification and credentialing.

Fire Prevention and increased community involvement has been the corner stone of Chief James Di Pace's mission since he took office in January 1995. For 10 years, Chief Di Pace has pressed the Board of Directors to support a comprehensive community public fire prevention program. The Board supports the concept but funding has been another issue. For years the attitude has been to prepare for suppression and mitigation at all cost. Prevention was usually one of the first line items reduced if cuts were needed to bring in an acceptable budget. For example, in the fiscal year 2004-2005, with a total operating budget of \$550,708, the fire prevention component made up only 1.9%. During the last several budget cycles, the Avon Town Council had made it clear that all public fire education would be done by the Avon Volunteer Fire Department, and not the Town Fire Marshal. Currently the Fire Marshal is a branch of the Avon Building Department. The primary focus of the Building Department is to inspect for structural integrity of buildings with some life safety concerns prior to occupant use. The annual life safety inspections and other fire related duties have a low or non existent priority.

Utilizing the town's own philosophy during the preparation phase of the 2005/2006 budget, the Board accepted a proposal from Chief Di Pace to reduce the suppression needs in the budget, so that a part time employee could be hired to coordinate the department's Public Education Program. The only logical place to take the money was from the Education and Training Division, which provided a 3.63% reduction to help fund this position. Since the AVFD did not have the mechanism in place to compensate the employee, the request for funding the position was presented to the town. They rejected the position because they did not want to add another employee to the town's payroll and they felt this function should be accomplished by the volunteers.

In support of the USFA operational objectives, this research will help promote the establishment of comprehensive multi-hazard risk reduction program led by the fire service and also help to identify the obstacles that the AVFD leadership might face with the current attitude of its members. Also by performing this research, the AVFD can reduce the negative appearance that we are providing a service the community does not need or even want. Gaining community support of the department has a tremendous impact on the organization's effectiveness in the community. In unit 1 of the Leading Community Risk Reduction student manual, it is noted that "what better way, then, to safeguard the citizens of the community than by taking the lead in a community-wide risk reduction program!" (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], SM 1-82).

Due to past dealings with the Town Council and a need to build support for the program within the department and the community, a direct correlation can be made with the intended research project and the information provided in the 2nd year of the Executive Fire Officers Program (EFOP) Leading Community Risk Reduction. Not only will this researcher have to

look at ways to build support, but will need to address the changing community, the need to influence change within the AVFD and address potential legal and societal trends. This research will be accomplished by utilizing a descriptive research approach and analyzing data compiled from a membership survey.

Literature Review

Before the AVFD can think about developing a CRRP, insight should be gained from other successful programs, initiatives and research. The following literature review was compiled from magazine articles, published books, applied research papers written for the Executive Fire Officers program, and Internet resources. The purpose of this literature review is to summarize the critical findings of others and describe how their findings influenced my research.

The fire service has a long tradition of serving the community. From the days of the bucket brigades to present day fire suppression forces, firefighters have always been entrenched in their communities. Evolution has taken the fire service from a fire only concept to a general attitude that when anything goes wrong the fire department will fix it. This attitude has created greater responsibility for providing an efficient and effective service. For years fire departments have existed without great scrutiny when it came to how they operated. The fire service as a whole has functioned on years of tradition, rules of thumb, standards and statistics to strengthen budget request for equipment and manning, but taking these national figures were taken out of context and not related them directly to their locality (Ammons, 2001). Ammons also points out that a one size fits all strategy may not be the best solution for a community and leaders must place greater importance on local experience when comparing relevant national statistics. In

Municipal Benchmarks (2001), David N. Ammons discusses four types of performance measures:

1. Workload (OUTPUT) – counts the number of buildings that were inspected by the Fire Inspectors.
2. Efficiency – measures the relationship between the work performed and the resources used to perform it.
3. Effectiveness (OUTCOME) – depicts the degree to which performance objectives are achieved.
4. Productivity – combines the dimension of efficiency and effectiveness.

According to Ammons, without the pressure from outside competition or the need to manage profit and loss, governments are able to neglect performance measures as they focus on other problems in the community. He also noted that even though most high performance municipalities are trying to be proactive in dealing with the community's problems they will continue to be better skilled at responding to complaints than preventing the problems. Even so it is important to overcome the resistance to using some form of measurement. Regardless of where this dissention comes from, leadership must try to understand the reasons.

After establishing a level of acceptable performance and to avoid reinventing the wheel, the fire service should look at organizations that have had success at reducing problems within their fields of expertise. Three very successful programs that have been implemented by community leaders, police agencies and other partnerships are the "Click it or Ticket" campaign, D.A.R.E, the Neighborhood Watch programs. These programs were first developed to address local problems then expanded to address nationwide problems.

The Click It or Ticket campaign is a nationally recognized effort to reduce the number of deaths and incapacitating injuries caused by people not wearing their seatbelts when traveling in the motor vehicles. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) has utilized paid advertising and the support of government agencies, traffic safety organizations, local advocates and other partnerships that will yet again result in increases in safety belt use, and will protect us against one of the greatest threats to us all — death in traffic crashes (“2005 Click It or Ticket,” 2005).

D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a cooperative effort by the police, schools, parents and the community to help provide children with the information and skills they need to avoid tobacco and alcohol, to live drug-free and violence-free lives. The D.A.R.E program started in 1983 in Los Angeles and according to the official D.A.R.E website (“Inside D.A.R.E America,” 2005), 36 million children will benefit from the new curriculum this year and it is now being presented in almost 80% of our nation's schools systems and in 54 countries.

The concept of community policing is not new and the idea of neighbors watching out for neighbors has been around for centuries. However, a formal process was created in 1979 with the development of the National Citizen's Crime Prevention Campaign (NCCPC). Most Americans at that time felt that crime was commonplace and that only the police could do something about it. Today more than 3 out of 4 people believe that they can personally take action to reduce crime in their neighborhoods (“About the NCCPC,” 2005). Utilizing an attractive media campaign with a cartoon detective dog named McGruff the Crime Dog®, and his motto “Take a Bite out of Crime®”, this campaign gained national recognition. Several partnerships, including the National Advertising Council, were developed to make this the program it is today. The alliance of national, state, and federal organizations working with area

businesses, schools, civic groups and law enforcement helped to develop crime prevention awareness and the ability to present it to the public nationally (“About the NCCPC,” 2005).

In their book *Fixing Broken Windows*, George Kelling and Catherine Coles speak about reducing crime in neighborhoods by utilizing the concepts of order maintenance, business improvement districts (BID’s) and community policing. The City of New York Police Department (NYPD) had previously functioned under a reactive style of management and would identify a problem and then would make aggressive sweeps to clean up the problem. This tactic stopped the immediate threat but did nothing for longer term change (Keller & Coles, 1996).

In the late 1970’s Herb Sturz engaged in an experiment named Operation Crossroads, an order maintenance tactic, to help clean up Times Square and take the street back from the prostitutes and hustlers. This new approach used trained observers that would identify hazard areas and the police then would implement a high-visibility, low arrest strategy to interrupt and deter the unwanted activity. This tactic was also used to clean up Bryant Park when the commissioner threatened to close the park due to all the drug problems. The results were outstanding, drug use decreased by 85% and acceptable activities increased by 79% (Keller & Coles, 1996). However, once the police presence was removed the situation worsened.

The next generation of policing neighborhood problems came from the development of business improvement districts. The BID’s were privately funded organizations that provided the resources needed to control and keep clean certain areas within the city. Today over thirty-three districts operate in New York City and in the Grand Central BID from 1989 to 1992, reported crime in the area dropped 42% (Keller & Coles, 1996). However, the continued existence of these organizations is being challenged because of several lawsuits.

As Police Commissioner, William Bratton made several changes immediately upon taken over, and one of the first was to introduce a new concept to the NYPD – community policing. He felt that to reduce crime the police needed to be “both aggressive and respectful of their activities: being aggressive in crime control does not require being combative, nor does being respectful of citizens embody weakness” (Keller & Coles, 1996). The goal was to obtain as much information as possible to enhance the ability to fight crime. Community involvement was paramount and fundamental to his new strategy, and the development of greater accountability to the community and involving neighbors to help solve their own local problems.

