SICK LEAVE ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy
as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program

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ABSTRACT

The problem was that the Minneapolis Fire Department was experiencing an increase in sick leave use by firefighters. Increased overtime costs and reduced daily staffing were impacting the fire department's ability to provide quality emergency service for the citizens of Minneapolis. The purpose of this research was to find out why sick leave use by firefighters was increasing. The descriptive research methodology was used to answer the following questions:

1. What were other employers experiencing regarding sick leave use and what were they doing to address absenteeism?

2. Can studying the data available develop consistent patterns of sick leave use by Minneapolis Firefighters?

3. Why do Minneapolis Firefighters use sick leave?

4. What policies were in place to govern sick leave use and absenteeism in Minneapolis?

The principal procedures used to complete this research consisted of a literature review, historical research regarding sick leave usage patterns by Minneapolis firefighters and a review applicable controlling documents related to sick leave use. A survey of current firefighters was conducted to determine reasons for sick leave use. The results of this survey are attached as Appendix A.

The results of this research included an analysis of sick leave usage and the findings from the survey conducted regarding sick leave use by firefighters. Legal and contractual language related to sick leave use as well as a review of sick leave management tools historically used by the fire department was also described.

The recommendations of this research project include a suggestion for the development of a new training program based on the results of the research. This recommendation includes a proposed Sick Leave Management Presentation attached as Appendix B. This presentation should be given to all current employees and be part of initial orientation for new firefighters.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The problem was that the Minneapolis Fire Department was experiencing an increase in sick leave use by firefighters. Increased overtime costs and reduced daily staffing were impacting the fire department's ability to provide the personnel necessary to deliver quality emergency service for the citizens of Minneapolis.

Reporting off ill as a way to get a paid day off work became a part of the fire department culture. Firefighters traditionally traded shifts with each other to cover needed days off. Some employees were using sick leave almost exclusively on weekends and holidays. This usage pattern suggested that sick leave was being used as additional and unscheduled vacation rather than for illnesses to themselves or family members.

The purpose of this research was to find out what had historically occurred with absenteeism and sick leave use on the Minneapolis Fire Department. This research attempted to find out the reasons behind the fact that sick leave use by firefighters was increasing. This study employed descriptive research to answer the following questions:

1. What were other employers experiencing regarding sick leave use and what were they doing to address absenteeism?

2. Can studying the data available develop consistent patterns of sick leave use by Minneapolis Firefighters?

3. Why do Minneapolis Firefighters use sick leave?

4. What policies were in place to govern sick leave use and absenteeism in Minneapolis?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Minneapolis Fire Department is a full time professional emergency service organization with an authorized strength of 474 employees. The department provides related services for a metropolitan population of 370,000 people located over 59 square miles. Firefighters responded to 34,163 calls for emergency service in 1999. Emergency medical events accounted for 70 percent of all calls for service.

From 1995 to 1998, sick leave use on the Minneapolis Fire Department fluctuated between 1950 shifts and 2050 shifts of sick leave used per year. There was a significant increase in sick leave from the 2010 shifts firefighters used in 1998 to a historically high of 2239 shifts missed in 1999. This represented a year-over-year increase of 11.39%. The marked increase in sick leave used in 1999 was the impetus for this research project.

Full time emergency service organizations must manage reduced service delivery and increased emergency response time as a result of shortages in daily staffing. To maintain an acceptable level of service, overtime is commonly used by full-time fire departments to hire back personnel to fill in for missing firefighters. Overtime costs for the Minneapolis Fire Department in 1999 totaled $3,384,594. This total included $1,343,400. in overtime costs directly related to firefighter absenteeism. Much of the overtime costs related to absenteeism were incurred during the summer months.

The significance of this research for the organization was threefold. First, unbudgeted increases in overtime costs took money away from needed training and equipment. Second, emergency service for the city was compromised, especially on holidays and weekends when many off duty personnel were unwilling to work overtime. The labor union representing firefighters had used the membership's willingness to work overtime as a bargaining strategy during contract negotiations. They did this by reinforcing the "voluntary" nature of the

overtime. Lastly, unless an updated program to manage sick leave use was adopted, future sick leave usage could continue to increase. This conclusion was based on a new organizational culture that allowed for a more liberal interpretation of exactly what constituted acceptable reasons to use accrued sick leave.

