

**Evaluation of the New Hire Orientation Process at the Ashland Fire
Department**

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study's purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of the new hire orientation process in place at the Ashland Fire Department. Through evaluative research it will be determined what procedures are the most vital to a successful new hire orientation program. These results were obtained through various published journals; internet research, libraries, Ashland Fire Department [A.F.D.] policies, a survey of A.F.D. members, and other orientation processes used in both the public and private sectors. Questions addressed were; a) the importance of an orientation program, b) the best practices of an effective orientation program, and c) what, if any, elements could be added to supplement the orientation process now in place at the Ashland Fire Department. Due to the lack of published material from within the public sector most information utilized came from the private sector.

Research has indicated that a well organized orientation process can reap huge benefits in employee satisfaction and retention. Recommendations from the research included; formal introductions to everyone in the organization, an explanation of the organizations history, instituting a mentoring program, establishing timeframes for completion, and incorporating a re-evaluation phase.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The new hire orientation process is a key function in the successful bridging of the new hire from the first day on the job to a functioning employee. This process, when completed, should contain adequate amounts of information to make both the shift officer and the new hire feel comfortable with day-to-day activities as well as emergency situations within the fire department.

The Ashland Fire Department has the option of schedules for the new hires, either to assign them directly to a 24 hour shift or a five-day a week forty-five hour shift. The 24 hour shift is a typical fire department shift consisting of a 24 hour work day followed by 48 hours off duty. The forty-five hour work week consists of five, nine hour days, Monday thru Friday.

During the orientation process the shift officers may believe that they are relaying the needed information to the new hire, however on the contrary, the information being relayed may be perceived by the recruit in a totally different light. In conjunction with this, is the information being passed on to the new hire adequate enough for them to perform as employers anticipate? If not, what other information is needed and what information, if any, is unnecessary or redundant?

The downfall of the orientation process at the Ashland Fire Department seems to be twofold. One, there is no consistent manner in which new hires are trained/oriented to the fire department, and two, there is no re-evaluation or follow-up phase. This method provides no means of assuring the information that is being passed on is being perceived correctly. Nor is there any means to assure that the information being passed on to the new hire is adequate enough for them to do their job effectively.

The problem this study has addressed is how the current orientation/training process in place can be improved or changed to emulate a highly effective program for new hires at the Ashland Fire Department.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compile information from both the public sector as well as the private sector to obtain the best practices for new employee orientation programs. The information has been gathered through evaluative research and a departmental survey. If the information gathered shows to be favorable, a new orientation program will be created and proposed.

Research Questions

The following questions will be answered by evaluative research:

1. Why is a solid employee orientation/training program important?
2. What are the best practices in an effective orientation/training program?
3. What additional elements, from the findings of this study, could be added to supplement the orientation process now in place at the Ashland Fire Department?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Since Ben Franklin organized the first fire brigades over 200 years ago until present time in the twenty-first century an abundance of change in the fire service has been seen. With early day fire departments the sole responsibility was for fire extinguishment. Fire brigades were all made-up of volunteers from with-in the community in which they resided and when a fire ensued, they were summoned to extinguish it. This would entail little more than a bucket brigade to throw water onto the burning structure until, in most cases the structure was fully consumed by the fire.

Back then the biggest concern was to keep the fire contained and not to spread to adjacent structures. Today's fire service, whether career or volunteer, is much more demanding than that of early years. Now there are countless duties that fire departments are responsible for. Along with emergency medical services [EMS] the fire department also has a number of specialized functions such as; hazardous material responses, technical rescue, water rescue, fire prevention, and public education to name a few. With all of these duties the department is very vulnerable in the fact that there can be omitted education in these areas.

Due to the small number of personnel at the Ashland Fire Department, which leads to a small turnover, there seems to be a lacking continuity in the way new hires are trained/oriented. There seems to be no uniform way of introducing new hires to the fire service.

The Ashland Fire Department consists of 37 paid career personnel. Jurisdictional boundaries for fire and EMS coverage are; the city of Ashland, Milton township, Montgomery township, and also Orange township for EMS only. This consists of approximately ninety-nine square miles of response territory. Ashland Fire Department is located centrally within the city and consists of only one station. This station houses all personnel and staff as well as 14 pieces

of apparatus. Ashland Fire Department responds to approximately 3500-4000 runs per year which includes; fire, EMS, and interhospital transfers.

Within its 37 career personnel roster there are 24 of which are also functioning paramedics. These numbers tend to be misleading, of the 37 career personnel 11 serve in staff functions and do not need to maintain their paramedic certification. All new hires now are required to maintain their paramedic certification for a minimum of 10 years. This is significant, as stated before, in the fact that the Ashland Fire Department also operates the EMS for the city as well as three townships.

