

**DEVELOPING A STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE MANUAL FOR THE FIRE
DEPARTMENT OF SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP**

Executive Development

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ABSTRACT

The Fire Department of Springfield Township (F.D.S.T.) is comprised of three volunteer fire companies: the Flourtown Fire Company, Oreland Volunteer Fire Company, and Wyndmoor Hose Company. The problem was the three fire companies do not operate under one standard operating procedure (SOP). The purpose of this research project identified the importance of SOPs and the challenges associated with the development of a township-wide SOP manual.

Historical and action research methods were employed to answer the following questions:

1. What are standard operating procedures (SOPs)?
2. Should the F.D.S.T. develop an SOP manual?
3. What challenges could be anticipated during the development of an S.O.P. manual?
4. What actions can be taken to successfully develop a township-wide SOP manual?

Data were collected from a review of the literature, interviews of key informants and surveys of various fire departments.

The interviews confirmed there would be challenges associated with the development of the SOP manual. The results of the survey provided reasons for developing an SOP manual and the challenges experienced during same. The literature reviewed acknowledged the use of SOPs as an important tool in managing fire departments.

It is recommended that the F.D.S.T. should develop a township-wide standard operating guideline (SOG) manual. In order to minimize challenges associated with the manual, members from all levels of the organizations should be included in the process. Finally, additional research should be conducted to determine if other management tools could be used to control fire departments.

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INTRODUCTION

The Fire Department of Springfield Township is comprised of three volunteer fire companies: the Flourtown Fire Company, Oreland Volunteer Fire Company, and Wyndmoor Hose Company. Each are separate organizations having their own charters, bylaws, and organizational structures. At a moment's notice, any one or all three of these emergency service organizations could be called upon to protect the residents of Springfield Township and from a wide range of emergency incidents including fires, and natural and man-made disasters. The problem is that these three volunteer fire companies do not operate with a common set of standard operating procedures.

The purpose of this research project aims to identify the importance of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the challenges associated with the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual for the F.D.S.T. Historical and action research methods were used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are standard operating procedures?
2. Should the F.D.S.T. develop a standardized operating procedure manual?
3. What challenges could be anticipated during the development of an S.O.P. manual?
4. What actions can be taken to successfully develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNICANCE

The Fire Department of Springfield Township (F.D.S.T.) is comprised of three volunteer fire companies: the Flourtown Fire Company, Oreland Volunteer Fire Company, and Wyndmoor Hose Company. The F.D.S.T. protects the residents of Springfield Township by providing the following services: fire suppression, a basic life support quick response service, technical rescue,

hazardous material responses, and fire safety inspections and educational programs. Through mutual aid agreements, the F.D.S.T. provides the same services to residents of the surrounding municipalities.

The F.D.S.T. primarily services Springfield Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, a small suburban community that shares a border with the northwestern section of the City of Philadelphia. The township is 6.2 square miles and called home by 19,533 residents. The densely populated community consists primarily of one- and two-family dwellings with a handful of apartment buildings and elder care facilities. In addition to residential occupancies, Springfield Township has commercial business districts and limited industrial and shopping center districts.

Although each of the three fire companies works towards the common goals of protecting and saving lives, stabilizing each incident, and protecting property, none work under the same standard operating procedures. In addition, the fire companies do not use a common set of SOPs to control tasks involving administrative rules and regulations, maintenance, communications, etc.

As a result of recent concerns associated with freelancing and unauthorized responses outside of the municipality, the Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township began reviewing the Fire Department's operations. Specifically, the Board of Commissioners questioned what type of measures could be implemented to prevent future freelancing and unauthorized responses.

Given the freelancing problem and the Board's concerns, I decided to review the existing Springfield Township ordinances, the ordinances from surrounding municipalities, and other management tools, to investigate whether a township-wide standard operating procedure manual

was a possible means to deter future unwanted activities. The result of this research paper explores the issues pertaining to developing a SOP manual and whether it will help in holding each fire company accountable for the responsibility of providing fire protection to Springfield Township.

It was felt that failure to establish controls might jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of the residents and visitors to Springfield Township and members of the F.D.S.T. Specifically, unauthorized responses outside of the municipality by one or more of the volunteer fire companies reduces the level of fire protection provided to the community. Responses to emergency incidents would certainly over tax the remaining personnel and resources. In addition, failure to establish control and coordination at an emergency incident will place firefighters at a greater risk for injuries and even death. In a 1994 NIOSH study, Commodore, Merinar, Pettit, and Ronk, “identified four factors essential to protecting fire fighters from injury and death: (1) following established fire-fighting policies and procedures...” (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/ffalert.html>). As identified by the NIOSH study, failure to follow policies and procedures is the number one reason why firefighters suffer injuries and fatalities on the fireground.

One of the many requirements of the applied research project is the relationship between the identified problem and the curriculum of the Executive Fire Officer Program. This applied research project conforms to this requirement by addressing topics discussed in Unit 7: Organizational Culture. The establishment of an SOP manual will create a formal organizational culture within each of the volunteer fire companies. In addition, Mr. Larry Bennett, Esquire, taught Unit 11 dealing with legal issues effecting the fire service. One of the many topics

covered by Mr. Bennett included the importance and problems associated with standard operating procedures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was performed to develop answers to four questions pertaining to the development of SOPs as a means for achieving coordination among three fire companies. These are: (1) what are standard operating procedures; (2) should the F.D.S.T. develop a standardized operating procedure manual; (3) what type of challenges could be anticipated during the development of an S.O.P. manual; and (4) what actions can be taken to successfully develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual?

Literature searches were conducted at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland, Free Library of Springfield Township, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania, and Drexel Library at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was noted during the literature review that many authors use the term "standard operating guideline" in place of "standard operating procedure". The reasons for this will be discussed later in the paper.

In addition to performing a literature review, information for question three was gathered by conducting several different interviews. First, members of the Township Board of Commissioners and Township Manager were interviewed to identify their perception and possible challenges associated with the development of a township-wide SOP manual. See Appendix A. Fire Chiefs from each of the three Springfield Township volunteer fire companies were interviewed to identify anticipated challenges associated with the development of an SOP manual. See Appendix B. Finally, surveys were used to obtain information from Fire Companies that have experience in the development of an SOP manual and how municipalities

receiving fire protection from more than one Fire Company maintain control over the separate organizations. See Appendixes C and D.

