

“Are Moraine Firefighters Working Out of Class Qualified to Do So?”

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A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

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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.

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ABSTRACT

The problem that this applied research paper addressed is the qualifications of firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers. The Moraine Fire Department currently does not conduct any type of crew leader/company officer training program for non-officers. The role of crew leader/company officer is a critical component of the mission of the department. Success in everything the department does can be affected by how well the responsibilities of the crew leader/company officer position are performed. The crew leader/company officer is a critical link between labor and administration. The current methods used to fill the spot of crew leader/company officer have worked well at times, and been a complete failure at others.

The purpose of this APR is to determine if the firefighters working out of class are qualified to do so. The research used in this study is descriptive, utilizing literature, national standards, and three surveys, one external and two internal. The research questions addressed are:

1. What standards are available to recommend education and training levels for crew leaders/company officers?
2. What types of training, education, and mentoring do neighboring departments similar in size to the Moraine Fire Department require for firefighters working out of class and functioning as crew leaders/company officers?
3. Are MFD firefighters being prepared to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers (on their own or by the department)?
4. Do Moraine Fire Department firefighters who are required to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers feel they are adequately prepared to do so?

The results of this APR indicate that functioning in the capacity of crew leader/company officer is a very demanding position requiring a vast amount of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Many firefighters working out of class within the Moraine Fire Department are not properly prepared to do so, and are in fact uncomfortable performing in the capacity. It is recommended that the Moraine Fire Department establish an officer training program for firefighters working out of class that meets or exceeds the recommendations of NFPA .

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

One of the most critical goals of fire service operations is maintaining consistency as much as possible. Company Officers are considered by many to be “the most influential member of the department and key to daily operations” (Smoke, 2010, p. 5). The responsibilities of company officer’s range from ensuring simple day to day task get completed to making critical decisions during emergency operations. Today’s fire service requires company officers to have a vast amount of knowledge on a variety of topics as well as communication skills and leadership abilities. Currently the city of Moraine Fire Department utilizes firefighters working out of class to function as crew leaders/company officers in the absence of a lieutenant. The simple definition of working out of class is a firefighter functioning in a job description other than firefighter, most often as a company officer/crew leader.

This practice has had negative effects on both emergency and non-emergency operations. Inconsistent decision making during emergency and non-emergency operations, poor supervision and crew accountability resulting in injuries and property damage, as well as poor leadership and direction of personnel are a few of the problems that have been experienced. Additional problems include inconsistencies in the delivery of the department’s mission and visions. Some firefighters have also expressed concerns with the additional stress of being placed into a position that they have not been properly prepared to fill, or have no desire to function in that capacity. Currently the Moraine Fire Department has no formal training program to ensure that the firefighters working out of class are adequately prepared to perform the functions of the

position. The purpose of this applied research paper is to determine if firefighters working out of class within the Moraine Fire Department are qualified to do so.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) is to identify and describe inadequacies in training and preparation of Moraine firefighters working out of class. Once completed, the results of this research project will be delivered to the Moraine Fire Department executive staff for evaluation and assistance in implementing minimum qualifications, experience, and training for firefighters working out of class.

Research Questions

The descriptive research method was used for this research project to answer the following research questions:

1. What standards are available to recommend education and training levels for crew leaders/company officers?
2. What types of training, education, and mentoring do neighboring departments similar in size to the Moraine Fire Department require for firefighters working out of class and functioning as crew leaders/company officers?
3. Are MFD firefighters being prepared to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers (on their own or by the department)?
4. Do Moraine Fire Department firefighters who are required to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers feel they are adequately prepared to do so?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Moraine is located on the south side of the City of Dayton, in southwest Ohio, and is bordered by the cities of Dayton, Kettering, West Carrolton, and Jefferson and Miami Townships. The city has a total area of 9.52 square miles, of which 9.25 square miles is land and 0.27 square miles is water. The population as of the 2010 census was 6,307. Residentially the city consists of single family dwellings, apartments, and mobile homes. The city has a large commercial and industrial base, a major interstate, rail line, and the Great Miami River running through it.

The Moraine Fire Department's primary purpose is to provide fire protection, emergency medical services, both basic life support (BLS) and advanced life support (ALS), and technical rescue services to the community. The department also provides secondary services such as, but not limited to, fire safety inspections, fire prevention activities, CPR and first aid classes, and child safety seat installations and inspections. In 2012 the Moraine Fire Department responded to 2200 incidents. The department operates out of two fire stations, Station 29 and Station 30. Both stations are manned twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Station 29 operates a ladder truck with two personnel assigned and a medic unit with two personnel assigned. On fire incidents the medic crew joins the ladder crew to form a four person crew. Station 30 cross staffs an engine, medic unit, and rescue truck handling first emergency first.