The National Fire Academy (NFA) has presented a Community Risk Reduction Model which is now used in several of their class offerings. By using this model, it forces leaders to be proactive when it comes to planning for their communities. Instead of guessing at what is happening and going along for the ride, leaders will be able to better forecast potential problems and put into place the proper measures to remove the risk or limit its impact on the community. In the Leading Community Risk Reduction (LCRR) course, FEMA (2004) has identified three keys to having a successful community risk reduction process:

1. there must be strong leadership within the fire department
2. the community must be engaged in the process and feel that it belongs to them
3. the risk reduction plan must be based on local problems and local resources

Ultimately, educating the community on the need to prevent problems before they have a chance to get out of control will always have a better outcome. To address this process the LCRR identified the concept of the five E's; Emergency Response, Education, Engineering, Enforcement, and Economic Incentives to be an essential part of the community fire protection

tool box (FEMA, 2004). The authors feel that it is through the use of all these tools together that the greatest impact on the reduction of risk will be achieved.

Utilizing the educational tool of the five E's, James Tauber (2000) in his Fire Engineering article calls on local fire officials to better match the resources that they are trying to deploy with the actual risks. Tauber believes that only through identifying the risks will leaders be able to deploy resources to provide a level of protection that is both politically and financially responsible to the local community. Because fire service leaders must have a plan to deploy resources, Tauber suggest that there should be four essential elements to a deployment model:

1. risk assessment of the local community
2. an evaluation of the existing fire department capabilities
3. a defined level of risk that the community is willing to accept
4. development of goals and objectives that support the other findings

Tauber also stresses that the community must be involved by having citizen committees, public hearings or even including citizens in the master planning process.

Peter Coombs and Adam Eckley from the Kent Fire Brigade in the United Kingdom shed an interesting light on "A new pattern of prevention" in their August 2000 article in Fire Chief magazine. It is their belief that by reducing the number of incidents that they are reducing the suffering and loss in the community. This reduction will then lead to more time for training, risk assessment and community fire safety initiatives (Coombs & Eckley, 2000). Their loss reduction was achieved by the development of a Community Fire Safety Team, which brought together many of the different skills needed to market, plan, and manage a comprehensive fire safety program.

The Kent Fire Brigade utilized the four P's marketing approach of Product, Price, Place and Promotion as the foundation of their risk reduction plan, but a fifth P needed to be added to include People. This approach was an intelligence-led model because like law enforcement, the fire service had to develop the ability to collect and analyze data and find patterns and areas of concern. It is through the plotting of past incidents that predictions for future incident demand levels can be developed. This plotting also allows for proper markets to be targeted for increased fire safety campaigns.

While researching several Executive Fire Officer's applied research projects a common theme developed; it was important that incident data collection and analysis coupled with education be utilized to persuade their members to embrace change. Karl Ristow (2003) believes that all fire departments should seek accreditation with the Congress of Fire Accreditation International because proper risk assessment and strategic planning must be accomplished to qualify for accreditation.

James Jensen (2003) noted that in the Janesville Fire Department that the department needed to make sure that they have aligned their own individual goals with that of the communities needs and communicate that to everyone involved in the process. He also stated that department leadership needs to take on a larger role by providing a leadership mechanism that will not only assure continued support but supply open communication.

Through his research findings he also established that members were more motivated when they were recognized for their efforts in risk reduction, since CRR is always seen as a service that cannot be easily noticed by the community. Another vital component of Jensen's research was that members needed to be more involved, a successful program could not be

maintained by one or two people and that they needed to establish a partnership with the City of Janesville itself.

While determining the attitudes and opinions of the LaGrange Fire Department (LFD), Beverly Walker (2003) had been experiencing a lack of support from not only the community but even the firefighters in her organization. Like the AVFD, the LFD was originally only providing fire prevention activities during Fire Prevention month in their school systems and by special request to outside organizations. Over the years their system developed with the addition of a full time position to handle the Public Fire Education component, but funding was still low to non-existent. She also noticed as the program grew, involvement from the firefighters did not. They still believed that risk reduction was “Not their job”. She even noted that when firefighters were asked how to reduce fire loss within the community that they overwhelmingly answered that the department needed to add more firefighters and stations. She goes on to state that “this attitude is one of tradition in the fire service, and indicates the reactive nature of the job as it has been passed down throughout fire service history” (p 30).

Like many of the other authors, Walker feels that the biggest stumbling block for the LFD was in the area of communications. She noticed that it was also not a one way issue and communication needed to be in both directions and that it was not simply enough for the leadership to state their support but they needed to be out in front leading by example.

The final report that must be reviewed when discussing CRR is the America Burning Re commissioned Report entitled *America at Risk* written in June of 2002. This report is a compilation of findings and recommendations that came from the commission established by the Director of FEMA to research why the fire problem in America remains as severe as it was 30

years ago. The report also addresses the expanded role that the fire service has been asked to play since the original report was release in 1973.

The commission reached two major conclusions:

1. The frequency and severity of fire in America do not result from the lack of knowledge, means of prevention or methods of suppression. We have a fire “problem” because our nation has failed to adequately apply and fund known loss reduction strategies.
2. The responsibilities of today’s fire departments extend well beyond the traditional fire hazard. The fire service is the primary responder to almost all local hazards, protecting the community’s commercial as well as human assets and firehouses are the closest connection government has to disaster-threatened neighborhoods. (FEMA, 2002, p.15)

These conclusions were based on the commission’s findings, but not only did they identify the problems, but the report includes recommendations on how to repair the shortcomings. The findings range from implementing known loss prevention strategies to taking care of burn injuries to firefighter health & safety. The report emphasizes the need for total community support from the planning phase through the evaluation component, and not just giving the programs lip service.

In summary, a common thread was found in this literature review; the fire service must develop partnerships not only within its own ranks but more importantly with other organizations that have the desired expertise needed to accomplish the mission. The fire service has traditionally adopted the philosophy that we must be able to do everything ourselves and not

look outside of our organization for help. The materials reviewed in one manner or another suggests that for a CRRP to be successful you must develop lasting partnerships and involve the whole community in the process from the beginning. Keller and Coles clearly demonstrate that the police have learned that partnerships work and enable your message to reach a broader target market. It will then be through the proper marketing of these partnerships that Coombs & Eckley suggest that the fire service will be able to strengthen its involvement in the community. Creating community equity will allow for a better risk assessment more greater involvement from all interested parties. This involvement will lead to a performance based appraisal of the AVFD that both Ammons and Tauber advocate.

Since one of the enabling objectives in the Leading Community Risk Reduction class was to create a personal vision of a fire-safe community, my vision prior to beginning my research, was that the AVFD membership would be able to carry out the risk reduction initiative without much outside help. This literature review has opened my mind to a whole new way of thinking. That is – that there must be a process that can be modified to better fit our system which is then marketed correctly utilizing extensive partnerships, that involve building internal and external community support.

Procedures

The purpose of the research is to evaluate the department's view of CRR and to identify the visionary role that the AVFD membership will be asked to play in reducing risk in the community. A descriptive research methodology was utilized reviewing sources from both the private & public sector and specifically items related to the fire service. The first step was to analyze existing department Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies to determine if a risk reduction program had been established at a policy level but not yet implemented. Next a review

of department and town budgets was performed to analyze the amount of annual funding set aside for risk reduction programs and development.

Originally both an external and internal survey was considered to help determine the current philosophies of the Connecticut fire service towards risk reduction and what other municipalities were doing to protect their communities. While the data from outside sources would have provided valuable information and benchmarking, it was felt that since the AVFD membership might reject the entire concept that the research should concentrate directly on the attitudes and opinions of the AVFD. An internal survey was administered to all 120 active members of the department. The survey was presented as being mandatory for the department leadership to complete and an opportunity for the general membership to voice their opinion. The survey was given to each member individually by their station captain with instructions to complete and return all surveys within two weeks to the Training Division. A cover letter (see Appendix A) was enclosed that provided instructions on how to complete the survey and requesting that 100% of the elected leadership of the department return a survey.

