EVALUATION AND MODIFICATION OF EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS

Executive Development

Evaluation and Modification of Employee Performance

Evaluations for the Orange Fire Department

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January 2007
Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/ to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.
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, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: ____________________________
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this applied research project was to create a new firefighter evaluation form. The problem was the form we used did not focus on specific firefighter responsibilities. The research indicated the employees were not satisfied with the current form. Action type research was utilized to answer the following questions: What issues are important? What criteria do other fire departments use? Should responsibilities from the job description be included? A national and internal questionnaire was utilized to gather data. The research indicated most fire departments utilize forms similar to forms we currently use yet change was desired by our personnel. Results indicated a combination of job description, objective, and 360° system should be utilized by our department.
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INTRODUCTION

Employee performance evaluations are part of a supervisor’s duty in many business, governmental, and non-profit organizations. Edwards (2005) describes performance appraisal as “the formal, systematic assessment of how well employees are performing their jobs in relation to established standards” (p. 147). He further describes the process to include the communication of the assessment to the employee and the organization (Edwards, 2005). The task of evaluating an employee’s performance in the Orange Fire Department is the task of a supervisor who holds an officers rank (Unknown, 1996). The Captains, Battalion Chiefs, Deputy Chief and Chief in the OFD are tasked with completing employee evaluations semiannually for the subordinates that report directly to them. The problem is the Orange Fire Department’s firefighter performance evaluation form does not focus on specific firefighter responsibilities thus possibly having a negative impact on the supervisor’s role of developing employees. The purpose of this research is to create a new firefighter performance evaluation form for OFD. The research method used was action. The research questions were: What issues should be considered with the creation of an employee performance evaluation form? What criteria do other fire departments use with firefighter evaluations? What responsibilities from the OFD firefighter job description should be included in the new form? What do the firefighters of OFD think should be included in a new performance evaluation form for firefighters?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The employee performance evaluation method utilized by the City of Orange Fire Department consists of a generic form that was developed for general government
employees to determine if a merit pay increase is appropriate at the time of the evaluation. This form was created before this researcher’s employment with the City of Orange began in March of 1984. The OFD is an all career department with (37) uniformed employees and one civilian administrative assistant. The fire department has the rare combination of being bound to the Texas civil service law and union contract bargaining agreement with binding arbitration. The City of Orange is located in the extreme Southeast section of Texas with the Interstate Highway -10 corridor splitting the city into North and South districts. The City of Orange limits to the East matches the State of Louisiana State line. The population of Orange is approximately 20,000 and the primary industry is petrochemical intermediate processing facilities (City-data.com, 2006). Employee performance evaluations are completed by the officer ranks of the OFD semi-annually for all employees that have completed their one year probationary period.

Training to complete employee evaluations is not formal. The study material utilized for the promotional exam contains several chapters that discuss employee evaluation. In addition the Texas Municipal League (TML) conducts training sessions on employee evaluations for supervisors on an infrequent basis (League, 2006). If a supervisor is on duty when the class is offered, they will attend this type of training. Probationary employees are evaluated by the Captain they report to and reviewed by the commander of the shift, and a Battalion Chief, quarterly. The general hierarchy of employee evaluation is: Captains evaluate Firefighters, Battalion Chiefs evaluate Captains, and the Deputy Chief evaluates Battalion Chiefs. The Fire Chief evaluates the Deputy Chief and the Fire Chief is evaluated by the city manager (Unknown, 1996). The focus of this applied research project was on the evaluation method for the rank of firefighter. The areas of
performance used for evaluation are all subjective using the evaluator’s opinion of the employee’s performance as the basis. The management of the Orange Fire Department (OFD) should have realized before now that the employee performance evaluation process was in need of review and possible modification. Management has not taken action to remedy this problem because the current process does serve the purpose of compliance to civil service regulations and therefore has a low priority. Every employee in the OFD is a stakeholder in this process because everyone below the rank of chief is receiving a performance evaluation by a fellow departmental employee. The researcher reviews all employee evaluations before sending to the archive files. Presently, the majority of officers completing the evaluations have their subordinates fall into two categories. They evaluate the personnel reporting to them just above average to avoid a lengthy justification narrative required for a rating of excellent and to foster a non-confrontational relationship with the subordinate. Or they evaluate the personnel reporting to them just below average to avoid the justification narrative and improvement plan required for a rating of unacceptable. The supervisors that rate employees below average use this to attempt to send a message to the employee that improvement is needed. The firefighters and officers receiving performance evaluations have not had an opportunity to participate in an evaluation of possible alternatives to the current process. A revised employee performance evaluation system with input from stakeholders of OFD may improve the quality of service to the customer. Service quality was a topic if instruction in the Executive Development Curriculum (Academy, 2006). Developing a comprehensive employee performance evaluation method will assist in the identification of service quality areas that require additional training or change. This research has
linkage to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) operational objectives by an appropriate and timely response to the emerging issue of the continual improvement process in the City of Orange Fire Department (Academy, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was conducted to provide the reader with information obtained from published findings that answer the following research questions. First, what issues should be considered with the creation of an employee performance evaluation form? Second, what criteria do other fire departments use with firefighter evaluations? Third, what responsibilities from the OFD firefighter job description should be included in the new form?

The first research question regarding issues for consideration starts with the legal issues. The OFD is an organization that has adopted civil service law. The civil service law that pertains to OFD is found in Chapter 143 (Miller, 1989). The portion of chapter 143 that pertains to employee evaluations states: “Efficiency reports may be created and required by the civil service commission. These reports should be completed semiannually and collected by the civil service commission. A copy of the report must be provided to the employee. The employee may make a statement concerning the report within ten days of receipt. The employee’s statement must accompany the efficiency report in the filing system maintained by the civil service commission. These reports may be used to break a tie in a promotional exam” (Miller, 1989).

The second legal issue is in relationship to the first research question is contained in the current International Association of Firefighters Local 1432 and The City of Orange, Texas A Collective Bargaining Agreement. The current collective bargaining
contract does not have specific language pertaining to employee performance evaluations. Under Article IV, Management Rights, the contract language states: “The Union agrees that the City shall maintain and be vested with all of the rights, powers, and authority to operate and manage the Department without limitation, as granted to it or as limited by the Charter and Ordinances of the City of Orange, or any other statute or law of the State of Texas, except as specifically limited by this agreement” (p. 7)(The City of Orange, 2004 thru 2007).

The third legal issue pertaining to the first research question is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 if the employee is in a protected group. Margulies (2004) described in her report the findings of the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee (EEOC) the use of a single numerical rating system to measure employee performance causes the employer to be in a difficult position. The number assigned may affect the employee’s career. If merit pay is tied to the numerical value assigned, the supervisors may assign a number to satisfy the merit system. The result will be little feedback to the employee to improve performance. She further described by having a centralized employee performance evaluation system that bases merit pay increases may cover the legal aspects of equity and ease administrative workloads. The use of more collaborative techniques to conduct employee performance evaluations such as management by objective, work planning and review, and 360 degree appraisals are considered more effective. These systems are designed to help employees develop and grow within the organization. Communication between supervisor and employee is increased with these systems by setting goals and matching expectations. These systems are perceived to be fairer because of the involvement of the subordinate and the communication of the goals
the organization has set. She explained many companies expect the employee performance evaluation system to complete too much. They want it to give feedback to the supervisor, allow the supervisor to coach the employee, set goals for the organization, develop the skills of the employee, determine pay grades, satisfy legal requirements, compare employees, and determine layoff selection. There is not an employee performance evaluation that can complete all these needs. She warned forced ranking systems compare employees to each other. Actual performance goals are used to determine if an employee is performing better than the next. A bell curve can be created with the high performing employees in the middle of the curve. Management will trim employees from each end of the curve to attain the best performing employees for retention. The system has some inherent problems. The termination of an employee that is performing at a satisfactory level but substandard when compared to other employees may have legal ramifications in the area of discrimination. This system will eventually terminate high performing employees because of the built in termination portion. Some of these terminations may be difficult to replace if the person is in a specialized field.

