

**Standardized Training Within the Genoa Township Fire Department.**

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A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

30 July 2014

## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. 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.

2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify what other local departments in the state of Ohio were doing for their training and how they came to the decision of how they were training their personnel. Using the descriptive research method, the author attempted to answer four questions. 1. How does the lack of a standardized training program affect crew job performance? 2. How should priorities be determined in order to implement a standardized training program? 3. How do other departments determine priorities or determine their standards in their training program? 4. How would we determine the need to implement a standardized training program?

A literature review of government regulations, professional standards, and professional journal articles was undertaken. A survey was also employed to gather information regarding surround departments in the central Ohio area regarding their training practices.

Literature review revealed that GTFD should list all organizational functions and also ensure for the training of their personnel in each function.

Departments should develop their training program based on the list of organizational functions, with input from personnel, regulations while retaining the flexibility to change with the current needs of the organization.

Adequate personnel or resources must be allocated to analyze the needs, develop the training program and follow through on the implementation of said training program.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Genoa Township Fire Department (GTFD) continues to grow and evolve in the services it provides. Most recently, nine new career line personnel were hired, increasing staffing across all crews by 33%, for a total of 27 career line personnel. Most of the new personnel have little to no experience in the various fire disciplines, requiring a variety of training topics and levels within each crew.

The problem that this research will address is that currently, GTFD does not have a standardized approach to delivering training which causes much variation in the level and content of the training that is being delivered across the crews. The current training approach is non-structured, meaning that the program does not follow any formal program or methodology. This will be researched using both descriptive and action research and an external survey of other fire departments during the research project.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research project is to examine what other methods are available that will enhance the training of the GTFD.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will be answered by this evaluative research:

1. How does the lack of a standardized training program affect crew job performance?
2. How should priorities be determined in order to implement a standardized training program?

3. How do other departments determine priorities or determine their standards in their training program?
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## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Genoa Township Fire Department provides fire prevention, public safety education, fire, rescue and emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, and dive rescue response to a township of 26 square miles serving a population of 23,644. Each one of these disciplines requires a unique set of skills for the rescuer to be proficient in, as well as, exposes the rescuer to new and unique risks. By accepting these roles, fire departments are promising their citizens that a well-trained and proficient team of rescuers will respond to their calls, and at the same time, they are promising to their firefighters the support they will need to operate, as safely as can be expected will be provided. Total incidents in 2012 numbered 1,605. Of the 1,605 calls for service, 71% of those calls were EMS calls in nature of which GTFD provides paramedic level service with transport to any hospital within the greater Columbus area. The EMS service is provided with a primary staffed medic vehicle with capabilities to respond with a second medic vehicle from cross staffed personnel on other vehicles on a daily basis. Genoa Township is mostly residential with less than 1% commercial/industrial base. Within Genoa Township, Hoover reservoir, is a major source of domestic water supply for the Columbus metropolitan area and is also a recreational watershed. Additionally Genoa Township Fire Department has automatic aid agreements with all surrounding jurisdictions thereby also increasing our response area. Currently, GTFD employs 27 career line suppression personnel broken down to nine personnel on a shift, working a 24 hours on 48 hours off 3 platoon work rotation. The training hours for the period of 12/1/2012 to 12/1/2013 numbered 5,678 hours. Dividing this by the 27 line personnel per year then broken down per shift realizes that each person averages 2 hours of training per shift. Currently the State of Ohio Department of Public Safety Division of EMS, sets for guidelines and required course work for recertification of EMS

cards in the State of Ohio. This same division does require continuing education for fire recertification, but there is not set guideless or required course work. In an effort to keep this research projects focus, I will examine the fire training programs and not attempt to include EMS training and recertification.