Currently the Moraine Fire Department is comprised of twenty-four full-time and nine part-time members. The current organizational structure consists of a Fire Chief, two Deputy Fire Chiefs, six Lieutenants, fifteen Career Firefighter/Paramedics, and nine part-time Firefighter/EMT-Paramedics.

The Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chiefs work forty-hour work weeks Monday thru Friday. The Fire Chief works Monday through Friday while the Deputy Chiefs both work four ten hour days with one working Monday thru Thursday and the second working Tuesday thru Friday. The six Lieutenants, Full-Time Firefighters, and Part-Time Firefighters all work a 24/48 (one day on-two days off) rotation assigned to three platoons (1st, 2nd, and 3rd). Three Lieutenants run as the Officer in Charge (Shift Commander of each Platoon) in a staff vehicle from Station 29, while the remaining three Lieutenants are assigned to the second station (Station 30) cross manning a Medic/Engine/Rescue on each platoon.

Lieutenants within the MFD are responsible for their station, apparatus, and personnel assigned to them for twenty-four hour shift. The lieutenant supervises the firefighters assigned to him for the day while responding to all types of fire, emergency medical, and rescue incidents. The Lieutenants also supervise their personnel in the completion of non-emergency tasks such as building and apparatus maintenance, pre-fire planning, installing smoke detectors and servicing fire hydrants as well as a variety of other special details and assigned projects. Lieutenants are responsible to train their firefighters to maintain the knowledge, skills and abilities to handle emergency situations as they arise and to always be in a constant state of readiness. Lieutenants functioning as company officers need to have a broad range of knowledge in many areas in order to effectively lead his/her company.

Currently one lieutenant functions as the officer in charge, and does not function as part of the crew at Station 29, which results in a firefighter filling that responsibility on the apparatus. When the Lieutenant functioning as the Officer in Charge is off work, the second Lieutenant moves to Station 29 and fills that position. With this configuration, there is no Lieutenant as part of the crew at Station 29 all of the time and whenever the Lieutenant at Station 30 has to move to Station 29 (to function as the Officer in Charge) or is off duty for other reasons (vacation, EDO,

Sick Leave) there is no Lieutenant as part of the crew at Station 30 requiring a Firefighter to work out of class to fill the position.

Due to vacations, earned days off, sick and injury leave, and a variety of other reasons the Firefighter required to work out of class changes from shift to shift often times changing multiple times during the one shift. Firefighters functioning in this capacity use whatever knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) they have obtained in their careers to help them function in the position.

The result of firefighters working out of class has many impacts on the operations of the department. The firefighters working out of class have various knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) as well as experience. One day a twenty year veteran firefighter could be filling the role of crew leader/company officer and the next a part-time rookie with one year experience could be in the same spot. These extreme differences make it very hard to maintain any type of consistency in shift operations. Often the firefighters required to work out of class have no desire to do so, and there is no compensation, which leads to poor performance of the duties the position involves.

Some of the problems encountered with firefighters working out of class include non-compliance with standard operating guidelines, poor decision making in non-emergency and emergency settings, lack of crew accountability in relation to assigned work and responsibilities. This has resulted in mishandled emergencies, damage to property and equipment, and lack of consistency in operations.

An additional problem was created when the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) was enacted which changed the amount of hours the part-time firefighters are schedule

to work each week. This limited shifts has forced the department to hire more part-time employees to cover the open shifts. These new employees are having less and less experience than the department has experienced in the past with part-time employees. This lack of experience and the fact that these inexperienced firefighters are being placed in the position of company officer/crew leader has the potential to result in serious harm or death to not only the firefighters, but the civilians they are protecting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review used for this applied research paper was obtained by reviewing assorted published Applied Research Projects (EFO and OFE), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards, International Association of Fire Chief's (IAFC) recommendations, International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) manuals, books, trade magazines, and internet libraries, the City of Moraine Position Description for Lieutenant, and personal interviews. The idea was to assemble an assortment of information and opinions to develop a plan to insure that Moraine Firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers are adequately prepared to function in that capacity.

Ask any leader in the fire service how important the position of company officer is in a fire department, and the majority of them will answer that the position is one of the most, if not the most important one. When the officers or senior members of the department who fill these critical positions are off or unavailable, who fills their positions, and what qualifications should they have? When discussing firefighters working out of class in the absence of an officer, one must consider not only the operational responsibilities required of the person, but the leadership void they must fill in the absence of the officer. A firefighter working out of class may have the ability to handle all the responsibilities of emergency operations, but without leadership abilities, they may cause more harm than good in the long run. Smoke states "the company officer is the most influential member of the department and key to daily operations" (p.5). Firefighters functioning as company officers/crew leaders have an enormous amount of responsibility placed upon them.