The fourth legal issue that pertains to the first research question is the term best practice. To define a best practice the researcher reviewed the two most noted resources. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA, 2006) and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA, 2006). Neither of these nationally recognized code and rule authorities addresses employee performance evaluation.

Guerin (2002) documented several legal issues in her book. She felt that employee performance evaluation should help the employee improve performance and protect the employer and evaluator from legal issues. Employers that review their
employee’s performance regularly by using employee evaluations reap great benefits. By completing evaluations on an employee, problems with individual employees are sometimes eliminated. Performance evaluations can keep the supervisor and employer out of legal problems. Evaluations track an employee’s performance which will provide documentation to a judge and jury that the supervisor and employer acted fairly. The evaluation process needs a set of standards and goals set by the supervisor and employer for the employee to be measured against. Goals and standards should be tailored to each job description. The employees can assist management in the creation of goals and standards so they are realistic. Keeping good records of an individual employee’s performance is a vital part of the evaluation process. Records of good and poor performance are required. The process of presenting the evaluation to the employee should be in writing along with a face to face meeting. The written portion should be completed by evaluating all records covering the performance period. The evaluator may utilize other manager’s evaluations of the employee being evaluated. The other managers should present their evaluation in writing. The final evaluation should include each standard or goal set, a conclusion if the employee met the standard or goal, and the reasons that support the conclusions. The face to face meeting should be scheduled when the employee and supervisor have adequate time to meet. Presenting an evaluation to an employee should include several key points. The supervisor should give the employee specific instances when performance was good and poor. If improvement is needed, a specific deadline should be set. The goals and standards should be realistic for the employee to achieve and within acceptable limits for the organization. When giving feedback to the employee, the supervisor should be honest. The evaluation should be
written so someone unfamiliar with the organization can understand the reason for the performance rating. The employee’s performance should be the focus of the evaluation not the employee’s personality. If an employee’s personality is affecting their performance, be specific how this trait did not meet the goals and standards. Listen to the employee’s comments on their evaluation. This will open communication lines between the employee and supervisor. The supervisor may get valuable information that might change the outcome of the evaluation rating.

Several issues pertaining to employee performance evaluations were written by Wrighton (2005). A review of Wrighton’s work found the organization must set up a schedule for employee performance evaluations. Without the organizational commitment and standardized procedures, evaluations are too easily put off. The evaluation process should be developed by having input from both the management of the organization and the employees. With this cooperative input, everyone can adhere to the guidelines. Evaluation of performance can then be objective and standard. Employee evaluations will help improve performance, define responsibilities, eliminate misunderstanding concerning job duties, clarify expected results, assist in employee development, and provide a written record for future reference. The formal evaluation system is also important because it eliminates a work group’s informal evaluation of a person from being the official record of performance.

Many organizations conduct employee performance evaluations annually. This is may cause problems with adherence with goal setting if the only feedback the employee receives is during a 12 month evaluation period. The employee may have made the same mistake twenty times during this period. The supervisor should review the goals
frequently during the evaluation period to provide feedback. The supervisor’s attitude should be helpful and supportive. The supervisor should show confidence in the employee’s ability to achieve the goals they set. The evaluation should emphasize the results of meeting goals, not the employee’s personality or shortcomings. If a goal was not met, the supervisor should determine what factors prevented the achievement and how the employee can overcome the obstacles. The annual evaluation is not the time or place for a reprimand. New goals should be set for the next evaluation period along with a new action plan to attain the set goals. The supervisor should have a formal interview each year with each employee report to them. This is accompanied by several informal interviews during the evaluation period. During this interview, the employee should not be surprised by anything discussed. The interview should simply be a review of the past evaluation period and a discussion of the goals and action plan for the next evaluation period. All pertinent facts should be recorded and shared with the employee. Goals and action plans should be included with these records and filed for future reference.

Problems with employee performance systems exist. The supervisor may have a “central tendency effect” (p. 83) which all employees are rated in the middle of the scale. A “recency factor” (p. 83) is an evaluation based only on recent events. These events may be positive or negative. A “halo effect” (p. 83) occurs when the supervisor considers good performance in one area override poor performance in another. The supervisor may have personal bias with factors that are not related to job performance influence the evaluation rating. Leniency or strictness by individual supervisors will adversely affect an employee’s evaluation.
Endenborough (2005) has issues with objectivity and feedback. He felt that if objectivity is not a part of assessing performance then the result would be subjective whim and prejudice. An objective measurement gives standardization to the predictions of individuals and their performance. Objectivity can not routinely be applied by all supervisors. Objectivity can be described as independent judgment from outside the organization and standardized tools are used. When the supervisor and employee being evaluated meet to discuss the evaluation, they have a better understanding of the behavior involved in either good or poor performance. The supervisor must develop a plan to harness the good performance and address directly or manage around the poor.

For feedback to be effective, the time between the actions being evaluated and the feedback from the supervisor needs to be compressed. If the time frame is lengthened, no appreciable effect or destabilization of the effect will occur. If appraisals are completed on an annual basis and that is the only time feedback is given to the employee, fine adjustments that effect major shifts in behavior will be limited.

The second research question regarding criteria other fire departments use for employee performance evaluations has limited published resources. The researcher broadened the question by removing fire department specific constraint. The result was a greater resource for literature review.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA, 2006) conducted a survey of member governmental entities and Moulder (2001) described the results. Employee performance evaluations are used to define expectations of the organization and then measuring the extent the employee meets those expectations. They communicate to the employee where they are having success and where improvement is
needed. They can be used for goal setting and fostering greater communication between supervisor and subordinate and between work groups. Employee performance evaluations have also been criticized for being subjective and unfair. The majority of cities surveyed by ICMA in 2000 about employee performance evaluations reported using a written performance standard that is associated with the employee’s job description. Many cities use multiple techniques to achieve a final evaluation. The performance techniques utilized by the surveyed cities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1, Performance Techniques

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<td>Interim appraisal of job performance</td>
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<td>Special management appraisals</td>
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<td>Review of supervisor by staff</td>
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The Fire Chief’s Handbook provides some fundamental guidelines. Brennan (1995) described the evaluation process is the means of regularly determining if an employee is meeting the needs of the department and the professional standards of the job. The determination is based on the manner in which the employee meets this criteria
and the degree. The evaluation should be an ongoing process based on observation of behavior by a supervisor. The process should provide the employee and department with information on the observed strengths and weaknesses. Training should be designed to accommodate the individual employee to eliminate or correct weaknesses.