In the mid 1990's Genoa Township began to undergo a significant residential housing growth period. As a result of this residential growth GTFD began to experience an increase in requests for services. On April 1, 2001 the GTFD transitioned from an all-volunteer fire department to a fulltime career staffed department. After the original 11 full time employees were hired, the township continued to grow, GTFD went thru a period of stagnant personnel growth and hiring. The department was able to add some personnel but not keeping with the additional demands the department was seeing for service. We have recently been able to hire an additional 9 personnel to increase staffing across all three shifts, which was an increase in staffing of 33%. After this most recent hiring of personnel it has become apparent that we have a wide variety of training levels within GTFD. These training deficiencies are most evident at incidents where an employee or groups of employees fail to perform tasks that are considered fundamental or tasks that they have been trained on previously and for some reason fail to perform to the level of their previous instruction. For example during a structure fire, employees have improperly placed ground ladders that could have led to the injury of a firefighter if the ladder was needed. Another example of a lack of readiness is newer employees that exhibited great difficulty in assisting in setting up a decontamination line during an incident, while the more seasoned veterans on the crew had no problems performing their assigned tasks.

The primary concern for GTFD management is that the current laws governing the training and qualification of firefighters in Ohio do not extend to different ranks and/or



assignments, nor do they address the periodic recertification process except to require a certain number of continuing education hours depending on your level of certification. The requirements do not state what these continuing education hours must entail. In addition, there are no department policies or programs to ensure this either. In other words, it could be said that there is no meaningful method for evaluating on-going firefighting skill proficiency for incumbent employees. Being a relatively new full time department we have not had the ability to form or establish a formal training program. We have basically trained our personnel on topics as they became relevant or in other cases when deficiencies were noticed while operating on the fire ground or various incidents. We are now at the time of our developmental growth stage that we need to explore various training programs to ensure that we are doing all that we can to train our personnel to their full capabilities. This challenge is unique as stated above as that there are very few personnel that have any other experience at any other fire department that would lend some sort of degree of knowledge or input on how other departments operate their training programs. In addition to how they operate their training programs, are they effective, are they seeing the results that they believe they should be achieving with their training program. The fire ground that we now face is a rapidly changing environment. With that being said, we believe that we should be exploring every possible format to be training our personnel. But, we also recognize that before we can train our personnel in what would be considered some of the advanced techniques or strategies, they must absolutely be proficient in the basics of firefighting practices. So this is where we find our dilemma, how do we train our personnel in some of the latest advancements, or tactical strategies, unless we know they have a strong basic knowledge in the fundamental tasks? Or are we providing good basic training to our new personnel, and how do we ensure that they are ready to answer the next call that may be presented to them? The

scenario that we are presented with of some senior personnel and a larger amount of junior personnel is probably not a new challenge, but it is a challenge to us. We wish to explore how we can effectively train our personnel in all the disciplines required of them to ensure their competency on the fire ground when the next call happens. What are other similar sized departments doing for their training?

Researching various training programs and their effectiveness will help establish a standard for which we can measure our employee knowledge and performance against. Without performing the research in this study, we truly would not have any justification for the implementation of a new training program nor would we have the standards to evaluate our practices and determine that there is no need for change. The outcome of this study will be able to serve as a standard for GTFD which should assist in our evaluation of employees. The results of this study should be able to provide guidance to GTFD in the future practices of our training program.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

NFPA 1001 (2007) Standard for firefighter professional qualifications states that “the authority having jurisdiction shall establish instructional priority and the training content to prepare individuals to meet the job performance requirements.” NFPA 472 (2002), NFPA 1002 (2003) and NFPA 1006 (2003) standards on professional qualifications made the same statement and went on to identify the minimum job performance requirements (JPR) for that standards job title. This makes it clear that each agency has the authority and responsibility to define and prioritize what the training standards should be for that agency. The Occupational Safety and Health

Administration (2006) part 1910 states “the employer shall provide training and education for all fire brigade members commensurate with those duties and functions that fire brigade members are expected to perform.” And then further states that “the employer shall assure that training and education is conducted frequently enough to assure that each member of the fire brigade is able to perform the member's assigned duties and functions satisfactorily and in a safe manner so as not to endanger fire brigade members or other employees.” The State of Ohio now mandates thru the Ohio Administrative Code that each firefighter that applies for renewal of their certificate must complete 54 hours of training in a 3 years cycle.