Additional information for each question was researched via the Internet. A search of the World Wide Web was performed to obtain information on standard operating procedures, change management, management controls, and legal liabilities associated with fire department operations.

What are standard operating procedures?

While performing a literature review to define standard operating procedures, it was noted that SOPs are an essential part of the controlling function of management. Bartol & Martin (1998) stated, “Controlling is the process of regulating organizational activities so that actual performance conforms to expected organizational standards and goals” (p. 510). Bartol & Martin (1998) added, “Since most organizational activities ultimately depend on human behavior, controlling is largely geared toward ensuring that employees behave in ways that facilitate the reaching of organizational goals. Thus controls both highlight needed behaviors and discourage unwanted behaviors” (p.511).

The literature reviewed to define standard operating procedures pertaining to the fire service found several different definitions with the same basic principle. According to the *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* published by the Federal Emergency Management Association (1998), Standard operating procedures are written guidelines that define precisely how operations [are] to be conducted. SOPs clearly spell out what is expected and required of personnel during emergency response and non-emergency activities. They provide a mechanism to

communicate legal and administrative requirements, organizational policies, and strategic plans to the members (p. 1).

As defined by *NFPA 1561, Fire Department Incident Management System*, a standard operating guideline is “an organizational directive that establishes a course of action or policy” (National Fire Protection Association, 2001, p. 6). Alan Brunacini, Chief of the Phoenix Fire Department, developed a more commonly used definition of SOPs that focuses on fire company operations during emergency incidents. In his book *Fire Command*, Chief Brunacini (1985) defined SOPs as “a set of organizational directives that establish a standard course of action on the fireground to increase the effectiveness of the firefighting team” (p. 16). No matter which definition an organization chooses to follow, each identifies the need for a pre-established set of rules to ensure a desired outcome.

Standard operating procedures are an important aspect of the controlling function of management. SOPs are used to define the actions of individuals and allocation of resources to ensure a desired outcome prior to responding to an emergency incident. In addition, SOPs are commonly used to disseminate information, establish training programs, and provide structure to organizations.

Should the F.D.S.T. develop an SOP manual?

The literature reviewed identified pros and cons for the F.D.S.T. to consider prior to developing a standard operating procedure manual. In his book *Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines*, John Lee Cook, Jr. (1998) stated “every organization needs a set of rules to govern its members. Without rules, chaos reigns” (p. 1). Rules can be in the form of bylaws, guidelines, regulations, policies, laws, or standard operating procedures. Cook (1998) continued to explain, “rules are part of control and an essential part of management. Control is necessary

for verifying whether the actions of the members are in accord with the organization's adopted plans and underlying principles" (p. 2).

Fire departments and emergency medical services across the United States and around the world use standard operating procedures (SOPs) as a management tool to control organizations. As stated in the *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* published by the Federal Emergency Management Association (1998), "SOPs may be prepared for any function that fire service organizations perform, including administration (hiring, equipment maintenance, building inspections, rehabilitation, etc.) and emergency response operations (fire suppression, medical services, hazardous materials responses, etc)" (p. 2).

The National Fire Protection Association realizes the importance of SOPs and has included a requirement for fire department's to develop SOPs as part of their standards.

NFPA 1500, Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program, states,

The fire department shall prepare and maintain written policies and standard operating procedures that document the organization structure, membership, roles and responsibilities, expected functions, and training requirements (National Fire Protection Association, 1997, p. 8).

This section of the standard includes requirements for, but not limited to, definition and sequence of tasks to be performed at different emergency incidents, staffing and apparatus requirements to mitigate emergency incidents, and procedures for an incident management system.

Robert McGrory, President of the Board of Commissioners stated he would "support [the development of a township-wide SOP manual] if developed with the cooperation of the volunteer fire companies and not mandated by a higher authority" (personal communication,

January 8, 2002). Glenn Schaum, Vice-President of the Board of Commissioners and Public Safety Commissioner, also would support the development of a township-wide SOP manual citing that it would “establish a standard that the three fire companies could operate under and to reduce freelancing” (personal communication, January 4, 2002). Finally, Frances DePaul, Chief of the Wyndmoor Hose Company, stated, “the development of such a manual should have happened ten years ago” (personal communication, February 7, 2002).

The literature reviewed also identified reasons why an SOP manual should not be developed by the F.D.S.T. Bentivoglio (1995) stated that SOPs are not “an easy way out of today’s liability dilemma. In fact, poorly written SOPs may actually increase a department’s liability for emergency operations” (p. 105). Bentivoglio (1995) continued to explain:

Fire departments are immune from lawsuits for negligent fireground operations under the ‘public duty doctrine.’ Unfortunately, there are exceptions to the ‘public duty doctrine.’ One important exception is the case in which a public safety agency (fire or police) assumes a ‘special duty’ to individual citizens by issuing written operating procedures or guidelines. The theory is that when a fire department establishes formal procedures, it assumes a ‘special duty’ to individuals to follow such procedures. When a department violates its own standards, it can be held liable (p. 105).

James Weir, Chief of the Flourtown Fire Company, stated that a township-wide SOP manual that would be used to control the actions of the three volunteer fire companies should not be developed. Mr. Weir reasoned, “the three companies are separate organizations and the existing operations vary too much between companies” (personal communication, January 25, 2002).

The literature reviewed and information obtained during interviews provided reasons for and against the development of a township-wide SOP manual. Standard operating procedures provide a mechanism to control and evaluate activities, manage human resource issues, and establish a comprehensive training program. However, operations that fail to comply with written procedure may increase the department's legal liability.

What challenges could be anticipated during the development of an S.O.P. manual?

Through interviews with the Fire Chiefs and members of the Township Board of Commissioners, it can be anticipated that there would be challenges associated with the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual. For example, Mr. Kenneth Bradley, member of the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners representing ward #5, stated during a personal interview, "Currently there is an effective fire protection service being provided in the Township. Creating a manual might mess it up" (personal communication, January 9, 2002). According to Daniel Supplee, Chief of the Oreland Volunteer Fire Company, "members of each company may be opposed to the rules and/or operations already being followed by the other companies" (personal communication, January 7, 2002). James Weir, Chief of the Flourtown Fire Company expressed similar concerns. "We are three completely separate companies that operate differently. [A township-wide SOP manual] would never happen" (personal communication, January 25, 2002).

