

**EXAMINING WAYS TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN
FEMALES WITHIN THE LANCASTER FIRE DEPARTMENT
THE OHIO FIRE EXECUTIVE COURSE**

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ABSTRACT

The problem identified for this research report was Lancaster Fire Department's lack of females within the workforce. The purpose of the paper was to investigate reasons why females were not attracted to the fire service and to improve the gender makeup within the Lancaster Fire Department. The research methods used were historical and descriptive research. There were four research questions to be explored. They included: what factors influenced females both negatively as well as positively in their decisions about becoming firefighters? The remaining questions included: what have other departments enacted to improve their numbers of females within their departments; and, how can Lancaster Fire implement these proven techniques to improve its numbers of females?

The procedures applied to research the subject included book reviews, governmental literature, interviews of local officials, and internet research. The results found departments which had successful female recruitment programs implemented organized recruitment teams which were focused on improving gender diversity. The recruitment concentrated on targeting potential recruits capable of succeeding in a traditional male occupation and then marketing a program with a media campaign.

Recommendations for the Lancaster Fire Department were many. The first item was to establish commitment to gender diversity among the top management. Financing, developing gender policies, and training personnel on diversity would then be necessary. Finally, a recruitment team then would be formed and placed in charge of formulating and marketing a recruitment plan.

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INTRODUCTION

Fire knows no gender, but people do (A Handbook on Women in Firefighting, 1993, p. 4). The United States Constitution states that all people are created equal. The fire service, for most of its existence, has eliminated or discouraged certain types of people based on race and gender from entering its ranks (Supporting A Diverse Fire Service, 2003, p. 1). This paper will look at some of the issues that create barriers for women who would like to join the Lancaster Fire Department.

Lancaster Fire Department has not demonstrated diversity in its hiring. The problem, as defined by this paper, is the lack of females within the Lancaster Fire Department. The Lancaster Fire Department has been in existence for over a century and has never demonstrated the diversity in hiring that all entities, both public and private, must demonstrate.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the historical reasons why, if any, females were not attracted to the fire service and determine ways to change this situation in the future for the Lancaster Fire Department.

The research methods employed to study this problem were both historical as well as descriptive research methods. The research questions defined for this study were:

1. What factors influenced females in their decision to apply for a position of a firefighter?
2. Why do women not apply for firefighter positions?
3. What methods have proven to be effective in encouraging women to apply for a position of a firefighter?

4. How can the Lancaster Fire Department encourage more females to choose a career in firefighting?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Lancaster Fire Department is located in Fairfield County, Ohio and is comprised of several divisions. These divisions include fire suppression, emergency medical services and fire prevention. The department consists of 82 full time firefighters covering approximately 18 square miles and working out of three separate engine houses.

The City of Lancaster consists of a blended mixture of residential, industrial, commercial and agriculturally zoned areas. In 2003 the percentage of each zoned area was: residential-55%; commercial and industrial-40% and agricultural-5%. The city, as well as the county, has experienced tremendous growth in the last 10 years.

The growth Lancaster has experienced has brought a more diverse population into the town than has ever been before; however, Lancaster Fire Department does not reflect diversity within its ranks. The trend throughout the United States reflects a growing mandate from the citizens to insist that public entities become more inclusive and hire females as well as males (Supporting A Diverse Fire Service, 2003, p.1). According to Safety Service Director, E. Strawn, the Lancaster Police Department has heeded this mandate and began recruiting females many years ago and today have four females on its department (personal communication, December 15, 2002).

Assistant Chief D. Crozier stated, "The future impact for the Lancaster Fire Department will be dictated by its willingness to create a diverse and inclusive workplace. Communities are

more willing to adequately fund public entities which are diverse instead of entities viewed as exclusive and closed to certain groups people. Therefore, if the Lancaster Fire Department would like to see more public support in the area of finances and moral support it is imperative it develop a comprehensive plan to recruit and retain females” (personal communication, October 24, 2002).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII) states it is against the law to discriminate based on sex and facilities among other things (Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination, 2003, p. 4). Crozier states that it is also possible to envision legal issues arising in the future if no action is taken to demonstrate an effort to hire minorities. Lancaster could be viewed as discriminatory in the future if change does not occur (personal communication, October 24, 2002).