The Ashland Fire Departments hiring process requires the candidate to have either an Ohio Basic Firefighter [FFI] certification or an Ohio Emergency Medical Technician-Basic [EMT-B] certification prior to sitting for the entrance exam. With this it assures that the candidate has some background in either the fire service or emergency medical service. After the new employee is hired they are required to obtain an Ohio Professional Firefighters [FFII] certification and then an Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic [EMT-P] certification dependant on the need for either of these. This schooling is to be accomplished during the probationary period. The probationary period is defined as one year after successful completion of FFII and EMT-P training, not to exceed two years. Along with obtaining any required certifications the recruit is expected to familiarize themselves with day-to-day operations of the department as well as mandatory shift training. This is usually done working a five day-a-week, forty-five hour schedule. The five day-a-week schedule is adjusted accordingly to the recruits certifications and ability to comprehend station operations. This schedule was originally introduced to afford the recruit the opportunity to train and function with all three crews while still on probation. With the need for the required schooling, EMT-P averaging 9 months and FFII averaging 6weeks, this can substantially reduce the time for orientation and training.

The Ashland Fire Department utilizes a new hire check-off sheet to help track and familiarize recruits with day-to-day activities as well as equipment operation. Although this form has worked well in the past for the initial tour of the station and explanation of policies and procedures, there is still no way to assure that the new hire receives the information needed. What seems to be lacking in the form is a re-evaluation phase of the whole orientation process. This would act as a post-test of the orientation/training process; it would assure the officers that the information that has been relayed to the new hire has been comprehended correctly by that individual.

Within the Ashland Fire Department the duty of training officer is assigned to an Assistant Chief who works a 24/48¹ schedule. This means that the training officer may only see the recruit once and at the maximum two times per week. With the check-off sheet utilized at the present time there are no time parameters allocated to each of the tasks to be explained to the new hire. Nor is there a training assignment associated with each piece of apparatus to be trained on.

The problem in this study focused on the information, or lack there of, that is given to the new hire after they are employed. Do the new hires have enough information to function effectively, and if not, what do they need and how should it be delivered? The significance of this study lies within the ability to convey the required information to the new hire in a manner in which it is understood and accepted in an appropriate time frame. If we can assure that the employee is given the information and understands it the department as a whole should benefit.

¹ 24/48 schedule refers to working 24 continuous hours followed by being off for the next 48 continuous hours. This is a typical fire department work schedule.

The potential impact this study could have on the Ashland Fire Department is to produce a well informed, functioning, new employee. This goal should be attainable through proper orientation and a structured training regime. This in turn will improve moral within the department as well as gain a priceless investment for the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In researching this topic there does not seem to be a lot of material in print about new hire orientation within the public sector, specifically in the fire service. There has been, although, quite a number of books and articles written on this subject for the private sector.

Orientation is defined as the process of becoming accustomed to a new situation or set of surroundings (Encarta, 2003). A good, well thought out, new hire orientation program can be the difference between a well-rounded, productive employee that has every potential but later leaves the job due to uncertainty or dissatisfaction. A thorough, organized employee orientation can reduce turnover, as Carol Hacker (Hacker, 2004, p.90) reported, “improving new employee orientation can increase retention rates by as much as 25 percent”. Hacker also states “it helps the new employee feel welcome, relieves anxiety, and launches the individual toward being a loyal and productive team member”. Judith Brown (Brown, 2004, ¶ 5) reaffirms this stating that “a thoughtful new employee orientation program can reduce turnover and save an organization thousands of dollars. One reason people change jobs is they never feel welcome or part of the organization they join.”

Jean Barbazette (Barbazette, 1994, pp.1-2) states in her orientation guide that “most new employee orientation programs are designed to accomplish some common objectives”.

- provide critical information and resources in a timely manner
- help make the new employee independently productive as soon as possible
- teach essential safety and job skills
- truly welcome the employee
- help the new employee feel secure, “fit in,” and get off to a good start by understanding the organization’s culture

Comparable to these, commonly cited objectives of orientation programs (Feldman, 1980; Gomersal & Myers, 1966; Ivancevich & Glueck, 1986) include the following:

- Reduce the newcomer's stress and anxiety
- Reduce startup costs
- Reduce turnover
- Reduce the time it takes for the newcomer to reach proficiency (training and "break-in" time)
- Assist the newcomer in learning the organization's values and expectations
- Assist the newcomer in acquiring appropriate role behaviors
- Help the newcomer adjust to the work group and its norms
- Encourage development of positive attitudes

Being able to provide critical information to the new employee in a timely manner is imperative, without this aspect they will be left to fend for themselves. This information has to be provided in a timely manner for the new hire to function productively. Helping the new hire to function on their own as soon as possible will serve a dual role in which you can instruct the new hire in proper day-to-day functions and decrease the amount of re-instruction due to poor initial orientation.

