



Managing Officer Program Handbook

Effective September 2026



FEMA



U.S. Fire Administration
National Fire Academy

Mission Statement

We support and strengthen fire and emergency medical services and stakeholders to prepare for, prevent, mitigate and respond to all hazards.



U.S. Fire Administration
Fire is Everyone's Fight®

Managing Officer Program Handbook

The Managing Officer Program provides first-level officers, midlevel officers and supervisors with an opportunity to:

- Develop professionally, improve their supervisory skills and meet emerging professional challenges.
- Weigh a national perspective on professional development.
- Support professional development and higher education.
- Create a network of fire service professionals who support career development.
- Enhance their existing supervisory roles with the knowledge, skills and abilities associated within the managing officer position.

**National Emergency Training
Center**

16825 South Seton Ave.
Emmitsburg, MD 21727-8998



FEMA

Dear Managing Officer Program Participant:

Welcome to the Managing Officer Program. Whether you are new to the program or nearing its completion, your participation is critical to the success of this major U.S. Fire Administration initiative.

Your organization's commitment and your engagement are vital to achieving our shared goals of advancing professional development and strengthening leadership in the fire and emergency services.

The challenge that we extend to you is a leadership one. This program is designed to help you grow professionally, think critically, and make sound data-informed decisions that will benefit your organization and community.

This handbook presents the current policies and expectations that govern the Managing Officer Program. Our intent is to establish clear standards that foster trust, professionalism, and academic excellence.

At any time, please let us know how we can service you better. Likewise, if you are satisfied with the program, we encourage you to share your experience with others.

I wish you the greatest measure of success in the Managing Officer Program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eriks J. Gabliks".

Eriks J. Gabliks
Superintendent
National Fire Academy
U.S. Fire Administration

About the Program

The Managing Officer Program is a nationally recognized professional development experience for first-level and midlevel officers in fire and emergency services organizations. Designed and delivered by the National Fire Academy (NFA), the program provides a comprehensive curriculum focused on leadership, risk reduction, data-informed decision-making and personal growth. Through a combination of on-campus sessions, applied assignments and peer learning, participants gain the knowledge, skills and network needed to excel as leaders in today's dynamic emergency services environment.

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Managing Officer Program Target Audience

The Managing Officer Program's target audience is first-level officers, midlevel officers and supervisors in fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and other related emergency service organizations. This program is not designed for chief-level officers.

Applicants from EMS-only agencies, fire departments or combined organizations are all eligible, provided they meet supervisory and other program requirements.

Chief-level officers seeking advanced executive leadership development are encouraged to consider the NFA's Executive Fire Officer Program. For more information, visit <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/programs/executive-fire-officer/>.

Eligibility Requirement

Academic requirement

Applicants must possess a high school diploma or GED from an accredited institution. Degrees or college credits beyond the high school level are not required for admission; however, higher education will be considered favorably during the application review process.

Service requirement

At the time of application, you must be a current or acting supervisor in a fire or emergency services organization. The program is open to both career and volunteer officers who meet these criteria.

Training requirement

Applicants must submit a formal resume or curriculum vitae (CV) that documents their relevant training, certifications and leadership experience.

- Certification at the Fire Officer I level (per National Fire Protection Association 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*) or EMS Officer I.
- Credentialing at the Fire Officer designation through the Center for Public Safety Excellence.
- Leadership, management and supervisory training at the fire or EMS level, including participation in state/regional symposiums, conferences and workshops (as documented in your resume).
- Other training that supports the competencies identified for the managing officer in the International Association of Fire Chiefs Officer Development Handbook.
- Equivalent training and experience will be considered.

Prerequisites

At the time of application, the following courses must be completed:

- ICS-100, "An Introduction to the Incident Command System" (Q0462) <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/details?id=518>
- ICS-200, "Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response" (Q0463) <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/details/519>
- IS-700.B, "An Introduction to the National Incident Management System" <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b>
- IS-800.D, "National Response Framework, an Introduction" <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-800.d>
- "Introduction to Emergency Response to Terrorism" (Q0890)

All required courses must be completed prior to starting the program.

