DEVELOPING A FORMAL COMPANY OFFICER TRAINING PROGRAM FOR
THE CASPER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Executive Leadership

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

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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

The problem for the Casper Fire Department was that the department was promoting personnel to the rank of Captain who had limited company officer experience and skills. This had placed many new Captains in a difficult situation where they were forced to learn supervisory and leadership skills while on the job and in some cases do so while supervising team members who may have been their senior.

The purpose of this research was to identify a development plan that would be used in implementing a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department. A survey instrument was used to gain feedback from Casper Fire Department personnel on what meaningful company officer training topics should be included in the formal training program.

Descriptive research was used to answer the following three research questions:

1. Should national recognized fire service training standards be adopted as a major element of the formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department?
2. What major topics should be included in a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department?
3. How do we implement a meaningful company officer training program into the Casper Fire Department?

The procedures used in this applied research project were comprised of a literature review and survey instrument. All literature was analyzed to assist in the applicability of national training standards for fire officer into a local officer development program for the Casper Fire Department. Literature was also utilized to discover what other organizations were using for curriculum in their officer development programs and information was gained on how others
recommend planning for the development of such a program. A survey instrument was created and delivered to Casper Fire Department members to gather information on the local training needs of the department; as well as gaining information on what ranks should be included in this training program. This survey also revealed information on how NFPA 1021 should be applied in the department’s officer training program.

Results of the literature review and survey suggested that the Casper Fire Department’s officer development program should include NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (1997 edition), as the core to its officer training curriculum. However, the fire department would only adopt the first two levels of Fire Officer I and Fire Officer II into its training program. This research also discovered that the department’s officer training program should apply to all ranks of the Casper Fire Department, including the rank of firefighter. Research also indicated that the department should include more training elements than NFPA 1021 recommends. This training should include specific local issues to meet the specific needs of the department. Survey data will be used as a resource to assist members in identifying local training topics.

A recommendation was made to adopt a planning process that will be used when developing the company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department.
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INTRODUCTION

The Casper Fire Department has historically promoted members of the department to supervisor, managerial and leadership roles after successfully passing some form of competitive promotional testing process. More recently, the testing process has included a written exam and assessment center. This is no different than how many other fire departments in the Country promote their employees to company officer positions.

Most fire departments have sophisticated promotional systems to fill higher-level positions. Firefighters compete for a limited number of officer positions and, if successful, are promoted and assigned to companies. Trumpets are pinned on during ceremonies, pictures are taken, and the proud new lieutenants and captains are sent out to manage the department’s first-response units (Hawkins, 2000, p.68).

This dynamic in the Casper Fire Department has led to situations where newly promoted officers are thrust into supervisory and leadership roles that they were not prepared for because the department had never instituted a formalized training program for those wishing to promote into the officer rank. This includes incumbent officers as well.

As the Fire Chief, this author has a responsibility to ensure that our personnel are adequately trained in all facets of the job. This includes the training and development of new company officers in the specific areas of supervision and leadership.

The problem for the Casper Fire Department is that the department is promoting personnel to the rank of Captain who have limited company officer experience and skills. This has placed many new Captains in a difficult situation where they are forced to learn supervisory and leadership skills while on the job and in some cases do so while supervising team members who may be their senior.
The purpose of this research is to identify a development plan that will be used in implementing a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department. A survey instrument was used to gain feedback from Casper Fire Department personnel on what meaningful company officer training topics should be included in the formal training program. Three research questions were developed to guide this research project to a successful conclusion. Descriptive research will be used to answer the following research questions:

1. Should national recognized fire service training standards be adopted as a major element of the formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department?

2. What major topics should be included in a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department?

3. How do we implement a meaningful company officer training program into the Casper Fire Department?

**BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The City of Casper Fire Department is staffed with 75 career employees who provide a wide variety of public safety services to the community of Casper, Wyoming. Casper is located in Central Wyoming and is populated with approximately 50,000 people. The incorporated city limits encompass 24 square miles. In addition to providing services to the citizens of Casper, the department has formal mutual aid agreements with the surrounding towns and areas of Mills, Evansville, Bar Nunn, Casper Mountain Fire District, and the Natrona County Fire Protection District. The department consists of 1 Chief Officer, 3 Division Chiefs, 3 Shift Commanders, 15 Captains, 18 Engineers, 30 Firefighters, 3 Fire Prevention Officers and 2 Administrative support personnel. These personnel operate out of 5 fire stations. The department’s work schedule is
comprised of 3 different shifts working a 24 hour period per shift. Each of the 3 shifts is manned with 5 company officers who hold the rank of Captain. These captains are expected to provide effective leadership and supervisory direction to each of their respective work groups.

The department is governed by a local civil service commission who promulgates their own local rules as established by State Statute. These local civil service rules establish how promotional testing and subsequent promotions are conducted within the Casper Fire Department. Promotional testing is conducted for each promotion to the next highest grade. These tests are given every two years to establish a certified promotional list of eligible candidates. In regard to time in grade requirements, only the firefighter rank has such a requirement. This requirement mandates that a probationary firefighter must pass his or her one year probationary period before being eligible to test for the next higher grade. In this specific case, it would be a promotion to the rank of Engineer. However, all other grades do not have an established time in grade requirement. This time in grade requirement has both its advantages and disadvantages. One could view the lack of time in grade as a positive because it creates more opportunity to test and promote. In essence, it creates a testing environment where the Chief Officer has a larger pool of candidates to choose from. On the other hand, one could also perceive that the lack of time in grade creates an environment where very inexperienced persons can be potentially promoted into both acting and full-time supervisory roles in a very short period of time on the job. As a matter of fact, this dynamic has occurred on many occasions over the past six years due to many retirements occurring in the Captains and Shift Commander’s ranks. In many cases, these vacancies were filled with young inexperienced officers who had received little or no formalized company officer training. The upside to this is that the department is filled with employees who are very bright, energetic, and committed to their jobs.
In many cases this factor has pulled these young officers through some challenging times as they learned supervisory and leadership skills while “on the job”. This on the job training frequently happens too late in a person’s career and should occur much earlier during their early years so that when members of the department take on supervisory roles they are prepared and more comfortable with their new responsibilities as a company officer.

Another factor involved in this problem is that as an Engineer, these personnel are expected to temporarily fill in for their Captain when they are absent due to vacation, disability, out of town training, etc. This acting role is treated by the department very seriously and expectations are very high for the person holding the rank of Engineer. These expectations are as high as what the department expects from a person formally holding the rank of Captain. This dynamic only further underscores the lack of company officer training because the majority of the persons in the Engineers rank have less than seven years of experience as well as limited leadership and supervisory training. Once again, the department is placing personnel into roles that have high expectations to perform but have not provided the necessary training to develop good supervisory skill sets and knowledge.

One final factor in this training problem lies in the probability that five out of seven existing upper level managers will retire over the next three to seven years. These retirements will leave a significant void in the ranks of Shift Commander, Division Chief and Fire Chief. As Fire Chief, this author is deeply concerned with this impending exodus of institutional knowledge and leadership. It is the goal of this author to develop a succession plan so that those individuals who wish to promote into these vacancies will do so with all of the needed skill sets, abilities, and knowledge. In order to make this succession plan successful the department must
take the first step and develop a formalized company officer training program for new officers and those aspiring to become company officers.