Thiel, Stern, Kimball, & Hankin (2003) in their report on trends in firefighter training identified several issues that are relevant to the current training trends at GTFD. First, “in order to meet the demands of expanding fire service roles, advanced and technical evolutions have increased, thus reducing the amount of time available to perform basic training evolutions on such subjects as hose, ladder, and tool work.” Second, “new technologies will inevitably become part of the training tools used by firefighters. These technologies can enhance, but not substitute for actual live” hands-on training evolutions. Finally, “in order to meet the demands of expanding fire service roles, advanced and technical training evolutions have increased, thus reducing the amount of time available to perform basic training evolutions on such subjects as hose, ladder, and tool work.”

According to Salka (2008) the best way to improve skills and perform correctly is to train. He recommends firefighters work on perfecting fireground skills with hands-on training. He states “the experiences you have at fires and other operations are also learning opportunities, but regularly scheduled training sessions will have the greatest positive influence on your personal and department wide skills” (p.182). Again we find another person stating that we must

train to be proficient, but nothing telling us about what we should train on to ensure our proficiency. Should we explore NFPA 1410, the Standard on Training for Initial Emergency Scene Operations is intended to offer fire rescue departments with a method to objectively measure the performance of emergency response teams. The standard contains 14 scenarios developed around common fire ground activities that could be encountered by initial arriving suppression units. Each of the scenarios is assigned a recommended maximum time for the completion of the activity. And are we sure that the above 14 scenarios are relevant to GTFD?

Or should we also examine what Graham states that you should start with the core critical tasks that apply to all personnel in your department....breakdown every job description....identify the remaining critical tasks in each job and train them upfront. This is the best way to achieve your goal of doing the job right on each and every occasion. In 2010, the Fire Firefighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP) identified 17 sentinel recommendations commonly found in hundreds of their investigations. The recommendations were categorized into six domains to address firefighter training and SOP's: (a) incident command, (b) motor vehicle safety, (c) equipment, (d) radio communications, (e) safety on the fire ground, and (f) fitness and wellness (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) 2010. These domains are subjects discussed during incident reviews, near miss reports and regrettably consistent mentions in line of duty death (LODD) investigations reports. Reeder (2006) wrote about the difficulty in covering all of the topics that must be part of a training program. He suggested starting by defining basic skill levels and focusing training on continuously improving these skills. Reeder emphasized focusing on "core skills... required to complete basic parts of a job" because we must be proficient at the basics before we can master

the complex. He recommended using NFPA 1000 series standards, department SOP's and job descriptions to develop job performance requirements.

The Genoa Township Fire Department responds to most calls not covered by another department of the Township due to size and lack of other Township departments for assistance. This would seem to open the door wide for defining core competencies and/or functions. Barr and Eversole (2003) addressed this by saying “another organization might respond to every call for help that is outside the scope of any other ... department within that community. What did that mean? You need to clearly define that which you intend to respond to and mitigate or at least maintain and support until it is mitigated.”

They went on to define a three tier system for prioritizing training.

1. Must Know – these are governmental mandates that all fire fighters are subject to.
2. Need to Know – these are professional qualification standards aligned to the functions of your organization. Certification is stressed.
3. Nice to Know – this is explained as knowledge that may be useful, but is not essential to fulfilling the job function or operation. Also described as professional development.

Life Safety Initiative number 5 of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF, 2011) urges fire departments to “develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform” (p 7). Graham (2011) states “having good people is not enough. Good people need direction on how to do their job.....Give me your ten best people in any job description. Give them a low frequency task, particularly one

high risk in nature. Without policy, you will have ten good people approaching the task ten different ways with ten different results. Good people need good policy.

So, the question is, how do fire departments select their training materials and what are they based on? Cayse (2001) suggests a seven-step needs assessment model that would identify what training was required and lacking.

1. Use your department's mission statement along with fire personnel and equipment to identify all the functions members are required to fill.
2. Research all laws and standards that apply to the departments types of responses.
3. Determine the minimum training time required for each specific function your members must perform.
4. Identify training deficiencies and their extent based on the current training program and the laws and standards that cover functional areas.
5. Examine in-house records for apparent training deficiencies. These include injury reports, legal actions and accidents.
6. Survey members for their views on the current training program.
7. Analyze the results looking for trends. Start with the minimum legal requirements that you must meet and then address other areas recognized in the assessment.

