

Running head: INCORPORATING MINIMUM TRAINING CERTIFICATIONS

Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations
in Emergency Management

Incorporating Minimum Training Certifications as a Prerequisite
for Members to Hold Line Officer Positions for the Ledyard Fire
Company, District No. 1, Inc.

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product,
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Abstract

The Ledyard Fire Company, District No. 1, Inc. is a combination fire department with all-volunteer fire officers. The Fire Company holds annual elections for fire officers by the membership at the annual business meeting each May. The problem was that there were no requirements in the Fire Company By-Laws to possess minimum training certification requirements as a prerequisite to being elected to office. The purpose of this research was to modify the Fire Company By-Laws to include language that specifies minimum training certification requirements for fire line officers to hold office.

The research method used was action and the following questions were developed:

1. What are the benefits to the Fire Company, Town, and the individual to require minimum certification requirements for fire line officers?
2. What local, state, and federal laws govern the requirements of certification requirements for fire line officers?
3. What certifications do other fire departments in Eastern Connecticut require for their fire line officers?
4. What minimum certification requirements should be included for a fire line officer and what are the positive and negative attributes of the requirements?

For this research project, procedures included a review current literature, a line officer training certification

survey, and review of current fire fighter and fire officer certification standards. Results indicated that many fire departments surveyed have minimum training certification requirements in place and these requirements provide a significant benefit to the individual, department, and town. Based on the research, it was recommended that by-law changes be enacted to require minimum training certification requirements for fire line officers at the Ledyard Fire Company.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	3
Table of Contents.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Background and Significance.....	7
Literature Review.....	12
Procedures.....	18
Results.....	20
Discussion.....	26
Recommendations.....	30
Reference List.....	32
Appendix A Survey Cover Letter.....	34
Appendix B Line Officer Training Certification Survey..	35
Appendix C By-Law Change.....	37

Introduction

The Ledyard Fire Company, District No. 1, Inc., like other fire departments nationwide, has a Para-military organizational structure and chain of command. As a combination department with all volunteer officers elected by the membership, one may question whether those elected are qualified for the position. Fire Company By-Laws govern the election of officers and include requirements for eligibility. Currently, the only requirements are length of time served as an active fire fighter and time served in a lower officer position (where applicable). Each officer position has a slightly different requirement, with the higher officer positions being the most stringent. There are no minimum training certification requirements as a prerequisite to hold any line officer position.

The problem is that the Ledyard Fire Company, District No. 1, Inc. does not require its' prospective and current fire line officers to possess minimum training certification standards. The potential result is the election of a line officer that does not meet the requirements of OSHA 1910.156(c)(2) and NFPA 1021. The purpose of this research is to modify Fire Company By-Laws to include minimum training certification requirements for current and prospective fire line officers.

The action research method was used in this study. The following research questions were answered:

1. What are the benefits to the Fire Company, Town, and the individual to require minimum certification requirements for fire line officers?
2. What local, state, and federal laws govern the requirements of certification requirements for fire line officers?
3. What certifications do other fire departments in Eastern Connecticut require for their fire line officers?
4. What minimum certification requirements should be included for a fire line officer and what are the positive and negative attributes of the requirements?

Background and Significance

This research topic was selected as a result of past, present, and future concerns of this Fire Chief to ensure the department elects qualified fire line officers that have the necessary skills and training to perform their duties, while complying with law and consensus standards.

Having been an active member of my department for over sixteen years and progressing through the ranks to my current position as Fire Chief, I have always supported and encouraged the continuing education and training of my firefighters. During my undergraduate years in college, I attended firefighter training almost every weekend at the local fire school, which happened to be just five minutes from the campus. During this period, I was able to enhance my fire service knowledge, in both

practical and cognitive aspects. This resulted in me being the youngest, most highly trained member in my department. As a result of my desire to learn and advance, I moved rapidly through the line officer ranks and have held the position of Fire Chief since 1999.