Program Application Process

The Managing Officer Program has a structured application and competitive selection process. The application period is open for 30 days each year, typically during the month of November. Applications are only accepted during this annual window; submissions received outside of this period will not be considered. All qualified applications will be reviewed by an external panel, and applicants will be notified of their selection or nonselection status via email by the program administrator.

Applicants must submit a complete application package through the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Online Admissions Application portal at [NETC Online Admissions Application](#). The package must include:

1. Applicant essay.
 - A 1,500-word (maximum) essay answering, "Why are you the ideal candidate for the Managing Officer Program?"
 - The essay should address your qualifications, leadership experience, commitment to personal and professional development, and how participation in the program will benefit you, your organization and community.

➤ The essay must be original, written by the applicant, and free of plagiarism or AI-generated content.

➤ **Attach a PDF of the essay to the application.**

2. Letter of recommendation.

Signed from the sponsoring agency head (chief of department, etc.), confirming the applicant's supervisory role and the agency's support for program completion. The letter should also describe the potential benefits to the agency if the applicant is selected, including how the applicant's participation in the program will contribute to organizational improvement, leadership development or enhanced service delivery.

The letter of recommendation must be on official department letterhead and include either an original (wet) signature or a secure digital signature from the agency head (chief of department, etc.). Typed signatures or unsigned letters will not be accepted.

The letter of recommendation from your agency head (chief of department, etc.) must:

➤ Confirm your current or acting supervisory role.

➤ State the agency's support for your completion of the Managing Officer Program.

➤ Describe the potential benefits to the agency if you are selected, including how your participation will contribute to:

- Organizational improvement
- Leadership development
- Enhanced service delivery

➤ Be signed by the agency head (typed signatures are not permitted).

➤ **Attach a PDF of the letter to the application. Typed signatures are not permitted.**

3. Resume.

Applicants must submit a formal resume or CV that documents their relevant training, certifications and leadership experience. **Attach a PDF resume to the application.**

4. Signed participant contract.

Signed by the applicant, attesting to the accuracy of the application and commitment to program requirements. **This attachment will be provided before the open enrollment period.** The contract must include either an original (wet) signature or a secure digital signature from the applicant. Typed signatures or unsigned letters will not be accepted.

5. Organizational chart.

Applicants' organizational chart indicating the position that the applicant currently holds.

Maintaining Eligibility and Reporting a Change in Affiliation Requirement

Maintaining eligibility

To maintain eligibility as a Managing Officer Program student, you must be an active member of the emergency services with supervisory responsibilities.

You are required to notify the Managing Officer Program administrator via email about any changes in:

- Employer or organization.
- Position or supervisory status.
- Mailing address, email address or other contact information.

Failure to notify the program administrator of such changes may result in dismissal from the program.

Change of affiliation requirements

If you change your employer or agency affiliation during the program, you must submit the following documentation to the Managing Officer Program administrator:

- An updated organizational chart indicating your new position. To remain in the program, the new position must be of equal or higher level.
- A letter of support from the chief of department or agency head at your new agency.

Important:

- Any change in affiliation must be to a position with equal or higher level of supervisory responsibility.
- Changing affiliations to a lower level of authority or responsibility will result in dismissal from the program and require you to reapply for future consideration.
- Continued eligibility is contingent upon maintaining a supervisory role in an emergency services organization.
- All documentation must be submitted and approved before continuing in the program under your new affiliation.

Program Dismissal

Failure to maintain eligibility for the Managing Officer Program, violation of student conduct or integrity standards, or failure to meet program completion criteria may result in dismissal from the program.

Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of supervisory status or change to a position of lower authority.
- Failure to notify the program administrator of changes in employment, position or contact information.
- Violation of academic honesty, research integrity or professional conduct standards (including plagiarism, falsification or use of unauthorized materials).
- Failure to meet attendance, participation or performance requirements.
- Failure to complete required coursework, pre-course assignments or the Personal Development Plan (PDP) by established deadlines.

