

**AN OFFICER TRAINING PROGRAM IN
THE NEW BRITAIN FIRE DEPARTMENT**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of the
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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

ABSTRACT

The all-hazard, all-risk organization the local fire service has evolved into has created a necessity for multi-faceted personnel including competent fire officers. Developing fire officers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to effectively perform their jobs requires commensurate training and education. The problem was the New Britain Fire Department provided no training for new or incumbent officers. The purpose of this project was to provide guidance to the New Britain Fire Department in establishing an officer training program.

Descriptive research was used to answer the following questions:

1. What is the need for an officer training program in the New Britain Fire Department?
2. What do other fire departments do concerning an officer training program?
3. What resources are available to the New Britain Fire Department for developing an officer training program?

Research was done at the National Fire Academy's Learning Research Center. Books, periodicals, other Executive Fire Officer Program Applied Research Projects and government reports were researched. Research was also done on the Internet.

A survey of Connecticut fire departments was conducted with a 72 % participation rate. Results of the survey showed 11 % of fire departments have a formal officer development program. Further, 44 % of departments provide some form of "duty commensurate" training for newly promoted officers.

The project recommended several actions to begin development and implementation of an officer training program in the New Britain Fire Department.

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INTRODUCTION

The New Britain Fire Department (NBFD) does not provide any level of officer training to new or incumbent officers. Newly hired fire fighters are sent to the Connecticut Fire Academy for a 10-week recruit school to learn the fundamentals of their new jobs. However, newly promoted company officers and shift commanders are simply promoted one day and assigned to a company or shift the next day. They are expected to perform proficiently in their new roles without any training or orientation in their new responsibilities. This is contradictory to OSHA regulations and national consensus standards, which refer to job function training as being commensurate with duties. Common sense and practicality indicates that when personnel are placed in new roles, especially with positions that lead others into danger, that they receive training and education to obtain the knowledge, skills and abilities required of their new position.

This problem is an urgent safety issue. There is a legal requirement and organizational need to provide the relevant knowledge and skills to incumbent and new officers of the department. Thus, the purpose of this project is to provide guidance to the New Britain Fire Department in establishing an officer training program.

Descriptive methodologies were conducted to answer the following questions.

1. What is the need for an officer training program in the New Britain Fire Department?
2. What do other fire departments do concerning an officer training program?
3. What resources are available to the New Britain Fire Department for developing an officer training program?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

New Britain, Connecticut is a diverse urban community of approximately 75,000 people located within 13.5 square miles. As with many other northeastern cities, New Britain has lost many of its major manufacturing companies and endured the subsequent loss of population, jobs and revenue from a declining tax base.

The New Britain Fire Department (NBFD) has 140 personnel staffing 9 fire companies and associated staff functions. The NBFD provides protective services through the provision of public life safety education and code enforcement, fire suppression, first responder medical services, operational level hazardous material response, vehicle extrication and some heavy rescue operations.

Department line staff are deployed from six fire stations with six engines companies, two ladder companies, and one rescue company working four shifts. All companies except the rescue company are staffed with four personnel. The rescue is staffed with three personnel. Each company shift is lead by one of three Lieutenants or the Company Captain. A Deputy Chief is the shift commander on each platoon.

The New Britain Fire Department has had a training division for over 50 years. As in many fire departments, the division originally “drilled” firefighters in the fundamentals of their jobs. A review of training division documents from the 1960’s and 1970’s shows no indication of any training for company officers in pertinent subjects such as strategy and tactics, instructional techniques or supervision.

Throughout the 1980's the basic firefighter training program lost its focus and less training occurred. Some of the decline may be attributed to organizational problems such as the closing of a fire company in 1976 and the resulting firefighter layoffs.

Another reason for the decline in training can be traced to the late 1970's and lingering into the 1980's. During this time, the fire department suffered a huge organizational upheaval as the Connecticut State Police and Chief State's Attorney broke up a municipal job selling and buying conspiracy in the City of New Britain. The Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief and many other fire department officers were arrested and some jailed and/or fired due to their involvement. Other officials including many from the police department and civil service commission were also arrested. The fire department went on organizational autopilot but continued to provide basic services to the public under much internal stress. Unfortunately, firefighter training became an afterthought in the organization as a casualty of the citywide scandal. During these years, any attempt at implementing officer training was also sidetracked due to the organizational crisis.

Although a change in training division supervisory staff occurred in the early 1990's, little changed and no standardized training program to develop competent fire officers was ever attempted to be implemented. The only subject relevant to officer training at this time was the Incident Command System (ICS) which was given to all department members. During the 1990's, many new company officers embraced their roles seriously and began developing themselves without department assistance. Some enrolled on personal time in courses at the Connecticut Fire Academy to better prepare themselves to perform their duties. In the mid-1990's, the fire department began

enrolling newly hired firefighters in the 10-week Recruit Firefighter program at the Connecticut Fire Academy. However, even though the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA) has offered fire officer training and certification since the mid-1980's, no new or incumbent line officer of the Nbfd has ever been sent by the department to the CFA for training and certification as a fire officer.