In the fire service skills and job safety are of the utmost importance. In proper orientation the new hire needs the proper skills for their job functions, and in conjunction, stress safety. Safety is often overlooked or under stressed in the orientation process with more emphasis being put on rushing the new hire through orientation so they can be utilized in the workforce. This seems to be unfair to both the new hire as well as the rest of the department in a lack of training issue. "Orientation programs typically cover both general company information, which may be

provided by the human resource development staff, and job-specific information, which would more likely be provided by the newcomer's immediate supervisor" (DeSimone, 1994, p.222).

Along this same line there were a number of resources reviewed that all agreed upon a mentoring program for the new hire. This would provide the new hire someone to direct everyday questions to along with promoting interaction with fellow employees. "The roles a mentor might play during the relationship will, at various times, include being storyteller, teacher, guide, advisor, friend, counselor, challenger, coach, catalyst, consultant, role model, and advocate." (Greist & Kaye, 2001, p.383) The mentor could also aid in building a relationship between the new hire and the current employees. This could further bind the new hire with the corporation.

In most literature reviewed, there was usually a great deal of emphasis put on introducing the new employee to the work force as well as their superiors. Linda Seal (Dahle, 1998, p.182) stated "95% of firings are the result of failing to fit into a company's culture. If people don't know you, they can't trust you." "New staff usually wants to fit in with accepted norms and values." states Joy Dirks (Dirks, 2004, ¶ 16) "Understanding company culture only happens over time, through formal presentations, informal dialogue and lots of personal experience". What gets said officially is compared with what gets said confidentially over lunch, after hours and even amongst colleagues in the washroom". From the top all the way down it seems to be important for the new employee to know who they will be working for as well as with. Making the new employee feel more comfortable and secure seems to be a key ingredient to employee success.

In the manual *Fire Service Orientation and Terminology*, from the International Fire Service Training Association [IFSTA], they cite all aspects of the fire service starting from the beginning of time when fire was seen as a tool for cave people. This explains a lot of the history

and tradition within the fire service which seems to be of utmost importance in a career such as this. One of the items listed by Linda Jerris (Jerris, 1993, p.30) to be included in your orientation program was “an introduction to who and what the company is, where it has been, and where it is going”. This seems to follow along with what has been written for new employee orientation in the private sector in which history and mission are big ingredients in their orientation processes.

Going from inception, to the present, and into the future allows the new employee an opportunity to see the whole evolution of the company or service in which he/she is going to be a part of. This gives the new employee a better understanding of what is expected of them in the work force, they are able to better understand the service as a whole. They are able to understand why they are doing something and what positive or negative results may come from their actions.

One of the most frequent commonalities among literature reviewed seemed to be the importance of a follow-up program. “The orientation process is not complete until you have evaluated the methods and results of the program and have fine-tuned it accordingly” stated Linda Jerris (Jerris, 1993, p.83). If you give the employee the orientation and nothing else is ever done there is no way to track effectiveness of the employee or the orientation program. Doris Sims states “One way to accomplish this is to meet with the employee at periodic intervals to discuss the progress in obtaining training and competencies that have been identified for him/her either by the new employee or the employer”. (Sims, 2002, p.309) “Ask for feedback (Brown, 2004, ¶ 2) find out from former new hires how they perceived the orientation process, and don’t be afraid to make changes based on those recommendations”. “This can help in detecting and correcting shortfalls in the orientation system”.

In the material researched there is a great deal of emphasis put on the value of a solid new hire orientation program. With this in place it should be straight forward for the new hire what is expected of him/her. “A well-planned organizational orientation is designed to make new

employees feel welcome and knowledgeable about their new organization”. states Diane Arthur (Arthur, 1998, p.299) “More specifically, it will:”

- Give new employees and overview of the organization’s history and current status
- Describe the company’s overall functions
- Explain the organizational structure
- Describe the organization’s philosophy, goals, and objectives
- Explain how vital each employee is in helping to achieve company goals
- Describe the benefits and employee services offered
- Outline the company’s standards of performance, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures
- Outline safety and security practices