A review of Neher’s (1997) work described employees as one of the most valuable assets of any organization. For such a valuable asset, many business owners do not spend enough time providing adequate maintenance, providing opportunity for improvement and properly caring for the employee. This is the common procedure for care of a piece of equipment. Employers care more for equipment than for the employees sometimes. Employers maintain good employee relations by having the employee assist in making goals for themselves over a reasonable period of time. Six months or annually is an adequate range for evaluating performance. Some supervisors dislike the performance evaluation process because of its potential to become an adversarial relationship with the subordinate. If done regularly and with care, the performance evaluation need not be a negative experience for the evaluator or the employee. The performance evaluation should include an interview about the employees' position with the company, how they are doing and ways that they could improve their performance. The evaluation should be handled in a positive manner. Neher reported that there are a number of available forms that can be used to evaluate employees. He also recommends to use three or four different forms and to rotate their use so the form does not become stale and it is not used by itself as a gauge to check progress or improvements. The supervisor should quantify the progress orally and use the form to stimulate discussion. If the same form is used and the employee has improved but not enough to change the
rating, then the supervisors is forced to changing the rating or explain why it did not change. One available form used a rating scale of poor to excellent and rated the employee's communication, planning, organizing, staffing, team work, controlling, leading and technical skills and abilities. He advises the supervisor must indicate what they believe the employee’s actual performance represents. The supervisor may have the employee fill out an identical form as a self-evaluation and to provide a copy of their performance evaluation prior to the interview. If the employer provides the employees the opportunity for self-evaluation, compare the results of the supervisors evaluation with the employee’s. Differences between the supervisors and the employee’s ratings provide an opportunity to discuss why the supervisor believes there is need for improvement or why the employee did better than their self-evaluation. The supervisor’s evaluation covers the areas where the employer wants the employee to improve, and the form used allows discussion of these areas. After the interview with the employee and discussing the evaluation, the supervisor should pick out two to three items where weaknesses can be improved. The supervisor should set a goal that reinforces a strength that could lead to a better job performance. The interview should be scheduled to leave time for the employee to discuss personal goals they may have and how they are going to attain those goals through their employment. Employees should not be surprised that they are not performing well at the performance evaluation. The supervisor should be communicating regularly on how they are doing and the evaluation should be the formal time to talk and set goals for the future. If an organization has not had performance evaluations in the past, there will be normal tension between the employee and the supervisor. When the supervisor sets up performance evaluation meetings with employees, send a clear
message of what is going to be accomplished. Never terminate an employee at the time of their performance evaluation. If an employee is terminated during a performance evaluation, this will create an atmosphere of fear. If an employee is doing poorly and the performance evaluation brings out the items for improvement, set realistic timetables to re-evaluate the employee regarding their performance. If the employee continues to under-perform, terminate the employee. At that point the employee will know that this job is not right for them and there is a better chance that the termination will be non-adversarial. Good employee moral and positive employee performance make organizations more money than any other asset.

Some of the most frequently used evaluation techniques were identified by Edwards (2005). The graphic rating scale utilizes a numerical scale with low numbers equating to a less desirable evaluation and higher numbers to a more desirable evaluation. Typically terms such as initiative, dependability, and cooperation are utilized to describe an employees attributes. This system relies on the supervisor’s opinion of the firefighter’s performance. Critical incident method requires the employer and supervisor to keep detailed records of excellent performance and unsatisfactory performance. The supervisor will utilize this data at the conclusion of the evaluation period to determine the employee’s performance. Ranking appraisal system consists of the supervisor grouping employees and assigning them from highest performance to lowest using a comparison of employees within the group. Behavior anchored rating scale system is based on a standard performance level that the employee is tested against. Management by objectives (MBO) system is based on an agreement between the supervisor and the employee of specific objective that must be completed during the evaluation period. The
completeness of the objectives determines the results of the performance evaluation. Total quality management (TQM) is a system based on giving employees feedback on areas in need of improvement. This feedback is in two parts. The first is subjective which is generated by managers, peers, and customers. The second is through statistical analysis of the work process.

Cheung (1999) described the 360° evaluation method as having evaluations submitted by the member’s peers, customers that the member has had interface with, management, and a self evaluation by the member. All these evaluations are compiled into a final report.

The third research question regarding what responsibilities from the OFD firefighter job description should be included in the new form was reviewed using the City of Orange Job Description 80-10 (Orange, 2003). The job description describes essential functions as protects life and property, maintains readiness, supports maintenance, contributes to fire prevention, and preserves and enhances the quality of life for citizens. Included in the essential functions titled Protects Life and Property are four sub-sections. The first is standby; maintaining standby readiness and being ready to respond at a moment’s notice to calls anytime day or night. The second is firefighting; receiving and responding to alarms; making proper emergency entrances; using portable extinguishing devices; using ropes; handling and using ladders properly; handling salvage and overhaul; using tools and equipment properly; driving and operating fire apparatus; using protective equipment; using radio equipment; recognizing and preserving evidence of fire cause; restoring apparatus and equipment to service after use. The third is emergency medical; providing emergency medical services and basic life support to
citizens in need of medical attention. The fourth is rescue; providing effective rescue from burning building and other emergency and non-emergency situations; responding to hazardous materials incidents; mitigating small incidents and controlling the scene of large incidents until they can be mitigated by the appropriate agency or contractor.

City of Orange Job Description 80-10 (Orange, 2003) describes the essential function of maintains personnel readiness with additional language to further define this function. The employee will participate in continuous training in skills and techniques of firefighting by; studying materials relating to fire tactics and other important information; maintaining knowledge of power tools and equipment; maintaining adequate cardiovascular and muscular fitness; participate in training operations including live fire, water rescue, vehicle rescue, hazardous materials, and emergency medical operations; inspecting assigned district to assure thorough knowledge of all streets, alleys, and buildings; maintaining a working knowledge of the street addresses, City limits, and hydrant locations.

City of Orange Job Description 80-10 (Orange, 2003) describes the essential function of supports maintenance with additional language to further define this function. The employee will complete this function by; caring for the station, apparatus and equipment; testing hoses; performing regular hydrant maintenance; performing general maintenance and cleaning work in the upkeep of departmental apparatus, equipment, furnishings, and structures, cleaning and washing walls and floors; washing, hanging, and drying hose; washing, cleaning and polishing apparatus.

City of Orange Job Description 80-10 (Orange, 2003) describes the job description identifies the overall strength demand for a firefighter as very heavy.
Continuous demands listed are vision, hearing, and talking. Frequent demands listed are
standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, reaching, handling, kneeling,
crouching, bending, twisting, climbing, and balancing. The job description describes
machines, tools, equipment and work aids as chainsaws, smoke ejectors, generators,
SCBA, axes, pike poles, ladders, ropes, hoses, deluge guns, halogen tools, oxygen bottle,
electrical cords, spanner wrenches, hydrant wrench, and other tools. Environmental
factors are described as works outside in all conditions, exposure to extreme heat,
vibrations, exposure to chemicals, exhaust, noise, power lines, smoke, flames, heat,
unsafe buildings, infectious diseases, unstable cars, distracted drivers, swift flowing
water, and sometimes not enough rest. Protective equipment is described as steel toed
boots, helmet, special gloves, coat, pants, helmet visor, Nomex hood, SCBA, and
personal floatation device.

City of Orange Job Description 80-10 (Orange, 2003) describes non-physical
demands as frequently encountered time pressures, noisy distracting environment,
performing multiple tasks simultaneously, and frequent change of tasks, working closely
with others as part of a team, irregular schedule/overtime, and stress.

City of Orange Job Description 80-10 (Orange, 2003) describes job requirements
as high school diploma or equivalent, Class B drivers license, civil service requirements,
speak English, obtain basic firefighter certification within one year, obtain emergency
care attendant certificate within one year, read English, write English, perform standard
mathematical calculations, have the ability to assess emergency situations calmly, act
safely, quickly, and have the ability to communicate effectively with coworkers, officials,
and citizens in a variety of situations.
In summary, literature review for the first three research questions established a significant basis for research. The last two research questions will utilize the information gathered in literature review.

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) was to create a new firefighter performance evaluation form. After completing the literature review for employee performance evaluations the researcher was educated on several evaluation methods that are utilized in a variety of career fields. With this new knowledge, the researcher created a series of questionnaires to gather information.