Another challenge that may be associated with the development of a standard operating procedure manual is the fear of change. Conner (1992) reasoned:

Change is not perceived as negative because of its unwanted effects as much as because of our inability to predict and control it. We view change as negative when we are unable to foresee it, when we dislike its implications and feel unprepared for its effects. Thus a

critical factor affecting our perception of change as positive or negative is the degree of control we exercise over our environment (p. 70).

Information obtained during interviews with members of the Township Board of Commissioners and Fire Chiefs identified challenges that would be associated with the development of an SOP manual. The challenges identified range from the fear of change to the perception that the development of an SOP manual will create additional problems.

What actions can be taken to successfully develop a township-wide SOP manual?

Literature reviewed actions that can be taken to successfully develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual. There are as many different change models out there as there are topics for standard operating procedures. One definition of change management offered by Nichols (2000) “refers to the making of changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion. The aim is to more effectively implement new methods and systems in an ongoing organization” (<http://home.att.net/~nickols/change.htm>).

To successfully manage change, Conner (1992) stated:

Effective leaders are capable of reframing the thinking of those whom they guide, enabling them to see that significant changes are not only imperative but achievable. Yet the challenges facing these leaders go beyond determining what needs to be done differently. They must also address how to execute these decisions in a manner that has the greatest possibility for success (p. 9).

To increase the possibility for successful development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual, members from all levels of each organization should be included in the process.

A committee approach is especially helpful if the topic of an SOP is controversial or involves change. No one likes change. Therefore, it is desirable to get as many fingerprints on the proposed SOP as possible. This will help create a sense of ownership among committee members and may help in selling the final product to everyone effected (Cook, 1998, p. 6).

To successfully develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual, a committee consisting of members in various levels of the department should be established to develop each procedure. The creation of this committee will allow for input and ownership of the manual.

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

A historical research methodology was employed to study and understand past events in order to (a) define standard operating procedures, and (b) identify whether the F.D.S.T. should develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual and what some of the challenges may be in doing so.

In addition to historical research, an action research methodology was employed to solve an existing problem and improve performance by (a) identifying what type of challenges will be experienced while developing an S.O.P. manual, and (b) how to handle them in order to successfully develop the manual.

Two surveys were created and distributed to Fire Departments in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. In early December 2001, a package including 15 cover letters with surveys and self-addressed, stamped envelopes were given to Mr. Thaddeus Lowden, Chief of the Evesham Fire Department, and graduate of the Executive Fire Officer Program, to distribute to

other Fire Chiefs in the state of New Jersey. See Appendix C. This survey was used to obtain information from departments who have already developed a standard operating procedure manual. Specific questions included reasons for developing an SOP manual, steps used during development, and challenges encountered during the development of said manual. Additional information was obtained on each participating department that included number of fire companies, geographical size of the municipality protected, whether the personnel were volunteer, career, or a combination thereof, and the number of personnel in each company. Ten of the surveys were completed and returned, which represents a 66% response rate.

In early January 2002, a cover letter, survey, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to nine municipalities in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania having multiple fire companies protecting a single governmental subdivision. See Appendix D. The desired outcome of this second survey was to identify whether one standard operating procedure manual is used to control operations and administration of all companies, why the manual was developed, and challenges associated with the of said manual. Five out of the nine surveys were returned, which represents a 56% response rate. Of those five respondents, three municipalities have standard operating procedure manuals as control systems to regulate the operations of multiple fire companies within each municipality.

Finally, interviews were performed with members of the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners, Township Manager, and Fire Chiefs from each of the three volunteer fire companies in question. Each of these individuals was selected because of their leadership and management roles in their respective organizations.

Definitions

Fire Company – a body of men organized to fight fires, esp. one of a number of such groups constituting a fire department (Neufeldt, 1997, p. 508).

Fire Department – a municipal department, usually consisting of one or more fire companies, whose work is fighting fires and preventing their occurrence (Neufeldt, 1997, p. 508).

Public Duty Doctrine – provides a governmental entity is not liable for torts committed against a person in absence of a special duty owed to the injured party (Mills v. City of Overland Park).

Springfield Township Emergency Services Board (STEMS) – representation from volunteer emergency service agencies, Municipal Public Safety Departments and the Board of Commissioners to develop procedures and techniques to coordinate the delivery of emergency services in the township (Code of the Township of Springfield, 1980, p. 2601).

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – An organizational directive that establishes a standard course of action (NFPA 1720, 2001, p. 5).

Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) – An organizational directive that establishes a course of action or policy (NFPA 1561, 1995, p. 6).

Limitations and assumptions

Limitations and assumptions associated with this research project include the accuracy of information obtained during the interviews and surveys, knowledge level of each participant, availability of information at the local libraries, and the number of courses taken as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program.

It can only be assumed that the participants in the interview process answered the questions completely, honestly, and without prejudice. Furthermore, it was assumed that the survey respondents possessed the appropriate knowledge to accurately answer the questions.

One limitation identified upon receipt of the surveys was the use of common terminology. A word or phrase used by the researcher may have a completely different meaning to the survey respondent. For example, a respondent may have interchanged the definition of Fire Company with Fire Department.

Finally, having completed only one of the four Executive Fire Officer courses proved to be a limitation. Attending the Strategic Management of Change course would have provided the researcher with additional background knowledge and information pertaining to change management.

Despite these limitations, the findings from this study are expected to be useful in deciding on whether to develop an SOP manual.

RESULTS

The results of this investigation provided answers to each of the four research questions. The literature reviewed, information obtained during interviews, and data gathered from surveys revealed that although SOPs may be a source of legal liability, they are beneficial in establishing structure within an organization, defining activities and allocating resources, and can be used as a comprehensive training program. Two proposed standard operating guidelines can be found in Appendixes D and F.

1. What are standard operating procedures? Standard operating procedures are part of a control system, which “is a set of mechanisms designed to increase the probability of meeting organizational standards and goals” (Bartol & Martin, 1998, p. 511). Managers use control systems as part of the controlling process to “develop appropriate standards, compare ongoing performance against those standards, and take steps to ensure that corrective actions are taken when necessary” (Bartol & Martin, 1998, p. 510).