PROCEDURES

This research project included data from various published books found in the Ashland Public Library as well as the Ashland University Library and through the InterLibrary Loan system. Also researched were journal articles through the use of the World Wide Web [www] in popular research databases as OhioLink and EBSCO. Books and manuals found at the Ashland Fire Department library that pertain to my subject have also been utilized. Also from the Ashland Fire Department two policies on orientation will be used in the evaluation. Orientation checklists also have been a common denominator in most of the research material, some of which are included as examples. A survey was conducted of the personnel at the Ashland Fire Department; this survey was given to the entire department. The survey included questions on the orientation process as well as the perceived ability to function by the new hire, the co-workers, and the supervisors. This gave the research project a better-rounded, non-bias, conclusion. After the research was finished and the survey had been tabulated there was a conclusion to the validity of the orientation process in place at the Ashland Fire Department.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations that could affect this study include, but not limited to, the participation in the survey given to the members of the Ashland Fire Department. Also the validity of the answers on the survey, either accurate or not, as they were answered by the department members.

RESULTS

The results of this project are the compilation of data from various sources including various published books found in the Ashland Public Library as well as the Ashland University Library and through the InterLibrary Loan system, journal articles found on the World Wide Web, and research data bases such as OhioLink and EBSCO. Also, utilized from the Ashland Fire Department library, were books and policies addressing orientation. Other avenues researched were new hire orientation policies from organizations including various fire departments and the Ohio Air National Guard.

A survey regarding the new hire orientation process was developed and distributed to the members of the Ashland Fire Department. The survey was given on a voluntary basis with a return rate of ninety-seven percent or thirty-six of the thirty-seven members being questioned. The survey was distributed over a period of a week in early January 2005. The survey was distributed to only members of the Ashland Fire Department due to the relevance of the information being requested. The survey was aimed specifically towards the new hire orientation process at the Ashland Fire Department. In the survey a number of the questions utilized a 1-to-5 likert scale, 1 being least important and 5 being most important.

With that in mind one question asked was the feeling of importance towards a new hire orientation program. Of the thirty-six members questioned eighty-one percent agreed that a new hire orientation program is very important and rated this with a five. Only to be followed by twenty-one percent or the remaining seven members rating this with a four. This reflects the positive resounding response to the importance of a new hire orientation program from the people polled.

However when asked about the adequacy of the new hire orientation program already in place at the Ashland Fire Department ninety-two percent rated it a 3 or lower. This reflects the

perception of the program to be only average at best with over fifty-five percent rating it below average.

Question One

Why is a solid employee orientation/training program important?

Within the fire service a solid new hire orientation/training program can pay huge dividends throughout the career of the employee. It helps to make the new employee feel welcome and secure in their new setting. It serves as a guide to deliver critical information in a structured timeframe. It can help reduce a new employee's stress and help make them productive as soon as possible. This will make it less likely that the supervisor will have to re-teach the employee thus making the program redundant. A well-rounded program can also reduce employee turnover. Carol Hacker (Hacker, 2004, p.90) reported that "it can increase retention rates as much as twenty-five percent".

Question Two

What are the best practices in an efficient orientation/training program?

Most resources utilized for this research project seemed to agree on some vital objectives for a new hire orientation/training program. First you need to introduce the new employee to his/her co-workers and superiors. This helps them feel welcome, secure, and a member of the team.

Explain job responsibilities and clarify your expectations of the new hire. You need to provide the new employee with the required information and training to make him/her independently productive as soon as possible.

Explain the history of the organization to the new hire. This seems to be a widely accepted practice in most new hire orientation programs, especially in the private sector. If the

new hire can better understand the history behind an organization then he/she can better predict the future.

Also there needs to be a check and balance system to both check on the new hires progression and productivity but also to confirm the effectiveness of the new hire orientation/training program. This information can be culminated into a check off sheet that can be utilized by the mentor as a timeline for completion of tasks or by the new hire him/herself to track their own progress.

Along with these a follow-up evaluation with the new hire is essential. This will give the employer a chance to ask questions of the new hire that would otherwise be overlooked. This is where the pros and cons within the program are surfaced, and should be corrected.

Question Three

What additional elements, from the findings of this study, could be added to supplement the orientation process now in place at the Ashland Fire Department?

In this area, I found that the process already in use contains a number of the positive attributes that were discovered in the material researched. However, there still seems to be vital issues that have not been addressed. One of which that both public and private sector agreed upon, was the need for a formal introduction of the new hire to the present employees. The *Charlottesville Volunteer Fire Company Recruit Checklist* incorporates a four hour tour of duty with each of its three shifts to help acquaint its new employees. Joy Dirks (September, 2004, ¶ 1) states, “staff members who are properly trained and welcomed at the beginning of their careers feel good about their choice of employer, fit in quickly with peers and colleagues and readily contribute new ideas”.