The sample size for questionnaires distributed within the OFD and the City of Orange was 100% or 36. Three questionnaires were utilized to query stakeholders in the OFD. The City of Orange questionnaire was conducted during the shift tour or scheduled work day of each employee. The employees selected are direct stakeholders in the OFD. The return rate for these employees was 36 or 100%. Questions for the questionnaire were developed by utilizing the information gathered in literature review. A copy of the questionnaire for OFD administrative personnel is located in Appendix B titled Administrative Questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire for OFD firefighters is located in Appendix C titled Firefighter Questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire to all OFD stakeholders querying evaluation issues and usage of the job description is located in Appendix D titled Issues & Job Description Questionnaire.

The sample size for the questionnaire sent to other fire departments consisted of 120 questionnaires sent out for a likely return of over 100. The sample size was determined by convenience. The people to complete the questionnaire were selected
from local contacts, former National Fire Academy (NFA) classmates, and people currently enrolled in EFOP. The researcher received 84 or 67% responses from the questionnaire. Questions for the questionnaire were developed by utilizing the information gathered in literature review. A copy of the questionnaire to other fire departments is located in Appendix A titled National Questionnaire.

The first research question queried what issues should be considered with the creation of a new employee performance evaluation form. The title of this questionnaire was Issues & Job Description Questionnaire. The researcher chose to present this questionnaire to 100% of the stakeholders of the OFD. These people were chosen because firefighter evaluations have a direct affect on them or their job description. This included all uniformed personnel, the human resources manager for the City of Orange, and the city manager of the City of Orange. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix D titled Issue & Job Description Questionnaire.

The second research question queried what criteria other fire departments use with firefighter evaluations. Literature review of employee performance evaluations resulted in thousands of sources. The researcher chose several documents and books to review before choosing three that most precisely answered the research question. The researcher chose to send a questionnaire that would adequately answer the research question to a variety of sources locally, regionally, and nation wide. The title of this questionnaire was National Questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

The third research question queried what responsibilities from the OFD job description should be included in the new employee performance evaluation form. The
questionnaire that queried what issues OFD personnel had with evaluations included a second task that asked personnel to choose which sections of the job description they thought should be included. A copy of the job description was included with the questionnaire. The responses to this questionnaire were very random when the researcher initially analyzed the data. Further analysis found similarities among responses. The researcher categorized or grouped responses in the following general categories: timeliness and dependability issues, relationships at work, human factors, measured performance standards, subjective and objective criteria, form usability, frequency of evaluation, variance in grading by time in. The title of this questionnaire was Issues & Job Description Questionnaire. The researcher chose to present this question to 100% of the stakeholders of the OFD. These people were chosen because firefighter evaluations have a direct affect on them or their job description. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix D.

The fourth research question queried what do OFD administrative personnel see as important to the new employee evaluation form. The title of this questionnaire was Administrative Questionnaire. The researcher chose to present a series of questions to every OFD administrative person that completes evaluation forms. These people were chosen because they complete firefighter evaluations or review them. This included all Captains, Battalion Chiefs, the Fire Chief, and City of Orange city manager. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix B.

The fifth research question queried what do OFD firefighters think should be included in the new employee evaluation form. The title of this questionnaire was Firefighter Questionnaire. The researcher chose to present a series of questions to every
OFD firefighter. Firefighters were chosen because they are the recipients of this type of evaluation. This included probationary employees. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

Limitations:

The limitations of the procedure are in several areas. The information found in the literary review was limited to citations the researcher felt relevant to this ARP. Much more information is available on the subject of employee performance evaluations. The questionnaire concerning types of evaluations was limited to the most frequently cited employee performance evaluation methods the researcher found in the literature reviewed. To send a questionnaire to a representative percentage of all the fire departments in the United States would lengthen the research process past the due date of this ARP. The returned questionnaire from within the City of Orange may have inaccuracies from employees that are on probation. These employees may believe the researcher could identify their responses by their handwriting and terminate them for their individual viewpoints. Each person that completed the questionnaire was located in a spare office and alone. Some of the questionnaires were not completed fully. Some questionnaire did not contain any choices given, just comments at the end. Some questionnaire only had one issue completed and some job descriptions had no indication of what should be included in a new employee performance evaluation form. Responses to this questionnaire were all handwritten with questionable grammar, punctuation, and word usage.

Assumptions:
The researcher took the assumption in these cases that nothing in the job
description should be included and the respondent disagreed with all areas. The reader
may also assume some of the questionnaire responses from OFD personnel were
deliberately skewed to the negative so the final product would favor their personal
employee performance evaluation.

RESULTS

The following information was gathered to answer each research question posed:

Research Question 1: What issues should be considered with the creation of an
employee performance evaluation form? A literature review was conducted on specific
documents and texts that legally affect issues for consideration with the creation of a new
employee performance evaluation form. These references include: the Texas Firemen's
and Policemen's Civil Service Law, Chapter 143 (Miller, 1989), International Association
of Firefighters Local 1432 and The City of Orange, Texas a Collective Bargaining
Basics (Guerin, 2002), and a report from the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee
(Margulies, 2004).

Information was sought but not located in the NFPA recommendations and
OSHA laws concerning employee performance evaluations. A best practice citation from
a nationally recognized standard would add to the researcher’s issues but none were
found.

Literature review was conducted next on recently published works concerning
issues of employee performance evaluations. These references include: Effective
Supervisory Practices: Better Results Through Teamwork (Wrighton, 2005), Assessment
Methods in Recruitment, Selection, and Performance: a managers guide to psychometric testing, interviews, and assessment centres (Edenborough, 2005), and Everyday Employment Law: The Basics (Guerin, 2002).

A questionnaire was distributed within the OFD to identify any issues personnel had with the development of a new employee performance evaluation form. A paraphrased summary of the comments are below. A copy of the questionnaire form is located in Appendix D titled Issues & Job Description Questionnaire.

The issues and job description questionnaire generated 70 issue responses from 36 employees of the OFD. The responses were very random when the researcher initially analyzed the data. Further analysis found similarities among responses. The researcher categorized or grouped responses in the following general categories: timeliness and dependability issues, relationships at work, human factors, measured performance standards, subjective and objective criteria, form usability, frequency of evaluation, variance in grading by time in OFD, evaluation process, consequences of a bad evaluation, and general comments.

The category of timeliness and dependability issues generated six responses. The respondents were concerned with the dependability of the employee, timeliness, attitude, and willingness to work. One respondent wrote that an employee should have intuitiveness to do the extra or nearly impossible when necessary. An issue of being on time and showing up every shift was a reoccurring issue. Respondents thought being timely with minimal absences, good relief, and good management of time are issues that should be included. Respondents thought is an employee was late for work, absent without leave, or unable to complete tasks on time was an important issue.
The category of relationship at work and human factors generated eleven responses. The respondents were concerned about measuring the employee’s ability to perform duties in public. Attributes such as being nice, friendly, and professional were qualities to be measured. Respondents thought supervisors should evaluate employees who create problems for others poorly. Measurements of how employees interact with peers and their ability to work closely with other members of the team under stressful and less optimum conditions were important factors. Issues concerning how some employees work with the different levels of co-workers should be measured.

The category of measured performance standards generated 22 responses. Respondents thought quantifiable standards should be used to evaluate firefighters. A method to measure task performance against established national, regional, or local norms was identified. Measuring the job knowledge of a three year firefighter against a 20 year veteran was identified as not being a fair evaluation method. Respondents thought readiness should be measured. The employee must keep their gear in a ready state to receive a favorable evaluation. The employee must also make sure the SCBA is full when checking the truck and have bunker gear ready to be donned without delay to receive a favorable evaluation. Respondents thought a method of tracking the consistency of performance of duties over a period of time should be developed. The employee must not just do well at a favorite task but do the whole job good to receive a favorable evaluation. Job safety and communications skills should be measured. Respondents thought a performance standard for the ability to establish water flow as needed from an Engine in a set time period would be a good evaluation tool. Measurable standards of streets and hydrants, equipment operations, station operations should be
evaluated. Respondents thought the supervisor should keep a record of good and bad performance. Respondents thought performance objectives should be based on nationally recognized methods, not the way OFD has modified those methods.