Fire officers of the F.D.S.T. can use SOPs as a control system to compare the actions of the firefighters and the allocation of resources against a predetermine set of rules to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of fireground operations. SOPs can then be used as a training tool to correct actions to increase efficiency and effectiveness on the fireground. Additionally, SOPs can be used as a tool to reduce freelancing and control the actions of the S.T.F.D.

According to the *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* published by the Federal Emergency Management Association (1998), SOPs are:

Written guidelines that define precisely how operations [are] to be conducted. SOPs clearly spell out what is expected and required of personnel during emergency response and non-emergency activities. They provide a mechanism to communicate legal and administrative requirements, organizational policies, and strategic plans to the members (p. 1).

SOPs are not only used as a means to control emergency incidents. Standard operating procedures are frequently used as a communication tool, part of a training program, and to handle human resource issues. The F.D.S.T. could use SOPs to communicate rules, regulations, and policies to the members of each of the three volunteer fire companies. In addition, a comprehensive training plan could be developed using SOPs to establish requirements such as lesson plans, annual recertifications, mandatory courses, and minimum skill competencies.

Chief Allan Brunacini (1985), a highly respected leader within the fire service, explained: SOPs become a collection of values and experiences that evolve into a fireground playbook and which represent the official policy of the organization. This manual also

provides a convenient package for new members to learn from and experienced members to review the official fireground approach (p. 17).

Therefore, SOPs can be defined as a management tool to be used for controlling the actions of personnel and allocation of resources both at the scene of emergency incidents and in handling routine station duties.

2. Should the F.D.S.T. develop a standardized operating procedure manual? Findings to the investigation suggest that there are at least five reasons for creating an SOP manual.

First, the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual would establish a control system for the routine tasks experienced by the F.D.S.T. on a daily basis both on and away from emergency scenes. In his book *Managing the Nonprofit Organization, Principles and Practices*, Peter F. Drucker (1990) stated, “Non-profit institutions tend not to give priority to performance and results. Yet performance and results are far more important – and far more difficult to measure and control – in the non-profit institution than in a business” (p. 107). Drucker (1990) continued to explain, “performance in the non-profit institution must be planned” (p. 109). SOPs are not just used to control fireground operations. As stated in the *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* published by the Federal Emergency Management Association (1998), “SOPs may be prepared for any function that fire service organizations perform, including administration (hiring, equipment maintenance, building inspections, rehabilitation, etc.) and emergency response operations (fire suppression, medical services, hazardous materials responses, etc)” (p. 2). In the article *Making the Most of SOPs*, Dr. Harry Carter (1988) explains with the use of SOPs “you spell out ahead of time how you want your people to act, what you want them to do and which equipment you would like them to use” (p. 26).

Second, SOPs provide a mechanism to control the actions of personnel prior to, during, and at the conclusion of every emergency incident. In his book *Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines*, John Lee Cook, Jr. (1998) stated “every organization needs a set of rules to govern its members. Without rules, chaos reigns” (p. 1). Cook (1998) continued to explain, “rules are part of control and an essential part of management. Control is necessary for verifying whether the actions of the members are in accord with the organization’s adopted plans and underlying principles” (p. 2). SOPs can be used to control a multitude of activities including, but not limited to the actions of personnel, allocation of resources, define what resources respond what kind of incidents, fireground strategy and tactics, administrative duties, etc.

Another reason for developing a standard operating procedure manual is because they can be used as a training tool. According to the United States Fire Administration (1999),

Written SOPs can provide the framework for training programs, member briefings, drills, and exercises. These activities, in turn, improve the understanding of work requirements and help identify potential problems. A comprehensive SOP manual also serves as a self study and reference document for personnel (p. 8).

As recruits enter the fire service, they are given IFSTA’s *Essentials of Firefighting* instruction manual to learn the basics of firefighting. The manual covers topics including, but not limited to, ropes and knots, personal protective equipment, fire behavior, and building construction.

Included in the chapter Firefighter Orientation and Safety is a section on SOPs. “These procedures provide a standard set of actions that are the core of every fire fighting incident plan” (International Fire Service Training Association, 1998, p. 12). The manual continues to teach:

Following standard operating procedures reduces chaos on the fire scene. All resources can be used in a coordinated effort to rescue victims, stabilize the incident, and conserve property. Operational procedures that are standardized, clearly written, and mandated to each department member establish accountability and increase command control and effectiveness...Firefighters will understand their duties and require a minimum of direction. SOPs also help prevent duplication of effort and uncoordinated operations because all positions are assigned and covered (International Fire Service Training Association, 1998, p. 13).

Fourth, the *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* published by the Federal Emergency Management Association (1998) stated that SOPs “provide a mechanism to communicate legal and administrative requirements, organizational policies, and strategic plans to the members” (p. 1). In support of this notion, the National Fire Protection Association established a requirement for fire departments to develop SOPs as part of their standards. *NFPA 1500, Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, states, “fire department[s] shall prepare and maintain written policies and standard operating procedures that document the organization structure, membership, roles and responsibilities, expected functions, and training requirements” (National Fire Protection Association, 1997, p. 8). The development of written procedures allows individuals in each organization to reference a manual that communicates to the firefighter the organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, and a numerous other requirements expected of each person. Failure to develop an SOP manual will leave everyone in the dark as to how the organization operates, chain of command, rules and regulations, etc.

Finally, the most controversial issue associated with the development of standard operating procedures is legal liability. According to Cook (1998),

“In our litigious age, some people conclude that the mere presence of written procedures invites litigation and therefore should be avoided at all costs. Unfortunately, in our line of work, litigation is like risk – it is unavoidable” (p. 4).

There are many theories on how to write rules and regulations to protect fire departments from becoming involved in litigation. Many “firehouse lawyers” reason that using the term standard operating guidelines instead of standard operating procedures allows for flexibility and thus reduces liability. Cook (1998) explained, “Many people interpret ‘procedure’ to mean ‘follow or else,’ whereas ‘guideline’ implies some degree of flexibility. The assumption is that a department’s liability might be reduced or avoided altogether in the event a department has ‘guidelines’ rather than ‘procedures’” (p. 5). This concern was raised during an interview with Ms. Jane Fisher, member of the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners representing ward #1. “I would be opposed to the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual. In my experience, manuals such as these are not flexible enough to meet the needs of the organization. However, I would like to see the concept developed as a Township Code” (personal communication, January 2, 2002).