The Ledyard Fire Company, District No. 1, Inc. is an all volunteer, private organization which provides fire, emergency medical, and hazardous-materials responses to the Town of Ledyard utilizing town owned equipment and operates out of a town owned public safety complex. There are two paid Town of Ledyard Career Firefighter/Drivers assigned to the department and work during normal business hours to supplement the volunteer coverage, which technically classifies the department as combination. The Fire Company is governed by two bodies. A Board of Directors is responsible for all administrative functions of Company's business, while the Fire Chief is responsible for all operational matters and town assets. The Fire Company Constitution and By-Laws govern the following major areas: Membership, meetings, officers, and committees, and disciplinary action.

There are nine fire line officers who include the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Captain, 1st Lieutenant, 2nd Lieutenant, Chief Engineer, Assistant Engineer, and Fire Police Captain. All fire line officers are elected annually by the membership and serve one-year terms, with the exception of the Chief and Deputy Fire Chief, who serve concurrent two-year terms and the Fire Police Captain who is

appointed annually by the Fire Chief. The Fire Company By-Laws do not require any of the fire line officers to hold any formal training or education, only time in service is specified.

When the Fire Company was established in 1951, formal training for firefighters was non-existent and our by-laws reflected that. However, there has been considerable change in the fire service since then and personal safety, efficiency, technology, and equipment are more important than ever. Fire Science and Fire Engineering are disciplines in college leading to associates, bachelors, masters, and even PhD degrees. Boy, has the fire service come a long way.

The idea for this research has its roots in an unannounced OSHA inspection at our department in 2002. During the review process, it was pointed out that *OSHA Standard 1910.156(c)(1)* states, "Fire Brigade leaders and training instructors shall be provided with training and education which is more comprehensive than that provided to the general membership of the fire brigade." (Author, 1998, p. 2). Although the department was not cited for violation of this standard, it was brought to light that several of our line officers' did not have documented training commensurate with their positions.

I have always been a proponent of continuing education. The fire service is no exception. Having obtained my bachelor and master degrees along with an extensive fire service certification background; I lead by example and encourage my fire fighters to pursue every available training opportunity. However, there are obstacles that have prevented firefighters

and prospective and current line officers from taking advantages of these opportunities.

In a volunteer fire department, time is a major factor. The volunteer firefighter attempts to balance his/her full-time employment, school, family, social activities, and fire department obligations, which are often overwhelming. Today's volunteer firefighter is required to comply with all medical and health requirements, minimum initial and refresher training, special work details, and response to emergency calls. When you add the responsibilities of holding a line officer position, it becomes a real challenge to balance all of the responsibilities and requirements. This is the situation for my department.

The fire service has become so much more technical as a profession over the last decade that those in leadership positions must have the training, skills, and abilities to effectively lead and manage. Regardless of whether you are volunteer or paid, the same standards apply. Well-educated and trained leaders are key to the success of any fire department. Having required minimum certification requirements for line officers will benefit the department in several ways. First, it will ensure that line officers that are elected have the necessary training requirements before they are in a leadership position. Second, it helps to eliminate electing individuals based solely on popularity. Third, it acts as a motivator for prospective candidates to advance their fire service education. And fourth, it illustrates the importance that the department places on education and training.

A change in by-laws to reflect the requirement of minimum certification standards for line officers is one such way to ensure compliance with OSHA and NFPA standards. This research is linked to the United States Fire Administration operational objective, "To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (United States Fire Administration, 2003, p. II-2).

My recent completion of the National Fire Academy Course titled *Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management* is linked to this research project in two primary content areas. The Incident Command System and NIMS AND NRP units deal with the complex subjects of incident command, control, and multi-agency interaction. These topics require our fire service leaders to have a well-educated background and be fluent in these areas for successful mitigation. Within the Incident Command unit, the responsibilities of the Incident Commander (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2004, chap. 2, p. 2-3) are directly related to the training and certification of line officers, who will act in the capacity of the Incident Commander. In the NIMS and NRP unit, the understanding of the National Incident Management System and National Response Plan (NFA, 2004, chap. 3, p. 2-7) are crucial for fire officers to understand and implement for both small and large scale incidents. Fire line officers must be familiar with these concepts and this is accomplished through continuing education and my recommendation for including minimum training certifications for the department.