Traditionally in the fire service functioning as a crew leader/company officer required little more than being a good firefighter. It was felt that having a basic knowledge of strategy and tactics and the physical ability to carry out the tasks were sufficient in performing the job. As time has progressed the fire service has changed dramatically requiring crew leaders/company officers to not only have the traits previously mentioned, but the need for higher education and training has become evident. Changes in building contents and construction, emergency medical services, technical rescue, hazardous materials, and response to terrorism have all placed additional demands on all levels of the fire service, especially those functioning as crew leaders/company officers. James O. Page wrote in the March 2001 issue of Fire Rescue Magazine (2001) how important the company officer really is. He went on to say that company officers are the only ones with a twenty-four hour, around the clock ability to influence department members. This also places those in this position in the best position to motivate, teach, and inspire.

In attempting to answer the first research question, what standards are available to recommend education and training levels for crew leaders/company officers, one has to start with the National Fire Protection Association, Standard 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, a nationally recognized and accepted standard for fire officers. The standard lists in detail the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to function as a company officer. The standard outlines the job performance requirements for (JPR) for four levels of fire officers. Fire Officer I is considered the supervisory level, such as company officers. Fire Officer II, III, and IV correspond to the supervisory/managerial, managerial/administrative, and administrative levels.

For Fire Officer I the standard identifies the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) that a company level officer should possess. The KSA's are identified in seven areas:

1. General.
2. Human resource management.
3. Community and government relations.
4. Administration.
5. Inspection and investigation.
6. Emergency service delivery.
7. Health and safety.

Like no time before, functioning as a crew leader/company officer demands formal education and vast amounts of experience in fire, emergency medical, and rescue services. Aside from the operational aspects of the position, today's crew leaders/company officers require formal education and specialized training. The demands of providing emergency medical, fire, and rescue services have never been greater. The responsibilities of today's crew leaders/company officers include leadership, motivation, technical expertise, committing to continuous education, a willingness to serve and change, and providing direction and instruction (Fleming 2002). Chase Sargent goes on to include accepting responsibility and accountability, evaluating firefighters, maintaining discipline, and following organizational rules and policies as additional responsibilities (Sargent).

The International Association of Fire Chief's (IAFC) *Officer Development Handbook* (2010) offers those aspiring to lead a well defined career development map. The handbook defines career mapping as professional development that is planned, progressive and a lifelong process

of education, training, experience, and self development (Appendix D). The IAFC's *Officer Development Handbook* is organized into four components: learning, education, experience, and self-development. The learning component involves training and certification while the education component addresses with higher level formal education. The experience component focuses on opportunities to practice the skills, and gain experience in several different areas. The self development component is accomplished through various activities for each level.

For firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers, the supervisory fire officer level (Fire Officer I) would be appropriate. The recommended training for this level includes Firefighter II, Fire Officer I, Incident Safety Officer, IMS, Instructor I, Inspector I, Emergency Medical Services (EMT or Paramedic), Hazardous Materials Operations Level, and a valid Driver's License with endorsements. The education component identifies course work in the following 100 level college courses: English composition, public speaking, business communications, biology, chemistry, psychology, sociology, algebra, business computer systems, health and wellness, American government, human resource management, fire behavior and combustion, building construction, and fire administration.

The International Fire Service Training Association [IFSTA], *Fire Department Company Officer* 3rd Edition (1998), describes that the company officer not only provides that vital link during emergency operations, but also fills the same role in day-to-day activities. It is imperative to have the right person in the position. "The fact is that the company officer plays an important role in the coordination of departmental goals and objectives and, in most instances, is the person who ensures that action is taken to accomplish day-to-day tasks" (IFSTA, 1998, p. 5).

In collecting information from local sources, it was discovered that very few departments in the Dayton metropolitan area surrounding Moraine provide any type of formal training programs for firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers. NFPA Standard 1500, *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs* (2013) which is a comprehensive document that addresses a wide variety of topics. Chapter 5.1.1 Training, Education, and Professional states that “the fire department shall provide training, education, and professional development programs for all department members commensurate with the duties and functions that they are expected to perform” (NFPA 2013, p.12). In the article career development for officers, Clinton H. Smoke states that “A company officer is a first line supervisor responsible for the performance and safety of assigned personnel in an emergency service organization” (Smoke, 1998).