Caffarella (1994) said needs assessment can be a powerful tool to justify and focus the planning effort, but it is only one of many ways that ideas are formulated for educational programs. She also said a formal needs assessment is not the way ideas are generated for educational programs and may not be necessary in terms of time and money spent. Program ideas can come from different sources such as personal observations, hunches and experience.

Benchmarking is one of the tools that deal with measuring both the quality and the quantity of fire services. “Unfortunately, it’s a technique that doesn’t have a permanent home in many fire protection management plans” (Coleman, 2009). This statement supports the premise that, although the fire service agrees on the need for prompt emergency responses and apply mitigation techniques quickly, many agencies do not embrace the concept of measuring and comparing results for the purpose of improving performance.

Given the information found in the literature review a survey will be conducted to investigate what other like sized departments in central Ohio are doing for their training programs and also attempt to find out if their program is working for each agency in the manner they think it should.

## **PROCEDURES**

This research project used both descriptive and action research to investigate the issue of ensuring firefighter competency and/or proficiency. The research consists of a review of discussion of current standards available that address minimum requisite knowledge and skills for a basic firefighter. The research will consist of a review of the available published literature, government reports, information from Internet sources, and from survey results. The survey will be distributed to fire departments in the Central Ohio region that have full-time employees or that largely have full time employees with part time employees supplementing their ranks, in an effort to find departments that are similar to GTFD in their organizational structure, while also recognizing that other departments that use mostly part time employees may not be able to evaluate their employees on the standards of what is being looked for in the research of the

project. The survey will ask from the respondents the training methods they employ within their organization, why they use this program, what it is modeled after, and are they seeing the results that they believe they should be seeing from their training program. The method of distribution will be to obtain e-mail contact information from the Ohio Fire Chiefs database, and then electronically disseminate the survey to the appropriate respondent. The survey will be limited to the Central Ohio region so that if any follow up is necessary that this is possible with time and travel constraints. The Central Ohio region includes forty-nine full-time fire departments in nine counties. The external survey instrument will be used to gather information from fire departments in Central Ohio regarding the various training programs used by other departments with input also on what the other departments are doing and what they have learned from each individual department's past practices or experiences. The purpose of the research is to identify current methods other departments use for ensuring firefighter competency and to explore the need for a standardized training program to ensure competency with the GTFD.

The research progressed through a search of available materials pertaining to training standards whether in the state of Ohio or other states as a basis to evaluate what other departments may be doing, and to also explore what standards, concepts or methods are being used through out the nation in performing fire department training. While exploring these topics the research was looking to answer the question of what are fire departments doing to ensure that their firefighters are training or being trained to a certain competency level. The research methods included completed Ohio Fire Chief's Ohio Fire Executive training program research projects, along with the National Fire Academy's applied research project archives along with internet searches of pertinent topics and information.

After the above research a set of survey questions was developed to deliver to



neighboring central Ohio fire departments for the purpose of surveying local departments of similar size and personnel as to how they conducted their training programs so that the research would also have relevance regarding how recertification was accomplished in the state of Ohio.

The survey was distributed electronically to 30 central Ohio fire departments mainly to the Chief Officer or the Assistant Chief of the organization. E-mail distribution was chosen due to the fact that the survey was short in nature and that in this current era that timely response would be more likely than a paper survey sent through the mail that had to be returned to the requestor. The overall response from the survey was fairly high in response, totaling an overall response of 73% of surveyed organizations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the survey within central Ohio included that there were multiple departments that did not match the size or employee constraints that would allow for an equal analysis of the organization and also the reality of who may answer the survey given the known facts of the organization. Thus, 30 departments were chosen to survey on the basis of size of department, number of employees employed, and number of full time employees employed and how did they compare to the organization of GTFD. The Columbus Fire Department was excluded from this survey due to the size of the organization and the author did not feel that they would be able to provide any equivalence due to their size and organizational structure.