The New Britain Fire Department (2005) states in its Organizational Statement that, "Training shall take place on a regular basis for all personnel. Every member is strongly encouraged to attend additional training and educational programs offered by outside agencies and institutions. Programs typically attended by department members include those sponsored by the Connecticut and National Fire Academies" (p.15). However, only staff positions have been sent to such institutions for training. No line officers have had the opportunity to attend mostly due to budgetary reasons of filling positions while attending classes. Recently, all department members have received National Incident Management System (NIMS) training. There have also been some training courses such as Incident Safety Officer offered on a voluntary basis.

The New Britain Fire Department's continued lack of a department-wide officer training program must be addressed. The continued absence of an officer level training program for all officers is a significant organizational, operational and safety issue.

This project relates to the Executive Leadership course at the National Fire Academy. The course discusses leadership, decision-making skills, influencing, power, persuasion, networking, and succession planning. This project concerning officer training and development was undertaken as an issue relevant to succession planning. Development of personnel, especially company and command officers, is important to all

employees, the organization, its mission and ultimately the citizens of New Britain. A relevant and well-implemented officer training and development program will provide fire officers the knowledge, skills and abilities to more safely and effectively perform their duties. A modern training program must go beyond basic skills training of firefighters. If the department is to go to the next level of service delivery, operational readiness, and safety for all personnel, then its officers must be brought to the next level of development through appropriate training and education.

A relevant and properly developed officer training program will support the achievement of the following five-year Operations Objectives by the United States Fire Administration. They are as follows:

- Reduce the loss of life from fire by 15 percent by:
 - Reducing the loss of life from fire in the age group 14 years and below
 - Reducing the loss of life from fire in the age group 65 years and above
 - Reducing the loss of life from fire of firefighters
- To promote a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service.

Well-trained and educated fire officers will have increased capacity to educate the public in fire prevention and life saving skills. They will have improved knowledge and skills to effectively manage and safely lead their respective companies. Officers will also have a greater ability to more safely and effectively train firefighters under their command. Finally, educated personnel will also have gained the increased ability to participate in the development of the comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted regarding a fire officer training program. The review was conducted in the context that an officer training program is only part of an officer development program. Further, it is acknowledged that an officer development program is part of a more comprehensive organizational staff development program.

Many terms swirl around the issue of fire officer training and development. Some include training, education, professional development, staff / personnel development, career planning, succession planning and human resource management. Some of the terms connote various perspectives of the organization and the employee. Staff development and human resource management infer actions taken by organization to improve personnel for the betterment of the organization. Career planning implies actions taken by the employees to plan their professional career, which may include several different organizations over the course of their lifetimes.

Chief Dennis Compton (2000) writes of a broadened view of the confluence of these two perspectives in stating, “The management of a person’s career is a difficult challenge and responsibility for the organization and the individual” (p. 25). He acknowledges the convergence of the shared expectations and goals of the employee and organization. Compton (2000) speaks of most fire departments having comprehensive vehicle maintenance programs and yet not having a similar program for the organization’s most valuable asset (p.25). “We are overdue in providing similar guidance for managing out human resources” (Compton, 2000, p.25). Chief Compton’s view of the issue is comprehensive in that it merges the interests of both the department and the

employee. For discussion, he breaks down a career into three distinct yet overlapping periods. They are:

1. Selection and Entry
2. The Career Journey
3. Transition to Retirement (Compton, 2000, p.26)

This project relates to only one period, the career journey. He describes the aspects of the career journey as:

- Humane People Management
- Self-discipline & Imposed Discipline
- Positive Employee Relations
- Health, Safety, and Wellness
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Training and Development (Compton, 2000, p.27)

While all listed aspects are inter-related, this project relates to the issue of training and development and specifically to line officer training.

The comprehensiveness of what Compton (2000) advocates is evident in the chapter title, “Program-Based Career Management...An Organizational and Individual Guide” (p.25). His philosophy advocates shared benefits to the organization and the employee. He speaks to employee development as foundational to organizational effectiveness and employee performance.

Training must address today’s needs and prepare employees for tomorrow.

Educational growth should also be encouraged. Mentoring helps employees prepare for supervisory and management level positions. It is the responsibility of

today's leaders to prepare tomorrow's leaders, and thus ensure the long-term effectiveness and success of the organization. It is not only our job to manage the organization today, but also to develop people in the organization to manage and lead tomorrow. This is one of the most important investments we can make in our organization's future (Compton, 2000, p.36).

It is interesting to note Compton's reference to training and development of people as an investment. Training budgets are frequently the first line item to be trimmed as they are seen as a cost rather than an investment. This may be a classic case of being penny wise and pound foolish since, "While the costs of training may be high, the cost of ignorance is even higher" (Edcon, 1995, p.28).