This research directly relates to the Labor Relations module of the Executive Development curriculum. Sick leave benefits are part of the benefit package that was negotiated in the Labor Agreement with Local 82 of the International Association of Firefighters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fire service managers have been struggling with absenteeism in large and small fire departments across the country. The Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy contains 19 references to absenteeism and sick leave research done over the past 10 years by Executive Fire Officer candidates. A review of this research indicates that the absenteeism problem faced by the Minneapolis Fire Department is not unique.

In his analysis of sick leave use in the El Paso Fire Department, Assistant Chief Gregersen (1998) noticed that sick leave use increased on weekends, especially payday weekends. He also noted that sick leave "spiked" on holidays. This observation was a common theme in much of the research reports available. Sands (1990) also noted problems with absences on weekends in the Medford Fire Department in Medford, Massachusetts. Sands proposed providing extra financial incentives for hours worked on weekends.

Haas (1996) noted that firefighters in Manteca, California demonstrated that views regarding the use of sick leave had evolved from a protective insurance policy to the belief of a

birthright to use as the employee sees fit. This culture change caused a problem with morale because of excessive sick leave use on the fire department. A combination of positive incentives and disciplinary action was recommended to address the problem.

Mims (1999) found that overtime spending was possibly due to poorly monitored sick leave usage in her research on alternative work schedules for firefighters. She recommended a review and revision of the department's sick leave program. Sanders (1992) noted that an increase in overtime spending in Nacogdoches, Texas prompted a review of sick leave policies. Similarly, Furasek (1997) reported that the Lincoln, Nebraska Fire Department experienced a dramatic increase in sick leave from 1991 to 1996. Many of these researchers noted overtime costs as the reason for a review of policies related to absenteeism.

In a research report by Hancock (1996) involving overtime projections for the annual budget, the author looked at the effects of extending the workweek in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1996. The research found that sick leave usage went up .95 persons per day with the increase from a 52-hour workweek to 56-hour workweek. The Colorado Springs Fire Department and the Minneapolis Fire Department are similar in size.

Dwertman (1998) indicated that members of the St. Bernard, Ohio Fire Department had been using more sick leave despite a reduction in the rate at which sick leave is accrued from 15 tours (shifts) per year to 8 tours (shifts) per year. The expectation was that with the reduction in sick leave accrual rates, sick leave use would decline. The department had set a goal of a 2 percent absenteeism rate. This would be a 50% reduction from the 4% rate experienced in 1996. Dwertman's research also indicated that the union representing firefighters had used sick leave as a form of revenge against the city's residency policy.

Cascio (1982) described the sick leave abuse problem addressed by the Memphis, Tennessee Police Department. They were loosing 12,000 employee days of work every year to

sick leave. This total represented 3.8% of total scheduled work hours in the 1200 officer department. They're new Sick Leave Policy states "Sick leave is not to considered as an alternate form of vacation time, comp time, holiday leave or time off for personal business."

Many of the Executive Fire Officer research papers cite an article in Fire Engineering Magazine by Burkell (1985). He states that sick leave abuse disrupts the unity and continuity required to build an effective and efficient team. Another article in Fire Engineering Magazine by Gentleman (1993) outlines a program that reduced sick leave by 45% in Orlando, Florida. This incentive program also uses a 'carrot and stick' approach. Each quarter (three months), employees who use no sick time can convert 8.75 hours of earned sick time into vacation or cash. A bonus of 15 additional hours is earned at the end of any year that the employee uses no sick time. Under this incentive plan, each firefighter can earn up to 50 additional hours of vacation each year. The firefighter may elect to be paid for the value of the extra vacation or take the extra time off. These incentive bonuses are paid just before Christmas each year.

Literature reviewed from other countries established that absenteeism is not just a concern of organizations in the United States. Evans (1995) discusses sick leave abuse in Canberra, Australia. This research report studied the increase in sick leave use in the Australian Capitol Territory Fire Brigade (ACTFB) with other fire service organizations throughout the country. This research recommended incentives to reduce absenteeism. These included adopting a sick leave buy back program, introduction of a more flexible leave agreement and to provide members with a clear indication of the intent of the ACTFB.