In reviewing the Lieutenant position description for the Moraine Fire Department, responsibilities listed include ensuring the day-to-day operations of their assigned station, supervising assigned personnel, insuring safety practices of subordinates, ensuring all necessary daily activities are completed, understanding and using the principles/procedures of delegation and discipline, and functioning as assigned in different positions within the incident management system. One would assume that firefighters working out of class filling these positions would have the same responsibilities. NFPA 1500 contains additional requirements including that the fire department develops training curriculums that meet the requirements of the NFPA professional standard pertaining to a member’s assigned function. For firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers, that standard would be NFPA 1021.

Due to the organizational structure of the Moraine Fire Department, Firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers are mainly responsible for supervising the crew during emergency incidents; function as part of the Incident Management System. NFPA 1561, *Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System*, identifies the necessity of supervisory personnel to be trained for their role in the Incident Management System, including the ability to assume initial command of an incident until a higher ranking officer arrives (NFPA, 2014, p. 18).

Many departments across the country have created officer development programs. The Houston Fire Department created a forty-hour officer school with an additional sixteen hours of continuing education. The school is designed to enhance good management skills while the stage for a complete overhaul of standard practices. The continuing education program has four-hour classes throughout the year that include a variety of topics (Connealy, 2000). Mentoring is another option for providing firefighters working out of class with the skills they need to be successful. Mentoring is an important aspect of career development. A successful mentor helps to guide and coach you through the development experience and growth. A good mentor does not tell you what to do, but rather gives you options, challenges you to see the big picture, encourages, identifies areas for improvement, and helps you refine your skills (Brueman, 2009). Chief Laskey in his book writes that “mentoring people means giving them the stuff that they need to learn and improve. A good mentoring program will give the person a good sense of belonging to the organization and that someone else is willing to give them what they need to do their job better and develop (Laskey, 2006).

In researching curriculums that meet the NFPA 1021 standard, the International Fire Service Training Association offers the program Fire and Emergency Services Company Officer

Instructor Resource Kit. The Kit provides the resources needed to teach courses that use the Fire and Emergency Services Company Officer manual (4th edition) which meets NFPA 1021 standards. Locally Sinclair Community College located in Dayton offers Fire Officer I, II, III, and IV. The courses all meet the requirements for NFPA 1021 Standards for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.

In summary, research shows that there are many options related to officer training materials. NFPA 1021, The IAFC Professional Development Model, continuing education available from local, state, and federal resources, and mentoring all provide direction to improve the skills of Firefighters who are required to work out of class and function as crew leaders/company officers in the Moraine Fire Department. Using the information obtained with this research to develop a training program to train firefighters prior to them working out of class, will provide them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that these firefighters need to function as crew leaders/company officers.

PROCEDURES

This applied research paper was formatted and written based on the edition of the American Psychological Association publication manual. The author utilized the descriptive research method to answer the following questions: a.) what standards are available to recommend education and training levels for crew leaders/company officers? b.) what types of training, education, and mentoring do neighboring departments similar in size to the Moraine Fire Department require for firefighters working out of class and functioning as crew leaders/company officers? c.) are MFD firefighters being prepared to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers (on their own or by the department)? d.) do Moraine Fire Department firefighters who are required to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers feel they are adequately prepared to do so?

The research methodology consisted of three parts. The first involved a literature review of articles, texts, reports, and research papers related to firefighters working out of class and functioning as crew leaders/company officers, and a review of state and national standards. This provided information and data for answering question #1. The second consisted of obtaining information from similar neighboring departments via a survey instrument and one on one interviews providing information for answering question #2. The third involved an internal survey of Moraine Fire Department firefighters. This provided the needed information for answering questions #3 and #4.

Research for the first part began with a simple internet search completed by the author utilizing the Google search engine (www.google.com). The terms used in this internet search included company officer, acting company officer, and firefighters working out of class.

The available information found via these research methods was quite large with most

material referencing the National Fire Protection Association 1021. After acquiring sufficient research material, the research questions were utilized to evaluate and access the information and assemble the information contained in this document. The next step in the research process involved visiting the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland providing several sources including magazine articles and previous Executive Fire Officer Program Applied Research Projects. The last step of this research consisted of scanning the database of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association- Ohio Fire Executive Applied Research Projects.

The survey portion of the research initially consisted of constructing two surveys consisting of hard copy questionnaires. These surveys were sent to the Ohio Fire Executive (OFE) ARPevaluators who made recommendations for making adjustments to the surveys. The first was an internal feedback instrument that was developed for the firefighters of the Moraine Fire Department. After reviewing the questionnaire and having a number of members complete a sample survey, it was determined that the survey would be difficult to break down into accurate percentages. After making corrections and re-configuring the questions the survey was sent out to the firefighters of the Moraine Fire Department.