## **RESULTS**

The focus of the research project was centered on available online and written documentation that may give insight on how other departments are operating their training programs. The survey process was an attempt to identify local trends in their individual training

programs.

The written research process shows that there are no clearly defined requirements to either maintain proficiency or recertify in the state of Ohio as a firefighter, as opposed to the current standards to recertify at any level of emergency medical technician in Ohio. Currently, a firefighter must recertify his or her credentials as a firefighter, there are a clearly defined amount of hours that is required to recertify, but no defined topics of instruction given forth by the State of Ohio. The GTFD currently meets the recertification requirements for its employees by the number of hours each employee trains per year. The question remains are we training our employees well enough to be competent on the fire ground.

As stated above, the survey was electronically mailed to 30 potential respondents with a total response of 22 returned surveys for an overall response of 73%.

The results of the survey are as follows and are also listed in the appendix but are worthy of detailed explanation of the results as follows:

1. Does your department use a regulated training program within your department? In other words, does your department follow a set program or subject matter for your training program?
  - Yes = 54%
  - No = 45%
  
2. If yes to above, is the training program tailored to follow a specific set of guidelines? i.e. IFSTA, NFPA, minimum company standards or State renewal requirements?
  - Yes = 64%
  - No = 35%

3. If yes to above, what set of standards is your program modeled after?

The following written answers were provided regarding the training programs from various departments:

- Training is based on some guidelines. We also used incident critiques to identify errors and development opportunities.
- State recertification
- Combination of NFPA and state of Ohio requirements
- Yes for EMS but not fire. Currently setting schedule
- State renewal.
- IFSTA
- Required state subjects
- Company Standards - Ohio Firefighter JPR's - Department Guidelines & Tactics
- NFPA
- IFSTA, EMS re-certification to meet state requirements
- State certification renewal standards.

4. If yes to above, how did you decide on the model of program you are using?

- Topics based on observed deficiencies and risk management (infrequently performed).
- It was identified through a self-evaluation process focusing on improving training within the fire division.
- Many of our fire fighters are instructors at universities in our area and they decided.

- We found it to be important that task level skills be conducted to a standard outcome and consistent benchmarks, Using a standard tactics manual based on SOG's just seemed to make the most sense.
  - National Standards and Best practices
  - Provides required hours to recertify without the cost of overtime.
  - Provide the necessary hours for employees to recertify
5. Does your department have a person or persons that are assigned to developing and implementing your training?
- Yes = 83%
  - No = 13%
6. Does your department have a required amount of hours that each employee must train each shift, month or year?
- Yes = 42%
  - No = 57%
7. If yes to the above question, what is the requirement?
- One hour per day.
  - The requirement includes daily and annual requirements that must be achieved based on shift and individual certification levels for EMS
  - 200 Per year
  - Must maintain state level cards per contract
  - 2.5 hours per day
  - Two hours per shift minimum.
  - 24 hours - fire; Required CEUs - EMS

- 20 hours a month for full-time firefighters & officers.
  - 20 hrs
  - One hour daily per station, one hour monthly per shift for fire. EMS is two hours per month
  - Not required, but training topics are assigned monthly
8. If you have a standardized training program, do you feel that it has improved your employee's performance?
- Yes = 92%
  - No = 7%
9. If you do **NOT** have a standardized training program, have you considered developing such a program?
- Yes = 91.6%
  - No = 8.3%
10. What does your organization do to ensure that your employees are all receiving the same standard training?
- All training is repeated on each unit. If that is not possible overtime is allowed to attend off duty
  - We use a topic and hours tracking program to ensure the state minimum hours are met.
  - Informal effort to teach same material.
  - Utilization of written lesson plans, regular division wide instructor meetings to identify consistencies in program delivery as well as addressing quality instructional methods
  - Train to SOG
  - Training should follow SOG requirements