A government agency in the United Kingdom published a report entitled "Managing Attendance in the Public Sector: Putting Best Practice to Work." (Modernizing Public Services Group, 1998). The Cabinet Office outlines a plan to reduce sickness absence by 30% by 2003. The plan states that managers need to be able to assess what level of sickness absence is usual

for an organization and what is achievable. This document looks at existing examples of best practices in the United Kingdom and presents a package of policies and techniques for monitoring and managing sick leave. The recommendations in this report include:

1. Draw up sickness policies that set out the organizational commitment.

2. Establish illness polices that respond sympathetically to exceptional demands from outside the workplace.

3. Offers flex scheduling when possible.

4. Keep accurate illness records and set circumstances for verification of sick leave.

5. Set clear goals for improvement and communicate them to everyone in the organization.

6. Allow for brief periods of annual leave for emergency situations to be taken on short notice.

This report also identifies the public sector as an employer that is naively generous when it comes to acceptable levels of sick leave absence. This can lead to an 'absence culture' developing in the organization. In order to change this culture, employers need to make employees feel valued and reinforce that their absence will have an adverse impact on their colleagues. Another observation as that when overtime pay is used to cover absences, some employees will encourage sick leave to profit from the scheme.

The Minneapolis Civil Service Commission Rules (1995) state that each sworn employee of the fire department on a 24-hour shift earns 144 hours (six shifts) of sick leave per year. These sick leave days accumulate in each employee's sick leave "bank" with no limit on the number of hours that can be accrued. The Civil Service Commission also defines sick

leave as actual illness, temporary physical disability, or illness in the immediate family, or quarantine.

The labor agreement between the City of Minneapolis and Local 82 of the International Association of Firefighters (1999) restates the same sick leave accumulation rates that are outlined in Civil Service Rules. The labor agreement also details two incentive programs to encourage employees to save sick leave. These plans are the Sick Leave Credit Pay Plan and the Sick Leave Severance Pay Plan. These incentive plans are explained in depth in the Results section of this research.

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

Along with a literature review, a review and analysis of historical attendance records was conducted. Trends in sick leave use were studied in an attempt to find patterns. Computerized attendance data from 1995 to 1999 was analyzed. A detailed look at 1999 records was conducted due to the large increase in sick leave used when compared to previous years. Demographic data was compared to sick leave records of each employee in an attempt to see if seniority was a factor in increased absenteeism. This information is summarized in the Sick Leave Management Presentation attached as Appendix B.

An anonymous survey of Minneapolis Fire Department employees was conducted in an attempt to answer the third research question. A committee of fire department employees of all ranks developed the survey questions that ask why employees report off work using sick leave. To help insure confidentiality and increase the reliability of the data, a firefighter assigned to the 24-hour shift collected the completed surveys and compiled the results. The voluntary

survey was completed during work hours. A total of 87 out of 410 firefighters participated by filling out a one-page form. A copy of this survey is included in Appendix A.

Research question four was answered by reviewing the existing documents related to sick leave use. This review included Civil Service Rules, Fire Department Policies and the Labor Agreement with Local 82 of the International Association of Firefighters (1999).

Successful strategies from other organizations as well as current trends in sick leave usage were studied in order to develop recommendations for a Sick Leave Management Presentation for all current and new employees. This presentation is included in this report as Appendix B.

Assumptions and Limitations

Attendance data before 1995 was not computerized and is difficult to obtain. These records are not complete. The large number of employees who have retired since 1995 also limits the usefulness of this historical data. Over fifty percent of the current employees were not employed by the city prior to 1995.

The confidential survey was limited to 87 people out of a total population of 410 firefighters. This represents 21% of the total number of employees in the surveyed job classifications. Some of the data may be flawed by the lack of control when the survey was completed. An analysis of the answers received indicated that a small number of the respondents were obviously not taking the process seriously.