Response to the initial survey was minimal so a second survey was constructed utilizing the Survey Monkey Website (www.surveymonkey.com) and was sent out a second time to the firefighters of the Moraine Fire Department. Again response to the survey was limited so the author was forced to personally approach each firefighter and have them complete the survey. The second survey was an external feedback instrument that was sent to similar sized fire departments in Montgomery, Warren, and Greene counties in Ohio that function with small crews and a limited number of fire officers similar to the Moraine Fire Department

Definition of Terms

Acting Company Officer- A firefighter assigned on an occasional basis to supervise a crew on a engine, ladder, or medic.

Lieutenant- A first line supervisor responsible for a specific crew at a MFD fire station. These Lieutenants also function as the Officer in Charge and are assigned additional responsibilities within the department.

Officer in Charge- One of the two lieutenants assigned to each shift of the MFD. This lieutenant is responsible for all shift activities and responds to incidents in a staff vehicle.

National Fire Academy- A residential campus located in Emmitsburg, Maryland operated by the United States Fire Administration offering professional development courses to the fire service.

National Fire Protection Association- A non-profit world-wide organization and developer of more than 300 consensus standards and codes.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1021- The professional standard outlining the minimum job performance requirements (JPR) for fire officers.

Working Out of Class- A firefighter functioning in a position that includes functions not included in the job description for firefighter. Most often this is a firefighter functioning as a company officer/crew leader.

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations to the research. The data was collected via two surveys, one internal, and one external. Limitations of the internal survey included the experience, knowledge, and understanding of fire department staffing by the firefighters surveyed, as well as the fact that the survey was being conducted by a Lieutenant of the department. The external survey is limited

by the number of departments surveyed, and the fact that all departments surveyed were in Montgomery, Warren, and Greene counties in the State of Ohio.

An additional limitation that affected both surveys is the difficulty the author had in receiving responses back from the survey. This required the author to have a portion of the surveys completed while he waited, which caused some of the respondents to rush in answering the questions. All limitations of the study should not have a negative effect on the project.

RESULTS

The purpose of this applied research project was to research if the firefighters of the Moraine Fire Department working out of class as crew leaders/company officers are qualified to do so. This section will report the results of the information and data collected for the paper. An extensive literature review and three survey instruments were utilized to determine answers for the research questions posed in the introduction of this project.

Research question 1. What standards are available to recommend education and training levels for crew leaders/company officers? This question was answered mainly through the literature review which found that all the literature reviewed related to the fire service as well as business, military, and sports emphasized the importance of properly educated and trained first level supervisors. Crew leaders/company officers have enormous responsibilities in the day to day and emergency scene operations. The demands of this type of position are intense and difficult for those who perform the job day in and day out, and even more so for those who do it on an intermittent bases. There are multiple sources available recommending minimal knowledge, skills, and abilities to function as a crew leader/company officer. The National Fire Protection Associations (NFPA) Standard 1021 *Standard for Fire Officer Qualifications* is the benchmark utilized across the country. NFPA 1021 outlines the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) required of a company level officer. The identified KSA's are contained in seven areas:

1. General.
2. Human Resource Management.
3. Community and Government Relations.
4. Administration.

5. Inspection and Investigation.
6. Emergency Service Delivery.
7. Health and Safety.

The International Association of Fire Chief's *Officer Development Handbook* (IAFC, 2010) offers additional reference to the national standards and practices listed in NFPA 1021. The handbook provides a road map for the training and development for four levels of fire officers.

The handbook lists four sections:

1. Learning.
2. Education.
3. Experience.
4. Self-Development.

The section covering Supervising Fire Officer Level I would be the classification for a company officer or a firefighter working out of class in that capacity. The training section relates to professional training and certifications while the education section is related to college level instruction. The literature research showed that national standards for crew leader/company officers exist and the importance of having qualified persons filling those roles.

Research question 2- What types of training, education, and mentoring do neighboring departments to the Moraine Fire Department require for firefighters working out of class and functioning as crew leaders/company officers? The types of training, education, and mentoring being required was identified through an external survey instrument that was sent to sixteen similar departments in the area of the MFD. Due to poor response to the surveys, one on one interviews were conducted with members of the departments to answer the questions posed on the survey.

Feedback instrument question #1 Name of department?

A list of departments is provided in appendix 1.

Feedback instrument question #2 What ranks are included in your organization?