It is with this emphasis that the research on how to attract and retain females within the Lancaster Fire Department fits into the Ohio Fire Executives project requirement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Supporting A Diverse Fire Service (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] 2003) claims that for more than a century the American fire service was composed predominantly of white, male firefighters from northern European decent. It was not until the 1920's that other ethnicities began to make employment gains within the fire service. The first such groups were the Italians from southern Europe. The fire service has a well documented philosophy within the industry as being resistant to change. The Italians struggled for many years to gain acceptance as firefighters, and it was not until their numbers were sufficiently represented did they truly gain acceptance as firefighters. The 1960's and 1970's saw the beginnings of the African-Americans

and Hispanics as firefighters. The hiring of male minorities began slowly but accelerated in later years due to the civil rights movements of the 1960's and the general acceptance by the white establishment in favor of minorities within the fire service, particularly in larger departments (p.1).

The handbook Many Faces, One Purpose (FEMA, 1999) states that the 1980's and 1990's saw the greatest change in departmental demographics across the United States. The era was marked by the firm entrenchment of minority males within the fire service and the entrance of females into the industry as well (p. 81-82). There were numerous departments that saw the benefits of attracting and retaining females firefighters and therefore developed extensive female recruiting programs (Supporting A Diverse Fire Service, 2003). The Albuquerque Fire Department doubled its number of female fire fighters within one year by developing an effective recruiting strategy for females ("The New Workplace for Women Project," October 1995-March 1997). However, nationwide, only two percent of firefighters are women (Many Women Strong, 1999, p. 1).

Assistant Chief D. Crozier asserted, the Lancaster Fire Department was organized in 1886 as a full time department with its primary mission being fire suppression. Today, however, its mission has grown to include many different aspects within the emergency management field. The core offerings of the fire department are: fire suppression, fire inspections, education, emergency medical services, arson investigation, code enforcement and hazardous material responses. The broadening of its mission coincided with the brisk growth the City of Lancaster experienced during the previous twenty years (personal communication, October 24, 2002). According to the United States Census, Lancaster had a total population of 35,335 people in

2000. There were 18,611 females and 16,724 males. The racial demographics in the 2000 census were quite telling. Lancaster was recorded as being predominantly Caucasian with a total of 34,408. The remainder were comprised of Hispanics with a total of 291, African-Americans with a total of 214, and lastly of Asians with a total of 166. The percentage of racial minorities were approximately 1%; however, if the percentage of females versus males were compared the females claimed the majority of the population with a percentage of 52.6%.

There are many reasons for a public service agency to reflect the demographics of its community. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color religion, sex, or national origin (Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination, 2003). The federal government states, under the Civil Rights Act of 1991, that a person which has been discriminated against in the area of employment may seek monetary damages if the discrimination was intentional (p. 1).

The study examined the hiring methods presently used by the City of Lancaster in its effort to attract firefighter applicants. Safety Service Director E. Strawn stated, the notification of the hiring process is maintained by the Lancaster Civil Service Commission. The potential applicants are notified through the local newspaper of the coming entry level exam. The notification is done 30 days prior to the administration of the test. According to the Lancaster Safety Director, the test is also posted in several local vocational schools such as Fairfield Career Center, Lancaster High School and Hocking College (personal communication, December 15, 2002).

Strawn asserted that once the test is given participants that pass are awarded extra points for prior military service, fire certification cards and paramedic certification cards and then

placed in rank order. Extra points can total to a maximum of 30 points above the possible 100 points from the test. Applicants selected from the test move further into the hiring procedure. The applicants must then pass a physical test, stress test, background check and polygraph test. Upon completion of the tests the applicant would then be probationally hired into the fire department.

Lancaster Fire Department's history of hiring minorities is very similar to most full time departments across United States and Western Europe. Statistics are very similar in large and small departments alike, and to demonstrate the lack of diversity one need only to review information from studies done in the United States and abroad. For example, The Oregonian (Farrell, 1999) published an article citing Portland Fire Department's number of women in its fire prevention bureau was 99% male, 95% white (Fire Bureau Still Working on Finding Balance in Its Hiring, Oct. 1999, p. 1). Firefighters in England and Wales were predominantly males as well. The H.M. Fire Service Inspectorate conducted a survey in 1997 of firefighters in England and Wales and found less than 1% of all firefighters were female. The Inspectorate stated afterward, the numbers speak for themselves and females were not represented in the British Fire Service (Fairness Within the Fire Service, 1999, p. 1).