If a student is dismissed from the Managing Officer Program:

- The student's sponsoring agency will be notified in writing.
- The student will be provided with the reason(s) for dismissal.
- The student may be ineligible to reapply for a specified period or may be required to reapply for future consideration, as determined by the program administrator.

Note: Students dismissed for academic or conduct violations may be subject to additional sanctions as outlined in NFA and U.S. Fire Administration policies.

Program Reinstatement

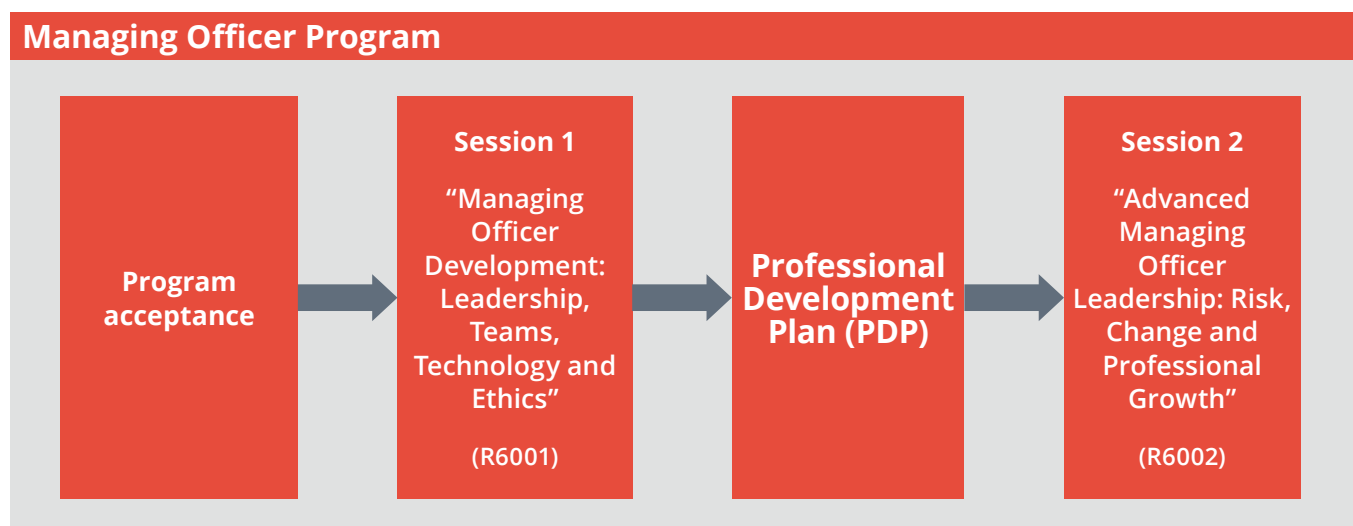
If you are dismissed from the Managing Officer Program for failure to maintain eligibility, violation of conduct or integrity standards, or failure to meet program completion criteria, you may request reinstatement as follows:

- Submit a written request for reinstatement to the program administrator within 15 calendar days of notification of dismissal.
- Include justification for reinstatement, supporting documentation and a letter of support from your agency head.
- The program administrator will review your request and notify you of the decision.
- The decision of the program administrator is final.

Program Overview and Sequence

These classes are only open to students who are accepted into the Managing Officer Program.

The Managing Officer Program is delivered in a 2-session, 2-week (10-day) format, with each session held on the NFA campus and the second session occurring within 12 months of the first session. Each session is designed to build upon the previous, integrating leadership theory, operational practice and personal development.



Session 1: “Managing Officer Development: Leadership, Teams, Technology and Ethics” (R6001)

Duration: 2 weeks (10 days)

Key focus areas:

- Leadership theory and styles
- Team building and group dynamics
- Conflict resolution and ethical decision-making
- Social and emotional intelligence
- Coaching, mentoring and developing others
- Tools and technology in the modern fire service (including artificial intelligence (AI) and data-driven decision-making)

Assessment: Participation in class activities, scenario-based exercises and submission of initial components of the PDP.