The relevancy of this applied research project and the National Fire Academy’s Executive Leadership course lies in the belief that ongoing professional development of aspiring fire officers is critical in the day to day operations of a modern day fire department. Information garnered from this applied research project will be used to develop a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department. This training program will help ensure that our young officers will possess all of the needed leadership and supervisory skills to effectively deal with the dynamic environment of public safety services in Casper, Wyoming. An element of this research included a survey instrument that was used to gain a sampling of information from existing fire department employees. This information was important in helping this author identify who the intended audience should be for this company officer training and what topics should be included in this training program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this project included information that was found in journal articles, reports and books.

The first area of research in this project revolves around the issue of whether this researcher should consider the use of National Fire Protection Association 1021 (NFPA 1021) as the major training standard for a company officer development program for the Casper Fire Department. NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, is a nationally recognized training standard for the professional development of fire officers. Its scope and purpose are described in the specific published document as stated, “This standard identifies the performance requirements necessary to perform the duties of a fire officer and specifically
identifies four levels of progression” (National Fire Protection Association, 1997, p. 1021-5).

The authors of NFPA 1021 continue in their description of the standard in the following manner.

The intent of the standard is to define progressive levels of performance required at the various levels of officer responsibility. The authority having jurisdiction has the option to combine or group the levels to meet its local needs and to use them in the development of job descriptions and specifying promotional standards (p.1021-5).

This standard goes further in explaining the description and scope by adding the following:

It is not the intent of this standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these minimum requirements. This standard shall cover the requirements for the four levels of progression – Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II, Fire Officer III, and Fire Officer IV (p. 1021-5).

One author of an Applied Research Project for the National Fire Academy reports, “NFPA 1021 is recognized as the national standard for company officer development and the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) has used this standard for the basis of its company officer textbook (Hall, 2003). Hall also discovered that at least one other group recognized the importance of NFPA 1021.

The California State Fire Marshal’s program meets the basic requirements of the NFPA 1021 Standard, but it also expands into specific criteria that tend to deviate from the traditional fire service technical aspects and into more of a management-based curriculum. The fire service of today is much more professional and litigious than in past years and these other topics are imperative to be successful as a company officer in today’s fire service environment (p. 12).
David L. Rohr (2002) finds in his research that NFPA serves as a vital reference for company officer training.

NFPA 1021 can and should serve as the reference document for every officer development program in the country. Realizing that every jurisdiction has individual needs, NFPA 1021 would serve as a “straw man” for each program and provide guidance to be certain that the six categories of job performance requirements are met at all levels (Officer I, II, III, IV). Individual regional needs for professionals in their field should address curriculum development (p. 32).

Rohr (2002) goes on to further clarify that “Curriculum development should include the NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications as the core curriculum” (p. 34). It is another author’s opinion that NFPA 1021 “has been acknowledged by most departments nationwide” (Lewis, 1998). Lewis further explains her interpretation of NFPA 1021 by explaining, “That document has become familiar within the fire service as an instrument which addresses training needs of an officer and the need for each department to tailor their objectives to meet the organizational responsibilities that face as individuals” (p. 10). A final perspective of NFPA 1021 can be found in the writings of Michael J. Kocab (2003) who’s research results indicate that most departments in the United States recognize this standard as the national standard for company officer training (p. 20). He further underscores his position on NFPA 1021 by claiming, “That the vast majority of departments require some kind of training for new company officers, and that those departments, which have company officer development programs by and large, meet the NFPA 1021 standard” (p. 21). Staff development is discussed by the International City Manager’s Association in their book Managing the Fire Services. ICMA (2002) validates the company
officer training program by stating, “Fire and emergency response managers continually point to the lack of high-quality staff-type development programs” (p. 275). They go on to say that this continues to be a significant problem in many organizations today (p. 275).

Research of past literature has provided information on the use of NFPA 1021 throughout the fire service. This literature review will now research what training topics organizations are recommending and using in their own company officer development programs.

In its book entitled *Fire Department Company Officer*, the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) highlights how the role of the company officer is changing by saying, “Today – more than ever – company officers are in the “people business”. In many departments, a small percentage of a company officer’s time is spent dealing with emergencies. The majority of their on-duty time is spent dealing with people” (International Fire Service Training Association, 1999, p. 1). IFSTA offers more specificity on this statement by defining some issues that officers must be aware of today.

Along with the rest of the fire service, the role of the company officer has changed and continues to change. This is natural and inevitable in the ever changing world we inhabit. Today’s company officers must know about and be able to deal with concepts such as gender equity, and cultural diversity. They must know about planning, budgeting, and time management. In short, today’s company officer must be a much more versatile and better informed supervisor than in the past (p. 1).

Chris Connealy (2000) describes various topics included in the Houston Fire Department’s company officer training program by detailing that students attend four 16 hour classes that deal with change in the emergency services, enhancing personal power base and ethics, the development of perceptions, values and attitudes and their impacts, and the last class
covers situational leadership (p, 122). These four 16 hour classes are followed by an additional 40 hour officer school. Connealy specifically describes their 40 hour curriculum as follows:

- Leadership (2 hours)
- Management (2 hours)
- Customer service (1 hour)
- Group dynamics (1 hour)
- Role of an officer (2 hours)
- Organizational structure and principles (1/2 hour)
- Written operating guidelines (1/2 hour)
- Documentation and discipline (4 hours)
- Motivation (1 hour)
- Empowerment (1/2 hour)
- Communication (2 hours)
- Training (1 ½ hours)
- Human resource issues (2 hours)
- Conflict resolution (1 hour)
- Career development (1/2 hour)
- Employee assistance program (2 hours)
- Resource management (1/2 hour)
- Legal issues (4 hours)
- Testifying in court (1 hour)
- Job knowledge (1 hour)
- Overview of all commands in the fire department (10 hours)
A company officer training program offered by the Alexandria Fire Department includes topics listed below by Thomas M. Hawkins Jr. (2000).

- Mission and values of the fire department
- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- Self-directed professional growth and development
- Communications skills
- Time management
- Team-building skills
- Leadership styles and process
- Training techniques and responsibilities
- Conflict management and resolution
- The legal aspects of being a manager
- Employee evaluations and the discipline process
- Management of emergency situations
- Customer service program
- Fire department as a part of local government
- Financial management
- Citywide expectations (pgs. 70 – 71)

As referenced in the chart below, Kurt Hall’s research concluded that members of the Addison Fire Department felt that their company officer development curriculum should include the following:
Another perspective comes from Talcott (1999) who recommends using a mentoring component, a self-analysis instrument and an acting officers handbook (p. 37). In the introduction of his book *Winning ‘Em Over*, Jay Conger suggests that we are in the midst of a management revolution. Conger believes that persuasion and the art of influencing others will be vital in succeeding a manager of tomorrow (Conger, 1998, Introduction). This book was utilized as a text book in the Executive Leadership course at the National Fire Academy.