Actual results from recommendations of previous research in other organizations were difficult to obtain. The financial impact of various management programs had not been studied to determine if new policies are having the desired impact. These factors limit the analysis of various approaches to solving the problem.

RESULTS

<u>Research Question #1:</u> What were other employers experiencing regarding sick leave use and what were they doing to address absenteeism?

Fire departments across the country report similar problems with absenteeism as encountered in Minneapolis. Increased sick leave use on weekends and holidays was noted in two research reports based on attendance records in El Paso, Texas and Medford, Massachusetts. Haas (1996) noted that increased sick leave use in Manteca California was the result of a change in how sick leave was viewed by firefighters. This culture change was also noted in research done by the Cabinet Office regarding public sector jobs in the United Kingdom.

Mims (1999), Sanders (1992) and Hancock (1996) all noted budget concerns as the reason for a review of sick leave policies. Excess overtime costs associated with maintaining minimum staffing were cited in all three of these research reports. Dwerman (1998) reported that firefighters in St. Bernard, Ohio used sick leave as a form of revenge against the city's residency policy. A nearly 50% reduction in the rate at which sick leave is accrued failed to reduce sick leave in this organization.

Research indicated that organizations outside the fire service have struggled with absenteeism as well. The Memphis, Tennessee Police Department issued a new sick leave policy that made it clear that sick leave was not to be used as an alternate for vacation, comp time, holiday leave or for personal business. The fire service in Australia adopted a comprehensive incentive program in an effort to combat absenteeism. They also stressed the need for a clear policy regarding the intent of the organization to reduce sick leave. The Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom issued a "best practices" document addressing

attendance in the public sector. Practical suggestions for managers regarding absenteeism were included in an effort to standardize the policy throughout their government.

Research Question #2: Can studying the data available develop consistent patterns of sick leave use by Minneapolis Firefighters?

A comprehensive study of attendance records was completed in January 2000 for the years of 1995 to 1999. This time frame was selected because of the availability of computerized records. Total shifts of sick leave were divided by the average staffing strength of the fire department in order to compare the data from year to year more accurately. An average number of sick shifts per employee for each of the five years were computed. The total sick leave used by Minneapolis Firefighters for these years were:

Sick Leave		Average Staffing	Sick Leave per Firefighter
1995	2050 shifts	447	4.586
1996	1950 shifts	440	4.432
1997	2000 shifts	429	4.662
1998	2010 shifts	406	4.951
1999	2239 shifts	435	5.147

This data suggested a slow increase in the trend line for sick leave use per firefighter starting in 1996. The increase of .715 shifts of sick leave used per year from 1996 to 1999 represented an increase in overtime costs of $186,000 per year.

A disparity was found between weekday and weekend/holiday sick leave use in 1999. The following is a breakdown by day of the week:

Day	Average Sick Leave
Monday	5.34 shifts
Tuesday	4.98 shifts
Wednesday	4.65 shifts
Thursday	4.75 shifts
Friday	6.37 shifts
Saturday	9.38 shifts
Sunday	7.56 shifts
Holidays	7.30 shifts

This data shows that sick leave use ranged from 4.65 shifts on an average Wednesday to 9.38

shifts on an average Saturday. Hiring off-duty firefighters and paying them overtime wages

covered this difference of almost 5 shifts from midweek days to weekend days. In June of

1999, Saturdays averaged 15 people off on sick leave. This Saturday rate was over 3 times the

sick leave rate experienced during the middle of the week of the same month.

Minneapolis Firefighters earn six shifts of sick leave each year. During 1999, it was

found that 62 employees had used 5 or more shifts of sick leave on weekends and holidays.

Research question #3: Why do Minneapolis Firefighters use sick leave?

A sick leave survey was conducted to determine the actual reason(s) firefighters use

sick leave in Minneapolis. The results of the survey are included in Appendix A. A committee

of firefighters designed the survey instrument based on their experience and interaction with

their coworkers. The 10 most common reasons firefighters used sick leave were listed. The

survey asked why each participant would call in sick and why they felt other employees would

use sick leave. The large disparity between what each individual reported as reasons that they

used sick leave and the reasons their coworkers did was significant. For example, 5 percent

reported that they would use sick time to avoid extra duties scheduled for a particular day while 45 percent of respondents indicated that their co-workers would call in sick to avoid the extra work. In another case, 26 percent of respondents indicated that they would call in sick to take care of personal business, but 55 percent of the same respondents indicated that their co-workers would use this reason to call in sick. In eight of ten cases, the reasons that employees indicated they would use sick leave was substantially lower than what they perceived the reasons their co-workers would use to engage in the same behavior.