The category of subjective and objective criteria generated five responses. An issue of supervisors showing favoritism of certain employees should be eliminated from the evaluation process. The respondents thought the direct supervisor has more intimate knowledge of employees work abilities, knowledge, personality, and other factors that have a bearing on job performance. For this reason, the direct supervisor should lead the evaluation process. Respondents thought employees should set goals for every objective on the evaluation form. This would allow the employee to monitor their progress. They thought by incorporating job description tasks into an annual evaluation should allow for a closer monitoring process on typical job duties and functional tasks performed by a firefighter.

The category of form usability generated four responses. The respondents thought the form should have clearer wording of the particular categories. They recorded having too many issues in one category makes completing the form difficult. They thought the form should be simple and the grading scale easier to understand. The result will be the supervisor will be able to complete a fair and just evaluation that can be easily understood by upper management. They also thought the process should include a firm follow up interview.

The category of frequency of evaluation generated two responses. The respondents thought the frequency should be standardized by evaluating everyone during
the same month or their hire month. They also thought newly hired employees should be evaluated every quarter.

The category of variance in grading by time in OFD generated seven responses. The respondents thought the form should have standardized variances to take into account the firefighter’s time in service and prior experience. They also thought the evaluations should be specific to the level of competence needed for the time on the job. Evaluations must be adaptable to the level of time in the department. They thought the evaluation should be based on the individual’s skill level and not compared to someone else with more seniority and knowledge of the job

The category of evaluation process generated eleven responses. The respondents thought firefighters should have more than one Captain evaluate them to improve the process. All three Captains should evaluate the employee on the shift for fairness and keep everyone on the same level. They also thought self evaluation, and peer evaluation would improve the process. They also thought the evaluation process should include a medical physical section, this would allow for the monitoring of the employee from a health and wellness standpoint.

The category of consequences of a bad evaluation generated two responses. The respondents thought the process should include termination of the employee if evaluated poorly in your probationary year.

The category of general comments generated eight responses. The respondents thought the evaluation process should be used to educate personnel. They also thought the process should be consistent, well documented, include goals, consider time in service, measure work ethic, commitment to the job, and self motivation.
Raw data gathered in the issues and job description questionnaire is located in Appendix F titled Issues & Job Description Raw Data. Spelling was corrected but language and wording are verbatim from collected questionnaire forms.

The researcher analyzed the data collected for research question 1. The questionnaire presented to OFD personnel asking for issues that should be considered with the creation of a new evaluation form generated several general areas of concern. The ability of an employee to come to work on time, willing to complete the work schedule, and not calling in sick was identified as an important issue. Another issue was the ability of the employee to sustain a good relationship with others in the work group. Measurements of job skills were identified as an issue that should be considered with the evaluation process. Employees would like to have a measurable standard to meet. An issue with subjective and objective criteria for evaluations was found. Subjectivity is important but should be balanced with measurable objectives. The ease of the forms usability was found to have issues. Several issues concerning the comparison of senior firefighters with firefighters with much less seniority were expressed. Issues with the evaluation process were recorded. An evaluation that has input from several people rather than one supervisor dominated this issue.

Research Question 2: What criteria do other fire departments use with firefighter evaluations? Literature review was conducted on this question with no results. Specific information has not been published on what criteria individual fire departments use for firefighter evaluations. The researcher broadened the question by removing the term fire departments. This resulted in many sources of information recently published. The term firefighter was added to the search to narrow the choice field after general data was
collected. The following resources were found: Performance Appraisals for Local
Government Employees: Programs and Practices (Moulder, 2001), The Fire Chief’s
Handbook (Brennan, 1995), Fire Service Personnel Management (Edwards, 2005),
Introducing a 360 Degree Performance Evaluation (Cheung, 1999), and A Better Way to
do Employee Evaluations (Neher, 1997). The researcher found these publications to
provide the most precise answer to research question 2.

A questionnaire was utilized to query other fire departments. The questionnaire
was delivered to a variety of fire departments located regionally and nationally by E-mail.
A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix A. The title of the questionnaire is
National Questionnaire. The questionnaire generated 84 responses from a variety of
different size fire departments. The numbers of different size departments are in
Appendix E titled National Questionnaire Raw Data. The majority of fire departments
that responded had 51 to 100 members. The questionnaire also generated data identifying
the type of fire department the respondent was a member of. The choices were career,
combination, and volunteer. Raw data on types of fire departments are also located in
Appendix E. The majority of responses came from career fire departments but all type
departments were represented. The questionnaire asked if the department conducted
evaluations on firefighters. The vast majority responded that they did complete
evaluations. The questionnaire asked if the department utilized the firefighter job
description as the basis for evaluation. The majority used this method.

The national questionnaire asked if the department used a graphic rating scale
with subjective criteria to evaluate firefighters. The vast majority of fire department that
responded utilized this type evaluation method. The questionnaire asked if the
department utilized a critical incident method for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of departments that responded to the questionnaire did not use this method for evaluation. The questionnaire asked if the department utilized a ranking appraisal method for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The vast majority did not use this evaluation method. The questionnaire asked if the department utilized a behavior anchored rating scale method for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The vast majority did not use this evaluation method. The questionnaire asked if the department used an objective based system for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority did not use this method but slightly more than half did use this method. The questionnaire asked if the department utilized total quality management (TQM) system for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The vast majority of respondents did not use this method. The questionnaire asked if the department utilized a 360 degree evaluation system for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The vast majority did not use this method. The questionnaire asked if the department utilized a combination of the various systems in their evaluation system. Three methods were utilized the most; they were job description based, graphic rating system, and objective based.

The national questionnaire asked if the department required the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting with the member during the evaluation process. The evaluation process was explained to the respondents as the actual time the employee receives the evaluation from the supervisor. The vast majority of departments that responded require this meeting. The questionnaire asked what frequency the departments conducted evaluations on non-probationary firefighters. The majority conduct evaluations annually. The questionnaire asked if the department requires the supervisor to conduct a formal
meeting with the member during the evaluation period to provide information about the firefighter’s progress leading up to the evaluation. Most departments do not require this meeting. Details of numerical results to research question one is located in Appendix E

The researcher analyzed the data collected for research question two. ICMA surveyed over 2000 governmental entities and found many use multiple techniques of evaluation to achieve a useful product. Many employee performance evaluations were criticized for being subjective and unfair. ICMA survey suggested that the employee evaluations should define the organizations expectations and then measure the employee against those standards. (Moulder, 2001) Neher (1997) wrote in his journal article that semi-annual or annual evaluations are preferred. He emphasized the need for a formal interview between the employee and supervisor during the evaluation process. He also suggested rotating evaluation forms so the form does not become stale to the supervisor. During the evaluation process a portion should include a self evaluation by the employee. The differences between the supervisors evaluation and the employees self evaluation creates an opportunity for the supervisor to identify weaknesses and set goals. He also reminded supervisors that the evaluation process is not a disciplinary action.

The national questionnaire indicated that most also use a graphic rating scale with subjective criteria to accomplish the evaluation. When multiple evaluation systems are utilized, the job description, a graphic rating scale, and an objective based system was utilized. Most departments require a formal meeting between the supervisor and employee when the evaluation is presented. Most departments conduct evaluations annually.
Research Question 3: What responsibilities from the OFD firefighter job description should be included in the new form? The questionnaire inquiring what issues personnel of OFD had with the creation of an employee performance evaluation form contained an additional request. Members of OFD were asked what responsibilities from the OFD firefighter job description should be included in a new evaluation form. Members were asked to highlight the responsibilities they thought should be included. A copy of the question and instructions are located in Appendix D titled Issues & Job Description Questionnaire.