The literature review up to this point has provided information on NFPA 1021 and has researched what topics and issues are being taught in various company officer training programs around the Country. Lastly, this research will focus on the planning, processes, and implementation strategies that have been utilized and recommended by others to create a formal company officer training program in their organizations.
ICMA (2002) describes the elements of a successful training process include paying particular attention to five progressive steps (p. 268). These steps are:

- Planning for the training
- Ensuring its safety
- Meeting national, state, and local training standards and requirements
- Recognizing and responding to the training needs of the particular department
- Thinking carefully about formats for delivering the training (p. 268)

In reference to staff development, ICMA provides more even detail for those who are planning for their specific company officer training program by writing,

Like most aspects of departmental training, a staff development program should be grounded on an open planning process. The items to consider (in all aspects of departmental training, but especially in this one) include

- Applicability and accessibility of the program
- Prerequisites
- Time and travel constraints
- Access to learning resources (both print and nonprint)
- Financial resources for tuition, travel, lectures, and so forth
- Resource sharing with other fire service and non-fire service entities
- Equivalency of various forms of education and training (p. 276)

Rohr (2002) recommends using NFPA 1021 as the core curriculum and then using department stakeholders in identifying regional, state, and federal issues that may be applicable (p. 34). He further explains that his planning process should include the following:

- Educational needs and delivery methodology should be explored to meet the identified
goals of the organization. This would include addressing alternative methods of course
delivery to adult students as well as determining the most effective means to make
program available to the largest number of potential students. Finally, fiscal and logistical
impacts must be explored. Implementation guidelines must be developed and marketed to
ensure a true “buy in” from the members of the department. Once completed, the
program should become a permanent piece of the Department’s Career Development
Program (p. 34).

In an effort to underscore the importance of individual organizational needs Rohr (2002)
states, “To be successful, an officer development program must absolutely meet the needs of the
organization” (p.34).

Research conducted by Steve Earley (2002) indicates that succession development should
be a part of the overall approach to company officer training. Early recommends four steps to
include, developing a succession development plan, form a coalition with other local
departments and the community college, conduct an on the job analysis to identify essential
skills and competencies, and to develop a comprehensive career development manual for the
department (p. 32 – 33).

In an article written by Thomas M. Hawkins Jr., (2000) Chief Hawkins created a LEAD
(Leadership, Education, and Development) Institute to help solve his department’s officer
training problems. Hawkins organized a group of employees to design, implement and manage
the LEAD Institute (p. 68). Chief Hawkins states, “Their first step was to decide on a set of
principles that would guide the program’s development” (p. 68). This group arrived at three
guiding principles listed below:
1. The curriculum couldn’t be abstract; it needed to be real. Each subject module had to provide real information that the students could use. Too often, management training programs in the business world don’t explain how to use the information.

2. All curriculum components must have end objectives that are specific and measurable. For 18 months, the team worked on the curriculum and its objectives so that desired outcomes could be established before instructors were selected.

3. Instructors must use innovative instructional techniques, such as case studies, role-playing, group interaction and, of course, class participation. Boring lectures and insulting teaching techniques, such as reading aloud from a textbook, wouldn’t be tolerated (p. 68).

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this research is to identify a development plan that will be used in implementing a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department. Descriptive research was employed throughout this research project to find answers to three research questions.

This applied research project began with literature review performed at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center. Upon this author’s return to Casper, Wyoming, all subsequent data collection and literature review was conducted at the Natrona County Library, the Casper College Library, and through the interlibrary loan process. Books, journals, reports, and a survey were utilized as the basis for research on this applied research project. The literature review was utilized to research applicable information on all three research questions. Research question one: Should national recognized fire service training standards be adopted as a major element of the formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department?
Research question two: What major topics should be included in a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department? Research question three: How do we implement a meaningful company officer training program into the Casper Fire Department?

Descriptive research was also utilized in the development, implementation, and evaluation of a survey instrument. The survey was designed to further assist this author in obtaining more information to answer research questions one and two. A cover letter explaining the purpose and expectations of the survey instrument was developed and attached to the survey instrument. The cover letter and survey instrument are contained in Appendix A and Appendix B. This author also attached a copy of NFPA 1021 to each survey instrument so participants could review the standard before answering the specific questions.

The next step in this research project was to prepare the survey instrument, associated cover letter, and NFPA standard for delivery to members of the Casper Fire Department. Sixty-six survey packets were created, and 66 surveys were delivered to the on-duty Shift Commander. All three shift commanders delivered survey packets to each member on their respective platoons. It is important to note that all shift personnel, representing all ranks, were asked to complete the survey instruments.

47 survey instruments were completed and returned within the given time period, and 19 surveys were not returned. This represents a 71.2% return rate of completed surveys.

The survey instrument asked the participants nine questions. Question one sought information on whether the Casper Fire Department should use NFPA 1021 as the training standard to use in its development of personnel who wish to obtain the rank of Captain. Question two asked whether NFPA 1021 should be used by the Casper Fire Department to develop incumbent company officers. Question three sought information on what four specific levels of
NFPA 1021 should apply to the Captains rank. Question four asked for those who answered No on the previous question to please explain why. Questions five and six sought information on what other company officer training curriculum was being used by other organizations. Question seven asked respondents if they agreed with this author that students should be taught both supervisory skills and leadership skills. Question eight asked respondents what ranks should be included in a company officer training program. Question nine sought explanation on why the respondent thought that the firefighter rank should be included in the training program as well.

The results of the survey were tabulated, and a number and percentage of Yes, No and Unsure answers were compiled and documented for question one. The results of question two were tabulated, and a number and percentage of Yes, No, and Unsure answers were compiled and documented. The results of question three were documented as the number of responses for each category that were presented in the specific question. These results were documented in the form of highest to lowest number. The results of question four were compiled, and documented in the form of a list of narrative answers. The results of question five were tabulated, and a number and percentage of Yes and No answers were compiled and documented. The results of question six were compiled in a list and documented. The results of question seven were tabulated, and a number and percentage of Yes, No, and Unsure answers were compiled and documented. Results of question eight were documented as the number of responses for each category that were presented in the specific question. These results were documented in the form of highest to lowest number. Results of question nine were compiled in a list and documented. The final results of the survey instrument are contained in Appendix C.
Assumptions and Limitations

During the development of the first research question an assumption was made that NFPA 1021 was a widely known national standard in reference to company officer training. Another assumption was made during the creation of the survey instrument that all respondents would understand the intent and meaning of all nine survey questions posed. This author also made the assumption that if a respondent was not familiar with the specifics of NFPA 1021, he or she would reference the attached copy of the standard. This would enable the respondent to become familiar with the standard and would allow the respondent to more accurately respond to the questions posed.

Some limitations were experienced while developing this applied research project. First, of the 66 surveys that were sent out, only 47 completed surveys were returned. This accounts for a 71.2% return rate. This limited return rate may affect the legitimacy of the documented results. Also, this author discovered three instances where the answers that were given were unclear. This author chose to deem these three answers to be invalid. This dynamic may slightly hinder the accuracy of the overall results.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were provided in the document entitled, *NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* (International City/County Management Association, 2002, p. 1021-5).

**Fire Officer I** – The fire officer at the supervisory level.

**Fire Officer II** – The fire officer at the supervisory/management level.

**Fire Officer III** – The fire officer at the managerial/administrative level.

**Fire Officer IV** – The fire officer at the administrative level.
RESULTS

The results of this applied research project have been compiled from extensive literature review and survey data. The following is information provided to answer each of the three research questions.