There are other “firehouse lawyers” who reason the language used within the document, whichever it may be called, is the most critical part. In the book *Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines*, Cook (1998) explained:

Of greater importance is whether a given directive is written in mandatory or permissive terms. The words shall and will within a document may become extremely important in the even your department’s activities come under scrutiny. Shall and will are imperative

words, and their use may not only unnecessarily restrict the actions of the incident commander but also give your courtroom opponent an advantage. Should or may, on the other hand, indicated that an action is a recommendation – advised but not required (p. 5). Despite the controversy over what to call the manual and which language should be used, Hauser (1995) stated, “SOPs make training new recruits easier, provides a uniform source of information on basic department operations, provides basic structure of responses to give a more organized or professional appearance to one’s community/customers” (p. 45).

All ten respondents of the first survey indicated their organizations have standard operating procedures. According to the respondents, the SOPs have been in place ranging from six months to more than 16 years. Reasons given for developing SOPs include standardization of operations, lack of policy, and required by NFPA.

Additionally, information received in a survey from Mr. John Waters, Chief Fire Marshal of Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania addressed the concerns raised during an interview with Ms. Jane Fisher. Upper Merion Township Ordinance 94-619 authorizes the Upper Merion Fire and Rescue Services Board to, among other things, make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors dealing with uniform policies and procedures. The ordinance explains, “all companies shall adhere to the Uniform Fire and Rescue Services Division Policies and Procedures, as adopted by the Fire and Rescue Services Board” (Code of the Township of Upper Merion, 1994). Mr. Waters also explained in the survey that the development and challenges associated with the development of SOPs is “an ongoing process”.

3. What type of challenges could be anticipated during the development of a standard operating procedure (S.O.P.) manual? Through interviews with fire company personnel and members of the Township Board of Commissioners, it was confirmed there would be

challenges associated with the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual. Out of the seven Township Board of Commissioners interviewed, two of them oppose the development of an SOP manual. Mr. Robert McGrory, President of the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners stated, “It is my perception that the current system is working well and [the development of a manual] has the potential to create more problems than it solves” (personal communication, January 8, 2002). Mr. Kenneth Bradley, Springfield Township Board of Commissioners representing ward #5, stated during a personal interview, “Currently there is an effective fire protection service being provided in the Township. Creating a manual might mess it up” (personal communication, January 9, 2002).

According to Dan Supplee, Chief of the Oreland Volunteer Fire Company, “a major problem would be getting all of the companies to agree on each procedure” (personal communication, January 7, 2002).

As identified by Mr. Cook and expanded upon in the article *The Human Factor: Effective Organizational Change in the Fire Service*, “When people say they hate change, they are really saying that they hate the discomfort and anxiety they feel while the change is taking place” (James, 2002, p. 77). In the book *The Nature of Change*, Conner (1992) concurred,

Change is not perceived as negative because of its unwanted effects as much as because of our inability to predict and control it. We view change as negative when we are unable to foresee it, when we dislike its implications and feel unprepared for its effects. Thus a critical factor affecting our perception of change as positive or negative is the degree of control we exercise over our environment (p. 70).

Out of the 10 surveys returned, four respondents indicated their organizations

experienced some type of challenge or opposition during the development of a standard operating procedure manual. According to Albert E. Freeman III, Chief of the Medford Farms Volunteer Fire Company, some of the older members of the company argued “we never had them before”. Thaddeus Lowden, Chief of Evesham Fire-Rescue, explained that opposition from his personnel reasoned that their stations “were different”, and therefore, could not operate under one SOP manual.

4. What actions can be taken to address the identified challenges and successfully develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual? First, to increase the possibility for successful development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual, leaders from each organization must understand the mechanics of change. “The content or subject matter of change management is drawn from psychology, sociology, business administration, economics, industrial engineering, systems engineering, and the study of human and organizational behavior” (Nickols, 2002, <http://home.att.net/~nickols/change.htm>). The more the leaders of each organization understand the dynamics of change, the better the chances will be to successfully develop a township-wide standard operating procedure manual.

To successfully manage change, Conner (1992) stated,

Effective leaders [must be] capable of reframing the thinking of those whom they guide, enabling them to see that significant changes are not only imperative but achievable. Yet the challenges facing these leaders go beyond determining what needs to be done differently. They must also address how to execute these decisions in a manner that has the greatest possibility for success” (p. 9).

One of the ways to help ensure success is to have input from all levels of the organizations. Cook (1998) explained,

A committee approach is especially helpful if the topic of an SOP is controversial or involves change. No one likes change. Therefore, it is desirable to get as many fingerprints on the proposed SOP as possible. This will help create a sense of ownership among committee members and may help in selling the final product to everyone effected (p. 6).

The United States Fire Administration also recommends this approach in the book

Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire & EMS Departments:

SOPs are usually most effective when members of the organization are included in every step of the development process. As a general rule, departments should get input from all groups potentially affected by the SOPs. This strategy borrows on concepts described in *Total Quality Management*, a business philosophy that encourages managers to get feedback from those using a service, as well as from workers who provide it. Member participation helps boost employee morale, increase ‘buy-in’, and promote a better understanding of the final product (United States Fire Administration, 1999, p. 34).

DISCUSSION

The findings from this investigation suggest that developing of a township-wide standard operating procedure would facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of future fire protection services by the Fire Department of Springfield Township. SOPs would achieve the coordination needed between the three volunteer fire companies.

Developing an SOP manual would require meeting certain challenges, however, the benefits would be significant. The catalyst of this research project was the desire of the Township Board of Commissioners to identify measures that could be implemented to prevent future freelancing and unauthorized responses by the F.D.S.T. Therefore, the first and foremost

benefit of developing an SOP manual would be the creation of a control system in which freelancing and unauthorized responses could be controlled and prevented. As stated in the *Guide to Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments* (1998),

Standard operating procedures are written guidelines that define precisely how operations [are or are not] to be conducted. SOPs clearly spell out what is expected and required of personnel during emergency response and non-emergency activities. They provide a mechanism to communicate legal and administrative requirements, organizational policies, and strategic plans to the members (p. 1).