Another item that seemed to be a common denominator was the implementation of a mentoring system. Once again this seemed to be a widely accepted practice within the material

researched for the private sector. “The purpose of the mentor is to show the new person the ropes, how the company does things and the proper procedures” states Craig Bodkin (Horowitz, 2000, ¶ 13). The new hires mentor serves as a go-to person or someone that he/she can call upon for general information about everyday questions and activities. The 179th Airlift Wing of the Ohio National Guard employs a sponsor checklist in which the sponsor or mentor goes through all of the regular day-to-day activities with the new recruit. It covers everything from meeting with the new recruit his/her first day, introduction to superiors, discussing the day’s events, and even accompanying them to lunch.

Another key item found among information gathered was to include some type of re-evaluation of the orientation program. “Send an evaluation two to four weeks after the employee has started: now that you’ve been with the company awhile, did the orientation meet your needs? After they have been there awhile, they find out what they should have known but didn’t” states Charles Cadwell (Tyler, 1998, ¶ 9). “Ask for feedback,” states Judith Brown (Brown, 2004, ¶ 2), “find out from former new hires how they perceived the orientation process, and don’t be afraid to make changes based on those recommendations.”

DISCUSSION

All material researched seemed to be in agreement that a well organized new hire orientation program can prove to be invaluable. Joy Dirks (Dirks, 2004, ¶ 36) states “the time, money and human resources you dedicate to new employee orientation can be one of your best long-term corporate investments.”

“Organizations that have good orientation programs get new people up to speed faster, have better alignment between what the employees do and what the organization needs them to do, and have lower turnover rates” echoes Judith Brown (Brown, 2004, ¶ 2).

This can also be seen in the results of the survey distributed to the members of the Ashland fire department. With the survey utilizing a likert scale of 1-to-5, 1 being not important and 5 being very important, twenty-nine (81%) members rated the importance of a new hire orientation program a 5. That was only to be followed by the remaining seven (19%) giving it a rating of 4. These numbers illustrate the perception of those questioned that a well-rounded new hire orientation program can be very beneficial.

As for the effectiveness of the program already in place at the Ashland fire department the survey could be misleading. Thirty-three members rated this with 3 or less, this would seem to reflect that the new hire orientation process in place is average at best.

The implementation of a formal new hire orientation process did not begin until 1995². This process consists of an orientation policy (Ashland Fire Department policy #74) and a new hire check off sheet. The check off sheet that is in place is just that, a check off sheet that is

² 1995 is an estimated date. The author and other AFD officers came to a general consensus of this date by tracking the hire dates of employees that had been subjected to the check off sheet and policy now in place.

utilized by the officer as a reminder of material to be covered. This method allows for individual interpretation of the material to be covered with the new hire. This methods result solely relies on the person presenting the material.

When questioned about their satisfaction with their own new hire orientation process the numbers were surprisingly low in this area also. Thirty-one (86%) members rated this area with a score of 3 or less. This shows one of two possibilities; one is that they were truly not satisfied with their orientation process, or two that when they were hired there was no new hire orientation process in place. This could be a factor in the overall satisfaction of the individual's orientation process that was offered at their time of employment. As previously stated the implementation of a new hire orientation process did not begin until 1995. With this in mind the survey also asked how long you had been employed at the Ashland Fire Department. Twenty (56%) members polled stated that they had been employed ten years or less. This shows that almost half of the members did not have any sort of new hire orientation program at all, which in turn could reflect the dissatisfaction of the employees with their orientation process.

Most everyone agreed that a mentoring program would be beneficial for the new hire. Twenty-five (69%) members rated this with a 4 or 5 followed by nine (25%) rating it a three with the remaining two awarding it a rating of 2 and 1 respectively.

Carol Hacker (Hacker 2004, p. 91) states, "consider teaming new hires with mentors or buddies." On the contrary Ashland fire departments orientation policy (policy #74) states "new employees have the responsibility for actively seeking instruction and to work diligently toward the goal of completing the orientation period." This responsibility is left almost solely up to the shift captain on how the new hire will be taught. As stated earlier the position of training officer at the Ashland fire department is assigned to an assistant chief. This person works a twenty-four hour shift schedule which put him in contact with the new hire a maximum of 2 days a week.