Research Question One

Should national recognized fire service training standards be adopted as a major element of the formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department? Information gathered from the literature review revealed that NFPA 1021 is referenced as a major component in the majority of established company officer development programs in use today (Hall, 2003; Kocab, 2003; Lewis, 1998; Rohr, 2002). NFPA 1021 is also formally recognized by ICMA (2002) and adopted as the core curriculum by IFSTA (1999) in their current fire officer textbook. Survey results reveal sources of information to answer this research question as well. Survey question one asked the respondents if the Casper Fire Department should, at a minimum, recognize NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Professional Qualifications Standard, as its training standard in which to formally develop members wishing to be promoted to the rank of Captain? 27 responded Yes, 12 responded No, and 7 responded Unsure. Survey question two asked whether the Casper Fire Department should, at a minimum, recognize NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Professional Qualifications Standard, as its standard in which to formally develop incumbent members who hold the rank of Captain? 27 responded Yes, 16 responded No, and 3 responded Unsure. Survey question three asked the survey participants if they answered Yes to either question #1 or question #2 please indicate with a check mark what specific Fire Officer standards should apply to the rank of Captain. Survey results for question three are as follows:

- Fire Officer I 20
Survey question four asked respondents that if they answered No to either question one or question two; please explain why you answered “No”. Survey results for this question revealed the following list of narrative answers.

- NFPA standards are not applied across the board. We would lack the establishment of requirements that would promote consistent evaluation. Fire officer III and IV would be overlooked in our system. NFPA standards should be used across the board or not at all.

- Current captains are good at their positions.

- [We] do not have enough specific understanding of the standard to say. I would need additional consideration to commit.

- We should research management training and updating qualifications.

- Some, if not most, duties that 1021 recommends do not fit into the job description as I know for CFD company officers (i.e. determine the cause of a fire 2-5).

- These standards should not be applied in a piece-meal fashion. Teach and train to the entire standard for the best all-around officer. Appropriate time commitments must be made. The priority of accomplishing this program should be equal to its importance (do not allow it to be a paper shuffle).

- I think that we can come up with our own standards.

- Some of the elements do not appear to relate to the CFD Captain’s position.
• I wish you could expand in detail what you are saying when you use the word incumbent. Formally developed incumbent members who hold the rank of captain? Is that not what we do now? You are the one that makes the final decision just, so choose the best of the candidates. This can be done by watching what they do [and] how they do on the job.

• I believe this could be part of the steps for the promotion process. The candidate would try to do the standards--this would help prepare them. The captains that already hold the rank have been doing these same standards already.

• Because our forward thinking should involve a tailor-made outline by a board of department members who have determined what our members’ wants and needs are. Not just latching onto a generic outline that does not pertain to what we want.

• I think that a lot of the NFPA requirements don’t pertain to the job of a CFD Captain. This course would be better served by creating a tailor-made program that better suits the needs of the department.

• Our company officer training should be tailored to our department.

• We need a program set up by our department for our department.

• I feel that once you have been promoted you can take the standards. The testing process should determine if the person is qualified. We should also look at other NFPA standards if we are going to use this one (i.e., NFPA 1710).

• CFD should look at recognizing and adapting NFPA standards that will affect our ability to do our job to help the customer (i.e., NFPA 1710). NFPA 1021 will not affect our level of service and I feel we have much larger legal issues to deal with.
• Present company officer’s get on-the-job-training in most of the areas of the standard. People wishing to be promoted could benefit form the standard by getting exposed to call areas before they get the on-the-job-training.

• Too much administrative requirements and most of the requirements are things that we do day-to-day; but some of the standards would be alright. Too much [time is spent] into inspections, that’s why we have an inspection bureau.

• I think we should develop our own standards which are customized to the specific needs and goals of the CFD.

• I feel captains currently meet the standards. Spend the time and money on upcoming candidates.

**Research Question Two**

What major topics should be included in a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department? The literature review and survey instrument provided answers to this research question. This author found that many different topics were being taught by those who have active company officer development training programs. These varying instructional topics that were discovered in the literature review are represented below.

• Gender equity

• Cultural diversity

• Planning

• Budgeting

• Time management

• Change in emergency services
- Enhancing personal power base and ethics
- Development of perceptions, values and attitudes and their impacts
- Situational leadership
- Leadership
- Management
- Customer service
- Group dynamics
- Role of an officer
- Organizational structure and principles
- Written operating guidelines
- Documentation and discipline
- Motivation
- Empowerment
- Communication
- Training
- Human resource issues
- Conflict resolution
- Career development
- Employee assistance program
- Resource management
- Legal issues
- Testifying in court
- Job knowledge
• Overview of all commands in the fire department
• Accreditation
• Strategic planning
• Mission and values of the fire department
• The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
• Self-directed professional growth and development
• Communications skills
• Time management
• Team-building skills
• Leadership styles and process
• Training techniques and responsibilities
• Conflict management and resolution
• The legal aspects of being a manager
• Employee evaluations and the discipline process
• Management of emergency situations
• Customer service program
• Fire department as a part of local government
• Financial management
• Citywide expectations
• Fire department organization
• Human resource management
• Community and government relations
• Administration
• Inspection/Investigation
• Emergency services delivery
• Safety
• Department policy and procedures
• Leadership
• Fire prevention
• Fire protection
• Hazardous materials
• Technical report writing
• Code and ordinances
• Fire fighting strategy and tactics
• Chemistry
• Psychology
• Human relations and management
• English
• Fire hazard and causes
• Building construction
• Personnel management
• Sociology
• Major emergency planning

Survey results provided sources of information to answer this research question as well.
Survey question five asked if the respondents were aware of other established supervisory training curriculum that should be considered a part of the Casper Fire Department’s Company Officer Training Program. 9 responded Yes and 37 responded No. Survey question six asked the respondents if they answered Yes to question five, please give a brief description of this curriculum and where it can be found. The results of this question are listed in narrative form below:

- PDCO at Northern Colorado, COPD at Rapid City, South Dakota. Both are company officer and prep courses.
- Fire Officer training from SLL; also, Fire Officer I & Rescue Training Institute.
- Many departments have already created successful in-house officer programs. These materials are available for the asking (why reinvent the wheel?).
- [I have] no specifics. Cheyenne Fire Department has an officer development program. I am not entirely sure what it entails.
- The Fire Officer Program taught by the Air Force.
- Lewisville, Texas has a company officer training program that is very advanced. They do it for acting captains and newly promoted officers.
- IFSTA manuals and other fire service publications.
- There are numerous leadership/motivational seminars developed for the general industry that would be great for the fire service.
Results of survey question seven also provides further information on what topics should be included in the department’s company officer training program. Survey question seven first stated that “As Fire Chief, I believe it is important to provide company officer training that develops technical supervisory skills and leadership skills”. This author then asked the respondents if they agree with this statement. 46 responded Yes, 0 responded No, and 1 responded Unsure.