Literature Review

The literature review for this research project encompassed the search of published professional standards, applied research projects, articles, journals, and other publications available through the Learning Research Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy. Additional literature was obtained through internet web sites, and locally through the fire marshal's office library.

Soon after the literature review began, it was apparent an abundance of material existed in the research area of minimum training certifications for line officers. Many Applied Research Projects were found, addressing paid, volunteer, and combination departments, from small, rural, departments, to some of the largest fully-paid fire departments in the country. It was evident to this researcher that the topic chosen was one that had captured the interest of the fire service nationwide.

In today's fire service, fire line officers are the leadership of the organization. Ex-Chief Michael J. Toth of the East Franklin Township (Somerset, NJ) Fire Department stated "Leadership is a set of skills and attitudes that enables one to get others to accomplish objectives determined by the leader, because they want to do it" (Toth, 1998, p. 7). It is apparent that much has been written on the topic of paid vs. volunteer firefighters when it comes to compliance with consensus standards. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) even has separate consensus standards for the deployment of Career

(NFPA 1710) and Volunteer (NFPA 1720) fire departments. In his ARP, Silva (2001) wrote about the necessary equality needed between paid and volunteer firefighters and standards to which they are held. He stated "Volunteer officers would gain the respect within the organization and with all the firefighters on the fireground if they went through the same testing procedure as their full-time counterparts" (Silva, 2001, p. 43). Garrisi (2001) wrote his ARP on the training issues facing volunteers in his department. Although not specific to fire officers, he conducted a comprehensive study on the minimum training standards for a volunteer firefighter. One of his research questions was "What is an acceptable minimum level of training for a volunteer firefighter?" (Garrisi, 2001, p. 21). The results were nine criteria that none of his members had completed. They included:

1. Class B Drivers License;
2. Fire Fighter I;
3. Fire Fighter II;
4. Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR);
5. Emergency Medical Technician Defibrillator (EMT-D);
6. Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational;
7. Hazardous Materials Decontamination;
8. CSFM Confined Space Awareness;
9. CSFM Driver/Operator 1A and 1B

Although his research was based on the merging of volunteer staff into another organization, he makes a striking point that

after a review of training records, none of his 30 potential volunteer members were in 100% compliance of the above criteria.

Locally, in Eastern Connecticut, many departments have some type of written training requirements to hold a line officer position. The requirements can be found in different types of documents, including by-laws, job descriptions, or standard operating guidelines, depending on such factors as the structure and makeup of the department.

In the Town of Griswold (2005), Connecticut, Standard Operating Guideline 43.1 entitled "Line Officer's Qualifications SOG" sets forth the requirements for Chief, Deputy, Assistant, Captain, and Lieutenant. Training prerequisites for all positions include being certified as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or Medical Response Technician (MRT), Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational, along with Incident Command System (ICS) training. For the positions of Captain and Lieutenant, certification at the Fire Fighter II level is required and for Chief and Deputy Chief, certification at the Fire Officer I level is required.

The Ashford Volunteer Fire Department (2004), Connecticut, By-Laws govern minimum training qualifications for line officers. By-Laws Article I, Section 2, Paragraph A-3-a specifies the requirements for the Chief, Deputy, Assistant, Captain, and Lieutenants. At the Lieutenant level, certification as Fire Fighter I, Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational, Medical Response Technician (MRT) or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Incident Command System (ICS) training

must be completed. Additionally, an approved officer development training program must be completed within one year of election to the position. There are two Captain positions, one a fire captain, the other an EMS captain. The fire captain position has a preferred qualification as Fire Fighter II or equivalent experience and the EMS captain requires certification as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). For the Assistant and Deputy Chief's positions, Fire Officer I or equivalent experience is a preferred qualification. And finally for the Fire Chief, Fire Officer II or equivalent experience is preferred.