The Lancaster Fire Department began to practice gender diversity in 1989. A group of fourteen firefighters were hired that year and within the group of fourteen firefighters one was a female. The department had no organized plan for attracting or retaining females. There were no policies, cultural diversity training courses or facility plans prior to hiring the female applicant (Crozier, D., personal communication, May 21, 2002). The female hired had a male family member within the department, and probably he was the motivational reason for her wanting to become a firefighter.

The research revealed five points of emphasis concerning females and their issues to become firefighters. The five points were tradition, recruitment of minorities, harassment, firehouse facilities and the active recruitment methods toward women.

Family Tradition

Family tradition was identified to be a large reason why many males and females became firefighters. The benefit of having a member as a firefighter seemed to have an influence on whether an individual attempted to enter the fire service (A Handbook on Women in Firefighting, 1993, p. 49). According to Don Adair, human resources manager for the City of Portland, "Portland has always had affirmative action for white males" (Fire Bureau Still Working on Finding Balance in Its Hiring, 2002). He went on to explain that affirmative action for white males meant that white males would tell other white males and family members of test dates, what to expect and how to prepare for the entry level entrance exams. This process ensured the homogeneous pool of applicants that Portland experienced (p. 4). Experts have acknowledged the idea that if a female had a family member already in the fire service she would be more likely to consider firefighting as a career (A Handbook on Women in Firefighting, 1993, p. 49).

Females were attracted to firefighting for many of the same reasons as their male counterparts. The nontraditional work schedules of most career departments allowed for larger spans of off-duty time for the firefighters (Chetkovich, C., 1997). According to FEMA's publication, Many Women Strong: A Handbook for Women Firefighters, (FEMA, 1999) stated that the nontraditional schedule was considered a double-edged sword. For a firefighter, the act of child rearing required a great deal of flexibility on the part of the spouse and family. The female firefighter would have many hours off duty to be with her family; however, had to find

suitable child care for her duty hours which tended to be for an average of 24 hours (p. 20).

FEMA's publication (Many Women Strong) also states that female firefighters cited reasons for becoming firefighters, such as lucrative pay, benefits, and retirement. In today's climate of corporate downsizing and pension reduction or elimination, the fire service offers a rewarding salary and a stable pension. There are numerous tangible reasons for desiring to be a firefighter and these reasons account for the steady growth of females within the fire service. Factors identified were monetary benefits, work schedules, community recognition, and family tradition. There are approximately 4,500 females in fire service. The importance of these reasons must not be overlooked and to do so would hinder future attempts to improve the number of females within the fire service (p. 5).

Recruitment of Minorities

To become a truly diverse profession that values employees for what they are and what that individual can offer to the organization, the fire service must look at its employment practices from a more inclusive point of view. The fire service too often examines an individual on the basis of their ability to assimilate into the fire service culture instead of evaluating the person's skills and abilities and how an individual might benefit the department.

Many times departments considered recruitment of minorities a success if there were a few dozen or more minorities that applied to take the entrance test (A Handbook on Women and Firefighting, 1993, p. 10). However, that should be just the beginning of the successful program; the real test must look 2 to 5 years past a females hiring date and evaluate the number of females that are actively contributing as firefighters to their departments. Before actively recruiting females, issues concerning females should be researched and addressed by the fire service

management. Policies and procedures must be in place to minimize potential issues (p. 17).

Harassment

There are several issues to be addressed prior to actively recruiting females. Lancaster Fire Department must address harassment policies and facility requirements if it wants to be truly successful in recruiting and retaining females.