**Research Question Three**

How do we implement a meaningful company officer training program into the Casper Fire Department? The literature review and survey instrument provided useful information to answer this research question. The literature review this author conducted revealed that planning is key to developing an officer training program. The planning process should include using NFPA 1021 as the core curriculum in the program. However, the majority of literature reveals that it is important to augment NFPA 1021 with specific local training needs, thus meeting the needs of the organization. All of these factors are summed up in the ICMA training process (International City/County Management Association, 2002, p. 268) These steps are:

- Planning for the training
- Ensuring its safety
- Meeting national, state, and local training standards and requirements
- Recognizing and responding to the training needs of the particular department
- Thinking carefully about formats for delivering the training (p. 268)
- Applicability and accessibility of the program
- Prerequisites
- Time and travel constraints
- Access to learning resources (both print and nonprint)
- Financial resources for tuition, travel, lectures, and so forth
- Resource sharing with other fire service and non-fire service entities
- Equivalency of various forms of education and training (p. 276)

Another development process option is explained by Rohr (2002) who recommends using NFPA 1021 as the core curriculum and using department stakeholders in identifying regional, state, and federal issues that may be applicable (p. 34). He further explains that his planning process should include the following:

Educational needs and delivery methodology should be explored to meet the identified goals of the organization. This would include addressing alternative methods of course delivery to adult students as well as determining the most effective means to make program available to the largest number of potential students. Finally, fiscal and logistical impacts must be explored. Implementation guidelines must be developed and marketed to ensure a true “buy in” from the members of the department. Once completed, the program should become a permanent piece of the Department’s Career Development Program (p. 34).

A third development process is explained by Steve Earley (2002) who recommends four steps to include, developing a succession development plan, form a coalition with other local departments and the community college, conduct an on the job analysis to identify essential skills and competencies, and to develop a comprehensive career development manual for the department (p. 32 – 33).

One last development process is recommended by Thomas M. Hawkins Jr. (2000). Chief Hawkins created a LEAD (Leadership, Education, and Development) Institute to help solve his
department’s officer training problems. Hawkins organized a group of employees to design, implement and manage the LEAD Institute (p. 68). Chief Hawkins states, “Their first step was to decide on a set of principles that would guide the program’s development” (p. 68). This group arrived at three guiding principles listed below:

1. The curriculum couldn’t be abstract; it needed to be real. Each subject module had to provide real information that the students could use. Too often, management training programs in the business world don’t explain how to use the information.

2. All curriculum components must have end objectives that are specific and measurable. For 18 months, the team worked on the curriculum and its objectives so that desired outcomes could be established before instructors were selected.

3. Instructors must use innovative instructional techniques, such as case studies, role-playing, group interaction and, of course, class participation. Boring lectures and insulting teaching techniques, such as reading aloud from a textbook, wouldn’t be tolerated (p. 68).

In addition to the literature review, survey questions eight and nine asked the respondents what ranks should be offered this company officer training. These survey questions were asked so that this author could determine who, during the planning process, should be offered this training. In reference to survey question eight, 30 responded that Firefighters should be included. 46 responded that Engineers should be included. 44 responded that Captains should be included. 31 responded that Shift Commanders should be included. 25 responded that Division Chiefs should be included. Lastly, 23 responded that the Fire Chief should be included. Of those 30 who responded that firefighters should be offered the training, this author asked in
survey question nine, why? The following information depicts the actual answers of survey question nine.

- Because they could in a short period of time become acting company officer. Also, if they were on the rescue truck and arrived first on a scene they will have to make some very important decisions.

- The firefighter should not be overwhelmed with trying to do too much. He should be proficient in all the skills required to be a fire fighter. As the employee travels up the ladder, he is required to gain more skills and knowledge, not replace them. I feel that we have a tendency to be the “Jack of all Trades” but master of none.

- Primary concentration should be for captains and acting captains. Once these positions are covered, this type of course should be available to all ranks. These should be a 360 degree approach to training all ranks.

- No, they are a firefighter. They need to learn and know the job of firefighter first, then engineer, before they worry about captain. In my opinion, people worry about where they want to be rather than doing the best job possible in the position they are in. Some of that might come from the pressure of thinking they have to promote, instead of when they are truly ready.

- Something I have seen happen several times is that a brand new engineer is expected to act as company officer in his first few shifts as an engineer. I feel this puts this person in a very tough position, and I don’t feel that anyone in the firefighter level should be offered this program. It would help out with the situation mentioned above and produce a better company officer in the long run. A firefighter is expected to know some of this anyway. You can tell by looking at the reading list of this year’s
engineer’s exam. There are three short supervisory/leadership books and some strategy and tactics books but nothing about driving and pumping a fire truck. I don’t know that this NFPA standard is what we need, but we do need some type of program that equals or is better than the relief driver program that was developed.

- It will prepare them and further their careers in the future.
- No, they should be working on firefighter duties.
- The more my engineer and firefighter know, the easier my job as captain is. An extra qualified brain and set of eyes are worth their weight in gold. Promotions on this department are slowing down. Training firefighters to the level of company officer (if the individual desires) will not only give the firefighter a new goal to achieve, it will make their transition up in rank smoother for the entire department.
- I don’t believe that firefighters should have to go through the training until they achieve a rank in which they would be responsible for the aspects which this training covers. Until that point in their career they have enough to focus on.
- Firefighters looking to promote to engineer and aspiring to become captains require this training in order to be ready to act captain and successfully promote. Firefighters also occasionally act in company officer roles at Hazmat incidents and on the rescue.
- Because they are the future. The earlier you train or educate them the better and more experienced they will be.
- Because when you are promoted to engineer you are expected to act captain sometimes your first shift. So the firefighter should be trained to company office level.
• In my opinion, a firefighter should not be held or looked down on for being a firefighter. The same training should be offered to all employees. Where did you come from? Where do captains come from? At the level of persons entering the job I believe any firefighter can and will be able to act as captain and do a great job.

• Firefighters who test for engineer are evaluated on organizational and supervisory skills. Also, many times a firefighter is promoted to engineer and very soon is asked to perform as an acting captain. Allow them the opportunity to build those skills before they are needed.

• In order to be a captain one must first be an engineer and a firefighter. So why not prepare those interested from the start?

• Firefighters are the future of the fire department. Start at the beginning.

• I believe everybody has to have the same knowledge and to know what is expected. Every rank should be offered the same training. This helps morale and it doesn’t make the lesser rank feel segregated against.

• Being able to obtain these classes or certification can help the firefighter be more aware early in his career why decisions are made the way they are. They can then learn more from the experiences they obtain to make them a better officer later in his/her career.

• In the later stages of firefighter (senior) I feel that they should start to learn and develop supervisory skills and company officer strategies and tactics. Because their next step is engineer they should already have a good background in order to do well in testing situations. As soon as they are promoted they are required to act in a supervisory position when called upon.
• Because we all inspire to advance in our jobs, by training as a firefighter you will receive a better captain or engineer when that person decides to promote. Not only that but the more we learn the better we operate in any position.

• I think offering company officer training to firefighters would help to prepare them to act company officer when they are promoted [to engineer]. Too often, a newly promoted engineer is put in a position they may not be comfortable in. Training would solve this problem. It would also give all ranks a good idea of exactly what a company officer’s job really entails.

• It would allow aggressive personnel to “go further.” It should only be offered after all other training has been completed.

• Yes, first, a few classes can help a firefighter determine if they want to pursue advancement. Second, promising firefighters can be mentored and developed into future company officers ready to assume full responsibilities upon promotion.

• No, I think their training should focus on relief driver and engineer.

• The day they are promoted to engineer they are acting company officers.

• Yes, because when they are promoted to engineer they will be asked to acting officer. I know from example--I promoted to engineer and acted captain my first three shifts.

• Firefighters are part of the crew. The more knowledge a firefighter has the more they can help in evaluating emergency scenes. Firefighters should not be restricted to a level below others as they can and if willing should be allowed to better themselves and the department.
• Yes, career development. All personnel should be given the opportunity to take these classes. Developing leaders should begin on the first day of their career. Long before we develop them as company officers we needs to develop firefighters as firefighters.