Firefighter EMT or Firefighter Paramedic- 16 departments/100%

Lieutenant- 16 departments/100%

Captain- 11 departments/68.75%

Deputy Chief- 4 departments/25%

Battalion Chief- 5 departments/31.25%

Assistant Chief- 3 departments/18.75%

Chief- 16 departments/100%

Feedback instrument question #3 What ranks are normally assigned as a crew leader/company officers (riding apparatus)?

Lieutenants- 16 departments/100%

Captains- 6 departments/37.50%

Feedback instrument question #4 Do you allow firefighters to work out of class and function as crew leaders/company officers in the absence of the normal crew leader/company officer?

16 departments/100%

Feedback instrument question #5 Do you require any type of additional training for those firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers?

Yes- 3 departments/18.75%

No- 13 departments/81.25%

Feedback instrument question #6 If additional training is required, does the department provide that training?

Yes- 3 departments (100% of the 3 that answered yes to additional training required)

Feedback instrument question #7 Does your department require those functioning as crew leaders/company officers to meet NFPA standard 102 Fire Officer Professional Qualifications- Fire Officer I?

No- 3 departments (100% of the 3 that answered yes to additional training required)

As the surveys show, more than 81.25% of the departments surveyed require no additional training for firefighters working out of class as a crew leader/company officer. A deficiency in this feedback instrument is the fact that the author did not ask if additional training is required for officers functioning as crew leader/company officers.

Research question 3 Are MFD firefighters being prepared to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers (on their own or by the department)? An internal feedback instrument was used to provide data to answer this research question.

Feedback instrument question #1 What is your current job title?

Full-Time Firefighter/Paramedic- 15 firefighters/50%

Part-Time Firefighter/Paramedic- 4 firefighters/13.34%

Part-Time Firefighter/EMT- 11 firefighters/36.66%

Feedback instrument question #2 How long have you been employed by the Moraine Fire Department?

Less than 2 years- 11 firefighters/36.67%

2-5 years- 3 firefighter/10%

5-10 years- 7 firefighters/23.33%

10-15 years- 3 firefighters/10%

15-20 years- 2 firefighters/6.67%

Over 20 years- 4 firefighters/13.33%

Feedback instrument question #3 How many years have you been in the fire service total?

Less than 5 years- 11/36.67%

5-10 years- 2/6.67%

10-15 years- 1/3.33%

15-20 years- 10/33.33%

Over 20 years- 6/20%

Feedback instrument question #4 What is the highest level of education you have obtained?

High School- 30/100%

Associates Degree- 7/23.34%

Bachelor Degree- 4/13.33%

Master Degree- 1/3.33%

Feedback instrument question #5- Did the Moraine Fire Department assist you in acquiring this education?

Yes- 8/26.67%

No- 22/73.33%

Feedback instrument question #6 What state certifications do you currently hold?

Firefighter I- 2/6.67%

Firefighter II- 28/93.33%

EMT- 8/26.67%

Paramedic- 22/73.33%

Inspector- 4/46.67%

Instructor- 6/20%

Feedback instrument question #7 Did the Moraine Fire Department assist you in acquiring these certifications?

Yes- None

No- 30/100%

Feedback instrument question #8 Have you attended any classes related to functioning as a crew leader/company officer at any of the following?

- a. Fire Department Instructor Conference- 12/40%*
- b. Ohio Fire Academy- None*
- c. National Fire Academy- None*

Feedback instrument question #9 Have you completed Fire Officer I?

- a. Yes- 3 firefighters/10%*
- b. No- 27 firefighters/90%*

Feedback instrument question #10 Do you ever work out of class functioning as a crew leader/company officer?

- a. Yes- 30 firefighters/100%*
- b. No- none*

The research shows that firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers are not being provided the training recommended by national standards. While many meet portions of the standards, most of the training they have they obtained on their own or through other departments.

Research question 4 Do Moraine Fire Department firefighters who are required to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers feel they are adequately prepared to do so?

Feedback instrument question #1 Do you feel you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work out of class functioning as a crew leader/company officer?

- a. Strongly Agree- None
- b. Agree- 13 firefighters/43.33%
- c. Neutral- 10 firefighters/33.33%
- d. Disagree- 7 firefighters/23.34%
- e. Strongly disagree

Feedback instrument question #2 Do you feel there has been incidents while working out of class as a crew leader/company officer, that you were overwhelmed?

- a. Strongly agree- none
- b. Agree- 27/90%
- c. Neutral- none
- d. Disagree- 3 firefighters/10%
- e. Strongly disagree- none

Feedback instrument question #3 Do you feel the Moraine Fire Department has properly prepared you to work out of class as a crew leader/company officer?