The job description contains a brief description of the job. The majority of OFD personnel think this should not be included in the evaluation form. Numerical data collected is located in Appendix F titled Issues & Job Description Raw Data.

The job description contains a section titled essential functions. A disclaimer sentence starts this section. The majority think it should not be included. Essential functions section of the job description contains several duties for protection life and property. They are: stand-by, firefighting, emergency medical service, rescue, maintains personal readiness, supports maintenance functions, contributes to fire prevention, and preserves and enhances quality of life for citizens. The majority of OFD personnel agree that these functions should be included in firefighter evaluations. Numerical data collected is located in Appendix F.

The next section of the job description had physical demands. The job description describes the overall strength demand as very heavy. The vast majorities of OFD personnel think this is accurate and should be included in the evaluation form. The physical demand section of the job description contained expected physical demands.
The first was standing and walking, most did not agree that this element should be included in the evaluation form. The second was lifting and carrying, most disagreed that this should be included. The third was pushing and pulling, most disagreed that this should be included. The fourth was reaching, most disagreed that this should be included. The fifth was handling, most disagreed that this should be included. The sixth was bending, most disagreed that this should be included. The seventh was twisting, most disagreed that this should be included. The eighth was climbing and balancing, most disagreed that this should be included. The ninth was hearing and talking, most disagreed that this should be included. The tenth was vision, most disagreed that this should be included. The eleventh was kneeling, most disagreed that this should be included. The twelfth was sitting, most disagreed that this should be included. The thirteenth was fine dexterity, most disagreed that this should be included. Numerical data collected is located in Appendix F.

The next section of the job description contains the physical description of duties. These included several ergonomic and physical abilities which included; use of foot controls, crouching and crawling, stamina, varying degrees of body position, use of machine tools, use of equipment and work aids, work environmental factors, use of protective equipment, and non-physical demands. The only two physical descriptions the majority of OFD personnel agreed should be included in the evaluation form were use of machines and work environmental factors. Numerical data collected is located in Appendix F.

The next section of the job description contained job requirements. Included were; formal education, experience, valid driver’s license, commission requirements,
Personnel of the OFD thought four job requirements should be included in employee evaluations. The four job requirements were: reading English, writing English, reasoning skill, and interpersonal skills. Numerical data collected is located in Appendix F.

The researcher analyzed the data collected for research question three. ICMA surveyed over 2000 governmental entities and found the majority tied the employee performance evaluation to the employee’s job description. (Moulder, 2001) The national questionnaire indicated most fire departments conduct employee performance evaluations utilizing the employee job description as the basis. Most OFD personnel think essential functions such as stand-by readiness, firefighting, emergency medical service, rescue, personal readiness, and maintenance functions should be measured for the employee performance evaluation. Most OFD personnel also think the physical demand is heavy for their job and a description of those demands should include the use of machine tools and the ability to work in a variety of environments. They also believe reading and writing English is important. The ability to assess emergency situations calmly and communicate with co-workers is also important to OFD personnel.

Research Question 4: What do OFD administrative personnel see as being important to the new form? A questionnaire was distributed to members of the OFD administration personnel to collect data. Administrative personnel were defined by the researcher as anyone who conducts employee performance evaluations. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix B.

The first question of the questionnaire asked the supervisor if they thought the employee performance evaluation system that is currently in use should be changed. The
majority of supervisors agreed. The second question asked if the supervisor thought the firefighter job description should be utilized as the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors agreed. The third question asked if the supervisor thought a graphic rating scale with subjective criteria should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors agreed. The fourth question asked if the supervisor thought a critical incident method should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors thought this method should not be used. The fifth question asked if the supervisor thought a ranking appraisal method should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors thought this method should not be used. The sixth question asked if the supervisor thought a behavior anchored rating scale should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors thought this method should be used. The seventh question asked if the supervisor thought an objective based system should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. A slight majority of supervisors thought this method should not be used. The eighth question asked if the supervisor thought a total quality management system should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors thought this method should not be used. The ninth question asked if the supervisor thought a 360 degree evaluating system should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of supervisors thought this method should not be used. The tenth question asked if the supervisor thought a combination of the various systems should be utilized for the basis of evaluating firefighters. The supervisor was instructed to choose the types they would like to apply. The two methods that received the majority of positive responses were the job description based and the behavior
anchored. The eleventh question asked if the supervisor thought it should be mandatory for the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting with the firefighter during the evaluation process. The majority of supervisors thought this requirement should be implemented. The twelfth question asked the supervisor at what frequency should evaluations occur. A slight majority of supervisors thought annual evaluations should be completed. The thirteenth question asked if the supervisor thought there should be a requirement for the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting with the firefighter during the evaluation period to provide information about the firefighter’s progress leading up to the evaluation. The majority of supervisors thought this requirement should be implemented. Detailed numerical results collected from the administrative questionnaire are located in Appendix G.

The researcher analyzed the data collected for research question 4. Most OFD administrative personnel think the evaluation system in current use should be changed and the job description should be utilized as the basis of the new form. The system most agree should be utilized is the behavior anchored rating scale. A slim majority favor the graphic rating scale and total quality management system. If a combination of evaluation systems were utilized, the majority prefer the job description and the behavior anchored systems. A majority think a formal interview with the employee is needed during the evaluation period to provide feedback before the evaluation process. They also think a formal interview should take place during the evaluation process. A slim majority think employee performance evaluations should occur on an annual basis.

Research Question 5: What do firefighters of OFD think should be included in a new performance evaluation form for firefighters? A questionnaire was distributed to
members of the OFD to collect data. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix C.

The first question of the questionnaire asked if the OFD firefighter thought the employee performance evaluation system in use currently should be changed. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The second question asked if the firefighter thought the firefighter job description should be utilized as the basis of evaluating firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The third question asked if the firefighter thought a graphic rating scale with subjective criteria should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The fourth question asked if the firefighter thought a critical incident method should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The fifth question asked if the firefighter thought a ranking appraisal system should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied no. The sixth question asked if the firefighter thought a behavior anchored rating scale method should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The seventh question asked if the firefighter thought an objective based system should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The eighth question asked if the firefighter thought a total quality management (TQM) system should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The ninth question asked if the firefighter thought a 360 degree evaluation system should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The tenth question asked if the firefighter thought a combination of various systems should be utilized to evaluate firefighters. The choices were: job description, graphic rating scale, critical incident, ranking appraisal, behavior anchored, objective
based, TQM, and 360 degree. The firefighter was instructed to choose which systems they would like to apply. All methods except ranking appraisal were chosen by the majority of OFD firefighters as the system they would like to use. The eleventh question asked if the firefighter thought it should be mandatory for the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting with the firefighter during the evaluation process. The majority of firefighters replied yes. The twelfth question asked the firefighter at what frequency should evaluations occur. The majority of firefighters replied annually. The thirteenth question asked if the firefighter thought there should be a requirement for the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting with the firefighter during the evaluation period to provide information about the firefighter’s progress leading up to the evaluation. The majority of firefighters replied yes.

The researcher analyzed the data collected for research question 5. OFD firefighters answered yes to more questions than administrative personnel. The majority answered yes to all questions except the question asking if the ranking appraisal system should be utilized. They think if a combination of systems should be utilized all except the ranking appraisal system should be utilized. They also think formal interviews should take place during the evaluation period and at the evaluation process. Most agree the frequency should be annually.