Another benefit of SOPs is the ability to plan how operations and administrative duties are to be performed prior to the actual incident. Carter (1998) explained with the use of SOPs “you spell out ahead of time how you want your people to act, what you want them to do and which equipment you would like them to use” (p. 26). This would be especially important in dealing with three separate and unique organizations. According to Clark (1991), “There is no more disappointing or frustrating sight than that of a poorly coordinated fire attack, where the fire burns uncontrolled while firefighters or units act independently. Firefighting operations must be closely controlled and coordinated” (p. 151).

Moreover, legal issues would need to be addressed in developing the manual. Depending upon how the manual is written, the F.D.S.T. could increase its legal liability. Bentivoglio (1995) explained:

Fire departments are immune from lawsuits for negligent fireground operations under the ‘public duty doctrine.’ Unfortunately, there are exceptions to the ‘public duty doctrine.’ One important exception is the case in which a public safety agency (fire or police)

assumes a 'special duty' to individual citizens by issuing written operating procedures or guidelines. The theory is that when a fire department establishes formal procedures, it assumes a 'special duty' to individuals to follow such procedures. When a department violates its own standards, it can be held liable (p. 105).

However, in the court case of *Mills v. City of Overland Park*, 837 P.2d 370 (Kan. 1992), the court opined that the creation of an SOP manual does not create a duty owed an individual.

Similarly, Cook (1998) explained:

Of greater importance is whether a given directive is written in mandatory or permissive terms. The words shall and will within a document may become extremely important in the even your department's activities come under scrutiny. Shall and will are imperative words, and their use may not only unnecessarily restrict the actions of the incident commander but also give your courtroom opponent an advantage. Should or may, on the other hand, indicated that an action is a recommendation – advised but not required (p. 5).

In the same case mentioned above, the court ruled on the whether language was critical in determining liability.

The use of 'will' is an order to act, removing the officer's discretion and creating a special duty. The use of 'may' is not a discretion to act, but a grant of authority *447 to act if the officer deems such action to be appropriate. No special duty is thereby created (*Mills v. City of Overland Park*, 1992).

Insomuch,

The fact is that most fire service standards recommend or require departments to have SOPs. It would be easy for anyone to cross-examine the Chief Officer as to all the important uses of SOPs, with the ultimate question of, 'If all the important aspects of

SOPs are recognized by your firefighting industry, then why hasn't your company adopted them?" (Houser, 1995, p. 44).

Therefore, failure to create a standard operating procedure manual may expose the F.D.S.T. to the same, if not more, legal liability.

Recognizing that developing an SOP manual is not problem-free, doing so would still be a good idea because, "SOPs make training new recruits easier, provides a uniform source of information on basic department operations, provides basic structure of responses to give a more organized or professional appearance to one's community/customers" (Houser, 1995, p. 45). Additionally, "Written SOPs can provide the framework for training programs, member briefings, drills, and exercises. A comprehensive SOP manual also serves as a self study and reference document for personnel" (USFA, 1999, p. 8). As a result, the development of a township-wide SOP manual would facilitate the education and training of the members of the F.D.S.T. thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the fire protection provided to Springfield Township.

To increase the probability that the SOP manual will achieve its objective, two factors need to be taken into account: 1) writing the manual in a way that makes it functional and addresses the legal liability issues, and 2) making sure that the manual is written in a way that all will accept the outcome. This second point suggests the importance of change management because of the old adage "nobody likes change". According to Nichols (2000) change management "refers to the making of changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion. The aim is to more effectively implement new methods and systems in an ongoing organization" (<http://home.att.net/~nickols/change.htm>).

In order to effectively implement an SOP manual, the F.D.S.T. must create a committee of personnel from all levels of the organization to develop each policy. According to Cook (1998), “it is desirable to get as many fingerprints on the proposed SOP as possible. This will help create a sense of ownership among committee members and may help in selling the final product to everyone effected (p. 6).

In conclusion, the development of an SOP manual has been identified as a control mechanism to deter freelancing and unauthorized responses of the F.D.S.T. Additionally, SOPs will have the following organizational implications: better command, control and coordination on the fireground, contribute to a comprehensive training program, reduce legal liability, and establish a professional culture within the organization. Having found a solution to the problem, the next section will show how to implement this solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this investigation, the Fire Department of Springfield Township should develop a township-wide standard operating guideline manual. The use of the term “guideline” should be used to take into account the perceived rigidity and liability associated with the term “procedure”. In addition, the beginning of the manual,

should begin with a preamble or introductory statement explaining that the procedures are general guidelines which may be modified by incident commanders, unit officers, and other personnel as conditions dictate. The preamble should further state that the SOP does not create rights or duties that are enforceable in court (Bentivoglio, 1995, p. 108).

As explained by Dr. Harry Carter, the use of the term “guideline” is “because there is no way on this green earth to make every decision for every situation of circumstance you might encounter” (Carter, 1998, p. 27).

The reasons supporting the decision to develop an SOG manual are as follows. First and foremost, the historical research identified that SOPs/SOGs have been used by fire departments for years to successfully control the actions of personnel and allocation of resources. These were the reasons why the research was initiated. Standard operating guidelines are used to plan responses to emergency incidents prior to the event occurring. SOGs contribute to the development of a comprehensive training program in which all the members of the F.D.S.T. are educated and trained with the same written information. Properly written and maintained SOGs reduce the legal liability associated with providing fire protection services to Springfield Township. Lastly, SOGs will create a structured and professional culture within the F.D.S.T.

The development of the SOG should be structured in a way that's similar to the ordinances currently being used by Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Chapter 26 of the Springfield Township Code should be amended to charge the STEMS Board with the responsibility of recommending SOGs to the Board of Township Commissioners for adoption.

There are several steps that can be taken in order to minimize the challenges associated with the development of the SOG manual. First, the reasons for and benefits of developing an SOP manual should be shared with every member of the organization early in the process. Individuals who are kept in the dark or who feel changes are being made "behind the scenes" are usually the ones who provide the most resistance to the change process.

Second, I agree with Cook (1998) in that, "it is desirable to get as many fingerprints on the proposed SOP as possible" (p. 6). Accordingly, a sub-committee of the Springfield Township Emergency Services (STEMS) Board should be created to draft proposed guidelines. Membership of this sub-committee should consist of one firefighter and line officer from each

Fire Company and the Fire Marshal. The SOG Committee should develop guidelines to be reviewed, modified, and recommended by the STEMS Board to the Township Board of Commissioners. See Appendix E for a proposed Standard Operating Guideline defining the process of creating and revising SOGs. Additionally, Appendix F puts into SOG format a dispatch procedure currently being used by the F.D.S.T. for emergency medical dispatches to confirmed structure fires.