The survey was developed by analyzing surveys developed by other EFO participants (Jensen, 2003; Ristow 2003; Walker, 2003) and the author's personal experience. The survey began by asking 5 questions to help gain background on the individual and their position(s) in the department. The next four questions centered on whether or not each member was currently involved in the department's public education program and what role they felt the department should play when dealing with the community and risk reduction. The next thirteen questions were statements that utilized a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, to gain better insight on personal opinions. The statements were designed to look at several successful community risk reduction programs and ideas. The goal was to see if the membership felt those

programs would be beneficial to the Town of Avon and the AVFD. The last three questions were short answer style which allowed for individual feedback on what was perceived as the most important problems facing the department in regards to community risk reduction.

There were several limitations identified in the research that could adversely affect the results. First, there was a lack of resources that specifically addressed leadership in volunteer organizations, and the use of community risk reduction programs in volunteer fire departments. A search of the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, MD found very little research done on this topic.

The second limitation to the research was not requiring all department members to complete the survey and that some of the respondents did not answer all the questions. Several board members and officers even skipped the short answer section completely. Even though the leadership of the department returned most of their surveys, the general membership had an extremely low return rate. The lack of membership involvement in the initial process may become an obstacle later.

The final limitation noted concerns personal opinions that the survey was developed with a bias. There was a feeling from some of the respondents that the Chief had influenced the survey by trying to get the membership's opinion about his full time job as Fire Marshal being incorporated into the fire department. It is not entirely possible to estimate the influence that this personal opinion had on the survey results.

Results

The survey was administered to 120 active members over a period of one month. A total of 51 members or 42.5% percent of the members returned surveys. Of the 51 members, 30 of them also serve in the capacity of either an officer or board of director member. The department

has 11 board members and 21 officers, three of the officers also serve on the board. All of the board members returned surveys but since the author and one lieutenant did not submit surveys the officers' rank did not have 100% completion. Of the 30 leaders in the department 4 board members (36%) and 2 officers (10.5%) did not take the opportunity to complete the short answer section.

Comprehensive tables that identify all survey question results are provided in Appendix B (Organizational Survey: Results). The first research question that needed to be answered was what CRR meant to the AVFD. When asked if CRR had ever been used during the firefighter's initial training, 61.5% of the respondents and more than 57% of the officers and 63% of the board members reported that they had never heard of the term. Even with very little interaction to CRR the overwhelming opinion (39 out of 51) of the respondents is that risk reduction means that the AVFD should be responsible for the preplanning of potential incidents that affect the community and help develop plans that minimize their impact. Even though over 90% agreed that the AVFD should take an aggressive role in planning for all hazards in the town, only 29% were involved in the current fire prevention system.

In addition, the survey tried to assess attitudes towards implementing several nationally recognized programs and many of them received over 75% acceptance from the respondents; those included the implementation of a program that will provide for a tax break for homes that install residential sprinklers, a residential smoke detector program, and a comprehensive education program that addresses all risks in the community. Also 94% of the respondents felt that the department should continue to fund and operate the AVFD Citizen's Academy.

The personal opinions of the respondents were analyzed to see what the membership felt were the most important areas of risk that needed to be addressed immediately. The largest

membership concern was seen in residential buildings. 21 of the 45 respondents that completed the short answers felt that it was a top priority for the AVFD to develop a residential fire education and prevention program and not just offer it to school age children. It was also felt by 18 respondents that the department needed to update the current smoke detector program to include Carbon Monoxide detectors. Finally, the last area to generate multiple responses (8) was the need to develop a hazardous materials education program for the public.

The short answer section of the survey also highlighted the concerns and obstacles that the membership felt might hinder a successful program. Overwhelmingly, 30 of the 45 respondents felt that proper funding was the number one obstacle that would impede implementation. The next closest concern was that 20 respondents felt that support from the town council was not strong enough to sustain the programs. However, the biggest concerns that were noted and directly affected the membership were time and the ability to staff the programs and whether or not the total membership would accept the programs. Both of these concerns received 18 responses.

A couple of solutions were presented to help ease the concerns for volunteer time and staffing. The first solution was to create a leadership position within the fire department that specifically dealt with risk management issues and would work with the town to implement plans. Over 70% of the respondents agreed that this was a possible solution; strangely enough more than 50% of the board disagreed with this concept. The next option presented was to fund a full time administrator that would handle all continuity of service issues throughout the department, with an emphasis on risk reduction. Over 81% of the board and more than 50% of all respondents felt that this was not a feasible solution. Finally, the idea to utilize existing town personnel with a change in their primary focus to center on community risk reduction and

prevention was presented. The recommendation was to incorporate the Fire Marshal's office into the fire department and create a new office that had the primary responsibility of code enforcement, public education, and developing community risk reduction plans. Over 78% all respondents and 95% of the officers were in favor of this option.

The members were also given the opportunity to suggest potential solutions to their concerns. Of all the short answer questions this question received the fewest responses. Many of the respondents noted that they were able to identify a problem but had no real solution for it. Overall the respondents felt that the leadership of the AVFD needed to develop partnerships with other public and private organizations, identify the program's benefit versus its cost and develop better communications with the town council.

When the respondents were asked what role the AVFD should play, 20% of the department leadership felt that the AVFD should only plan fire related emergencies, and 10% felt that someone else should do the development and the department will just carry out the plan. But over 70% of all respondents and 80% of officers felt a leadership role would be a better solution. When asked whether or not the respondents would support a formal CRRP, over 90% agreed to support the program.

Discussion

When trying to define Community Risk Reduction in the AVFD, it is important to take into account the diverse backgrounds within the department. Since Hartford Connecticut is known as the "Insurance Capital" of the world, and the Town of Avon is a suburb outside of Hartford, we have the unique privilege of having members that are or have been involved in the insurance/risk reduction industry. Unlike the insurance industry which tries to predict risk and the cost associated with it, the fire service under the direction of FEMA and the USFA have been

asked to develop plans to minimize the impacts of all types risk or develop programs that will prevent them altogether.

It is the philosophy of many in the community that “the responsibilities of today’s fire departments extend well beyond the traditional fire hazard” (FEMA, 2002, p.15). With this attitude comes a great expectation. Given that the results show that the members know what risk reduction is and more than 90% will support the new program, it is important to identify how this new concept relates and impacts the mission of the AVFD. The primary mission of the department is to provide fire suppression and prevention, life safety and rescue support, as well as other emergency community support to the citizens of the Town of Avon (AVFD, 2005). The AVFD mission currently refers to providing services that are reactionary in nature. This new concept will challenge the AVFD to become risk reduction champions in their community and strive to prevent incidents by utilizing the 5 E’s; Emergency response, education, enforcement, economic incentives and engineering (FEMA, 2004).

The leadership now must make sure that their current programs are operating efficiently, are accomplishing the department’s vision and mission, and that the current staffing can handle the change. The use of Ammons’ four performance standard measurements will help accomplish this task. The leadership must keep in mind that the use of statistics on staffing, line of duty deaths and amount of equipment a department possesses is not useful in determining benchmarks of performance. The leadership must look at the productivity measures of these workload indicators and compare them to whether or not the desired results have been achieved (Ammons, 2001). Goals and objectives must be set by the leadership so that results can be measured against an established standard. Ammons also stresses that national figures are important but not to lose sight of local statistics.