DISCUSSION

The problem for this applied research project has existed in the OFD for many years. The premise of the researchers initial literature review for the 1st research question was legal issues rather than personal issues from individuals. Three references the researcher found to be specific for an employee performance evaluation for the OFD
were located in legally binding text of civil service law, the union contract, and EEOC opinions. Texas Firemen’s and Policemen’s Civil Service Law, Chapter 143 states “These reports should be completed semiannually and collected by the civil service commission” (Miller, 1989). Nationally 79% of the fire departments that responded to the questionnaire complete employee evaluations annually. 53% of OFD administrative personnel think evaluations should be completed annually and 67% of OFD firefighters think evaluations should be completed annually. The contract between the City of Orange and IAFF 1432 gives management the right to manage the department which includes employee evaluations and the law states evaluations should be completed semi-annually (The City of Orange, 2004 thru 2007). Guerin’s (2002) book on everyday employment law reminded the researcher that the end result of employee performance evaluations is improved performance not disciplinary action. She wrote the employee’s performance should be measured against recognized or organizational standards. The final form of the evaluation should be in written form. Measurements of job skills were identified as an issue from the questionnaire presented to OFD personnel and that should be considered with the evaluation process. The questionnaire also revealed employees would like to have a measurable standard to meet.

The organizations commitment to employee performance evaluations with scheduled evaluation periods for all employees was emphasized in Wrighton’s (2005) book. He also wrote about the importance of periodic meetings with the employee during the evaluation period. A formal interview at the end of the evaluation period to present the employee with the results is also important. He also identified several problems that supervisors fall victim to when completing evaluations. They are “central tendency
effect, recency factor, and the halo effect” (p83). The national questionnaire indicated 89% of fire departments require a formal meeting between the supervisor and employee during the evaluation process. The questionnaire presented to OFD administrative personnel indicated 85% favored a formal interview during the evaluation process and 69% favored a requirement of the supervisor to conduct formal meeting during the evaluation period. OFD currently requires the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting during the evaluation process. OFD personnel indicated they had issues with supervisors conducting evaluations. Several issues concerning the comparison of senior firefighters with firefighters with much less seniority were expressed. Terms used by OFD firefighters listed in the issues questionnaire were: consistency, balance, equal, and fairness. Obviously some of Wrighton’s (2005) problems by supervisors occur within the OFD.

Edenborough’s (2005) book emphasized the need for objectivity with employee evaluations. He also wrote that feedback to the employee was essential to a successful evaluation system. Some of the issues recorded from OFD personnel refer to having a level playing field with other firefighters, balancing subjective and objective criteria, and the ability to meet set standards. The national questionnaire recorded 78% of fire departments do not use objective based evaluation criteria. OFD administrative personnel responded 58% to the questionnaire that they would not prefer an objective based evaluation. OFD firefighters responded 67% in their questionnaire that they would like to have an objective based evaluation. The cited published authors think an objective based evaluation system is best. The national questionnaire indicated and OFD
administration personnel do not think an objective based evaluation is preferred but OFD firefighters would like to be evaluated on objective criteria.

The questionnaire requesting OFD personnel to list issues they thought should be considered in a new evaluation form produced many responses. Some responses produced useful data and some responses contained personal attacks on supervisors in general. Some issues that were repeated by many OFD personnel were the ability of an employee to come to work on time, willing to complete the work schedule, and not calling in sick. Another issue was the ability of the employee to sustain a good relationship with others in the work group. The ease of the forms usability was found to have issues. Issues with the evaluation process were recorded. An evaluation that has input from several people rather than one supervisor dominated this issue.

Research question 2 queried what criteria other fire departments use for employee evaluations. Definitions and explanations of the most frequently used employee evaluation techniques were defined by Edwards (2005). A technique that Edwards (2005) did not list but is utilized by many organizations is the 360 degree method. Cheung (1999) defined the 360 degree technique in her journal article. These techniques were listed and defined in the questionnaires for better clarity. The national questionnaire recorded the majority (78%) of departments use a graphic rating scale for employee evaluations. The majority of OFD administrative personnel preferred the behavior anchored system. The majority of OFD firefighters also preferred the behavior anchored system. OFD currently utilizes the graphic rating scale system. The majority of OFD administrative personnel and OFD firefighters would like to see the system change according to the questionnaire.
ICMA surveyed over 2000 governmental entities and found many use multiple techniques of evaluation to achieve a useful product (Moulder, 2001). The national questionnaire indicated combinations of three techniques were utilized most. The three were job description based, graphic rating scale, and objective based systems. The questionnaire of OFD administrative personnel indicated a combination of two techniques received the majority of choices. They chose the job description based and behavior anchored systems. The questionnaire presented to OFD firefighters indicated a combination of six techniques received the majority of choices. They chose the job description, critical incident, behavior anchored, objective based, TQM, and 360 degree systems. The behavior anchored system received a slight majority over the other five choices from OFD firefighters. The data collected indicated the job description based system was common among the national questionnaire respondents, OFD administrative personnel, and OFD firefighters. The objective based system was common in the national questionnaire and OFD firefighter questionnaire. The behavior anchored system chosen by the OFD administrative personnel.

The ICMA survey found many employee performance evaluations were criticized for being subjective and unfair. ICMA states the employee evaluations should define the organizations expectations and then measure the employee against those standards (Moulder, 2001). The national questionnaire indicated this system is utilized throughout the fire service the majority of the time. OFD personnel agree with Moulder that this system is unfair.

Neher (1997) wrote in his journal article that semi-annual or annual evaluations are preferred. The national questionnaire indicated that annual evaluations are conducted
the majority of the time. OFD administrative personnel and firefighters also prefer an annual evaluation. Neher (1997) emphasized the need for a formal interview between the employee and supervisor during the evaluation process. The national questionnaire indicated a formal interview is conducted the majority of the time. OFD administrative personnel and firefighters agree with the national questionnaire respondents. During the evaluation process a portion should include a self evaluation by the employee (Neher, 1997). An issue was written on the questionnaire by OFD personnel in several instances that self evaluation should be included in the evaluation process.

Research question 3 queried OFD personnel about what responsibilities from the City of Orange firefighter job description should be utilized in employee evaluations. The job description is written with comprehensiveness yet rather nonspecific as a measurement tool.

The majority of OFD personnel agreed that maintaining a state of readiness to respond, responding to fires, hazardous material incidents, emergency medical incidents, rescue incidents are essential functions of their job. They also agreed that training, supporting maintenance functions, fire prevention duties, and the enhancement of quality of life of our customers is essential. Measuring an employee’s stand by readiness would be difficult over a six or twelve month period. Utilizing a critical incident technique as described by Edwards (2000) may be the best choice. The supervisor would be required to keep a detailed record of excellent and unsatisfactory performance to achieve this measurement (p.150). The job description provides more detail in the essential functions section on response to fires, medical emergencies, rescues, and hazardous material incidents. Practical evolutions with time or technique standards would create an
objective based evaluation. An objective measurement gives standardization to the predictions of individuals and their performance (Edenborough, 2005). The measurement of training, maintenance functions, and fire prevention duties can be easily determined by tracking training and staff activities in OFD’s database system. This technique can be considered an objective based evaluation. The enhancement of quality of life of our customers may be difficult to measure internally. Collecting outside data from customer contacts would be time consuming and possibly incomplete for every individual in OFD. A subjective evaluation by the supervisor is possibly the best solution.