Finally, a communication system should be established to allow each member of the organization the ability to provide input in all aspects of the process. With this in mind, it must be realized that the development process must be flexible enough to incorporate the input and changes suggested by the members.

In closing, the development of a township-wide standard operating guideline manual is essential for the effective and efficient delivery of future fire protection services by the Fire Department of Springfield Township. The development of said manual would be a significant step in holding each fire company accountable for the responsibility of providing fire protection services to the community of Springfield Township. In addition, the manual will provide a framework for a safe working environment for each firefighter.

Future readers should conduct additional research to determine if other management tools currently being used by private industry could be used to control fire departments. The scope of this research paper focused on standard operating procedures/guidelines as a widely accepted method used by fire departments around the world to control the actions of personnel and allocation of resources.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions – Springfield Township Elected Officials/Township Manager

Name:

Organization:

Title:

Questions:

1. How familiar are you with the fire companies that protect Springfield Township?
2. What is your perception of the Fire Company that protects the residents within your ward(s)?
3. In your opinion, could the services provided by that company be enhanced? If yes, how?
4. Do you feel that the local township government is responsible to provide fire protection to the residents of the township? If yes, to what extent?
5. Do you feel that the Township Board of Commissioners and/or Township staff should take a more active role in the delivery of the fire service in Springfield Township?
6. Would you support or oppose the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual? Why?
7. Would you support or oppose the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual that was enforced by the Township? Why?
8. What obstacles and/or challenges would you envision during the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual?

Do you have any other thoughts or opinions on this issue?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions – Fire Chiefs

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Questions:

1. On average, how many calls does your company respond to per year?
2. How many active members are in your company?
3. In what year was your fire company officially established?
4. Does your company have a written standard operating procedure manual?
5. Has your company ever had a written standard operating procedure manual?
6. If yes, what type of issues does your manual address?
7. If no, why doesn't your company have a written SOP manual?
8. How often is the manual reviewed and updated?
9. Who is responsible to review and update the manual?
10. What, if any, other type of written rules or regulations does your company currently have in place?

11. What is your opinion of developing a township-wide standard operating procedure manual?

12. What type of obstacles, challenges, or opposition would you anticipate in the development of such a manual?

13. How would you handle these obstacles, challenges, or opposition to the manual?

14. Do you think the development of a township-wide standard operating procedure manual would be a benefit or detriment to the 3 companies? Why?

APPENDIX C

December 6, 2001

Dear Fire Official:

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. My name is Rick Lesniak and I am the Code Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshal of Springfield Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. I am currently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy and have recently completed my first course, Executive Development.

As you may be aware, each student is required to complete and receive a passing grade for an applied research paper at the end of each course. With that said, I have begun the arduous task of completing the said paper and need your assistance.

The topic of my paper is the Development of a Standard Operating Procedure Manual for the Fire Department of Springfield Township. To give you a brief background, the Fire Department of Springfield Township consists of three (3) volunteer fire companies that protect 6.2 square miles adjacent to the Chestnut Hill section of the City of Philadelphia. Currently, the fire companies are independent organizations with separate charters, bylaws, and organizational structures.

As part of my research paper, I intend to demonstrate the importance of standard operating procedures and address the challenges of implementing such a manual. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in completing the attached survey and providing any additional information that would benefit my research. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 215-836-7600 or via email at Rlesniak@Springfield-Topwnship.org.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation and support.

Very truly yours,

Richard M. Lesniak
Code Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshal

SURVEY

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Title: _____

1. What is the geographical size of the municipality in which you cover?
2. How many stations protect this area?
3. How many calls does each station average per year?
4. How many active volunteer members and employees are in each company?
5. Do you have one standard operating procedure manual that each company follows?
6. How long ago did your department decide to develop one SOP manual?
7. Why did your department find it necessary to develop one SOP manual?
8. Please describe how the manual was developed (with/without member input, consulting agency, etc.).
9. Do you have a system that allows members to make suggestions for new procedures? Please describe.

10. Do you have a system that requires all procedures to be reviewed and updated? Please describe.

11. What, if any, opposition did you get from the members of your department while implementing and developing the manual?

12. What, if any, opposition did you get from the government officials in your municipality?

13. Were there any other challenges you faced while implementing the SOP manual?

14. How did you handle the opposition and challenges you faced during the development of the SOP manual?

15. What support did you get from firefighters and/or government officials during the process?

16. Has the development of the SOP manual had a positive or negative effect on your department? Please cite specific examples.

Please provide any additional information or comments that would be beneficial in developing a standard operating procedure.

Please return the survey to:

Rick Lesniak
Springfield Township
1510 Paper Mill Road
Wyndmoor, PA 19038

APPENDIX D

January 9, 2002

Ken Clark, Fire Marshal
Abington Township
1176 Old York Road
Abington, PA 19002

Dear Ken:

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I am currently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy and have recently completed my first course, Executive Development.

As part of the Executive Fire Officer Program, each student is required to complete and receive a passing grade for an applied research paper at the end of each course. With that said, I have begun the arduous task of completing the said paper and need your assistance.

The topic of my paper is the "Development of a Standard Operating Procedure Manual for Fire Department of Springfield Township". To give you a brief background, the Fire Department of Springfield Township consists of three (3) volunteer fire companies that protect 6.2 square miles adjacent to the Chestnut Hill section of the City of Philadelphia. Currently, the fire companies are independent organizations with separate charters, bylaws, and organizational structure.

As part of my research paper, I intend to demonstrate the importance of standard operating procedures and address the challenges of implementing such a manual. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in completing the attached survey and providing any additional information that would benefit my research. I would greatly appreciate your effort in returning the surveys no later than January 21, 2002 so that I have time to evaluate the responses and include them in my paper.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 215-836-7600 or via email at Rlesniak@Springfield-Township.org.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation and support.