Harassment is one issue that has long been recognized to be throughout most public safety forces. According to one source, 88% of all career female firefighters had experienced some form of harassment. Such harassment included: unwanted requests for sexual favors, unwanted physical contact, exposure to sexually explicit photos, videotapes or cartoons and sexist jokes (Many Faces, One Purpose, 1999, p. 38). Experts agreed these types of harassments were more about power than sex. Fire departments must have policies covering harassment prior to females entering the work force. Police Chief Joseph Polisar, of Garden Grove, California writes that zero tolerance enforcement policy for unacceptable behavior informs all personnel that the administration is 100% behind creating a diverse work environment free of any type of harassment (Recruiting, Integrating and Retaining Women Police Officers, October 1998, p. 1). When a fire department values diversity, it pays attention to what the work environment is like for everyone in the department, especially minorities. It makes visible the informal workplace support systems the dominant group takes for granted, and recognizes people who are excluded from the systems are, in fact, getting a negative form of special treatment" (Supporting a Diverse Fire Service, 1999, p. 3). Hiring a few female firefighters, or other minorities, and placing them in the fire service to sink or swim in the white male culture is not a way to manage change progressively (Many Faces, One Purpose, 1999, p. 32). Positive leadership in the fire service

means working to build a fire service culture where all employees can function productively together. As one chief officer stated, "Diversity is like getting something new to chew on instead of cream of wheat every day" (Supporting a Diverse Fire Service, 1999, p. 3).

Once the harassment policies have been developed, all personnel must be trained on what harassment is and other interpersonal issues relating to a diverse work environment (Polisar, J. 1998, p. 1). Cultural Diversity training moves us from a monocultured work environment to one that supports cultural diversity (Women in the Fire Service, 1999, p.). This type of training should be an ongoing training program that is continually educating the members about issues, such as, stereotyping, harassment, and communication. As the article Supporting A Diverse Fire Service (1999) states, there are several aspects of the fire service which promotes and reinforces prejudice on the part of the dominant group. These include: unfamiliarity with other cultures, the dominant group's perception that its way is right, the perception of being threatened by the inclusion of others, and finally the direct competition for a limited amount of rewards such as promotions. The article went on to identify factors that strengthen the bonds of all members such as: a mutual purpose on the job; frequent contact on the job; sharing of intense experiences, and interdependence of the crew members in critical situations (p. 5-6).

The administration of the diversity training should be done by people trained in diversity issues. The traditional firehouse method of allowing captains or lieutenants to train the men is inadequate at best. The skills required to conduct a meaningful discussion demand a facilitator capable of placing the members at ease and trust within the group being trained. (Supporting a Diverse Fire Service, 1999, p. 8).

Firehouse Facilities

Another item which should be addressed before the hiring of females into the fire service is the issue of facility accommodation. The lack of private sleeping quarters, restrooms, and showers reinforces the tradition of assimilation (Fire Station Facilities for the Workforce of the Future, 2003, p. 3). According to FEMA's Supporting a Diverse Fire Service (2003) there is a common belief among America's fire departments which states if females want to succeed in the male dominated fire service they must use the same restroom, shower and sleeping facilities as the men (p. 2). In the book Real Heat, Race and Gender in the Fire Service (Chetkovich, 1997) the author examined the females' point of view in the Oakland California Fire Department. It was discovered that when appropriate thought and resources were not given to accommodations, many of the ill feelings of the dominant group toward the females were exacerbated (p. 21). This failure required the women to negotiate their own facility accommodations with varying degrees of success. When conflicts arose, the blame was focused on the women instead of the policies or the administration's short comings (Fire Station Facilities for the Workforce of the Future, 2003). The underlying message was women were not regular members of the department. The need to develop private sleeping quarters for all members and to have both male and female restrooms and showers relieved the feelings from the men that special privileges had been granted to the women. It also encouraged the bonding process which the minority group strived to attain (p. 3).

Recruitment Methods

Once the policy and facility issues had been addressed, the next area to cover was the recruitment methodology. As was stated earlier, a successful recruitment of any minority and especially females is not measured by just how many women apply for the test. Chetkovich