This is only if the new hire is assigned to a 5 day work week. Should the new hire be assigned to a twenty-four hour shift, the training officer may not be in contact with this individual at all. This would put even more emphasis on a complete orientation policy that could be followed by each shift supervisor.

At the Ashland fire department the employer has the option of assigning the new hire to a forty-five hour work week, consisting of five nine hour days, instead of a twenty-four hour shift. New hires can be on this shift for the duration of their probationary period or assigned to a regular 24/48 shift. The probationary period, as stated previously, is defined as one year after completion of required schooling, up to the maximum of two years. The required schooling consists of firefighter II and emergency medical technician-paramedic. At the end of the two year period if the new hire has not successfully completed this requirement he/she will be terminated.

Of the members polled thirty (83%) agreed that the new hire should be assigned to a forty-five hour work week initially. Although this would leave the new hire to be assigned three different mentors, one for each shift. Craig Bodkin of Systems & Services (Horowitz, 2000, ¶ 14) generally has each new staff member work with three mentors – one per week for three weeks. This gives him feedback from multiple sources about the employee's ability and how he or she fits the corporate culture. This thinking could be utilized for the new hire being assigned to a five day work week. He/she could be teamed with a mentor from each shift. This would not only give the new hire someone to go to for everyday information but as Bodkin explained it would serve as a source of feedback on the employee's progress.

A re-evaluation or supplemental orientation process seems to be the norm among many private sector employers. This is a re-evaluation of the new hire orientation process giving the new hire an opportunity to gather information that may have may have been overlooked or not

provided to the new hire in the initial process. PricewaterhouseCoopers' Pamela Weber (Horowitz, 2000, ¶ 11) says, "some IT (information technology) groups bring recent hires back for orientation after they've been on the job a few weeks. This gives employees the opportunity to ask questions they didn't know to ask the first time." In Kathryn Tyler's article *Take the new employee off the back burner* (Tyler, 1998, ¶ 9) Charles Cadwell recommends, "Send an evaluation two to four weeks after the employee has started: 'Now that you've been with the company awhile, did the orientation meet your needs?'" This seems to be an avenue to check the success of the orientation process that is in place. Cadwell also states "an evaluation system will help develop a needs analysis for updating the orientation." This material should be what you use to continually update your orientation program. This is where you will find out if there is information that has been omitted, material given at the wrong timeframes, or was the material given comprehensible by the new hire. Did the information given to the new hire afford them the ability to function as you had expected?

This is an area of the new hire orientation process in place at the Ashland fire department which seems to be lacking. Although there is a check off sheet now utilized there is no provision for a re-evaluation or any feedback from the new employee. This seems to be an element that is highly endorsed in the material that was researched. This would afford the employer the ability to determine if the new hire was in need of any more pertinent information to function effectively. Also, a re-evaluation would serve as a tool for the continual revision of the orientation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ashland Fire Department has had a new hire orientation process in place for 10 years that was originally developed as a quick check off sheet; also there is a policy in place that addresses new hire orientation. Although these documents are in place, there is no formal or uniform means of utilizing them.

Within the material in use there are several good attributes in both, the check off sheet, and the orientation policy. It would be impractical to re-write both of these documents, but with the material researched there does seem to be some areas that could be improved upon. Research shows improvements could be made in these areas.

Recommendations include:

- A complete formal introduction to everyone in the organization. This would include, but not be limited to; all firefighting personnel, all officers, union representative, human resource personnel, and the Mayor.
- Include a section in the orientation process that describes the history of the Ashland Fire Department.
- Assign the new hire a mentor or mentors dependant upon how he/she is scheduled to work, i.e. twenty-four hour shift or five days a week. This would give the new hire a go to person for day to day questions.
- Establish timeframes for task completion. As you can see on the new hire check off sheet (appendix 2) the required information seems mostly to be contained in this document, but there lacks any timeframes to complete the tasks. There needs to be a baseline timeframe for completion of the individual tasks, but also each can be tailored to the individual.

- Include a re-evaluation phase in the orientation process. This would give the employer an opportunity to talk one-on-one with the new hire and find out if the information being given is adequate. Also this would give the new hire the opportunity to voice his/her opinion on the orientation process. Research has shown that this critique phase seems to be a very valuable tool for the revision of the orientation process.