Very truly yours,

Richard M. Lesniak
Code Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshal

SURVEY

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Title: _____

1. What is the geographical size of the municipality in which you cover?
2. How many fire companies provide fire protection to the municipality you represent?
3. How many calls does each company average per year?
4. How many active volunteer members and/or employees are in each company?
5. Do you have one standard operating procedure manual that oversees the operation and administration of each fire company?
6. How long ago did your municipality decide to develop one SOP manual?
7. Why did your municipality find it necessary to develop one SOP manual?
8. Please describe how the manual was developed (with/without member input, consulting agency, etc.).
9. Do you have a system that allows members to make suggestions for new procedures? Please describe.

10. Do you have a system that requires all procedures to be reviewed and updated? Please describe.

11. What, if any, opposition did you get from the members of your department while implementing and developing the manual?

12. What, if any, opposition did you get from the government officials in your municipality?

13. Were there any other challenges you faced while implementing the SOP manual?

14. How did you handle the opposition and challenges you faced during the development of the SOP manual?

15. What support did you get from firefighters and/or government officials during the process?

16. Has the development of the SOP manual had a positive or negative effect on your department? Please cite specific examples.

Please provide any additional information or comments that would be beneficial in developing a standard operating procedure.

Please return the survey to:

Rick Lesniak
Springfield Township
1510 Paper Mill Road
Wyndmoor, PA 19038

APPENDIX E

ADMINISTRATION:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT		PAGE: 1 OF 3	

PURPOSE:

This procedure shall outline the method by which all Standard Operating Guidelines are conceptualized, developed, and approved.

SCOPE:

This procedure shall be utilized for the preparation of all Standard Operating Guidelines.

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE CONCEPTUALIZATION:

Any member of the Department may suggest the need for a standard operating guideline. Guidelines may be suggested to address a specific need, outline routine duties, explain operational objectives and policy, address safety concerns, and define responsibility.

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE PREPARTATION:

Any member of the Department may prepare a standard operating guideline. All SOGs shall follow the general format utilized in the development of all SOGs. Completed SOGs will be forwarded to the Springfield Township Emergency Services (STEMS) Board for review.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS PROCESS:

Once a suggestion has been made and the concept defined, a working draft of the procedure may be developed. This draft will then be circulated, as a minimum, to each member of the SOG Committee, and the person who initiated the guideline. These individuals may share the draft with any and all of their personnel and submit comments as appropriate. Other individuals who may have valuable comments may also be copied and requested to comment.

ADOPTED:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
REVISED:		PAGE: 1 OF 3	

ADMINISTRATION:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT		PAGE: 2 OF 3	

REVISIONS:

Upon the return of the draft copies with comments, the SOG Committee will rewrite the document so as to address the maximum number of concerns without jeopardizing the safety, efficiency, and violation of state laws or policies.

REVIEW BY STEMS:

This final draft is then distributed to the STEMS Board for their comment and final approval. The Board may approve, disapprove or approve with amendments any Standard Operating Guideline.

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES:

Upon formal approval of the Board, copies of the procedure will be issued as follows:

Each member of STEMS	(10)
Fire Marshal	(1)
Public Safety Commissioner	(1)
Flourtown Fire Company	(1)
Oreland Fire Company	(1)
Wyndmoor Hose Company	(1)
Springfield Ambulance Association	(1)
TOTAL	16

ENFORCEMENT:

It is the responsibility of the Chief Officers of each organization to enforce the intent of the Standard Operating Guidelines. Line Officers and firefighters share responsibility in this process as well.

REVISIONS:

Standard Operating Guidelines are revised in the same process as they are produced. All personnel identified in the Department Comments Process of this Standard are issued copies including revisions and are requested to comment. Such comments are taken into careful consideration when the SOG Committee makes the final revised copy for the STEMS Board. The Board will formally approve the document in the same fashion as for a new SOG.

ADOPTED:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
REVISED:		PAGE: 2 OF 3	

ADMINISTRATION:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT		PAGE: 3 OF 3	

TEMPORARY AMENDMENTS:

If a practice, policy, or guideline is identified which has the possibility of having a negative impact on the department, the Chief of any company may publish a Temporary Amendment which will spell out such actions required to address the situation. Temporary Amendments shall be posted in each station and the Fire Marshal’s Office. Such Temporary Emergency Amendment, when signed by a Fire Chief, shall have the weight and authority of a Standard Operating Guideline until approved or disapproved by the Springfield Township Emergency Services Board. The reason for the Temporary Amendment shall be discussed and remedied at the next regularly scheduled STEMS Board meeting. If a STEMS Board meeting is not scheduled within thirty (30) days, an emergency meeting shall be scheduled.

ADOPTED:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
REVISED:		PAGE: 3 OF 3	

APPENDIX F

OPERATIONS:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
EMS DISPATCH TO CONFIRMED FIRES		PAGE: 1 OF 2	

PURPOSE

To establish a procedure to be used by the Montgomery County Emergency Dispatch Services to provide for a minimum number of emergency medical service units to be dispatched to the scene of confirmed structure fires.

SCOPE

All emergency medical service, fire, and police department personnel.

BACKGROUND

Statistics have proven that the majority of firefighter fatalities occur as a result of heart attacks while operating at an emergency incident. When dispatched, the responsibility of the emergency medical services is to provide triage, treatment and transport to any and all victims located at emergency incidents. These activities must be provided to both civilian personnel as well as members of the Fire Department. The Montgomery County Emergency Dispatch Services will dispatch the number of emergency medical service (EMS) units as described in this guideline.

DEFINITIONS

Confirmed fire – any report given by a police officer or fire personnel of smoke or fire showing from a structure.

Advanced Life Support – an emergency medical service (EMS) unit staffed, at a minimum, with a certified paramedic (Medic) and a certified emergency medical technician (EMT).

ADOPTED:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
REVISED:		PAGE: 1 OF 2	

OPERATIONS:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
EMS DISPATCH TO CONFIRMED FIRES		PAGE: 2 OF 2	

PROCEDURES

Upon confirmation of a structure fire located within the limits of Springfield Township, the Montgomery County Emergency Dispatch Services (MCEDS) should dispatch, at a minimum, two (2) Advanced Life Support Ambulances to the scene of the incident.

This policy should not prohibit EMS, fire, or police personnel from requesting additional emergency medical service units as required by the incident.

SUPERSEDED POLICY

This is a new policy on this subject matter. It does not supersede any previous memo or policy.

ADOPTED:	SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT	STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE	
REVISED:		PAGE: 2 OF 2	