The first two reasons listed on the survey are authorized purposes for sick leave use. Ninety-two percent of employees identified a personal illness as a reason to use this benefit and 85 percent said the illness of a family member would be a reason they would call in sick. The remaining eight responses were not valid reasons under the existing sick leave rules.

Research Question #4: What policies were in place to govern sick leave use and absenteeism in Minneapolis?

The Minneapolis Civil Service Commission Rules state that each sworn employee of the fire department on a 24-hour shift earns 144 hours (six shifts) of sick leave per year. These sick leave days accumulate in each employee's sick leave "bank" with no limit on the number of hours that can be accrued. The Civil Service Commission also defines sick leave as actual illness, temporary physical disability, or illness in the immediate family, or quarantine.

The labor agreement between the City of Minneapolis and Local 82 of the International Association of Firefighters restates the same sick leave accumulation rates that are outlined in Civil Service Rules. The labor agreement also details two incentive programs to encourage employees to save sick leave. These plans are the Sick Leave Credit Pay Plan and the Sick Leave Severance Pay Plan.

The Sick Leave Credit Pay Plan allows each employee to sell unused sick leave from the previous year back to the city. This incentive plan requires the employee to accumulate a minimum of 60 days of sick leave in their sick leave bank before they were eligible. At this level, the employee receives 50% of the daily rate of pay they were entitled to at the end of the year for each day sold. If the employee waits until they have accumulated 90 days in their bank, they are paid at 75% of their daily rate. At 120 days in the bank, they earn 100% of their daily rate. There is very little participation in this plan at the 50% and 75% levels.

The Sick Leave Severance Pay Plan is paid to employees who retire with at least 60 days in their sick leave bank. This benefit is paid at 50% of the employee's final rate of pay at retirement. The maximum sick leave that can be sold under this plan is 240 days. The payment for sick leave days under this plan is paid in equal installments over the first 5 years of retirement. Employees with less than 60 days of sick leave tended to use up all of their sick leave prior to retirement.

The fire department also requires that employees provide documentation from a health care provider when they miss work for more than 1½ shifts in a row. This documentation is also required when the total sick leave is used in any year exceeds the number of days that are earned in that year. This means that if firefighters use more than 6 shifts of sick leave during the year, they must provide the required doctor's note.

DISCUSSION

In reviewing research done by other Executive Fire Officer students, it became obvious that sick leave and absenteeism was a challenge for fire departments as well as other organizations across the country. Increased sick leave use on weekends and holidays was noted in two research reports based on attendance records in El Paso, Texas (Gregerson, 1998) and

Medford, Massachusetts (Sands, 1990). Haas (1996) noted that increased sick leave use in Manteca California was the result of a change in how sick leave was viewed by firefighters.

Mims (1999), Sanders (1992) and Hancock (1996) all noted budget concerns as the reason for a review of sick leave policies. Excess overtime costs associated with maintaining minimum staffing were cited in all three of these research reports.

Dwertman (1998) reported that firefighters and the local union in St. Bernard, Ohio used sick leave as a form of revenge against the city's residency policy. A nearly 50% reduction in the rate at which sick leave is accrued failed to reduce sick leave in this organization.

Research indicated that organizations outside the fire service have struggled with absenteeism as well. The Memphis, Tennessee Police Department (Cascio, 1982) issued a new sick leave policy that made it clear that sick leave was not to be used as an alternate for vacation, comp time, holiday leave or for personal business. The fire service in Australia (Evans, 1995) adopted a comprehensive incentive program in an effort to combat absenteeism. They also stressed the need for a clear policy regarding the intent of the organization to reduce sick leave. The Cabinet Office in the United Kingdom (Modernizing Public Services Group, 1998) issued a "best practices" document addressing attendance in the public sector. Practical suggestions for managers regarding absenteeism were included in an effort to standardize the policy throughout their government.

