R0389

Dear National Fire Academy Student:

Congratulations on your acceptance into the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), National Fire Academy (NFA) "Training and Professional Development Challenges for Fire and Emergency Services Leaders" (TPDCFESL) course.

In order for the course to be meaningful, you will need to complete the pre-course assignment described on the enclosure before coming to Emmitsburg, Maryland.

This course looks at current, emerging and forecast issues that impact hiring, training, professional development, promotion and the ability for departments to provide services. There will be class discussions that may be controversial. The intent of those exercises is not to create hostility, but to allow participants to be able to articulate support or opposition to controversial issues and tough decisions, describing how the decision aligns with organizational ethics, priorities and needs. Oftentimes there is not a "right" answer, and the solutions you develop are solidly in the gray area. The instructors may take opposition views to drive discussions and activities. Please do not take offense as they are only attempting to help participants to determine the limits of their answers.

The class will involve a variety of topics that address the full spectrum of training functions in organizations and the role that training plays. Topics and activities include reviewing adult learning, looking at learning myths that are not supported by research, effective training techniques, training evaluation, organizational impacts, recruitment and the changing face of fire and emergency services, population and demographic changes and their impact on organizations, funding, community involvement, personnel development, and how training aligns with community priorities. By the end of the course, participants will develop a plan of instruction, not a training plan, and conduct a simulated, high-level briefing describing the issue and its impact, seeking funding and organizational support, and aligning community-based outcomes with your proposed solution.

This is a six-day class that starts on Sunday at 8 a.m.

The course materials for this course are now available in a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) format that will function on any electronic device. If you own an electronic device (laptop computer, tablet, etc.) and are familiar with its document reader functions, we are asking you to download the Student Manual (SM) **before you travel to Emmitsburg** and bring the preloaded device with you. Please see the page following this letter for complete instructions on successfully downloading your course materials. Please note: If you plan to bring/use an iPad, you may experience issues saving/storing/printing course assignments since there is no USB/thumb drive capacity for these devices.

The NFA classroom environment is computer based. You are responsible for the security and maintenance of your electronic equipment. The NFA cannot provide computer software, hardware or technical support for your device.

March 2024

If you need additional information related to your course's content or course requirements, please contact Daniel Newland, training specialist, at 301-447-1157, or by email at daniel.newland@fema.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Eriks J. Gabliks, Superintendent
National Fire Academy
U.S. Fire Administration

Enclosures

**National Fire Academy Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)
Course Materials/Download Instructions**

If you own an electronic device (laptop computer, tablet, etc.) and are familiar with its document reader functions, we are asking you to download the Student Manual (SM) before you travel to class and bring the preloaded device with you.

The **first step** is to download Adobe Acrobat Reader to your device. This will enable you to read and manipulate the course materials. Adobe Acrobat Reader can be used to comment and highlight text in PDF documents. It is an excellent tool for note-taking purposes.

For laptops and computers

Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded from www.adobe.com/downloads/. It is a free download. Please note that depending on your settings, you may have to temporarily disable your antivirus software.

For tablets and other similar hand-held devices

Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded onto devices such as iPads, Android tablets and other hand-held devices. The application can be found in the device's application store using the search function and typing in "Adobe Acrobat Reader." Follow the instructions given. **It is a free application.**

After you have successfully downloaded the Adobe Acrobat Reader, please use the following web link to download your SM. You may copy/paste this link into your web browser.

https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/ax/sm/sm_0389.pdf

Note: In order to have the editing capabilities/toolbar, the SM needs to be opened with Adobe Acrobat Reader. There should be a function on your device to do this.

If you need assistance, please contact nfaonlinetier2@fema.dhs.gov.

Pre-course Assignments

Assignments

The following four graded assignments are due the **first day of class**:

1. Training Needs Assessment
2. Briefing Paper 1: Law/Regulation
3. Briefing Paper 2: Training/Education System
4. Briefing Paper 3: Fifteen Years from Now

*See Syllabus for instructions and grading rubrics.

Training Needs Assessment Expectations

1. Conduct an analysis of a performance issue that is correctable through training. Remember that not all performance issues lead to training solutions. Other causes of performance gaps may be policy, personnel, fiscal, motivation/incentive or organizational.

2. The analysis is based on, and your decision supported by, data and information.

3. Develop a report using at least three credible sources to support your report. Utilize American Psychological Association (APA) format (6th ed.) to cite resources. Write the paper in Times New Roman font, size 12, with 1-inch margins.

4. This is **not** an Applied Research Paper nor is it an opinion paper. The paper is a technical report that utilizes APA citation style. The paper is evidence-based and written in the third person. The paper identifies and describes the performance gap in your organization, describes how the issue is tied to training, and describes the impact of the performance gap on the organization and community.

5. There is no minimum or maximum length required for the paper, but it likely will be somewhere between five and 20 pages, depending on the issue (not including the title page and references).

6. During the course, you will work on developing one or more training solutions, developing costs and needs (conceptual), and making a request for funding (to your board/commission) and support for your solution.

Will training work (pre-course paper)?

There is often confusion regarding whether the performance issue is a training issue. Not all performance problems are training issues. For example, if your issue is the performance of step-up drivers and you do not have a standard for performance (what they need to do and to what degree), this is not a training issue. It is a policy issue (there is no policy standard). Similarly, if there is a policy for minimum requirements for stepping up, but there is no policy on continuing training or performance, it is either a policy issue or a training issue, depending on what the root cause analysis determines. For example, if there is a performance standard, initial training standard and continuing performance standard, but the driver performance is still inadequate, and a root cause analysis finds that currency training is not adequate, then you likely have a training issue. For example, if currency-training requirements lack a practical element, then hands-on training may be the solution for the issue.

I know it can be confusing, so if you have questions or would like to sound your idea before beginning the analysis, please feel free to contact me and we can work through your ideas to make sure you are on the right track.

What will the class be like?

The course looks at current, emerging and forecast issues that impact hiring, training, professional development, promotion and the ability for departments to provide services. There will be class discussions that may be controversial. The intent of those exercises is not to create hostility, but to allow participants to be able to articulate support or opposition to controversial issues and tough decisions, describing how the decision aligns with organizational ethics, priorities and needs. Oftentimes there is not a "right" answer, and the solutions you develop are solidly in the grey area. The instructors may take opposition views to drive discussions and activities. Please do not take offense as they are only attempting to push participants to determine the limits of their answers.

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Who do I contact with questions?

If you have questions regarding the class, contact Daniel Newland at daniel.newland@fema.dhs.gov or 301-447-1157.