- EMS Coordinated, instructors and a names list check for required need to know for our station.
  - Assigned topics, company officer monitoring.
  - We repeat the training over 3 duty days with the same instructor
  - Coordination between shifts.
  - Our training Captain tries. It is not perfect and there are times when the training is different from crew to crew.
  - We have monthly fire and EMS training topics. These are not however standard out of the can presentations done in a certain order. We tailor the topics to our needs.
  - Monthly training calendar with JPR's and objectives.
  - Training reports - still struggling with this
  - SOP, training forms, use of IFSTA manual. EMS is delivered by Columbus State to meet state requirements (pediatrics, geriatrics, etc)
  - Training outlines used to facilitate same baseline of learning material. Instructors paid OT to deliver course on all shifts
11. Does your department have a SOG, SOP or written directive that defines the training requirements of your employees for each level of employment?
- Yes = 40.9%
  - No = 59.09%
12. Does your department have a SOG, SOP or written directive that defines the job performance expectations of each employee in their respective position?
- Yes = 63.6%
  - No = 36.3%

13. Are your training requirements delivering the job performance requirements as described above?

- Yes = 50.0%
- No = 50.0%

14. Is there an aspect of your training program that you believe could be a benefit to other departments?

- We train via video conference with three other mutual aid fire departments once a week for each of our shifts. Although topics vary greatly, it has resulted in many improvements during multi-company operations. The companies that train together and much better at communicating and performing on the fire ground
- I wish I could say yes
- Contract sets standards; our own instructors keep cost minimal.
- We currently use Cleveland State for online training and are very happy with them. We also incorporate company drills and instruction on topics from Cleveland State.
- We are in the midst of performance based evaluations so in time we will have a program worth sharing.
- Without having the same instructor deliver the training, we lose much of the consistency that we intend to provide. Officer's have differing views on training and are often uncomfortable with the topic themselves.

15. Could you please describe the configuration of your department?

- Career = 59.09%
- Combination = 45.45%
- Paid On Call / Volunteer = 0%

- Other = 0%

16. What is the total number of employees for your department?

- Answers in this category ranged from a low of 7 to a high of 108, with 22 respondents answering for an average of 45.5 employees.

As stated above, there are no clearly defined requirements for recertification of firefighters in the state of Ohio, just a set number of hours per every recertification period. But several of the literature review articles do speak to ensuring that your employees are well trained in their basic proficiencies while also attempting to advance their skill levels through a training program.

Several of the survey results that are interesting are that of the respondents to the question of a standardized training program only 54% were using such a program. But of those respondents who answered that they did have a standardized training program 92% felt that it had improved their employee's performance. Also, only 40% of the respondents had any SOP, SOG or directive that defines the training requirements of their employee's, but 63% did have a SOP, SOG or directive that defined the job performance expectation of each employee for each position. Of that 63% that had the SOG, SOG or directive for their job performance those respondents answered that their training program was only meeting the requirements at a rate of 50%. Another point of interest of the survey is that of the respondents who answered that their organization did not have a standardized training program, 91% have considered developing such a program.

It appears that from the survey results that there is no clear, easy answer to the research questions, even though the survey process did assist in answering some unknown questions. As



can be seen in the survey results the answers varied greatly in some areas, mainly in the areas of what topics are taught, how they are chosen, and how often or how frequently do their personnel train on weekly, monthly or quarterly or yearly basis. The wide variety of answers may come from the fact that there are no clearly defined topics of instruction for firefighters once that become certified in the state of Ohio. The recertification process merely states that an employee must complete a certain amount of hours to recertify at their certification level. Although there are clearly defined hours and topics to be taught for personnel who wish to recertify their EMS certification in the state of Ohio, this is not the case for fire certifications.

From the survey, 54% of departments do use a standardized approach to training, and of those respondents 92% answered that it has improved their employee's performance. This is worth examining by the GTFD since we do not have any standardized approach to training. Although, with the following survey question the answers vary greatly as to how the organization reached their conclusion on what to topics to train on. Some departments stated they trained to IFSTA standards or NFPA standards, others trained by noting errors and others stated they trained to state of Ohio recertification requirements. From the survey results it would appear that the other departments are attempting to keep their employees current with minimum training standards regardless of their choice of reference to the training that they were providing, but with no obvious answer on how they prioritize their training.