A culture of "bending the rules" when using sick leave to be away from work seemed to be in place in many organizations. A review of data and documents available on sick leave use in Minneapolis suggested that this type of permissive culture had developed within the fire department. The large increase in absenteeism on weekends and holidays as opposed to absenteeism on Monday through Thursday indicates that employees are willing to call in sick

to meet other obligations in their personal lives. The survey conducted among firefighters found that many reasons are used for missing a day from work other than illness. Sixty-two firefighters, or approximately 15 percent of the workforce, used five shifts or more out of a total of six shifts of sick leave earned on weekends and holidays in 1999. The survey responses affirmed the empirical data finding evidence of absenteeism to go on family vacations, take advantage of good weather for a "mental health day" or just to spend a day with the kids.

The current policies regarding sick leave use are adequate to manage the problem if they are consistently enforced and applied to all employees. The incentive programs should have a positive effect in that they encourage employees to accumulate sick leave in their sick leave bank. The employee survey found that the current incentive programs were not resulting in firefighters using their sick leave benefit only for illness to themselves or their families. The current incentive programs were not effective.

The firefighter's union had used sick leave and refusal to work overtime as a tool at the bargaining table. While the use of sick leave in this manner is illegal, the membership of the union was reminded of their right to refuse voluntary overtime. The union also stated that it was management's responsibility to adequately staff the fire department. This problem needs to be addressed to avoid compromising emergency service for the citizens of Minneapolis.

The fire department has hired over 100 new employees over the past few years. While the increase in sick leave was not related to length of service, management must be aware of a culture developed within the fire department that allowed the use of sick leave benefits for reasons other that those for which it was intended. This absence culture must not be passed on from veteran employees to new firefighters if the absenteeism culture that has developed is going to be addressed effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research available from other organizations around the country, there are a number of recommendations that follow from the results. A number of agencies found that a clear statement of purpose from management was a key element of reducing unnecessary absenteeism. Employees must know that management is focused on the issue and is concerned about sick leave abuse.

A training presentation should be given to all employees outlining the problem from a financial and staffing perspective. Employees need to understand why responsible use of benefits is important to the fire department as well as an important financial consideration for the individual employee. This training program should include a definition of sick leave and the financial benefits of building a sick leave bank. There should also be information on what has been happening with sick leave use and how to trade shifts with other firefighters.

A committee of employees needs to take a look at the current incentive plans. Effective and cost efficient incentives should be developed to replace the current plans. This is a negotiated benefit with the labor union and will have to be discussed in future labor negotiations. A comparison of the current incentive plans with other fire departments should be undertaken.

A committee of employees should look at how to improve the current vacation scheduling system to make it more flexible. This committee will need to take staffing concerns into account to insure that there are enough firefighters to provide emergency service every day of the year. Vacation priority could be tied to responsible use of sick leave benefits, so those individuals who do not abuse their benefits would receive a better vacation selection in the following year.

Supervisors need to be held accountable for enforcing existing policies fairly and hold everyone to the same standards. Personal follow up with firefighters who are off sick will serve to show concern for the individual involved. Employees must realize the effect of their absence on the team at work. Responsible use of benefits and an awareness of this issue should be made part of promotion interviews in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Sick leave Use Survey

Please take a minute and give some thought to sick leave use. What are the reasons that you might use sick leave? Why do you think other people use sick leave? Please be honest and candid with your responses. The staffing committee will use this information to develop ideas. Return this survey to Firefighter Vicki Erickson at Station 14. Thank you for your participation.

1.   Which of the following reasons would cause you to call in sick/ report off?

_____ A.   Personal Illness/ Doctor appointment.

_____ B.   Illness of a family member/ Doctor appointment.

_____ C.   Need the day off for personal business.

_____ D.   I need the day off for a family commitment or vacation.

_____ E.   I could not get the day during vacation draw.

_____ F.   Need a "mental health" day away from work.

_____ G.   Rig day or extra work or training scheduled for the day.

_____ H.   I don't want to work with someone working at my station that day.

_____ I.   I can't find someone to trade with.

_____ J.   I will be able to work overtime the shift before or after for overtime pay.

_____ K.   Other reason (Please list them if you can).

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Why do you think other people you work with call in sick? List the letters that apply form the above list or add your own ideas.