A third Eastern Connecticut Fire Department, the Poquonnock Bridge Fire Department (2001), is a combination fire department, with career fire line officers who are bound by job descriptions for requirements. Specific requirements include the being certified at the Fire Fighter II level, certified as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), certified at the Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational level, and obtain Fire Officer I certification within twelve (12) months of appointment.

It is apparent that there is no one qualification standard among departments and no one way requirements are set forth (i.e. by-laws, job descriptions, contractual, etc.). It is clear though that some form of training certification requirements seem to be an important component of the fire line officer position in today's fire service. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), a consensus standard making organization, sets forth NFPA 1021, *Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*

(National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 2003). The purpose of the standard "...Shall be to specify the minimum job performance requirements for service as a fire officer" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 1021-5). Annex A.1.1 states "It is envisioned that in addition to the requirements of NFPA 1021, the authority having jurisdiction may require additional credentials. These can include fire degree programs and general education in business, management, science, and associated degree curricula" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 1021-13).

Essentially, the standard defines four (4) levels of Fire Officer certification/training: Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II, Fire Officer III, and Fire Officer IV. The standard defines each as the following:

Fire Officer I. "The fire officer, at the supervisory level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level 1" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 1021-6).

Fire Officer II. "The fire officer, at the supervisory managerial level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level II" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 1021-6).

Fire Officer III. "The fire officer, at the managerial/administrative level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level III" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 1021-6).

Fire Officer IV. "The fire officer, at the administrative level, who has met the job performance requirements specified in this standard for Level IV" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 1021-6).

This standard does not distinguish between career and volunteer departments and therefore applies to all fire departments, regardless of makeup. It is important to note that the State of Connecticut has not adopted any of the National Fire Protection Standards as law, however, Connecticut fire departments generally regard NFPA standards as a guide by which to operate.

Mandatory fire line officer training requirements can have a negative connotation for the department. All volunteer fire fighters need a certain level of training to adequately perform their duties, whether or not they aspire to be in a leadership position. In his ARP, Garland Garrisi of the Yuba City, California Fire Department writes "The recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters is becoming more difficult in today's changing society due to time constraints that are placed on an individual's life" (Garrisi, 2001, p. 10). Finally, Snook, Johnson, Olsen, and Buckman (1998) extensively examined volunteer firefighters and training success. The authors state "Training is the key to the success of a fire department" (Snook, Johnson, Olsen, and Buckman, 1998, p. 44).

Procedures

The research methodology was action. Material was gathered for this ARP through several different means, including:

1. Literature review of pertinent documents and publications from the National Fire Academy (NFA) Learning Research Center (LRC). These included periodicals, books, and Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects;
2. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards gathered from the local fire marshal office and on-line;
3. Developed and distributed a cover letter with a fire line officer survey requesting written policies, standards, and/or guidelines pertaining to certification requirements for fire line officers (Appendix A);
4. Developed and distributed a fire line officer survey (Appendix B).

Line Officer Training Certification Survey

A line officer training certification survey, along with a cover letter was developed and mailed to all fire chiefs in New London and Windham Counties. A total of eighty-six (86) surveys were mailed. This encompassed all departments in Eastern Connecticut. The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and solicited department specific information on written

policies, standards, and guidelines relating to the topic. A postage-paid return envelope was provided and the surveys were requested to be returned by a specified date. Appendices A and B provide the reader with the cover letter and survey.

Forty-three (43) of the eighty-six (86) surveys were returned (50 percent). The survey helped this researcher to answer the following questions about local departments:

1. Does your department have minimum certification requirements?
2. How are these requirements defined?
3. What type of requirements?
4. Is there a benefit?

Definitions

Certification. To attest as being true or as represented or as meeting a standard (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1989).

Standard. A document, the main text of which contains only mandatory provisions using the word "shall" to indicate requirements and in which is in the form generally suitable for mandatory reference by another standard or code or for adoption into law. Nonmandatory provisions shall be located in an appendix or annex, footnote, or fine-print note and are not to be considered a part of the requirements of a standard (NFPA, 1021).