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APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY

NEW HIRE ORIENTATION SURVEY

1. Do you feel that a new hire orientation program is important? (circle one)

not important 1 2 3 4 5 *very important*

2. Do you feel the new hire orientation process in place at the Ashland Fire Department is adequate? (circle one)

not adequate 1 2 3 4 5 *very adequate*

3. Rank the following in the order of importance to a successful new hire orientation program. (1 being the most important)

_____ Ashland Fire Department S.O.P.'s

_____ Hands on training (fire & ems)

_____ Introduction to personnel & Station tour

_____ OTHER (if needed) _____

_____ Protocol & Proficiency tests

_____ Schooling if needed (fire & paramedic)

4. Were you satisfied with *your* new hire orientation process when you were hired at the Ashland Fire Department?

not satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 *completely satisfied*

5. For orientation, should the new hire be assigned to a 45hr/wk shift for a minimum length of time?

NO _____ YES _____ , if yes, circle one. <3 months 3-6 months >6months

6. Do you feel a mentoring program would benefit the new hire? I.e. buddy system to show the new hire around and help train him/her, a go to person. (circle one)

not beneficial 1 2 3 4 5 *very beneficial*

7. How long have you been employed at the Ashland Fire Department?

<2yrs. 2-5yrs. 6-10yrs. 10-15yrs. >15yrs.

8. Did you have any FIRE or EMS experience prior to being hired at Ashland Fire Department? _____ FIRE _____ EMS

**Thank you for your participation in this survey.*

APPENDIX 2 – SURVEY answers

36 of 37 participated

1. Do you think a new hire orientation process is important? (circle one)

not important 1(0%) 2(0%) 3(0%) 4(19%) 5(81%) *very important*

2. Do you feel the new hire orientation process in place at the Ashland Fire Department is adequate? (circle one)

not adequate 1(28%) 2(28%) 3(36%) 4(6%) 5(3%) *very adequate*

3. Rank the following in order of importance to a successful new hire orientation program. (1 being most important)*

_____ Comprehension of Ashland Fire Department S.O.P.'s

_____ Hands on training (fire & EMS)

_____ Introduction to personnel & station tour

_____ OTHER (if needed)

_____ Protocol & Proficiency tests

_____ Schooling if needed (fire & paramedic)

*The information in question #3 proved to be ambiguous thus not utilized in this report.

4. Were you satisfied with *your* new hire orientation process when you were hired at the Ashland Fire Department? (circle one)

not satisfied 1(14%) 2(28%) 3(44%) 4(11%) 5(3%) *completely satisfied*

5. For orientation, should the new hire be assigned to a 45hr/wk shift for a minimum length of time?

NO 17% YES 83%, if yes, circle one, <3mo. 37% 3-6 mo. 47% >6mo. 17%

6. Do you feel a mentoring program would benefit the new hire? I.e. buddy system, someone assigned to show the new hire around and help train him/her, a go to person. (circle one)

not beneficial 1(3%) 2(3%) 3(25%) 4(39%) 5(31%) *very beneficial*

7. How long have you been employed at the Ashland Fire Department?

<2yrs. 8% 2-5yrs. 22% 6-10yrs. 25% 10-15yrs. 14% >15yrs. 31%

8. Did you have any FIRE or EMS experience prior to being hired at Ashland Fire Department? FIRE__**__ EMS__**__

** Fire only 11% EMS only 3% BOTH 72% NONE 14%

Response totals shown as percentages in RED

APPENDIX 3 – A.F.D. ORIENTATION POLICY #74

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the orientation process of the Division's new Fire Fighters. It is our intent to quickly and effectively indoctrinate our new employees in order for them to be able to perform the duties of their position.

It is the responsibility of the Officers to provide every opportunity for the new Fire Fighters to experience and learn Division of Fire procedures. The Officers shall ensure that the new employee is treated with respect and that there is no hazing. Fire Fighters also have responsibilities to the new employees. Proper instruction is necessary and who better to instruct than the Fire Fighters who perform those functions? New employees have the responsibility for actively seeking instruction and to work diligently toward the goal of completing the orientation period.

The newly hired Fire Fighter shall be assigned to respond to a variety of incidents in order to quickly gain experience. Through the assignments, the Officers control the safety of the newly hired Fire Fighter, effectively provide quality service to the community and ensure the safety of the other crew members. These carefully chosen assignments also allow the Officer to determine shift strength and callback requirements.

Typical assignments for the new Fire Fighter would include, but would not be limited to the following:

Riding Squad	Practice EMS procedures, basic through Paramedic Practice Division radio procedures Learn streets Learn hospital methodologies
Jump Seat on 2914 -2910	Practice fire procedures Build confidence and team
Local Transfers	Improve patient communication skills Learn locations of nursing homes Practice Division radio procedures Learn streets
Send on errands	Familiarization with area

It is the duty of the Officers to:

Ensure the safety of the Fire Fighters;

Ensure that quality services are provided in a timely manner;

Care for the Division's equipment and facilities; and
Be fiscally responsible.