• Some of our best leaders are firefighters. Informal of course, but no less important. With training, we can be sure that they contribute more to the job in a positive manner.

• A couple of reasons: 1) Firefighters will be the future leaders of the fire department; 2) A firefighter may be promoted to engineer and then be acting captain; 3) It puts everyone on the same page; and, 4) You must groom and train your replacements.

• Take the rescue for example—a firefighter is on the radio taking command. Good general knowledge, good to see where the company officers are coming from. Maybe acting engineer, this training can only help their decisions.

• No, firefighters need to learn their job and the job of an engineer. If a firefighter is ready to train as a company officer, then he should get promoted to engineer.

• They are the future of the department. It is important for a firefighter to know what captains and shift commanders are looking for so the firefighter can be more effective as a fireman.

• We already put firefighters in the position to make company officer level decisions. Take for an instant Truck 1 and Rescue 1. Rescue 1 fist in arrival at a motor vehicle accident or Truck 1 first into a structure fire. BIR, Strategy and Tactics, interaction with the public, etc.... Provide the training, stop just expecting them to know how to do it.
• You were a firefighter once. Did you or do you wish you had more formal company officer training as you were coming up the ranks. For me personally, training for upcoming promotions or for the real deal (a firefighter on the rescue arrives first due on an all hands working structure fire and taking command) is a valuable resource that should not be overlooked.

**DISCUSSION**

Author Chris Connealy (2000) provides a personal account of a situation where his department had no consistent company officer program by stating, “In my 11 years as an officer, the only officer training I received was a three-hour college course on management provided by the department in 1989” (p. 120). He continues by saying, “Our situation isn’t that unusual. Most departments have a difficult time training all their officers through a formal officer development program” (p. 120). These two quotes underscore the widespread problem with the professional development of fire officers across the country. The Casper Fire Department is no different. The department has, for many years, provided limited officer training. The majority of the officer training has been provided to limited persons through college level work and out of town officer training programs. No formalized in-house company officer training program has ever been developed for the members of the Casper Fire Department. This has left a situation where newly promoted Captains and those who are acting captains are placed in a “learn it as you go” work environment.

The first part of this research project focused on the acceptability of national training standards into the company officer development program for the Casper Fire Department. One widely accepted national officer training standard is NFPA 1021. “Many resources describe management training; and NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Professional Qualifications*, identifies
the job performance standards for several levels of fire officers” (International City/County Management Association, 2002, p. 276). These levels of fire officers are referred to in the standard as Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II, Fire Officer III, and Fire Officer IV. It is apparent to this author that NFPA 1021 is the most widely used national training standard for company officer development and survey results indicate that a majority of Casper Fire Department members agree that this standard should serve as our core curriculum as well. It is also important to note that most of the fire department members, who responded in the survey, indicated that Fire Officer I and Fire Officer II levels should be the only specific NFPA fire officer levels applicable in our customized training program.

One interesting set of survey data suggests that all ranks of the Casper Fire Department including firefighters through Chief Officer, attend this formal officer training program. With this in mind, it is this author’s intent to include all ranks in the initial delivering of this officer training. Future classes should be focused on firefighters who have passed their probationary period of employment, the engineer’s rank, and the captain’s rank. Another important set of information emerges in this research which indicates that NFPA 1021 is not an all inclusive standard, and that the Casper Fire Department must incorporate into its program more applicable topics to meets its own specific needs. This issue is central to this author’s second research question which states, “What major topics should be included in a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department?”

The literature review cited many different examples of what topics are being instructed in company officer development programs across the country. In addition to the literature review the respondents to the survey instrument were aware of several different programs and curriculum as well. This wide variety of subject matter will serve as a valuable resource to the
Casper Fire Department when developing its training curriculum for company officer. It is also this author’s intent to include leadership as a major topic in the training program. This is due, in part, to the fact that as a student at the National Fire Academy, this author has learned a great deal about the importance of leadership skills and their positive effect on an organization. Many different definitions of leadership exist. This author finds value in the definition that Donald T. Phillips (1992) provides in his writings.

Leadership is leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations (p. 3).

Leadership is being widely discussed as a major component in supervision and management training. It is apparent that many other fire departments are using it as a topic in officer training and Members of the Casper Fire Department agree with this author that the skills of leadership and supervision must go hand in hand. To go even further, it is this author’s opinion that leadership must play a much larger role in a supervisor’s, manager’s and administrator’s daily work life versus time spent on the technical supervisory skills. The Casper Fire Department needs to develop strong leadership skills in its personnel. This is critical because the department continues to change its role within the community. Old fire problems are being solved through prevention efforts and the department is changing its look, and in some cases, its identity in the community. It will take leadership to make the necessary changes that are needed to survive and succeed in the future. An understanding that leadership is not necessarily a natural talent, but one that can be learned is uplifting to this author. Rudolph Giuliani, past Mayor of New York City, states that, “Leadership does not simply happen. It can
be taught, learned, developed” (Giuliani, 2002, p. xii). The challenge in teaching leadership lies in its complex makeup. Authors who write about leadership and its components all seem to take a different approach. Some describe it as being somewhat elusive and mysterious; others are able to reduce it to a simple concept as Kahl (2004) does by stating, “Leadership boils down to a choice—a choice to provide the help that the team needs in order to reach its goal. First and foremost, all leaders make that choice” (p. 2).

While it appears that leadership should be taught in formal company officer development courses there is another lifelong method that Casper Fire Department personnel can utilize in developing their skills. This is through watching leaders in our own organization and by reading about successful leaders outside of our organization. Battalion Chief John Salka (2004) of the FDNY believes that this is the case as well by writing,

Because I feel that as a leader, you’re never done, I’ve always tried to read as many leadership books as I can. I prowl the business section of the bookstores, and when a new one comes out, I snatch it up. And I’m rarely disappointed. I almost always learn something new, or rediscover something I’d forgotten, or gain a new perspective on an old challenge (p.8).

Chief Salka wraps up the discussion on leadership development by using the analogy of the fire triangle and fire science to leadership.

Though we tend to blame fires on a single thing, like a naked wire, a tray spark, or a lit match, in actuality fire has three essential elements: heat, oxygen, and fuel. The three points of this triangle interact to form the chain reaction that leads to combustion. In the same way, leadership is not sparked by any one thing, such as charisma or presence or
rank, but is built on a foundation created by three leadership commitments (Salka & Neville, 2004).

These three leadership commitments are: reality, treating your people as assets, and developing leaders at all levels of your organization (p. 14). The last of these commitments emphasizes for this author the critical nature of leadership and its positive influence on an organization. As mentioned earlier, the Casper Fire Department is in the midst of change and it will take strong leadership to see us through to the future. Leadership must be a major component of the final company officer development program adopted by the Casper Fire Department.