Training. To teach so as to make fit, qualified, or proficient (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1989).

Limitations

There were a few limitations obvious to this researcher. First, while gathering research material, it became clear that virtually every department had a different operational methodology and attempting to make comparisons and equate each department's definitions and standards for fire line officers was difficult. Second, the survey provided a return rate of fifty (50) percent so the representative sample was not all inclusive. Additionally, with respect to the survey, only two (2) of the eight (8) counties in the state were sampled. This was due to time and cost.

Results

What are the benefits to the Fire Company, Town, and the individual to require minimum certification requirements for fire line officers?

This research question was answered from survey questions seven and nine. Survey question seven asked survey respondents what benefits are derived from requiring line officers to possess minimum training certification requirements. The respondents could select more than one choice and write in any

additional benefits that were derived. The choices were as follows:

- A. Competency - 6
- B. Elected or appointed based on qualification - 0
- C. Encourage prospective line officers to pursue training - 6
- D. Ensures a fair process - 6
- E. Other (Write in) - 0

The majority of the respondents selected multiple derived benefits, with the majority of respondents indicating competency and encouragement to pursue training as their choices. Three write-in comments were received. One respondent indicated that a benefit was the versatility of being cross trained. Complete results are provided in Appendix B.

Survey question nine asked respondents that did not have minimum training requirements for line officers if such a requirement would benefit their department, town, and the individual. The question was answered with a yes or no response and space for explanation. The results are as follows:

- A. Yes - 17
- B. No - 3

The majority of respondents indicated that such a requirement would serve as a benefit. Several respondents provided comments to the survey question. One respondent stated that the requirement would encourage those members not certified to complete the training, thereby encouraging a better choice of officers. The respondent further stated that their department nominating committee has in the past, selected only those with

Fire Fighter I/II certifications, however it is not required. Another respondent commented that professional standards ensure quality performance. Finally, a third respondent stated that requirements would certainly help, but in a small department it is difficult. The respondent further stated that they need to work on getting more membership first.

What local, state, and federal laws govern the requirements of certification requirements for fire line officers?

This question was answered through research of local, state and federal laws. For local governance, two documents contain the rules and regulations governing the operation of the town. These include the Town of Ledyard Charter (2002) and the Town of Ledyard Ordinances (1993). Neither of these documents dictate any requirements for its' fire personnel.

Connecticut General Statutes, Volume 2, Title 7, Chapter 104, titled "Municipal Police and Fire Protection" (2005) encompasses the relevant statutes pertaining to municipal fire departments in the state. There are no specific requirements within any of the statutes the mandate or require minimum training certification requirements for firefighters.

Finally, federal law does require some form of training for fire officers, although the language is extremely vague and subject to interpretation. Section 1910.156(c)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Standards, Subpart L, Fire Protection, Fire Brigades, Training and education, states "Fire

brigade leaders and training instructors shall be provided with training and education which is more comprehensive than that provided to the general membership of the fire brigade" (1998). The standard is applicable to all Connecticut fire departments, but does not indicate specific requirements.

What certifications do other fire departments in Eastern Connecticut require for their fire line officers?

This research question was answered from survey results. Questions four, five, and six provided the necessary data. Question four asked if the department required both fire (i.e. Fire Fighter I, Fire Officer I, etc.) and medical (i.e. MRT, EMT, etc.) certifications of the departments that required minimum certification requirements. Respondents had the following responses:

- A. Fire only - 7
- B. Medical only - 0
- C. Fire and medical - 26

The clear majority of respondents indicated that their departments required both fire and medical certifications for their line officers with no respondents indicating a medical requirement only.

Survey question five asked what minimum fire certification level was required in the respondents' department to hold a fire line officer position. Of the respondents that indicated their

departments require such certifications, the results were broken down as follows:

- A. Fire Fighter I - 13
- B. Fire Fighter II - 9
- C. Fire Service Instructor I - 1
- D. Fire Officer I - 4
- E. Other - 1

Several respondents answered with a combination of requirements and one answered that it depended on the rank of the line office. It is clear that respondents overall indicated the minimum requirement should be Fire Fighter I.