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Is the current sick leave sell back plan a reason for you to save sick days?

Yes___   No____

APPENDIX A

Sick leave Use Survey (Results)

Please take a minute and give some thought to sick leave use. What are the reasons that you might use sick leave? Why do you think other people use sick leave? Please be honest and candid with your responses. The staffing committee will use this information to develop ideas. Return this survey to Firefighter Vicki Erickson at Station 14. Thank you for your participation.

Which of the following reasons would cause you to call in sick/ report off?

Me	*Other People*		
92%	**74%**	A.	Personal Illness/ Doctor appointment.
85%	**65%**	B.	Illness of a family member/ Doctor appointment.
26%	**55%**	C.	Need the day off for personal business.
31%	**61%**	D.	I need the day off for a family commitment or vacation.
28%	**55%**	E.	I could not get the day during vacation draw.
32%	**55%**	F.	Need a "mental health" day away from work.
5%	**45%**	G.	Rig day or extra work or training scheduled for the day.
10%	**45%**	H.	I don't want to work with someone working at my station that day.
24%	**61%**	I.	I can't find someone to trade with.
2%	**42%**	J.	I will be able to work overtime the shift before or after for overtime pay.

Why do you think other people you work with call in sick? List the letters that apply form the above list or add your own ideas.

Results listed above

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Is the current sick leave sell back plan a reason for you to save sick days?

Yes___ **18.5%**   No____ **81.5%**

APPENDIX B

Slide 1

Minneapolis Fire Department
Sick Leave Management Plan

Deputy Chief Jim Clack

Slide 2

Purposes of the Plan

- Enhance understanding of sick leave benefits provided by the city of Minneapolis for all employees and families.
- Manage sick leave use as part of "bell curve" staffing.

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Slide 3

Goals and Objectives

- Insure that firefighters understand the financial benefits of "banking" sick leave for the future.
- Reduce the number of employees going off the payroll.
- Explain the sick leave management plan.
- Reduce weekend and holiday sick leave use.

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Slide 4

What is sick leave?

- Provided for illness or injury to you or your family.
- Firefighters earn 12 hours per month.
- Earned sick leave accumulates in your sick leave bank.
- There is no limit on the number of hours you can save in your bank.

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Slide 5

What's been happening?

Sick leave use 1995-1999

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Slide 6

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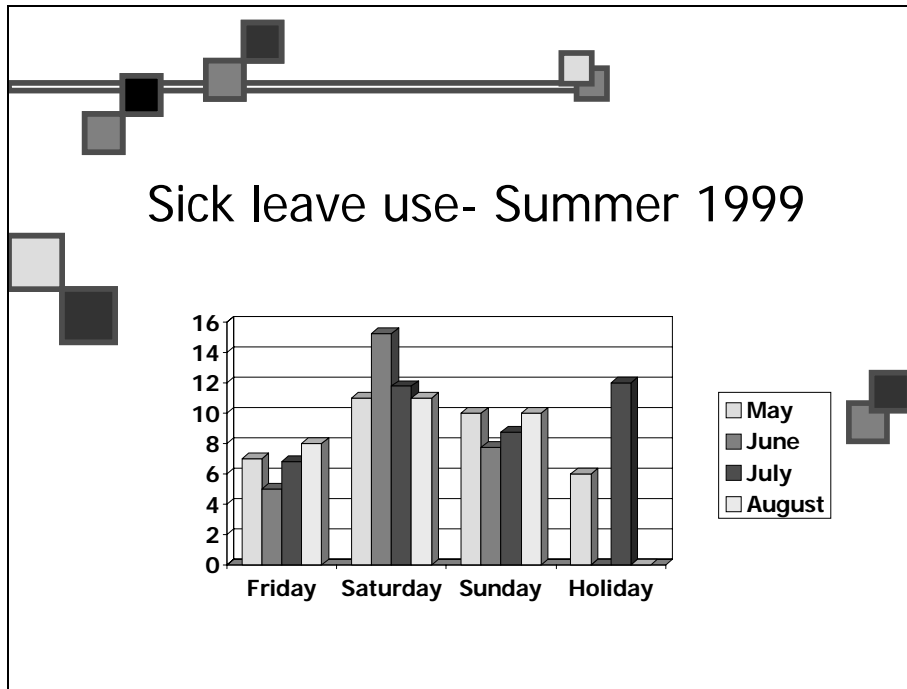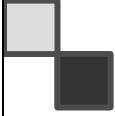
Slide 7