Between sessions: applied assignment

Students will conduct a community risk assessment in their home agency, identify a service demand, develop a problem statement and prepare a 5-minute persuasive presentation for Session 2.

Session 2: “Advanced Managing Officer Leadership: Risk, Change and Professional Growth” (R6002)

Duration: 2 weeks (10 days)

Key focus areas:

- Community risk reduction and engagement
- Integrated risk management
- Officer and team resiliency
- Advanced leadership and change management
- Gettysburg staff ride (leadership, strategy and resilience lessons)
- Capstone presentations (PDP)

Assessment: Graded risk assessment presentation, participation in class activities and submission/presentation of the final PDP.

Pre-course work

Prior to each session, students are required to complete assigned readings, online modules and department-specific assignments.

Pre-course work is designed to prepare students for active participation and applied learning during each session.

Personal journaling and reflection

Throughout the Managing Officer Program, you are encouraged to maintain a personal journal. Journaling is a private process that supports self-reflection, growth and integration of learning. You will receive journal prompts at key points in the program.

- Journals are not collected or graded but are highly encouraged for personal growth. Use your journal to reflect on leadership challenges, lessons learned and your progress toward PDP goals.
- Regular journaling will help you track your growth and prepare for your final PDP presentation.

Personal Development Plan Overview

Requirements

All Managing Officer Program participants must complete a PDP to successfully complete the program. The PDP replaces the previous Capstone project and serves as the culminating demonstration of your professional growth and leadership development.

Purpose

The PDP is a living document that:

- Encourages self-reflection and ongoing assessment of your leadership strengths and growth areas.
- Helps you set actionable, measurable goals aligned with your organization's mission and your own career aspirations.
- Integrates lessons learned from each session, applied assignments and peer/ instructor feedback.
- Demonstrates your commitment to continuous improvement and service to your agency and community.

Process and timeline

Session 1:

- Introduction to the PDP process and initial self-assessment.
- Drafting of leadership philosophy, professional goals and initial action steps.
- Integration of feedback from instructors and peers.

Between sessions:

Update your PDP based on your applied assignment (community risk assessment, problem statement and presentation preparation).

Session 2:

- Refine and finalize your PDP, incorporating new learning and feedback.
- Prepare and deliver a final PDP presentation to faculty and peers, summarizing your leadership journey, growth and future action steps.

Structure and content

Your PDP must include:

- Leadership philosophy statement: core values, beliefs and your approach to leadership.
- Self-assessment: reflection on strengths, areas for growth and feedback received.
- Professional goals: short- and long-term goals aligned with your organization's mission and your career path.
- Action plans: specific, measurable steps to achieve each goal, with timelines and resources needed.
- Application of learning: how you have applied lessons from the Managing Officer Program, including the community risk assessment and Gettysburg staff ride.
- Continuous Improvement Plan: ongoing self-assessment, feedback and professional development.

Evaluation criteria

Your PDP will be evaluated on:

- Clarity and depth of self-reflection
- Alignment of goals with leadership philosophy and organizational mission
- Specificity and feasibility of action plans
- Integration of program learning and applied assignments
- Quality and professionalism of the final presentation

Presentation guidelines

- The completed PDP must be submitted electronically by the established deadline.
- You will deliver a formal presentation of your PDP during Session 2. This presentation is a graded requirement for program completion.

Support and resources

- PDP templates, reflection prompts and examples will be provided throughout the program.
- Instructors and peers will offer feedback at key milestones.
- The PDP is your personal roadmap for leadership growth. Update it regularly and use it as a tool for lifelong development.

For questions or assistance with your PDP, contact the Managing Officer Program training specialist or your course instructors.

Successful Program Completion

Successful completion of the Managing Officer Program will be based on the following criteria:

- Compliance with general attendance policies and standards of academic and professional conduct as established by the NFA.
- Successful completion of all Managing Officer Program courses, including satisfactory completion of all required activities, assignments and assessments for each course.
- Completion and presentation of a PDP that meets program guidelines and demonstrates growth in leadership, professional skills and application of program learning.