Survey question six asked respondents what is the minimum medical certification level required in their department to hold a line officer position. The following are the results:

- A. Basic first aid/cpr - 0
- B. Medical Response Technician (MRT) - 13
- C. Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) - 12
- D. Other - 4

The respondents were split 50/50 between requiring MRT and EMT certifications. One respondent indicated that their department does not require fire officers to hold medical certifications but requires medical officers to do so (i.e. medical lieutenant). The department encourages fire officers to become medically certified to at least the MRT level.

What minimum certification requirements should be included for a fire line officer and what are the positive and negative attributes of the requirements?

This final question is answered by survey questions eight and nine. Question eight asked respondents to indicate what minimum training certification requirements should be included for a prospective line officer. Respondents could circle as many responses that applied and there was a space to write in additional comments. The results are as follows:

- A. Fire Fighter I/II - 8
- B. Fire Service Instructor I/II - 1
- C. Fire Officer I/II/III - 1
- D. MRT/EMT - 0
- E. In-house - 1
- F. Other - 1

The majority of respondents answered this question with multiple selections indicating that a combination of certification requirements should be included. Appendix B contains the complete breakdown of results.

By-law change

Research results indicate that federal law requires those in leadership positions to be more highly trained than those they are supervising. Survey respondents indicate that their departments have minimum training certification requirements for

their fire line officers and/or there is one or more benefits derived from have such requirements. There is a need for a by-law change in the Ledyard Fire Company to require minimum training certifications for its' fire line officers. Specific details and a by-law change draft are included in the recommendations section of this paper and Appendix C.

Discussion

Having been Fire Chief of my department since 1999, I have seen how important it is to have competent, educated, and well rounded line officers as part of the leadership team. This is especially true in the volunteer fire service and brings to light a problem which is the topic of this research paper. Not only is it difficult for the volunteer fire service to attract competent leaders, it is difficult to attract and retain volunteers in general.

After reviewing what others have said on the topic, I see the same recurring themes from all around the country in the volunteer fire service. In a recent article that appeared in *The Voice*, author Michael J. Toth writes "Today we now have 50 to 60 active members. We have a mere handful of individuals willing to do the work" (Toth, 1998, p. 8). He continues to explain that the reason for this multi-faceted. First, most households must have two incomes to support the family. Second, the volunteer fire service is in competition with other organizations who recruit volunteers. Third, the family, hobbies, sports,

television, education, and other activities all provide competition and take time away from the volunteer firefighter.

It is apparent from survey results that having competent, well-trained fire line officers is important to many fire departments in Eastern Connecticut. One can surmise that this holds true for the fire service statewide and nationwide. In his ARP, Joseph P. Silva of the Meridian, Idaho Fire Department discusses the implementation of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications and the appropriateness to require fire officers to possess Fire Officer I, II, III, or IV certifications. This discussion was a result of an extensive organizational study conducted by the Anne Arundel County Fire Department in 1994. The Report of the Fire Department Study Committee to Ann Arundel County Executive Robert R. Neal by Turner, Bandoian, Caldwell, Douglas, Foster, Fullerton, Hood, Moran, Snyder, and Steel (as cited in Silva, 2001) recommended "Retroactive application of NFPA 1021 standards to all career and volunteer officers, following a grace period, the length of which should be determined by the fire administrator...and made in consultation with the reconstituted Fire Advisory Board."

The subject of training is a popular topic to research, having found extensive literature in the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center. Within the subject of training, it was evident that virtually every aspect of training in the fire service has been researched and published. This indicates that there is great interest in the topic and leaves one to believe

that it is a core component of the modern fire service. As Gary Campbell of the Chubbuck, Idaho Fire Department states in his ARP, "...standards have to be developed and instituted for the good of the public and fire department before someone was hurt or killed" (Campbell, 1993, p. 19).