## DISCUSSION

Through a review of industry standards, articles in professional magazines, government studies and regulation, fire service textbooks and one survey the author attempted to discover if a standardized training program was needed for the Genoa Township Fire Department (GTFD).

Government and its agencies mandate certain training. Fire departments are required to provide training in the organization's functional areas so that firefighters are adequately prepared to safely perform these functions in an emergency, Ohio Administrative Code, BWC (2006). GTFD has increased the number of functional areas over the past 13 years causing training demands to increase.

An organization's functions must be clearly defined and stated in writing, Barr and Eversole (2003), Ohio Administrative Code, BWC (2006), and Morse (1999). This was an essential first step in determining what the needs of the organization were. This would be an essential first step in determining what the core competencies of the organization are. The lack of clearly defined organization functions leads to the inability of GTFD to provide a comprehensive training plan that would cover all of the needs of the department. Once functions can be determined, they can be prioritized and an effective plan can be developed to meet the training needs of the organization relative to the identified organizations functions. NFPA 1001 (2007).

Minimum company standards or professional standards act as a guide in formulating core competencies and a training program to address the fire department's training needs, but reliance on the standards alone cannot provide a complete comprehensive list of a fire department's training needs. More information would be needed from the department regarding the organization and its priorities.

An assessment process needs to be identified to establish what the organization is capable of at the time of assessment to determine what the training program was or was not doing in the mission of training the employees. This assessment would assist the department in identifying what it determined would be or is the minimum company standards or professional standards.

The author initially believed that through the research and survey process that there would be found a rather clearly defined answer or program that was in use by another organization that would lead to a clearly defined answer. After all of the research and survey the author has found that this is not the case that was found. The research did provide great insight regarding how other agencies conduct their training, and also showed what would appear that even organizations larger than GTFD don't have all the answers to this training dilemma.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The analysis of data collected thru the literature review, focus groups and survey exposed some short comings in the GTFD's training program. The Genoa Township Fire Department's overall performance, proficiency and safety would benefit if the following recommendations were implemented.

1. The literature review clearly shows that fire departments should identify and express in writing the functions desired of personnel in each job position and at what level they are expected to perform in those positions.
2. The literature also shows that that there should be written policies regarding the functions and performances referenced above with regard to how those expectations would be met.

3. The fire department should list a clearly defined set of functions that are expected from the organization, profession standards, including pertinent governmental regulations, and take input from personnel when developing a comprehensive training program.
4. The department should prioritize the training program to address criticality and difficulty risk factors.
5. The training program should be a dynamic, evolving program that has the flexibility to adjust to the changing needs of the environment in which the employee operates, and also remain flexibility to address deficiencies of departmental personnel when the deficiencies are noted.

The Genoa Township Fire Department would benefit from the above changes in many ways. It would first allow the organization to clearly define its role, services and expectations of employees. Once the training plan was in place, it would allow for a more comprehensive model to evaluate employees, thus also assisting the employees and the organization to continue to strive for continued personal improvement. The Genoa Township Fire Department must commit the resources necessary to implement the above changes. But if the commitment is made, a positive, improved training process would be the result.

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## APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY QUESTIONS WITH RESULTS

The survey questions are as follows below:

1. Does your department use a regulated training program within your department? In other words, does your department follow a set program or subject matter for your training program?
  - Yes = 54%
  - No = 45%
  
2. If yes to above, is the training program tailored to follow a specific set of guidelines? i.e. IFSTA, NFPA, minimum company standards or State renewal requirements?
  - Yes = 64%
  - No = 35%
  
3. If yes to above, what set of standards is your program modeled after?  
The following written answers were provided regarding the training programs from various departments:
  - Training is based on some guidelines. We also used incident critiques to identify errors and development opportunities.
  - State recertification
  - Combination of NFPA and state of Ohio requirements
  - Yes for EMS but not fire. Currently setting schedule
  - State renewal.
  - IFSTA
  - Required state subjects
  - Company Standards - Ohio Firefighter JPR's - Department Guidelines & Tactics
  - NFPA
  - IFSTA, EMS re-certification to meet state requirements