Sick Leave Use Study
Year End 1999

- Disproportionate number of sick days on weekends and holidays.
- 62 people used five or more sick days on weekends and holidays.
- Rank and seniority were not significant statistical factors among these 62 people.

Slide 8

Today's Situation

Average daily sick leave use
1999-2000
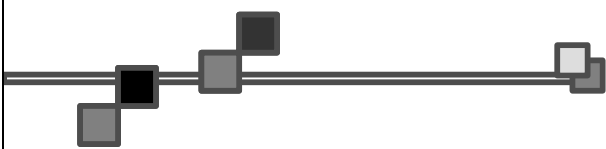
Slide 9

Essential Employees

- We are here 24 hours a day-holidays and weekends are another work day for us.
- The citizens rely on us to provide public safety
- If you don't come to work, you make us less effective for that shift. You hurt the rest of the team.

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Slide 10

Existing control tool

- Civil Service "Request for Sick Leave" (Pink Slip).
- Can be required by the supervisor at any time.
- Must be provided when:

    1 ½ shifts or more are missed because of sick leave or when 6 or more unverified sick days are used in one sick leave year.

Slide 11

Promotion

- Sick leave use patterns can effect promotion opportunities.
- The demographics of the fire department mean more competition for promotions in the future.
- You will not be promoted if you abuse your benefits.

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Slide 12

How Can I Get a Day off?

- You have a great work schedule!
- 101-107 work shifts per year.
- You have the ability to "trade" shifts with other firefighters. Trading is the best way to cover needed days off.

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Slide 13

Injury or Illness at Home

- The Fire Department may not be able to provide a "light duty" job for you.
- There may be a transitional work assignment available in a different city department.
- Off the payroll employees must pay:
  - Own health insurance.
  - Union dues.
  - No retirement credit.

Slide 14

Can You Afford to "Burn" Your Sick Leave Benefits?

- Lost security and $$$$$.
- Lost vacation draw priority rights.
- Sick hours added on to your hire back number for overtime priority.
- Off the payroll can mean a loss of seniority.

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Slide 15

Financial Benefits of "Banking" Sick Leave

- Serves as a disability insurance policy in case of injury away from work.
- Start selling back unused sick leave to the city after 5 years.
- Sell back up to 120 shifts of "banked" sick leave at retirement. Most retirees use this monthly payment to help cover health insurance costs.

Slide 16

Sick Leave Sell Back Program

- Sell back banked sick hours:
- 100% at 1440 hours (10 years).
- 75% at 1080 hours (7 ½ years).
- 50% at 720 hours (5 years).
- Save hours to sell back at higher levels.

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Slide 17

Annual sick leave sell back

- All unused sick leave earned for the year can be sold back to the city at full pay when you have accumulated 60 shifts in your sick leave bank.
- This annual check amounts to about $2,500 for Firefighters and $3,200 for Captains.
- Over a 30 year career you will make an additional $64,000 as a Firefighter and $82,000 as a Captain. (assumes a 4% annual raise for 20 years)

Slide 18

Severance Pay Plan

- Sell up to 120 shifts of sick leave in your bank back to the city at ½ your **final** rate of pay at retirement.
- This means those days you banked in your first 10 years of employment will be sold back at your **final** pay rate.

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Slide 19

Severance Pay Plan

- A Firefighter hired today makes $1,239 bi-weekly.
- In 30 years, that same Firefighter will be making about $5,000 bi weekly! (Assuming 4% raise per year).
- If promoted to Captain, you will be making $6,500 biweekly!