The job descriptions next general area is physical demands. The majority of OFD personnel disagree that most of this criterion should be included in an evaluation. The single area that had a majority agree was machines, tools, equipment, and work aids. This section includes lists the typical tools carried on most fire apparatus. An objective based evaluation may be the best tool for evaluation. Practical evaluation by the supervisor during a company drill could be a possible method of documentation of efficiency. Individual practical evaluation during the evaluation process is another possible method of evaluation. A written test covering a nationally recognized standard in the use of these tools is yet another possibility for an evaluation tool.

The final section of the job description is the requirements an individual needs for the job title firefighter. The areas that received the majority of positive responses from OFD personnel were: reading, writing, reasoning, and interpersonal skills. Evaluation of reading and writing skill may be completed by a standardized test from a nationally recognized testing agency. The difficulty level should be at the high school graduate level. Another option could utilize written documents submitted by the employees during
their normal record keeping tasks or incident reports. These documents could be graded by an outside source from a local school. This would take the internal subjectivity issue out of the evaluation. Reasoning skills could be evaluated using a standardized written test created by a nationally recognized authority. Peer group evaluation could be an alternative to a formal test to evaluate reasoning skills. Interpersonal skills could be evaluated by a review of documented disciplinary actions that occurred during the evaluation period. Another method could be the use of a peer group evaluation.

The fourth research question queried OFD administrative personnel what they thought was important to include in a new evaluation form. The questionnaire indicated a great majority thought the current system should be changed. The results from the questionnaire also indicated an evaluation should be based on the job description. The results of all questionnaires indicate this may be the best choice for the basis of an evaluation. The questionnaire also indicated the evaluation system should contain a behavior anchored method and a graphic rating scale. Both of these systems contain a subjective element that the administrative staff of OFD obviously approves of. The OFD administrative personnel thought evaluations should be conducted annually. The questionnaire results were only slightly in favor of annual evaluations rather than semi-annual so the final analysis could be considered evenly split. The questionnaire indicated administrative personnel think a formal meeting should occur at interval during the evaluation period and during the actual evaluation process. This element may provide greater interface between the employee and supervisor. A possible extension to this questionnaire result may be a rotating formal interview with all supervisors on the shift.
The fifth research question queried OFD firefighters about what they thought should be included in a new evaluation form. The results indicated they thought an overwhelming change should take place. Most questions concerning the type of evaluation system that should be used were answered yes by OFD firefighters. The only exception was the ranking appraisal system which groups employees and ranks them against each other. The researcher analyzed this great number of positive responses as any system is better than the current. Detailed numerical results are located in Appendix H titled Firefighter Questionnaire Raw Data.

An evaluation system that incorporates the sheer variety of systems OFD firefighters would like to use may be difficult to create and administer. The additional work load on the supervisors may create tremendous back log and marginal final conclusions. Additionally, the complexity of the form may make the firefighters desire to receive a good evaluation difficult to achieve.

The researcher compared the OFD firefighter’s responses to OFD the administrative personnel responses. The two questionnaires contained the same questions so this comparison could be analyzed. The first question querying if the existing evaluation form should be changed resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The second question querying if the job description should be used for evaluation resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The third question querying if a graphic rating scale should be used resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The fourth question querying if a critical incident method should be used resulted in the majority of firefighters responding yes and administrative
personnel responding no. The fifth question querying if a ranking appraisal system should be used resulted in a similar negative response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The sixth question querying if a behavior anchored system should be used resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The seventh question querying if a objective based system should be used resulted in firefighters responding yes and administrative personnel no. The eighth question querying if a TQM system should be used resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The ninth question querying if a 360 degree system should be used resulted in firefighters responding yes and administrative personnel no. The tenth question querying if a combination of different systems should be used resulted in similar positive responses for the job description and behavior anchored systems. Results of this comparison are illustrated in Graph 1. The eleventh question querying if a formal meeting should be required during the evaluation process resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The twelfth question querying what frequency should evaluations be completed resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. The thirteenth question querying if a requirement for the supervisor to conduct a formal meeting during the evaluation period should be implemented resulted in a similar positive response from firefighters and administrative personnel. Detailed numerical results from the firefighter questionnaire is located in Appendix H titled Firefighter Questionnaire Raw Data.

Graph 1, Comparison of OFD Administration and Firefighter Responses
RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this applied research project was to create a new firefighter performance evaluation form for OFD. Through literature review and questionnaires, the researcher gathered enough information to create an evaluation form that every member of the OFD provided input to.

Based on the results of this ARP, the OFD needs to consider the new employee performance evaluation form located in Appendix I titled New Firefighter Evaluation Form. The new evaluation system will be completed every 6 months in accordance with Texas Civil Service Law. Rather than tracking hire dates to complete the evaluation every six months from date of hire, every January and July all personnel will have an evaluation completed. Each supervisor should be responsible for completing an evaluation to employees that report directly to them. This would result in a supervisor completing three to four evaluations every six months. The supervisor will be allowed 45 days from January 1st and July 1st to complete the evaluations. This extended time frame
will allow for personnel that are on vacation to complete or participate in the evaluation process. For supervisory personnel that are on extended leave, their required evaluations will be assigned to another supervisor. For firefighters that are on extended leave, a form letter will be filed explaining the reason for the leave and no evaluation was completed.

Formal meeting between the employee and supervisor will be required during the first month of each calendar quarter (January, April, July, and October). The formal meeting in January and July will correspond with the presentation of the evaluation to the employee. The formal meeting in April and October will be an opportunity for the supervisor to inquire about the employee of their progress and give feedback. A uniform operating guideline (UOG) will be developed to guide the supervisor on points to cover during the presentation of evaluation meeting and the progress meeting. This will insure all supervisors are aware of what should be covered during each meeting.

The new form was based on a combination of the City of Orange firefighter job description (Orange, 2003), objective based criteria (Edwards, 2005), behavior anchored criteria (Edwards, 2005), and a modified 360 degree appraisal system (Cheung, 1999). The evaluation system has elements of subjectivity and objectivity. The subjective elements are diluted by requiring input from all three supervisors on the shift the firefighter is assigned to. The objective elements include standardized written tests and timed practical evolutions. The behavior anchored criterion will be collected from disciplinary documentation during the evaluation period. The elements of the evaluation taken from the 360 degree appraisal system will be a section for self evaluation and peer evaluation. The total score for each employee will be tabulated and measured against a numerical score range to come to the final conclusion. Terms used for grading will be:
excellent, above average, average, below average, and unacceptable. The numerical score range will vary according to the amount of years the firefighter has been employed by OFD.

The implementation of this change will occur in July of 2007. Evaluations of firefighters only will adhere to the new evaluation system. Firefighters will be evaluated utilizing the new system for two evaluation periods. Feedback from firefighters and supervisors to the researcher will provide needed evaluation of the new system. Modifications will be entered into the system as needed for the first two evaluation periods. After the modifications are complete, the new evaluation system will become permanent. A new employee performance evaluation form will then be developed for supervisors. The basis of the evaluation will follow the firefighter evaluation.

The researcher recommends the OFD follow the example of inclusion of all stakeholders when making changes that affect many employees. The researcher understands the difficulty in gathering quality input from all stakeholders to make a decision of change. Routine decisions on day to day operations should continue to come from the senior management.

Future readers of this ARP should realize employee performance evaluations are an important part of the fire service. Employees that strive to excel and have a continual improvement process with their professional development enjoy the performance evaluation process. Employees that have a mediocre attitude, effort level, and involvement in the organization find little substance in the evaluation process. Poor performing employees dread the evaluation process. The evaluation process should be a tool to commend employees that excel and improve employees that do not. Using a
standardized evaluation tool may be the easy answer to an organization's employee evaluation requirement. Attaining input from stakeholders, literary review, and networking with others will result in a customized employee performance evaluation system for their organization.
REFERENCES


Orange, City of (2003). *Firefighter Job Description 80-10*.