A fire fighter faces many obstacles when his/her rank changes from fire fighter to fire line officer. The situation is even more complicated when it is a volunteer. Snook, Johnson, Olsen, and Buckman state "The first day a firefighter becomes a supervisor their role changes. Instead of taking orders and direction, they are the person responsible for giving orders and direction. From that day on, the supervisor is faced with tasks, problems, and situations requiring well-developed decision making skills" (p. 117). This is a powerful statement and indicates the immense responsibility placed on the fire line officer. It re-iterates how important this researcher feels that minimum training certifications need to be required for fire line officers in the department.

The results of this research lead to several interpretations. First, research showed that there are many benefits to imposing certification requirements for fire line officers. Competency, encouragement to pursue training, and a fair promotional/selection process are all important factors to fire departments in the area. Second, results showed that over 50% of the survey respondents indicated their departments require both fire and medical certifications to hold a line officer position. This re-enforces the concept of initiating

change in our department to make these requirements for our fire line officers. Third, federal OSHA requires supervisors to be more highly trained than their subordinates. This requirement necessitates written training requirements for fire line officers to ensure compliance. Finally, research indicated that both fire and emergency medical training certifications should be included as requirements for fire line officers. This was not only true of survey results in the local area, but in research conducted during the literature review. One can surmise from the study results that a successful, competent fire line officer must be required to possess minimum fire and emergency medical training certifications to perform at the supervisory level.

The study results provide a concrete background to invoke change in Article III, Section 2 of the Fire Company By-Laws to include minimum certification requirements for each of the fire line officer positions. These positions include the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Captain, 1st Lieutenant, 2nd Lieutenant, Chief Engineer, and Assistant Engineer. Together, these positions make up the leadership of the Fire Company.

A major implication to making changes to the by-laws will be the effect on the individuals that are currently holding line officer positions. Depending on required training certifications, these individuals may not meet the minimum requirements. The question then becomes what to do? Do you "grandfather" these people in, set a time-frame for compliance, or replace them with new people who meet the qualifications? What do you do if you do not have anyone that meets the new

qualifications? These would all be issues that will be brought out with implementing these changes and will have to be addressed.

A second implication for the Fire Company is that of consistency and resistance to change. Our department typically elects the same fire line officers each year (every two years for the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief) as long as those officers are effectively performing their duties and wish to continue to serve. The by-law change may result in an unpopular result of current line officers not being eligible for positions that they have held for years and either leaving those positions vacant or filling them with personnel meeting the new requirements. Volunteer's can take change especially hard, more so when it comes to their leadership.

Recommendations

One way to ensure competent, effective fire line officers for the Ledyard Fire Company is to require minimum training requirements as a prerequisite to holding the office. To accomplish this objective, the Fire Company will need to implement the following recommendations:

- Determine what training certification requirements are necessary for each fire line officer position within the department;

- Draft a by-law change to incorporate the new training certification requirements for fire line officers;
- Present the by-law change to the Fire Company membership at a business meeting. The proposed change is posted for one month for comment and then voted on by the membership the following month;
- Nominate and elect fire line officers based on new requirements;

Appendix C illustrates a draft of the proposed by-law change to be submitted to the Fire Company membership. The proposed change will ensure compliance with federal law, provide the Fire Company with assurance that it elects the most qualified and competent fire line officers, encourages all members to pursue training opportunities to advance their careers, and provides for a fair promotional process.

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Appendix A
Survey Cover Letter

September 27, 2005

Dear Chief,

I am currently in my third year of the National Fire Academy's Executive Officer Fire Program. Recently I completed a course titled *Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management*. As part of the course requirement, I am conducting a research project. The topic of this research deals with the incorporation of minimum training certification standards as a prerequisite for members to hold line officer positions within my department.

To assist with my research, I am asking all Fire Chief's from Eastern Connecticut to complete the enclosed nine (9) question survey regarding line officer training certification. Once the survey is completed it can be mailed back to me in the enclosed postage-paid envelope by October 14, 2005

Your responses to the survey will remain anonymous. If your department has a written policy, standard, or guideline on training certification requirements for line officers, could you please enclose a copy with the survey results.