- a. Strongly agree- none
- b. Agree- 3 firefighters/10%
- c. Neutral- 8 firefighters/26.67%
- d. Disagree- 19 firefighters/63.33%
- e. Strongly disagree- none

Feedback instrument question #4 How would you rate your knowledge, skills, and abilities when working out of class functioning as a crew leader/company officer?

- f. Excellent- 4 firefighters/13.33%
- g. Good- 8 firefighters/26.67%
- h. Adequate- 12 firefighters/40%
- i. Needs Improvement- 6 firefighters/20%

For this question the research shows that 23.34% of the firefighters feel they do not have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to function as a crew leader/company officers, while 33.33% are unsure. Those that feel they do have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform is encouraging at 43.33%, but the department is currently no verifying those traits in any way.

DISCUSSION

The need to train and educate those functioning as company officers is essential for the success of the individual and the department. The role of company officer is one of the most difficult roles in the fire service. Functioning as a company officer is a difficult job for someone who operates in the position day in and day out, operating in the position is even more difficult for someone who does it on an intermittent basis such as the firefighters within the Moraine Fire Department. “A member working out of grade as the company officer faces tremendous challenges. The company officer must be a leader, a trainer, a communicator, a listener, a co-worker, a boss, and a subordinate all at the same time. The company officer must be prepared to wear all these hats historically with little or no training above what the member initially receives when they are a recruit” (Mullin, 2009, p.32).

In discussing the role of company officers, a vital component that cannot be overlooked is the important part company officers play in the motivation and moral of department’s members. James O. Page in the March 2001 issue of *Fire Rescue Magazine* wrote about the importance of company officers. He stated that company officers are the only ones with a 24 hour, around-the-clock ability to influence department members. He goes on to state that this places the officer in the best position to motivate, teach, and inspire (Page, 2001, p.). Having the skills and abilities to communicate the mission of the department and to keep the crews on course for fulfilling that mission is vital for anyone functioning in the capacity of company officer. These skills and abilities need to be learned and it cannot be assumed that someone can be successful without the proper training and preparedness.

Organizations outside the fire service have recognized the importance of first line supervision. The federal government as well as the military has conducted numerous studies related to the

subject to develop supervisor training programs. Dr. James Thompson in his research document *Training Supervisors to be leaders* identified for that the majority of federal employees their most relevant leadership is that provided by the first line supervisor. He goes on to state that there is high correlation between employee engagement and the extent to which the employees supervisor articulates organizational goals, performance expectations, and the supervisors ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Organizational liability is another reason that departments need to ensure that company officers or those working out of class filling the role have the proper training, skills, and abilities to perform the job.

The information obtained through research describes what the nationally accepted standards are for officers at all levels. There are many resources available that would assist the MFD in creating a officer development program for firefighters. The internal surveys show that a high percentage of the firefighters working out of class s crew leaders/company officers do not have the knowledge, skills, and abilities recommended for the position.

The nationally recognized standard for company officers NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, (NFPA, 2009) provides a important reference for training those functioning as company officers. NFPA 1021 outlines the job performance requirements (JPR) for four levels of fire officers. Fire Officer I is the level that company officers, or those working out of class in the position would fall under. The standard identifies the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) that someone operating at the supervisory level should have. The seven areas listed are:

1. General.
2. Human Resource Management.
3. Community and Government Relations.

4. Administration.
5. Inspection and Investigation.
6. Emergency Service Delivery.
7. Health and Safety.

(NFPA, 2009)

The internal feedback instruments distributed to the firefighters of the Moraine Fire Department provided insight on what knowledge, skills, and abilities the firefighters are lacking and should be included in a development program. The firefighter results identified that most have not received any training related to functioning as a crew leader/company officer and also identified that many are not comfortable performing in the capacity.

In summary all of the research has identified the need for anyone functioning in a company officer role, or those working out of class to fill that position, to have the training and education to perform the requirements of the position. Promoted officers and firefighters working out of class have a high level of responsibility and should be provided the training they need to be successful. Officer development training programs should meet national standards with recommended model programs available from the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

The authors interpretation of the research is that a officer development training program for firefighters working out of class within the Moraine Fire Department needs to be a high priority. National standards, the IAFC *Officer Development Handbook*, as well as examples provided by other fire departments with programs in existence all will provide excellent references and benchmarks for developing a program. This information and the results of the APR provide a strong foundation to work from for the development of a new training program.