The authors agree that the first step in developing a CRRP is to perform a risk assessment of the community. In 2000 Tauber recognized the importance of identifying the risk within a community and matching the resources needed to deploy to an incident with the acceptable risk the community is willing to bear. Since the AVFD has not had much success in getting a level of service agreement with the Town of Avon we tend to sit in our “ivory castle” by ourselves and plan for the worst case scenario by purchasing the latest and greatest equipment, training for every possible event and creating elaborate response plans. However, according to Tauber,

a fire department’s efforts to provide a level of protection greater than necessary, greater than desired by the citizens or that cannot be afforded by the community are irresponsible, harm the community, and can lead to the citizen’s withdrawing their support of the fire department. (p. 120)

Since the review of the department’s policies provided no substantial written goals and objectives or performance measures that support the AVFD mission and the leadership’s past practices, utilizing Tauber’s four essential elements of a deployment model would be a step in the right direction towards increased community support. It will only be through this process that an evaluation of the department’s present capabilities can be assessed and help identify the gap between desired service and the capability to provide that service, or in other words, the Town’s acceptable level of risk (FEMA, 2004).

Due to past opposition, when the idea of introducing a CRRP in Avon was brought forth to the leadership, and similar to the attitude seen by Walker (2003), it was felt that even though fire prevention was listed in the department’s mission statement the firefighters see it as someone else’s job. Since over 70% of the AVFD leadership were not involved in prevention, their initial fear about membership support was understandable. Walker’s report also emphasizes “it is not

simply enough for chiefs and deputy chiefs to support risk reduction, whether by providing funding, personnel for activities, or simply words” (p. 32). Therefore both department and community leaders need to step up and be seen out in front leading the charge and getting personally involved.

Based on the survey results, which produced a noticeable change from the leadership’s perceived notion that a program would not be accepted, the attitude towards a CRRP is positive amongst the majority of the respondents. Side bar comments made on the answer sheets by some of the respondents stress that support will only be given if the program has a designated purpose and clearly defined objectives, which are felt to be lacking in the existing programs.

The three major obstacles listed by the respondents that would impede implementation of a program were funding, town council support and volunteer staffing and time restraints. All three of these concerns were consistent findings with the other authors. The funding of programs seems to be the largest problem facing every community, regardless of community needs. In the *America at Risk* report the commission notes that until the fire service becomes more involved with the integrated efforts of all segments in the community, “there is little reason to expect that a proper appreciation of the critical role played by the fire service will materialize, in which case the necessary funding will continue to be lacking” (FEMA, 2002, p.16). In its first recommendation the commission advocates that Congress increase its involvement in loss prevention in America by appropriating the resources commensurate with those it provides for community policing and highway safety. They also go on to state that FEMA needs to place the same emphasis on loss prevention as it does to other natural disasters.

In addition, the AVFD must do a better job at marketing itself, as well as developing the partnerships to better support its mission. Coombs and Eckley (2000) believe that it is the

responsibility of the department leadership to develop an outstanding marketing team and “that community fire safety is a marketing function, and if the fire service isn’t successful in marketing, then they will be attempting to promote a service that we want the public to have and not what the public needs” (p. 3).

Part of this marketing process is dealing with people and identifying who the stakeholders are in the community that will help influence the support of the town council. Since developing partnerships and gaining community support were two of the solutions suggested by the AVFD membership and confirmed by the other authors (Jensen, 2003; Walker, 2003), it is important to incorporate these ideas into all phases of the program. The idea behind developing partnerships was clearly seen in Kelling and Coles’ book about the NYPD in the early 1990’s. To help reduce crime in the streets the courts and the police started to collaborate with members of the community and created a community court to address some of the minor crimes. The NYPD found community stakeholders and established a community advisory committee to keep the courts informed of the neighborhood problems and concerns and also aided in acquiring the needed resources to provide better community support and “the results to date are not only positive and affirming of current efforts, they are in some respects truly astonishing” (p. 151).

Risk reduction strategies are performed on many different levels, but as highlighted in the *America at Risk* report of June 2002 “the primary responsibility for fire prevention and suppression and actions with respect to other hazards dealt with by the fire services properly rest with the states and local governments” (p. 15). According to FEMA and the survey results it is the responsibility of the AVFD leadership to become more actively involved in making sure a comprehensive community risk reduction program is initiated so that the AVFD does not continue to get marginalized into a single hazard entity.

It has been said by town leaders that the problems seen in other communities can never happen here in Avon, so we do not have to plan for it. That type of statement, according to Ammons, is a typical response from individuals who are not prudent managers. To provide a politically and fiscally responsible service, the prudent manager sees this process as a chance to look at many different factors within the community, and thereby, to make an informed decision on the amount of acceptable risk and the level of service desired (Ammons, 2001).

With that added responsibility of providing all prevention education the AVFD will see an increase in the time volunteers must give to support these new and existing programs. Since time is a limited commodity for the AVFD members, and the Fire Marshal does not have the resources or the support available in the building department to perform the risk reduction duties, a solution to merge the two into one department has been suggested. The findings from the research and the survey support the need to create a division within the fire department that will provide Fire Code Enforcement, Fire Prevention & Education and Community Risk Reduction services by utilizing the 5 E's. The creation of this new partnership will provide a solution to many of the respondent's concerns. It will help to reduce the amount of donated time requested of the volunteers to operate the new programs, provide administrative oversight, and will give the Fire Marshal the logistic support to develop and implement more risk reduction strategies.

In summary the AVFD needs to take an extensive look at its current operations and establish an acceptable level of service with achievable goals and objectives which includes developing partnerships within the community. It will be through these partnerships and identification of the stakeholders in town that the leadership of the AVFD will be able to establish the need for a comprehensive risk analysis and the implementation of an all hazard risk reduction plan under the leadership of the fire department.

Recommendations

From the research performed and the conclusions drawn from the department survey, I would propose that the AVFD take the following 9 steps to change the department's past philosophy of just reacting to emergencies and, as a result, help enable the leadership to adopt a proactive approach to helping the community reduce risks.

1. Identify the stakeholders in the community that have a vested interest in risk reduction and create a community planning team. It was felt by the AVFD membership that the creation of partnerships will be crucial to implementing a successful program.
2. Conduct a community risk assessment including all identified stakeholders in the process that identifies and assesses all the critical hazards in the Town of Avon. Utilize the NFA's Community Risk Reduction model as a guide or initiate the process for Fire Service Accreditation, which will by default establish the needed areas of concerns and requirements.
3. Evaluate the existing capabilities of the fire department to identify the gap between the town's needs and the department's ability to provide the services.
4. Utilizing the results of the department evaluation, develop a level of service agreement with the Town of Avon.
5. Implement an educational process that will influence the town leaders to accept a change in philosophy that supports the belief that the existing Fire Marshal's office should be merged into the AVFD, and to provide the appropriate resources needed to support the continuity of service which is seen as an important element of the CRR program by the AVFD membership.

6. Based on the results of the risk assessment, develop organizational performance standards that support the newly expanded mission of the fire department.
7. Develop organizational goals and objectives that will support the performance standards through education, enforcement and emergency response.
8. Based on the recommendations of the AVFD membership, develop clear and concise action plans with the cost/benefit of reducing risks to the taxpayers of Avon.
9. Develop a process to evaluate the risk reduction initiatives to determine if the objectives are being achieved and modify plans based on evaluation results.