4. If yes to above, how did you decide on the model of program you are using?
  - Topics based on observed deficiencies and risk management (infrequently performed).
  - It was identified through a self-evaluation process focusing on improving training within the fire division.
  - Many of our fire fighters are instructors at universities in our area and they decided.
  - We found it to be important that task level skills be conducted to a standard outcome and consistent benchmarks, Using a standard tactics manual based on SOG's just seemed to make the most sense.
  - National Standards and Best practices
  - Provides required hours to recertify without the cost of overtime.
  - Provide the necessary hours for employees to recertify
  
5. Does your department have a person or persons that are assigned to developing and implementing your training?
  - Yes = 83%
  - No = 13%
  
6. Does your department have a required amount of hours that each employee must train each shift, month or year?
  - Yes = 42%
  - No = 57%
  
7. If yes to the above question, what is the requirement?
  - One hour per day.
  - The requirement includes daily and annual requirements that must be achieved based on shift and individual certification levels for EMS
  - 200 Per year



- Must maintain state level cards per contract
  - 2.5 hours per day
  - Two hours per shift minimum.
  - 24 hours - fire; Required CEUs - EMS
  - 20 hours a month for full-time firefighters & officers.
  - 20 hours
  - One hour daily per station, one hour monthly per shift for fire. EMS is two hours per month
8. If you have a standardized training program, do you feel that it has improved your employee's performance?
- Yes = 92%
  - No = 7%
9. If you do **NOT** have a standardized training program, have you considered developing such a program?
- Yes = 91.6%
  - No = 8.3%
10. What does your organization do to ensure that your employees are all receiving the same standard training?
- All training is repeated on each unit. If that is not possible overtime is allowed to attend off duty
  - We use a topic and hours tracking program to ensure the state minimum hours are met.
  - Informal effort to teach same material.
  - Utilization of written lesson plans, regular division wide instructor meetings to Identify consistencies in program delivery as well as addressing quality instructional methods
  - Train to SOG

- Training should follow SOG requirements
- EMS Coordinated, instructors and a names list check for required need to know for our station.
- Assigned topics, company officer monitoring.
- We repeat the training over 3 duty days with the same instructor
- Coordination between shifts.
- Our training Captain tries. It is not perfect and there are times when the training is different from crew to crew.
- We have monthly fire and EMS training topics. These are not however standard out of the can presentations done in a certain order. We tailor the topics to our needs.
- Monthly training calendar with JPR's and objectives.
- Training reports - still struggling with this
- SOP, training forms, use of IFSTA manual. EMS is delivered by Columbus State to meet state requirements (pediatrics, geriatrics, etc)
- Training outlines used to facilitate same baseline of learning material. Instructors paid OT to deliver course on all shifts

11. Does your department have a SOG, SOP or written directive that defines the training requirements of your employees for each level of employment?

- Yes = 40.9%
- No = 59.09%

12. Does your department have a SOG, SOP or written directive that defines the job performance expectations of each employee in their respective position?

- Yes = 63.6%
- No = 36.3%

13. Are your training requirements delivering the job performance requirements as described above?

- Yes = 50.0%
- No = 50.0%

14. Is there an aspect of your training program that you believe could be a benefit to other departments?

- We train via video conference with three other mutual aid fire departments once a week for each of our shifts. Although topics vary greatly, it has resulted in many improvements during multi-company operations. The companies that train together and much better at communicating and performing on the fire ground
- I wish I could say yes
- Contract sets standards; our own instructors keep cost minimal.
- We currently use Cleveland State for online training and are very happy with them. We also incorporate company drills and instruction on topics from Cleveland State.
- We are in the midst of performance based evaluations so in time we will have a program worth sharing.
- Without having the same instructor deliver the training, we lose much of the consistency that we intend to provide. Officers have differing views on training and are often uncomfortable with the topic themselves.

15. Could you please describe the configuration of your department?

- Career = 59.09%
- Combination = 45.45%
- Paid On Call / Volunteer = 0%
- Other = 0%

16. What is the total number of employees for your department?

- Answers in this category ranged from a low of 7 to a high of 108, with 22 respondents answering for an average of 45.5 employees.