Note: All program requirements, including pre-course work, in-class participation, between-session assignments and the final PDP presentation, must be completed by the established deadlines to be eligible for graduation and receipt of the Managing Officer Program certificate.

Class/Course Scheduling

Session assignment and notification

- Managing Officer Program participants will be notified of their assigned session dates after acceptance into the program.
- Sessions are scheduled in advance and may be offered at multiple points throughout the federal fiscal year, which begins October 1 and ends September 30.
- Participants will be assigned to available sessions based on program capacity and scheduling needs. Specific date preferences cannot be guaranteed.

Schedule change requests

If you are unable to attend a scheduled session:

- You must notify the Admissions Office as soon as possible, no less than 30 days before the class begins.
- Requests for a change in session dates that are within 30 days of the start date must be submitted in writing to the Managing Officer Program administrator, who will review and approve or deny all change requests.
- A confirmation letter from your sponsoring agency head may be required.

Priority for schedule changes

- Requests due to unanticipated local or family events (e.g., federal or local disaster, line-of-duty injury, illness, significant family event) will require supporting documentation and will be given priority.
- Requests based on personal or departmental convenience will be given the lowest priority.

Placement after schedule change

- Students requesting a change will be placed in the next available session on a space-available basis.
- If there is no space available in the current fiscal year, the student will be assigned to the next available session in the following fiscal year.

Important: Failure to notify the Admissions Office or program administrator of your inability to attend a scheduled session may result in suspension of eligibility to attend NFA courses and dismissal from the Managing Officer Program.

Integrity Standards

The NFA is committed to maintaining and preserving the highest standards of integrity regarding the Managing Officer Program. Participants and alumni are consequently affected in a most negative way when the Managing Officer Program is associated with any unethical behavior committed by one of its participants.

The NFA enforces the appropriate standards of conduct for completion of research and the potential penalties for engaging in any unethical behavior. Plagiarism, falsification and misrepresentation in Capstone projects will not be tolerated. Please refer to NFA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 700.1 — Code of Conduct, and NETC SOP 119-22 — Conduct on the NETC Campus, for more information. The SOPs link can be found at https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/nfa/nfa_policies.pdf.

Individuals who engage in such behavior will be disciplined with one or more of the following actions:

- A return of all money expended or reimbursed by the U.S. government associated with the course, to include all travel expenses, room accommodations and books, as well as an apportionment of the instructor's salary.
- A return of the course certificate and (if applicable) the Managing Officer Program completion certificate.
- A letter to the current employer with an accompanying explanation of the violation that caused the certificate to be revoked.
- A 10-year prohibition on attendance at any residential NFA course.

Managing Officer Program participants, graduates and others who discover suspicious work are strongly encouraged to report their findings to the Managing Officer Program administrator or a curriculum training specialist.

Program Completion and Graduation

Upon meeting all program requirements — including attendance, successful completion of all courses and assignments, and submission and presentation of your PDP — you will be eligible for graduation from the Managing Officer Program.

- Graduates will receive a Managing Officer Program certificate.
- A formal graduation ceremony will be held at the NFA at the conclusion of Session 2.
- Your achievement will be recognized by the NFA, your sponsoring agency, and the broader fire and emergency services community.

Program Management Contact Information

Managing Officer Program training specialist: Edward H. Kensler Jr.

Phone: 301-447-1158

Email: edward.kenslerjr@fema.dhs.gov

- Responsible for curriculum development.
- Responsible for oversight and initial student selection process.
- Responsible for the PDP process and related student submissions.

Managing Officer Program administrator: Tina Crevier

Phone: 301-447-1107

Email: tina.crevier@fema.dhs.gov

- Programmatic coordination, oversight and leadership for all aspects of the Managing Officer Program.
- Primary point of contact for student questions, scheduling, eligibility and program completion requirements.

For additional resources: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/programs/managing-officer/>



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