The last element of this research is to identify a planning strategy that can be used by the department in developing a company officer development program. Results of this research have discovered several different options available to develop such a training program. This author has chose to use ICMA’s (2002) development process. It includes the following steps:

- Planning for the training
- Ensuring its safety
- Meeting national, state, and local training standards and requirements
- Recognizing and responding to the training needs of the particular department
- Thinking carefully about formats for delivering the training (p. 268)
- Applicability and accessibility of the program
- Prerequisites
- Time and travel constraints
- Access to learning resources (both print and nonprint)
- Financial resources for tuition, travel, lectures, and so forth
• Resource sharing with other fire service and non-fire service entities

• Equivalency of various forms of education and training (p. 276)

This process appears to include the other planning options put forward by other authors on this subject. It also takes into consideration the need to meet national standards as well as meeting local needs of the Casper Fire Department. This planning process will enable the department to develop its officer training program utilizing data gained in this research as valuable resource material.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based upon the problem and purpose statement of this applied research project as well as all information provided through extensive literature review and survey results. As this author stated early in this research, the problem for the Casper Fire Department is that the department is promoting personnel to the rank of Captain who have limited company officer experience and skills. This has placed many new Captains in a difficult situation where they are forced to learn supervisory and leadership skills while on the job and in some cases do so while supervising team members who may be their senior. The purpose of this research is to identify a development plan that will be used in implementing a formal company officer training program for the Casper Fire Department.

The literature review and survey results have led this author to recommend that NFPA 1021 should be used as our core curriculum when developing the department’s officer training program. It is also apparent that the Casper Fire Department needs more specific training needs than NFPA 1021 provides. This author will use the survey results that describe our local needs when the total training curriculum is created. Another recommendation is that the department applies two of the four existing NFPA 1021 fire officer levels into the program. These levels will
be Fire Officer I and Fire Officer II. Fire Officer III and Fire Officer IV will be excluded in this development program. Lastly, this research has assisted this author in identifying a development strategy that will be used in the planning of the company officer development program. This said strategy will include the following steps:

- Planning for the training
- Ensuring its safety
- Meeting national, state, and local training standards and requirements
- Recognizing and responding to the training needs of the particular department
- Thinking carefully about formats for delivering the training (p. 268)
- Applicability and accessibility of the program
- Prerequisites
- Time and travel constraints
- Access to learning resources (both print and nonprint)
- Financial resources for tuition, travel, lectures, and so forth
- Resource sharing with other fire service and non-fire service entities
- Equivalency of various forms of education and training (p. 276)

This author recommends that future readers of this Applied Research Project research what training programs have proved to be successful in developing fire officers. Research could also provide information on why some officer training programs fail. Further research could also focus on how departments can take the next step in training for their incumbent fire officers who wish to become managers and administrators.
References


March 22, 2005

I am in the process of completing an applied research project in conjunction with my most recent Executive Fire Officer course through the National Fire Academy. The subject of my research project is “Developing a Company Officer Training Program for the Casper Fire Department”. As you are aware the Casper Fire Department has no formally established training program for its incumbent and prospective company officers. I want to implement a formal training program that will develop supervisory and leadership skills for those who are Captains and those who aspire to the Captain’s rank. The purpose of this letter and survey is to gather information that will give me some indication of what kind of training elements should be included in such a formalized training program.

Please take a few minutes of your time to complete the attached survey. All completed surveys are anonymous; do not include your name on the instrument. Please personally retain your completed survey until your Shift Commander collects them. Please complete the survey instrument by March 29, 2005.

I want to thank you in advance for taking your time to answer this survey instrument. Your input will go along way in helping us develop a formal company officer training program for our department.

Sincerely,

Mark P. Young
Fire Chief
Appendix B

Survey Instrument
Company Officer Training Program Survey

1. Please indicate by answering Yes, No or Unsure whether the Casper Fire Department should, at a minimum, recognize NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Professional Qualifications Standard as its training standard in which to formally develop members wishing to be promoted to the rank of Captain.

   Yes  No  Unsure

2. Please indicate by answering Yes, No or Unsure whether the Casper Fire Department should, at a minimum, recognize NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Professional Qualifications Standard as its standard in which to formally develop incumbent members who hold the rank of Captain.

   Yes  No  Unsure

3. If you answered Yes to either question #1 or question #2 please indicate with a check mark what specific Fire Officer standards should apply to the rank of Captain. You may choose more than one answer.

   - Fire Officer I
   - Fire Officer II
   - Fire Officer III
   - Fire Officer IV
   - All of the above

4. If you answered No to either question #1 or question #2 please explain why you answered “No”.


5. Are you aware of other established supervisory training curriculum that should be considered a part of the Casper Fire Department’s Company Officer Training Program?

   Yes    No

6. If you answered Yes to question #5 please give a brief description of this curriculum and where it can be found.

7. As Fire Chief, I believe it is important to provide company officer training that develops technical supervisory skills and leadership skills. Do you agree?

   Yes    No    Unsure

8. Please indicate with a check mark what ranks should be offered company officer training?
   
   _____ Firefighter
   _____ Engineer
   _____ Captain
   _____ Shift Commander
   _____ Division Chief
   _____ Fire Chief

9. In your opinion, if you think that personnel who hold the rank of firefighter should be offered this training please explain why?

Thanks for your time and input.

Mark P. Young
Fire Chief
### Appendix C

Final Survey Results

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Invalid was due to one respondent answering both “yes” and “unsure” on same survey.

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3 respondents did not mark any choices on this question.

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Respondents were asked to pick multiple items to answer the question.

*47 Total Surveys Collected

Written Survey Results to Questions 4, 6, and 9

**Question #4**

*If you answered No to either question #1 or question #2 please explain why you answered “No”.*

- NFPA standards are not applied across the board. We would lack the establishment of requirements that would promote consistent evaluation. Fire officer III and IV would be overlooked in our system. NFPA standards should be used across the board or not at all.

- Current captains are good at their positions.

- [We] do not have enough specific understanding of the standard to say. I would need additional consideration to commit.
• We should research management training and updating qualifications.

• Some, if not most, duties that 1021 recommends do not fit into the job description as I know for CFD company officers (i.e. determine the cause of a fire 2-5).

• These standards should not be applied in a piece-meal fashion. Teach and train to the entire standard for the best all-around officer. Appropriate time commitments must be made. The priority of accomplishing this program should be equal to its importance (do not allow it to be a paper shuffle).

• I think that we can come up with our own standards.

• Some of the elements do not appear to relate to the CFD Captain’s position.

• I wish you could expand in detail what you are saying when you use the word incumbent. Formally developed incumbent members who hold the rank of captain? Is that not what we do now. You are the one that makes the final decision just, so choose the best of the candidates. This can be done by watching what they do [and] how they do on the job.

• I believe this could be part of the steps for the promotion process. The candidate would try to do the standards--this would help prepare them. The captains that already hold the rank have been doing these same standards already.

• Because our forward thinking should involve a tailor-made outline by a board of department members who have determined what our members’ wants and needs are. Not just latching onto a generic outline that does not pertain to what we want.

• I think that a lot of the NFPA requirements don’t pertain to the job of a CFD Captain. This course would be better served by creating a tailor-made program that better suits the needs of the department.

• Our company officer training should be tailored to our department.

• We need a program set up by our department for our department.

• I feel that once you have been promoted you can take the standards. The testing process should determine if the person is qualified. We should also look at other NFPA standards if we are going to use this one (i.e., NFPA 1710).

• CFD should look at recognizing and adapting NFPA standards that will affect our ability to do our job to help the customer (i.e., NFPA 1710). NFPA 1021 will not affect our level of service and I feel we have much larger legal issues to deal with.
Present company officer’s get on-the-job-training in most of the areas of the standard. People wishing to be promoted could benefit form the standard by getting exposed to call areas before they get the on-the-job-training.