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Table 1 (Retention Study)

AVFD Membership Retention (1945 to the Present)

Year	New Members	Active	%Active	Inactive	%Inactive
1945 to 1973	222	12	5.41%	210	94.59%
1974	22	0	0.00%	22	100.00%
1975	17	0	0.00%	17	100.00%
1976	16	2	12.50%	14	87.50%
1977	11	2	18.18%	9	81.82%
1978	15	2	13.33%	13	86.67%
1979	13	2	15.38%	11	84.62%
1980	13	0	0.00%	13	100.00%
1981	9	0	0.00%	9	100.00%
1982	9	2	22.22%	7	77.78%
1983	4	0	0.00%	4	100.00%
1984	10	1	10.00%	9	90.00%
1985	9	1	11.11%	8	88.89%
1986	7	2	28.57%	5	71.43%
1987	15	0	0.00%	15	100.00%
1988	13	4	30.77%	9	69.23%
1989	4	0	0.00%	4	100.00%
1974 to 1989	187	30	16.04%	169	90.37%
1990	6	2	33.33%	4	66.67%
1991	18	5	27.78%	13	72.22%
1992	15	7	46.67%	8	53.33%
1993	11	3	27.27%	8	72.73%
1994	12	1	8.33%	11	91.67%
1995	11	3	27.27%	8	72.73%
1996	16	4	25.00%	12	75.00%
1997	14	1	7.14%	13	92.86%
1990 to 1997	103	26	25.24%	77	74.76%
1974 to 1997	290	56	19.31%	246	84.83%
1998	9	4	44.44%	5	55.56%
1999	14	10	71.43%	4	28.57%
2000	19	6	31.58%	13	68.42%
2001	15	9	60.00%	6	40.00%
2002	9	6	66.67%	3	33.33%
2003	14	10	71.43%	4	28.57%
2004	16	13	81.25%	3	18.75%
2005	6	6	100.00%	0	0.00%
1998 to 2005	102	64	62.75%	38	37.25%
1945 to 2005	614	120	19.54%	494	80.46%

Appendix A (Organizational Survey)



Avon Volunteer Fire Department Training Division

"Your Lifeline to Safety"

Training Chief: John Deckers

25 Darling Drive Avon CT 06001 (860) 677-2644

~~March 14, 2005~~

Dear Members,

I am once again asking for your help by completing a survey that will become part of my second paper for the Executive Officer Program. The topic for this paper is how the Avon Volunteer Fire Dept. views the concept of Community Risk Reduction and the direction the department will take over the next several years regarding risk in the community.

I am asking that 100% of the Officers and Board members complete the survey since your members have elected you to a position of leadership in the department. I would also like every member to give his/her opinion. The more data received, the more valid the results. This is your chance to state your concerns and any problems you see regarding how the department operates. You have a voice!

The survey has 22 multiple choice questions and 3 short answers. I am asking that you take a score sheet and question package and return the score sheet to me or Meghan Bond by March 28, 2005.

Survey Directions:

1. Use a number 2 pencil
2. Fill in your 3 digit membership number in the ID number fill.
3. Fill your last name in the space provided.
4. Answer the first 22 questions on the front side in the appropriate spaces
5. Answer the short answer questions on the back side, please print clearly.

I would like to thank you in advance for your support on this project and our journey to better protect the citizens of Avon.

Respectfully,

John Deckers

Training Division Chief

Avon Volunteer Fire Department

EFO Community Risk Survey

1. How long have you been a member of the AVFD?
 - A. 0-5 years
 - B. 6-10 years
 - C. 11-20 years
 - D. More than 20 years

2. What is your current rank within the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD)?
 - A. Chief Officer
 - B. Officer
 - C. Firefighter
 - D. Administration
 - E. Fire Police

3. Are you a Board of Directors member?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

4. How old are you? (Optional)
 - A. 18 to 25
 - B. 26 to 35
 - C. over 35
 - D. Not applicable

5. What is your highest completed level of education?
 - A. High School
 - B. Associates Degree
 - C. Bachelors Degree
 - D. Master or higher
 - E. Other

6. Are you currently involved in any of the AVFD Fire Prevention Education programs?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

7. During your firefighter training, did you ever hear the term Community Risk Reduction?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

EFO Community Risk Survey

8. What does Community Risk Reduction mean to the AVFD?
 - A. Reducing the occurrence of motor vehicle & fire related incidents in Avon.
 - B. Preplanning potential incidents that affect the community and minimize their impact.
 - C. Define the acceptable level of risk for the community.

9. What role should the AVFD play in Community Risk Reduction in Avon?
 - A. Leadership - responsible for coordinating and developing the master plan for the community.
 - B. Participant - let others make the plan and the AVFD will play its part.
 - C. Planning for fire and other related emergencies only.
 - D. No role, it is not our job to plan for the community.

Please rate the following questions on whether you agree or disagree with the statement

10. The AVFD should take an aggressive role in planning for all emergencies within the Town of Avon.
 - A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree

11. The AVFD should continue to fund and operate the Citizen's Fire Academy.
 - A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree

12. The AVFD should develop a smoke detector program to make sure all residences in the town of Avon have working smoke detectors.
 - A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Disagree
 - D. Strongly Disagree

EFO Community Risk Survey

13. The AVFD should help design and support an ordinance that provides a tax break for homes that install residential sprinklers.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

14. The AVFD should adopt a comprehensive education program that addresses all types of risk in the community.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

15. The AVFD should support the adoption of a home inspection program for one and two family dwellings.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

16. The AVFD should develop and implement a child car seat safety program.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

17. The AVFD leadership should develop a position for a Risk Reduction Manager that will work with the town to help reduce all types of risk within the community.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

18. The AVFD leadership should make a commitment to Community Risk Reduction by independently funding part-time positions to provide Fire Prevention and Risk Reduction education.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

EFO Community Risk Survey

19. The AVFD leadership should make a commitment to Community Risk Reduction by independently funding a full time Administrator to make sure that there is continuity of service in all phases of the department.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

20. The AVFD leadership should request that the Town of Avon support making the Fire Marshal a full time position and separate department instead of an additional duty performed by the Building officials.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

21. The AVFD leadership should request that the Town of Avon support the creation of a separate department that has a mission to focus on Fire Code Enforcement, Fire Prevention & Education and Community Risk Reduction, operated by the Fire Department.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Disagree
- D. Strongly Disagree

22. If the AVFD implements a Community Risk Reduction program, will you support the program?

- A. Yes
- B. No

On the back of the survey form (score sheet), please answer the following questions....

23. In your opinion, identify three (3) areas of risk that the AVFD should address immediately.

24. Identify three (3) problems that you feel the AVFD leadership will face when implementing a Community Risk Reduction Program.

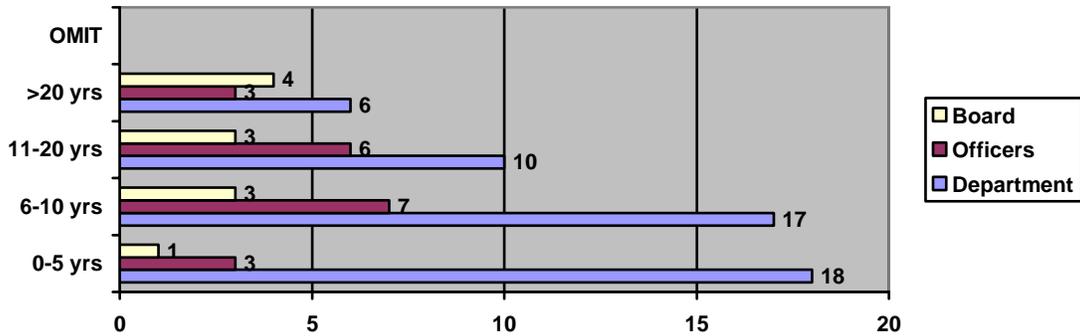
25. Based on the three problems you stated in the previous question, please provide your potential solutions.

Thank you for your participation in this survey

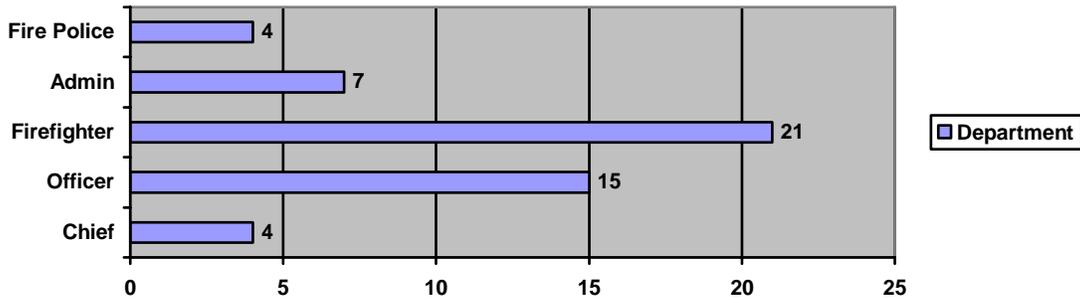
Appendix B (Organizational Survey: Results)

EFO Community Risk Survey

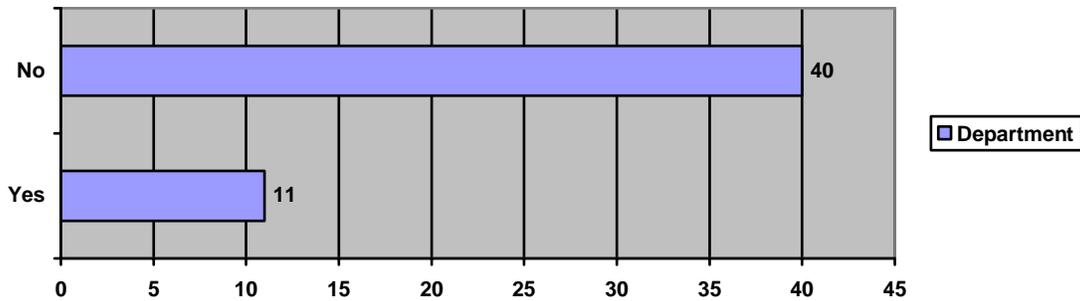
1. How long have you been a member of the AVFD?