The results of this APR and implementing the recommendations will be a monumental task. The financial implications as well as the time commitment will be considerable. Additional financial implications may include compensation related to the collective bargaining agreement. The researcher believes that creating an officer development program will be very challenging and may take years to get on-line, but the long term benefit for the firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers as well as the department as a whole, will far out way the challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of consistent operations amongst company officers in day to day and emergency operations cannot be over emphasized. “The strength of every fire department is the company officer” (Smith, 2012, p. 21), and for the Moraine Fire Department to succeed, we must prepare our firefighters to function as company officers in the absence of lieutenants. In order to accomplish this, every effort should be made to provide the firefighters working out of class with knowledge and skills outlined by NFPA 1021 by instituting an officer development program within the Moraine Fire Department.

The first step in this process should be to initiate a training class dedicated to self-development for our employees. All members should be made aware of the IAFC *Officer Development Handbook* and the FESHE *National Professional Development Matrix*. The Moraine Fire Department should promote and encourage the attendance of available training classes at the Ohio Fire Academy, National Fire Academy, and local colleges and universities.

The second step in creating the program should consist of creating a company officer development program for all firefighters seeking to work out of grade. This program would consist of at minimum a self study program consisting of reviewing our standard operating guidelines, rules/regulations, report writing, and decision making. Upon completion of the self study portion, there would be a class covering incident management and simulated incidents.

The final step would be to pass a comprehensive test consisting of all aspects related to the position of company officer. Upon completion of all the above, firefighters would be allowed to work out of class. The ultimate goal of the program should be to prepare the firefighters for working out of class, but a collateral benefit would be starting our firefighters on

the path to meeting NFPA Standard 1021 which would be the foundation for future promotion to lieutenant within the department.

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APPENDIX 1 – FIRE DEPARTMENTS CONTACTED

Departments contacted through email, phone conversations, or direct contact who provided information related to firefighters working out of class:

Brookville Fire Department, Ohio

Butler Township Fire Department, Ohio

Clearcreek Township Fire Department, Ohio

Franklin Fire Department, Ohio

Germantown Fire Department, Ohio

Harrison Township Fire Department, Ohio

Huber Heights Fire Department, Ohio

Jefferson Township Fire Department, Ohio

Kettering Fire Department, Ohio

Germantown Fire Department, Ohio

Miami Valley Fire District, Ohio

Trotwood Fire Department, Ohio

Washington Township Fire Department, (Montgomery County) Ohio

West Carrollton Fire Department, Ohio

Xenia Township Fire Department, Ohio

Vandalia Fire Department, Ohio

APPENDIX 2 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT- EXTERNAL

This survey is directly related to my second research question- What types of training, education, and mentoring do neighboring departments similar in size to the Moraine Fire Department require for firefighters working out of class and functioning as crew leaders/company officers?

- 1) Name of department?
- 2) What ranks are included in your organizational structure?
- 3) What ranks normally are assigned to function as crew leader/company officers (riding apparatus)?
- 4) Do you allow firefighters to work out of class and function as crew leaders/company officers in the absence of the normal crew leader/company officer?
- 5) Do you require any type of training for those firefighters working out of class as crew leaders/company officers?
- 6) If training is required, does the department provide that training?
- 7) Does your department require those functioning as crew leaders/company officers to meet NFPA standard 1021 *Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*?

APPENDIX 3 – SURVEY INSTRUMENTS- INTERNAL

This survey is directly related to my third research question- Are Moraine Fire Department firefighters being prepared to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers (on their own or by the department)?

- 1) What is your current job title?
- 2) How long have you been employed by the Moraine Fire Department?
- 3) How many years have you been in the fire service total?
- 4) What is the highest level of education you have obtained?
- 5) Did the Moraine Fire Department assist you in acquiring this education? If yes, how?
- 6) What state certifications do you currently hold?
- 7) Did the Moraine Fire Department assist you in acquiring these certifications? If yes, how?
- 8) Have you attended any classes related to functioning as a crew leader/company officer at any of the following?
 - a. Fire Department Instructors Conference
 - b. Ohio Fire Academy
 - c. National Fire Academy
- 9) Have you completed Fire Officer I?
- 10) Do you ever work out of class functioning as a crew leader/company officer?

This survey is directly related to my fourth question- Do Moraine Fire Department firefighters who are required to work out of class as crew leaders/company officers feel they are adequately prepared to do so?

2) Do you feel you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to work out of class functioning as a crew leader/company officer?

- f. Strongly Agree
- g. Agree
- h. Neutral
- i. Disagree
- j. Strongly disagree

3) Do you feel there has been incidents while working out of class as a crew leader/company officer, that you were overwhelmed?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

4) Do you feel the Moraine Fire Department has properly prepared you to work out of class as a crew leader/company officer?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

5) How would you rate your knowledge, skills, and abilities when working out of class functioning as a crew leader/company officer?

- a. Excellent
- b. Good
- c. Adequate
- d. Needs Improvement