Too much administrative requirements and most of the requirements are things that we do day-to-day; but some of the standards would be alright. Too much [time is spent] into inspections, that’s why we have an inspection bureau.

I think we should develop our own standards which are customized to the specific needs and goals of the CFD.

I feel captains currently meet the standards. Spend the time and money on upcoming candidates.

Question #6

*If you answered Yes to either question #5 please give a brief description of this curriculum and where it can be found.*

- PDCO at Northern Colorado, COPD at Rapid City, South Dakota. Both are company officer and prep courses.

- Fire Officer training from SLL; also, Fire Officer I & Rescue Training Institute.


- Many departments have already created successful in-house officer programs. These materials are available for the asking (why reinvent the wheel?).

- [I have] no specifics. Cheyenne Fire Department has an officer development program. I am not entirely sure what it entails.

- The Fire Officer Program taught by the Air Force.

- Lewisville, Texas has a company officer training program that is very advanced. They do it for acting captains and newly promoted officers.

- IFSTA manuals and other fire service publications.

- There are numerous leadership/motivational seminars developed for the general industry that would be great for the fire service.
Question #8 (Second Part)

In your opinion, if you think that personnel who hold the rank of firefighter should be offered this training please explain why?

- Because they could in a short period of time become acting company officer. Also, if they were on the rescue truck and arrived first on a scene they will have to make some very important decisions.

- The firefighter should not be overwhelmed with trying to do too much. He should be proficient in all the skills required to be a fire fighter. As the employee travels up the ladder, he is required to gain more skills and knowledge, not replace them. I feel that we have a tendency to be the “Jack of all Trades” but master of none.

- Primary concentration should be for captains and acting captains. Once these positions are covered, this type of course should be available to all ranks. These should be a 360 degree approach to training all ranks.

- No, they are a firefighter. They need to learn and know the job of firefighter first, then engineer, before they worry about captain. In my opinion, people worry about where they want to be rather than doing the best job possible in the position they are in. Some of that might come from the pressure of thinking they have to promote, instead of when they are truly ready.

- Something I have seen happen several times is that a brand new engineer is expected to act as company officer in his first few shifts as an engineer. I feel this puts this person in a very tough position, and I don’t feel that anyone in the firefighter level should be offered this program. It would help out with the situation mentioned above and produce a better company officer in the long run. A firefighter is expected to know some of this anyway. You can tell by looking at the reading list of this year’s engineer’s exam. There are three short supervisory/leadership books and some strategy and tactics books but nothing about driving and pumping a fire truck. I don’t know that this NFPA standard is what we need, but we do need some type of program that equals or is better than the relief driver program that was developed.

- It will prepare them and further their careers in the future.

- No, they should be working on firefighter duties.

- The more my engineer and firefighter know, the easier my job as captain is. An extra qualified brain and set of eyes are worth their weight in gold. Promotions on this department are slowing down. Training firefighters to the level of company officer (if the individual desires) will not only give the firefighter a new goal to achieve, it will make their transition up in rank smoother for the entire department.
• I don’t believe that firefighters should have to go through the training until they achieve a rank in which they would be responsible for the aspects which this training covers. Until that point in their career they have enough to focus on.

• Firefighters looking to promote to engineer and aspiring to become captains require this training in order to be ready to act captain and successfully promote. Firefighters also occasionally act in company officer roles at Hazmat incidents and on the rescue.

• Because they are the future. The earlier you train or educate them the better and more experienced they will be.

• Because when you are promoted to engineer you are expected to act captain sometimes your first shift. So the firefighter should be trained to company office level.

• In my opinion, a firefighter should not be held or looked down on for being a firefighter. The same training should be offered to all employees. Where did you come from? Where do captains come from? At the level of persons entering the job I believe any firefighter can and will be able to act as captain and do a great job.

• Firefighters who test for engineer are evaluated on organizational and supervisory skills. Also, many times a firefighter is promoted to engineer any very soon is asked to perform as an acting captain. Allow them the opportunity to build those skills before they are needed.

• In order to be a captain one must first be an engineer and a firefighter. So why not prepare those interested from the start?

• Firefighters are the future of the fire department. Start at the beginning.

• I believe everybody has to have the same knowledge and to know what is expected. Every rank should be offered the same training. This helps morale and it doesn’t make the lesser rank feel segregated against.

• Being able to obtain these classes or certification can help the firefighter be more aware early in his career why decisions are made the way they are. They can then learn more from the experiences they obtain to make them a better officer later in his/her career.

• In the later stages of firefighter (senior) I feel that they should start to learn and develop supervisory skills and company officer strategies and tactics. Because their next step is engineer they should already have a good background in order to do well in testing situations. As soon as they are promoted they are required to act in a supervisory position when called upon.

• Because we all inspire to advance in our jobs, by training as a firefighter you will receive a better captain or engineer when that person decides to promote. Not only that but the more we learn the better we operate in any position.
I think offering company officer training to firefighters would help to prepare them to act company officer when they are promoted to engineer. Too often, a newly promoted engineer is put in a position they may not be comfortable in. Training would solve this problem. It would also give all ranks a good idea of exactly what a company officer’s job really entails.

It would allow aggressive personnel to “go further.” It should only be offered after all other training has been completed.

Yes, first, a few classes can help a firefighter determine if they want to pursue advancement. Second, promising firefighters can be mentored and developed into future company officers ready to assume full responsibilities upon promotion.

No, I think their training should focus on relief driver and engineer.

The day they are promoted to engineer they are acting company officers.

Yes, because when they are promoted to engineer they will be asked to acting officer. I know from example—I promoted to engineer and acted captain my first three shifts.

Firefighters are part of the crew. The more knowledge a firefighter has the more they can help in evaluating emergency scenes. Firefighters should not be restricted to a level below others as they can and if willing should be allowed to better themselves and the department.

Yes, career development. All personnel should be given the opportunity to take these classes. Developing leaders should begin on the first day of their career. Long before we develop them as company officers we needs to develop firefighters as firefighters.

Some of our best leaders are firefighters. Informal of course, but no less important. With training, we can be sure that they contribute more to the job in a positive manner.

A couple of reasons: 1) Firefighters will be the future leaders of the fire department; 2) A firefighter may be promoted to engineer and then be acting captain; 3) It puts everyone on the same page; and, 4) You must groom and train your replacements.

Take the rescue for example—a firefighter is on the radio taking command. Good general knowledge, good to see where the company officers are coming from. Maybe acting engineer, this training can only help their decisions.

No, firefighters need to learn their job and the job of an engineer. If a firefighter is ready to train as a company officer, then he should get promoted to engineer.
• They are the future of the department. It is important for a firefighter to know what captains and shift commanders are looking for so the firefighter can be more effective as a fireman.

• We already put firefighters in the position to make company officer level decisions. Take for an instant Truck 1 and Rescue 1. Rescue 1 first in arrival at a motor vehicle accident or Truck 1 first into a structure fire. BIR, Strategy and Tactics, interaction with the public, etc... Provide the training, stop just expecting them to know how to do it.

• You were a firefighter once. Did you or do you wish you had more formal company officer training as you were coming up the ranks. For me personally, training for upcoming promotions or for the real deal (a firefighter on the rescue arrives first due on an all hands working structure fire and taking command) is a valuable resource that should not be overlooked.