(1997) she claims an accurate measure was how many females were still on the job two or more years past their hire date. In order to attract females who are physically capable of performing the tasks a firefighter must perform, an organization must recruit individuals with the potential to succeed. The Oakland California Fire Department found several attributes during their recruiting process which helped it gauge whether an individual had the predisposition to succeed. Self-confidence, commitment to the work and physical aptitude were three characteristics which helped determine if an individual could succeed in the fire service setting. Self-confidence helped individuals by prompting them to ask questions, to put themselves forward in work situations, to deal with criticism, and to recover easily from mistakes. Appropriate social skills and orientation looked at these issue from two vantage points. The first issue was from the females point. Among women, some familiarity with the fire service setting and the group bonding process which takes place in the fire department was helpful. Prior blue collar work was advantageous. A great deal of the time was spent not on actual fire scenes, but around the fire station. It was important to have an understanding of this group setting. The second part of this category was males that had prior exposure with females as coworkers in prior blue collar jobs (pp. 162- 165). According to Chetkovich, this meant not only agreeing that "it was okay to have women in the fire service as long as they could do the job," but also having an understanding of how to work with women and respect for women as people" (p. 98). The goal was to select candidates with those qualities and to inform them of the culture of the fire service prior to the female applicants joining the fire service. The premise behind the plan originated from the fact that the fire service has been slow to embrace change and females represent a great deal of change from the traditional male firefighter.

A strong commitment to the work heavily influenced what coworkers thought of the new recruits. It was discovered in Oakland that people who are unhappy pushing their bodies to the limit will be neither comfortable in the job nor accepted by the group. The physical aptitude of the recruit was also very important. Firefighting can be very strenuous and it takes a good deal of strength and ability to perform the duties. Organizations needed to target their efforts toward candidates that were engaged in strenuous work environments such as those in blue collar industries (pp. 162-164).

When organizations target their efforts dramatic results can be achieved. For example, when the Tucson Police Department made a deliberate effort to recruit women the percentage of women on the job rose from 10% to 29% (Polisar, 1998). Other safety departments have had similar result as Tucson. The Miami Fire Department increased its ranks of female firefighters to an astonishing 28% by developing a strategy of attracting a target group of females compatible with the fire fighting profession. Tucson and Miami used the typical method of drawing females into the police field. Newspapers, radio spots, and school fairs were standard fare for attracting females. This proved typical as well. It wasn't until they developed a comprehensive plan which included newspapers, radio, schools as well as Women and Policing Career Fairs with accompanying media coverage did the percentage increase drastically. Media coverage featuring female officers proved to be the most productive of all methods tested (p. 2).

Experts agreed that once the ground work had been laid involving behaviors, policies, and facilities the attention should be turned toward recruiting females. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) considers workplace diversity important enough to have written several books on issues involving women and how to attract and retain them in the fire service.

FEMA's plan coincides with most other materials on the subject available.

FEMA's handbook (Many Faces, One Purpose, 1999) suggests posting of test dates and requirements in local, regional and national publications are considered the natural starting point for recruiting women. When using the media it is important to have female firefighters as spokespersons. Radio and television spots were effective mediums for announcing the test and encouraging females to apply. The ability of existing female firefighters to encourage other females to become firefighters proved to be an effective method as well. It is now confirmed that posting test and hiring information in locations where females frequent is very beneficial to developing the interest of females in the fire service. For example gyms, college athletic programs, fitness centers, military discharge centers, women's athletic leagues and organized athletic events such as running and lifting competitions should be emphasized (p. 12). Schools must be targeted both in the short and long term recruiting efforts. Fire department recruitment teams should nurture relationships with vocational counselors and guidance councilors in order to attract females to the profession in the future (p. 6).

Departments can develop job shadow programs or ride along programs with targeted interest in females for future recruits (p. 6). Job fairs for women have proven very successful for departments across the United States (p. 13). Job fairs should be no more than 2-3 hours in length and consist of female role models, information about the job (schedules, duties, career ladders), information about the training academy and the paramilitary structure of the fire service (Women and Policing, IWITTS, 2000 p. 1). It is very important to convey the facts of the work environment to potential female recruits as well as the application process and the importance of times and dates, physical requirements and conditioning. The main thrust of such fairs are to

inform women about the fire service and emphasize the value the department places on building a diverse work environment.

Cultural diversity was stressed in all of the current literature on female recruiting (Supporting a Diverse Fire Service 1999; Fire Chief.com, 2002; and Why We Quit, 1996). Each stated the importance of not only educating the members of the fire service on the benefits of a diverse work force but also the cost to departments that fail to acknowledge the diversity in the workplace. The benefits cited by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's handbook titled A Handbook on Women in Firefighting (1993) included more community support for departments that are a reflection of the community's population, improved morale among all members not just females and a fresher, more dynamic workplace which invites various views and opinions. The financial rewards are tangible as well. The reduced number of complaints and legal issues are directly related to a departments ability to value all members not just the majority (p. 67).