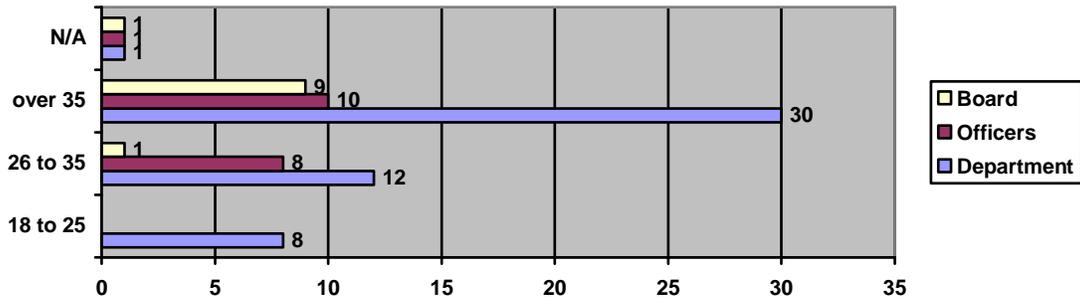
2. What is your current rank within the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD)?



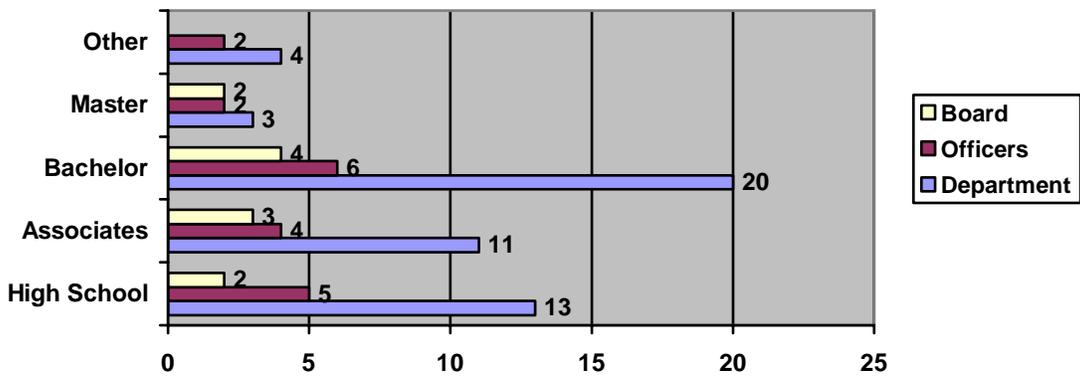
3. Are you a Board of Directors member?



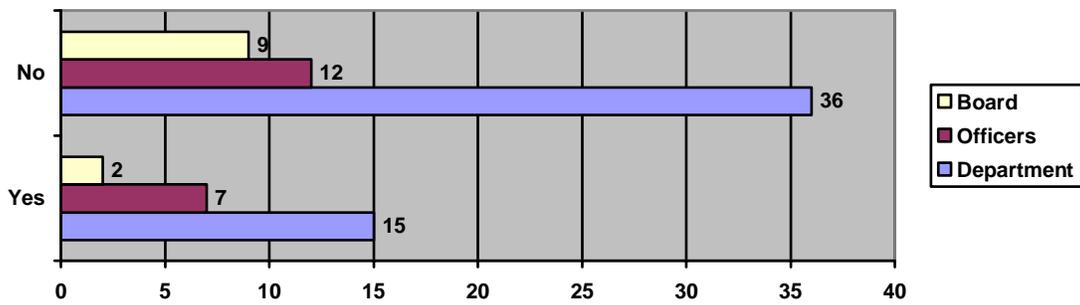
4. How old are you? (Optional)



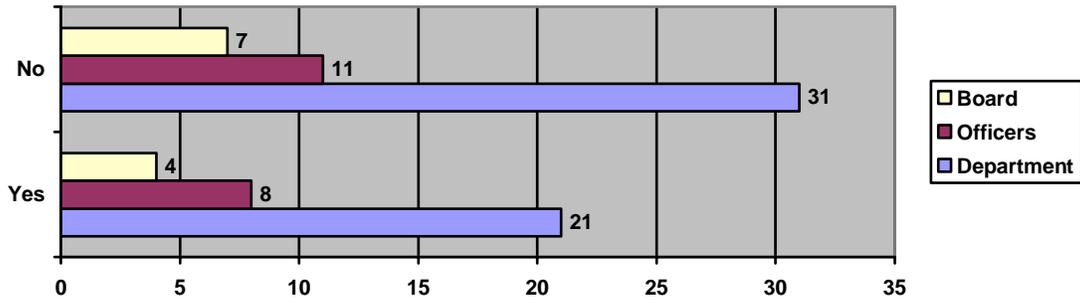
5. What is your highest completed level of education?



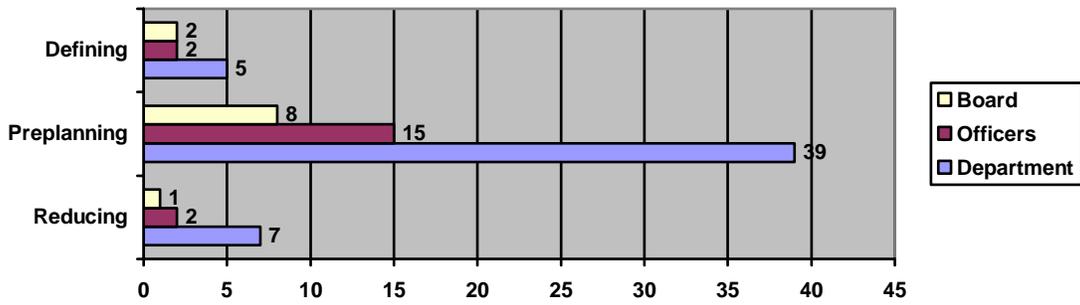
6. Are you currently involved in any of the AVFD Fire Prevention Education programs?



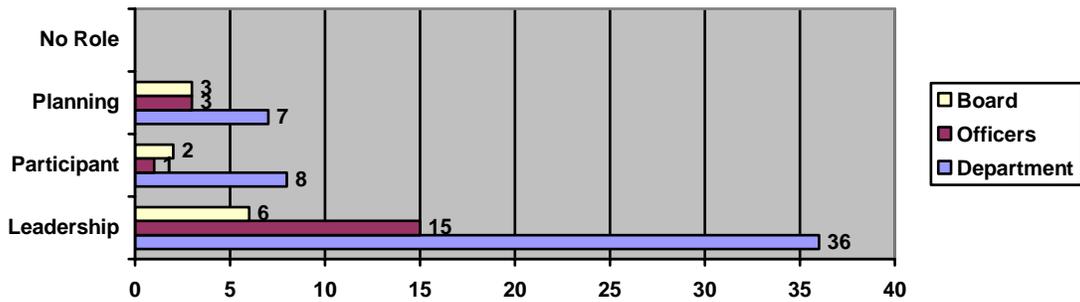
7. During your firefighter training, did you ever hear the term Community Risk Reduction?