The newly hired Fire Fighter will not be "counted" as manpower until the chief Officer of the shift determines so. "Counting" as manpower for shift strength during responses is determined by the Officer in Charge at that specific time. The newly hired Fire Fighter shall not be "counted" for determining minimum staffing and shift fill until the Chief Officer clears the Fire Fighter for "counting".

"Counting" on shift and being able to take call are two different concepts "Counting" a newly hired Fire Fighter on shift changes according to assignments and responses. The Officer in Charge can control the Fire Fighters' responses. Filling in for emergency callback differs in that the control is absent. The fill-in Fire Fighter is expected to be able to drive and operate any equipment.

APPENDIX 4 – ASHLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT CHECK OFF SHEET

**ASHLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT
NEW HIRE CHECKOFF SHEET**

NAME: _____

START DATE: _____ COMPLETED DATE: _____

1. QUICK TOUR OF STATION

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Truck Bay | _____ | Gear Storage Closets | _____ |
| Dispatch | _____ | Locker Room | _____ |
| AC's Office | _____ | Back Office | _____ |
| Captain's Office | _____ | Meeting Room | _____ |
| Lounge | _____ | Dorms | _____ |
| Kitchen | _____ | Fire Escape and Tornado Procedure | _____ |

2. TOBACCO PRODUCTS _____ Training _____

3. RULES AND REGULATIONS ISSUED _____ Training _____

4. PROTOCOLS ISSUED _____ Training _____

5. CONTRACT ISSUED _____ Contact Union Rep _____

6. BED ISSUED _____

7. LOCKER ISSUED _____

8. TURNOUT GEAR AND POLICY

Training on section _____

Issued gear _____

Measured for new gear _____

Proper usage of gear _____

Where to store, on and off duty _____

How to clean _____

9. TIME CLOCK

Normal clock in and out _____

Overtime clock in and out _____

10. SHIFT CHANGE PROCEDURES

Training on section _____

Proper Uniform _____

Time _____

Location _____

Truck Assignments _____

Truck Sheets _____

Daily Duties or Assignments _____

11. POLICIES ISSUED

Disciplinary	_____	Training	_____
Sexual Harassment	_____	Training	_____
Hazing and Horseplay	_____	Training	_____
News Media	_____	Training	_____

12. TRUCK CHECK

Daily	_____
Monday	_____

13. CLEAN UP DUTIES, M.S.D.S. SHEETS

Daily Clean Up	_____	Trash	_____
Weekly Schedule	_____	Restrooms	_____
Cleaning Supplies	_____	Kitchen	_____
Sweep	_____	Mop**	_____

**Different Cleaning Solutions _____

14. MEALS

Times	_____
Cost	_____
Issue of Cupboard and Ref. Key	_____
Clean Up	_____

15. DESK DUTIES

Phones	_____	Pager System	_____
Personal Calls	_____	Emergency Calls	_____
Radio Traffic	_____		

16. GO OVER CONTRACT AND ORDINANCE

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| Pay Schedule | _____ | Perfect Attendance Day | _____ |
| Vacation | _____ | Personal Day | _____ |
| Kelly Days | _____ | Sick Leave | _____ |
| Duty Schedule | _____ | Injury Leave | _____ |
| Holidays | _____ | Funeral Leave | _____ |

17. FIRE COMPANY: DRILLS AND MEETINGS _____

18. PERSONNEL AND FINANCE

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Insurance | _____ | Deferred Comp | _____ |
| Payroll Deduction | _____ | Parking Pass | _____ |
| Credit Union | _____ | | |

19. EVALUATIONS _____

20. REPRIMANDS _____

21. SICK LEAVE _____

22. CLOTHING-UNIFORM PURCHASE _____

23. SCHOOLS _____

24. OVERTIME _____

25. PERFECT ATTENDANCE DAYS _____

26. EQUIPMENT FAMILIARIZATION

2910	_____	2914	_____
2912	_____	2944	_____
2941	_____	2945	_____
2921	_____	2950	_____
2931	_____	2934	_____
2932	_____	2935	_____

PUMP OPERATION	
2910	_____
2912	_____
2914	_____
2921	_____
2941	_____
2945	_____
2950	_____
Air Truck Operation	
2944	_____

AFTER RULES, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, SOG'S AND PROTOCOLS HAVE BEEN ISSUED, TRAINING SHALL BE DONE TO INSURE THAT THE NEW EMPLOYEE UNDERSTANDS THESE DOCUMENTS.