PROCEDURES

The study used two research methods, historical and descriptive, to understand the issues women face when deciding to become a firefighter or not. There were many sources for the information and most information came from either the Federal Emergency Management Agency, magazines, newspapers internet resources, books and city officials.

To begin the study the book Real Heat-Race and Gender in the Fire Service (Chetkovich, 1997) was read. Dr Chetkovich, studied Oakland, California's fire department. The study examined the collective experiences females had while going through recruit school and onto

shift work. The study was conducted over eighteen months and looked at hiring practices, forms of harassment, group relationships, facility issues and job satisfaction as female firefighters.

Government literature examining the U.S. Fire Service and female roles within the service was reviewed. The Federal Emergency Management Agency published information on most issues involving women in today's fire service.

The World Wide Web provided vast amounts of information on most topics of diversity in the fire service. Finally, informal interviews with the Assistant Chief of Fire Suppression and the Lancaster Service Safety Director were conducted. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and focused on Lancaster Fire's hiring history, the current method of recruiting and the future recruiting desires of the administration.

The research was conducted over twelve month period and progressed steadily by carefully reviewing literature regarding females in the fire service. The limitation on the subject of females in the Lancaster Fire Service was the reluctance of its employees to discuss changing the gender makeup of the department. It appeared to be a topic most were not in favor of and this reluctance made it difficult to quantify, specifically, the views members had as a whole on women in the fire service and their role in the Lancaster Fire Service.

RESULTS

The research conducted to investigate the influencing factors for women wishing to become firefighters was vast. Dr. Chetkovich (1997) identified family tradition as one of the primary positive factors for females when applying for a firefighters position. The interaction women have with male family members and other male friends who are firefighters proved

beneficial in those females becoming firefighters. The male role models gave insight into the testing dates, testing procedures, firehouse culture, pay and benefits of the job.

There was also a great deal of corroborating literature on the benefits of targeting females when recruiting. Miami, Florida and Madison, Wisconsin were just two of many large departments that dramatically increased the numbers of females on their rosters by specifically creating a marketing plan intended to attract women (Polisar, 1998, p. 2). A strong recruitment program with a dedicated staff was an important factor to achieve diversity in the fire service. The recruitment team would be responsible for developing materials, advertisements, job fairs and job orientations for interested individuals (p. 2).

The study identified items that negatively affected women in their decisions to not apply for the job. Factors such as harassment were identified, and the open hostility by male firefighters toward female recruits was undeniable. Intimidation, sexually explicit language and unwanted touching was prevalent in the industry and according to one study 88% of all female firefighters experienced some form of harassment (Many Faces, One Purpose, 1999, p. 38).

The lack of peer support groups was a factor in not applying. The feeling of having no one to confide in and the accompanying isolation was part of the reason for the low numbers of female firefighters (Willing, L., 2003, p. 2).

Child care many times negatively influenced decisions as well. The non-traditional, 24 hour shifts required women to find child care for those 24 hours and many times that was difficult (A Handbook on Women in Firefighting: The Changing Face of the Fire Service, 1993, p.48)..

The resources had a great deal of agreement on methods to recruit and retain women.

Chetkovich, (1997) and FEMA, (1999) recommended departments take steps pro actively before attempts are made to actively recruit females. The first recommendations sources suggested were to develop policies and procedures pertaining to harassment, hair length and the departments encouragement of cultural diversity. Top management should openly endorse cultural diversity in deed as well as their actions. Chiefs must also back the idea of a two gender workforce by providing the finances to accomplish the goal of diversity (Many Faces, 1999, p. 7).

Recruitment teams would be entrusted with the objective to create methods of recruiting females into the fire service. FEMA suggests the recruitment team be responsible for developing literature which would be gender neutral in content (Many Faces, One Purpose, 1999). They would develop the promotional strategies to recruit females, decide on methods to advertise such as newspapers, radio spots, television public service announcements and chose local and regional establishments to place testing information (p. 10). Locations such as gyms, military discharge centers, schools, university and female athletic events are some of the suggested places to place literature. The emphasis on targeting females from certain backgrounds was to attract clientele which would have the propensity to succeed in the fire service (p. 12).