8. What does Community Risk Reduction mean to the AVFD?

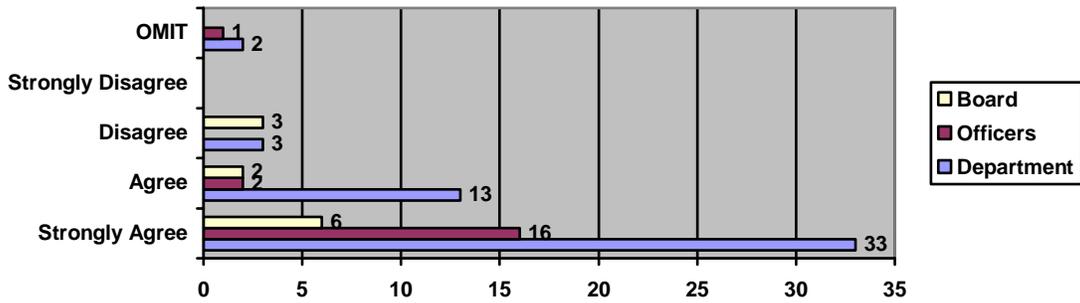


9. What role should the AVFD play in Community Risk Reduction in Avon?

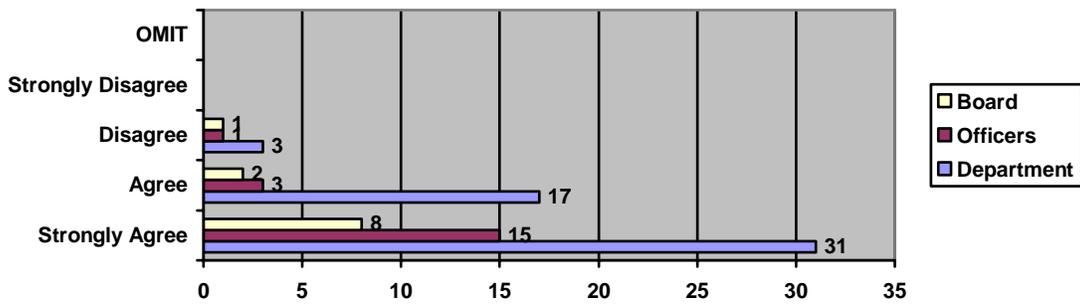


Please rate the following questions on whether you agree or disagree with the statement.....

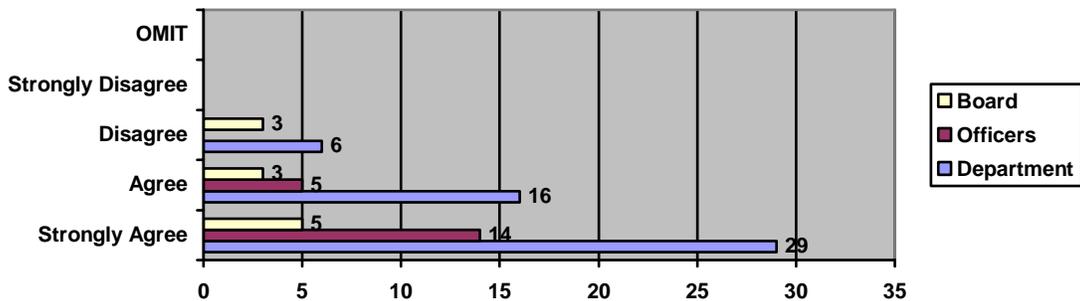
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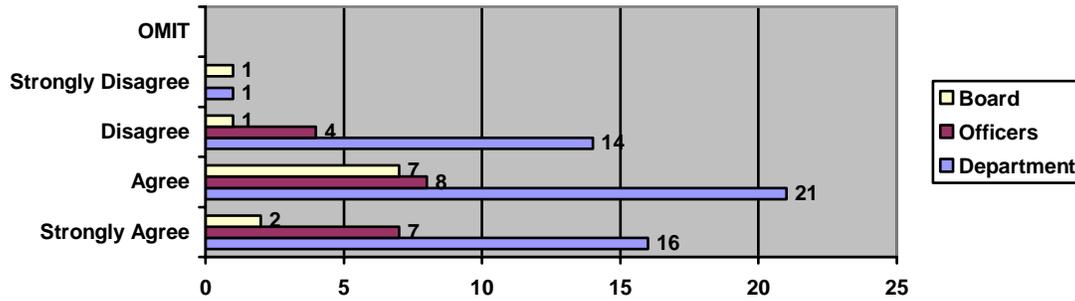
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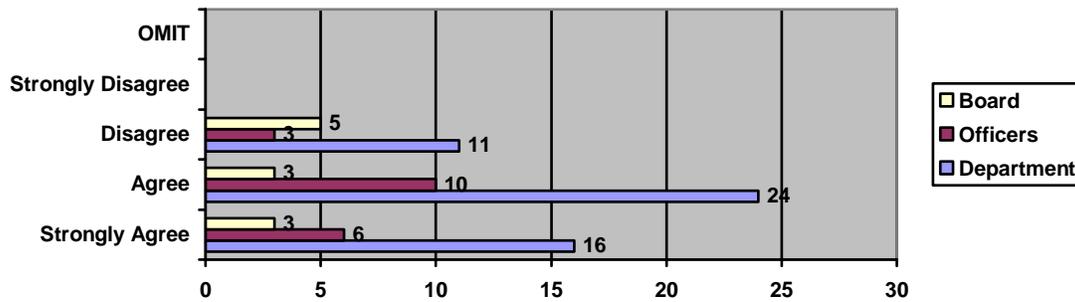
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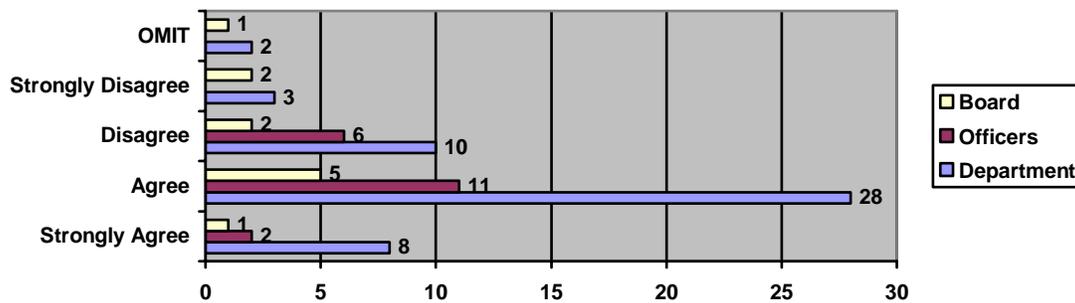
13. The AVFD should help design and support an ordinance that provides a tax break for homes that install residential sprinklers.



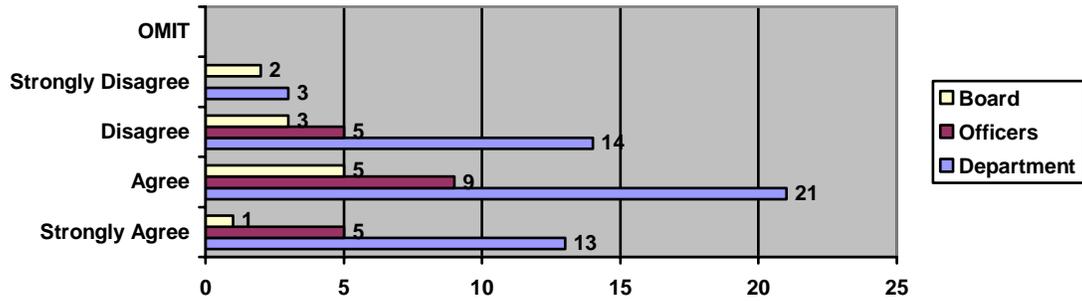
14. The AVFD should adopt a comprehensive education program that addresses all types of risk in the community.