If you would like a copy of the survey results, please indicate it at the end of the survey and leave your name and mailing address or e-mail address.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by e-mail at amrazikjr@comcast.net or at the fire station at (860) 464-9222.

Sincerely,

Alexander R. Mrazik Jr.
Fire Chief

Enclosures - Line Officer Training Certification Survey
Return Postage Paid Envelope

Appendix B

Line Officer Training Certification Survey

1. Please identify the makeup of your department:

- A. Volunteer - **27**
- B. Combination - **10**
- C. Paid - **6**

2. Does your department require its' members to possess minimum training certifications as a prerequisite to holding a line officer position (i.e. captain, lieutenant)

- A. Yes - **33**
- B. No - Go to Question 7 - **10**

3. How is this requirement defined in your department?

- A. Departmental by-laws - **15**
 - B. Departmental policies or guidelines - **7**
 - C. Town policy/contractual - **1**
 - D. Verbal requirement by Fire Chief or designee - **2**
 - E. Other: - **3**
-

4. Does your department require both fire (i.e. FFI, FOI) and medical (i.e. MRT, EMT) certifications to hold a line officer position?

- A. Fire only - Skip Question 6 - **7**
- B. Medical only - Go to Question 6 - **0**
- C. Fire and medical - **26**

5. What is the minimum fire certification level required in your department to hold a line officer position?

- A. Firefighter I - **13**
 - B. Firefighter II - **9**
 - C. Fire Service Instructor I - **1**
 - D. Fire Officer I - **4**
 - E. Other: - **1**
-

6. What is the minimum medical certification level required in your department to hold a line officer position?

- A. Basic first aid/CPR - 0
 - B. Medical Response Technician (MRT) - 13
 - C. Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) - 12
 - D. Other: - 4
-

7. What benefit(s) is (are) derived from requiring line officers to possess minimum training certification requirements? (Circle all that apply)

- A. Competency - 6
 - B. Elected or appointed based on qualification - 0
 - C. Encourages prospective line officers to pursue training-6
 - D. Ensures a fair process - 1
 - E. Other: - 0
-

8. What minimum training certification requirements should be included for a prospective line officer? (Circle all that apply)

- A. Firefighter I/II - 8
 - B. Fire Service Instructor I/II - 1
 - C. Fire Officer I/II/III - 1
 - D. MRT/EMT - 0
 - E. In-house officer training - 1
 - F. Other: - 1
-

9. If your department does not have a requirement for line officers to possess minimum training certification standards, do you believe that such a requirement would be beneficial to your department, town, and the individual?

- A. Yes - 17
- B. No - 3

Please Explain:

Appendix C

Ledyard Fire Company, District No. 1, Inc. By-Law Change

Article III. Officers

Section 2 REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY FOR OFFICE

Candidate for Fire Chief shall be a five (5) year veteran of the Fire Company and shall have served as Deputy or Assistant Chief of the Fire Company. *The candidate shall be certified as Fire Officer I in accordance with NFPA Standard 1021.*

Candidate for Deputy Chief shall be a three (3) year veteran of the Fire Company and shall have served one (1) year as a Fire Line Officer in the Fire Company. *The candidate shall be certified as Fire Officer I in accordance with NFPA Standard 1021.*

Candidate for Assistant Chief shall be a three (3) year veteran of the Fire Company and shall have served one (1) year as a Fire Line Officer in the Fire Company. *The candidate shall be certified as Fire Officer I in accordance with NFPA Standard 1021.*

Candidate for Captain shall be a two (2) year veteran of the Fire Company and have a minimum of three years actively involved in the fire service. *The candidate shall be certified as Fire Fighter II in accordance with NFPA Standard 1001.*

Candidate for Lieutenant shall have served a minimum of three (3) years actively involved in the fire service. *The candidate shall be certified as Fire Fighter II in accordance with NFPA Standard 1001.*

Candidates for Engineers shall have served a minimum of three (3) years actively involved in the fire service. The candidate shall be certified as Fire Fighter I in accordance with NFPA Standard 1001.