Finally, it was suggested (Polisar, 1998) that departments conduct open houses and job fairs for females. The orientation sessions would serve to familiarize women with the job of firefighting as well as the fire house culture, pay, benefits and hours etc. Recruitment teams could inform interested individuals about testing requirements during open house sessions as well (p. 2).

There have been many departments in the United States that have increased their numbers of females by developing an organized, deliberate female recruitment program. Therefore,

Lancaster can begin to make strides toward diversity by practicing tried and proven techniques.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed the need for fire departments in the United States to become more inclusive and open toward females as firefighters. The lack of females as full-time firefighters is prevalent throughout the country and the fire service lags behind the police when it comes to hiring females. According to D. Trimmer, Assistant Prosecutor for Lancaster, the average number of females within the policing field is about 12% (personal communication, May 16, 2003). However, according to FEMA, the average for female firefighters is about 2% (Many Women Strong, 1999, p. 2).

Lancaster Fire has continued to recruit the traditional way and the results reflect this tradition. It is my opinion that if Lancaster is going to increase its numbers of females it will need to develop an strategy to do so. Dr. Chetkovich (1997) identified poor recruiting strategies, social expectations, poor facilities and lack of peer support groups as major factors affecting women in the firefighting field. It is only after careful study that I agree with her findings. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has published several handbooks and all confirm the fact that women are truly under-represented in today's fire service (Many Women Strong, 1999, p. 2). In addition to FEMA and Dr. Chetkovich (1997), the internet had numerous sources demonstrating this fact as well. The Institute for Women in Trades, Technology and Science and Firechief.com defined the extent of the research problem and defined strategies to improve the numbers of females in the fire service.

The researcher feels the problem in the Lancaster Fire Department to be one of no

direction in recruiting. The lack of forethought and planning has perpetuated the homogenous makeup in the department. Lancaster Fire needs to become proactive and respond to the diversity issue by developing a diversity plan which values individuality and inclusiveness. The programs already in existence in many fire departments could be examined by the top management and modified to fit Lancaster's needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research proposes that the Lancaster Fire Department address the issue of attracting and retaining qualified females in an organized and proactive manner. In accordance with well documented approaches from leading departments across the United States, Lancaster must address these issues if it hopes to have a successful integration of females into its fire service:

1. Provide mandatory classes on cultural diversity for all existing employees prior to females entering the ranks. The goal is to elevate apprehensions the male work force may have concerning sexual harassment. The Lancaster's formal policy must be explained and any questions must be answered fully. Lancaster recently developed a comprehensive plan to assist employees in defining what harassment is and the steps which should be taken in report such incidents.

2. The Lancaster Fire Department must develop a plan to address facility issues involved with employing both sexes within the workforce. It is mandatory that females have their own restroom, shower, and private sleeping quarters. The goal is not to imply woman are getting special treatment but to acknowledge that females are a valuable asset to the department and to

provide them with suitable accommodations. To not provide such facilities is to unduly set them apart from the group and forces the females to rely on themselves to negotiate their facility needs.

3. Target recruitment of females. It should be an immediate goal of the Lancaster Fire Administration to advertise job opportunities to females, focusing in locations which promote characteristics beneficial to the fire service. The areas would include physically fit occupations such as military, athletic teams, and occupations requiring skills valued by the fire service. Also, universities, vocational schools, gym facilities, and job fairs would be targeted in order to attract females with these characteristics. Brochures explaining the job and its many benefits and demands would be used making sure that it is written in gender neutral language. Prior to the test being given, a question and answer session would be held to answer question involving the test and its format. Information about the firehouse life and what to expect if hired would be advantageous to many that have little understanding about fire service. In addition, requirements concerning physical testing and what is expected of recruits is needed to ensure potential candidates are prepared for the physical testing portion of the test. Finally, the use of the media to inform the public of the interest Lancaster has in hiring females would be needed. Local radio and television stations provide community service announcements and this would be an avenue to reach large numbers of females at no cost to the department.

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