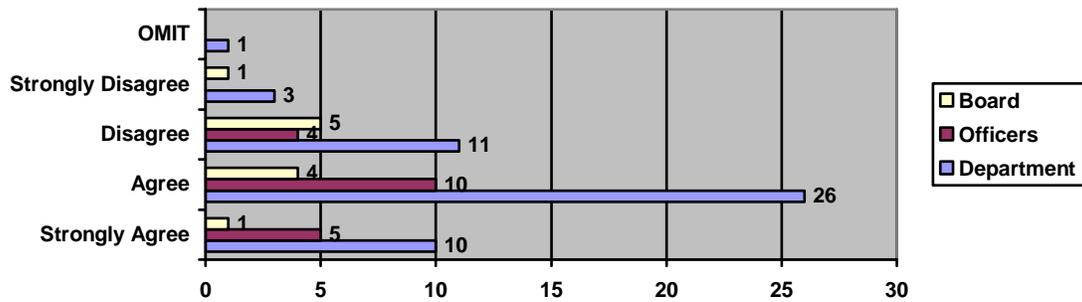
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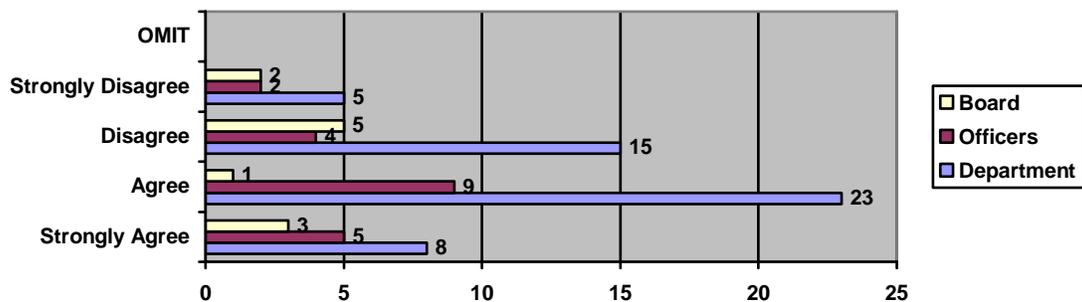
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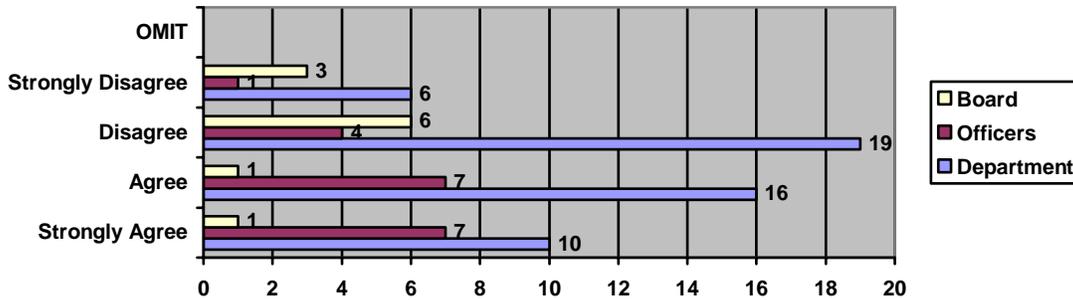
17. The AVFD leadership should develop a position for a Risk Reduction Manager that will work with the town to help reduce all types of risk within the community.



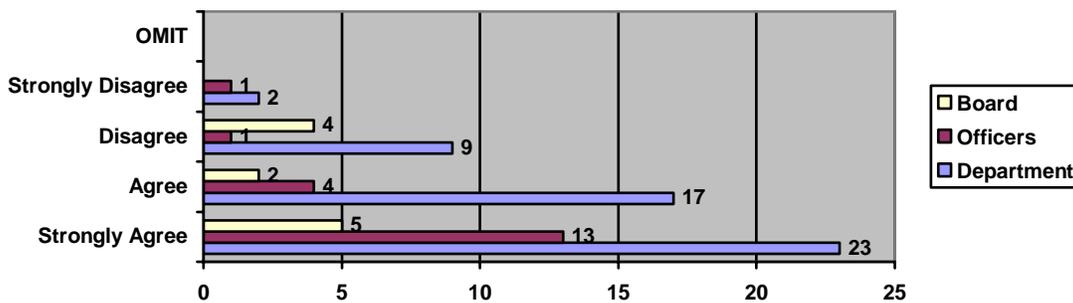
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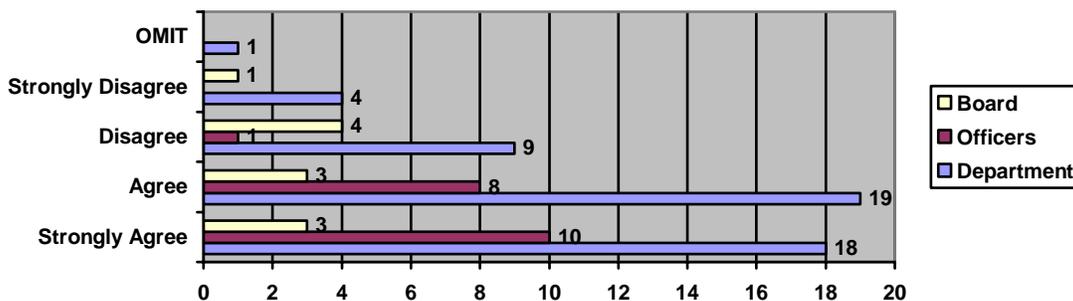
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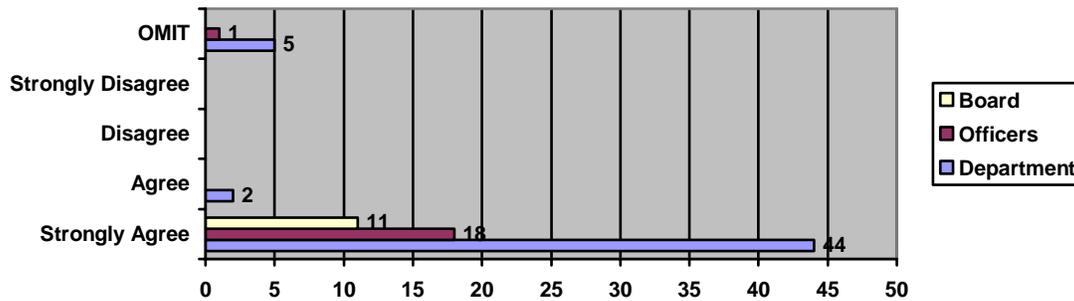
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21. The AVFD leadership should request that the Town of Avon support the creation of a separate department that has a mission to focus on Fire Code Enforcement, Fire Prevention & Education and Community Risk Reduction, operated by the Fire Department.



22. If the AVFD implements a Community Risk Reduction program, will you support the program?



The following 3 questions (23-25) allowed the participants to share their opinions. The following is the breakdown of who answered the questions based on their job function.

Overall statistics: 120 surveys sent to department members and 51 were returned (42.5 %)
19 Officers returned surveys (95%), 2 did not provide answers.
11 Board members returned surveys (100%), 4 did not provide answers.
Of the 24 Department members who returned surveys, 8 did not provide answers.

23. In your opinion, identify three (3) areas of risk that the AVFD should address immediately.

Results:

- Residential Fire Prevention Programs (21 responses)
- Smoke & CO Detector Program (18 responses)
- Increase in Hazardous Materials Awareness for the public (8 responses)

24. Identify three (3) problems that you feel the AVFD leadership will face when implementing a Community Risk Reduction Program.

Results:

- Funding additional programs (30 responses)
- Town Council Support (20 responses)
- Volunteer staffing and time (18 responses)
- Volunteer acceptance (18 responses)

25. Based on the three problems you stated in the previous question, please provide your potential solutions.

Results:

- Gain community support prior to implementation (11 responses)
- Program developed with clear cost vs. benefits analysis (6 responses)
- Find Partners to help with delivery and program support (6 responses)
- Develop better communications with Town (5 responses)