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International has been granting accreditation to fire departments and other emergency service organizations for 15 years. It accredits an organization after successful completion of an in-depth self-assessment and an on-site evaluation. The Fire and Emergency Self-Assessment Manual (FESSAM) 6th edition (2000) in the section on Human Resources asks several questions relevant to career planning, officer training and education issues. The following are the noted questions.

- Is there a career development program in place within the organization? (p.116)
- Are educational and technical experience qualifications established for all supervisory and staff jobs? (p.116)
- Is credit toward promotion given for completion of college-level work? (p.117)
- Are indoctrination or training sessions conducted to familiarize new officers with their duties? (p.117)

- Do employees and members have an understanding of their potential advancement and specialization potential, and can they identify what assistance is available from the agency to achieve these goals? (p.118)
- Are indoctrination programs given to personnel when they are promoted? (p.126)
- Does the department have an in-service officer training program? (p.127)

These questions are answered by the fire department seeking accreditation. The process involves self-examination of the organization. By the presence of the questions the department is prompted to analyze the questions as to their local implication. The fact that questions pertaining to career development, educational background, officer indoctrination sessions, promotional expectations, and the existence of an officer training program indicates the importance of these issues and programs to the accreditation process and ultimately to the operation of a modern emergency service organization. These questions prompt a participating department to discuss the status and importance of training and development in its organization.

In the Chief Fire Officer's Desk Reference, Purchase (2000) states, "It is only in recent decades that the fire service has given much thought to the development of its supervisors and managers" (p 168). He speaks to training going beyond basic fire fighting and elaborates further. "Fire fighters with proven operational skills need additional instruction to take on the supervisory role that promotion brings. A new lieutenant, for example needs to learn how counseling, delegation, discipline, and mentoring can work toward building an effective team" (Purchase, 2000, p 168). He confirms the scope and complexity of the issue. "Maintaining the competency of fire

department personnel in the 21st century can challenge departments of all types and sizes. It's a challenge that lasts throughout each member's career" (Purchase, 2000, p.167).

Cochran (2006) notes,

Training programs for fire departments should be structured to meet the needs of all personnel, from the entry-level recruits to the most senior chief officers. Fire service training is a continuous process from the date of hire to the date of retirement (p.11).

Cochran refers to a relatively new tool for dealing with the subject. "To professionally develop fire personnel, the training function must be dynamic so that it meets the need for both training and education based on the guidelines of the IAFC Professional Development Handbook" (Cochran, 2006, p. 12).

In 2003, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) published the first edition of its Officer Development Handbook (ODH). Its publication is indicative of the recent ascent of officer development to the forefront of fire service issues. The document is intended to provide "a clear roadmap for success as a fire service officer" by providing a "professional development tool that will serve both incumbent and aspiring officers" (IAFC, 2003, Forward). The guiding principle in the ODH states, "Professional development is the planned, progressive life-long process of education, training, self-development and experience" (IAFC, 2003, p. 1). The handbook acknowledges that it is a work in progress and that out of its four elements of professional development: training, education, experience and self-development, it only addresses the first two. Speaking to aspiring officers the IAFC (2003) offers "information that will enable you to plan a systematic program of development for your professional service career" (p. 1). A key

statement in the Handbook can be heard as a collective desire from fire chiefs to aspiring officers. “We want our officers to have the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in supervisory, management, administrative and executive positions” (IAFC, 2003, p. 7).

A pyramid shaped graphic in the Handbook illustrates the recommended professional certification levels to be attained. They are in order of progression as follows:

- Firefighter I
- Firefighter II
- Special Certifications
- Fire Officer I
- Fire Officer II
- Fire Officer III
- Fire Officer IV

Concurrently, higher education degrees are also listed in progression as follows:

- Associates
- Bachelors
- Masters

The career development pyramid “reflects the fact that emergency response training activities are more prevalent during the initial career years, while organizational skills grow from a shift to an education emphasis” (IAFC, 2003, p.5).

The aforementioned recommended certifications are based on national consensus standards promulgated by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The National Fire Protection Association publishes the majority of national consensus standards used today in the fire service (Goodson & Sneed, 1998, p.42). Consensus standards are developed through a consensus making process. In the case of NFPA standards, they are revised every 3-5 years (Brodoff & Foley, 2002, p.401). The American National Standards Association (ANSI) accredits NFPA's consensus standards making process (Brodoff & Foley, 2002, p.400).

NFPA standards are not laws and do not have the force of law. Consensus standards are intended to be adopted by the authority having jurisdiction (NFPA 1500, 2002, p.5). By adopting a standard, a municipality would be self imposing the requirements of that standard upon itself (Brodoff & Foley, 2002, p.389). It would appear to follow that an organization could avoid the requirements of a particular consensus standard simply by not adopting the standard. However, many consensus standards may be used to determine the standard of care for the fire service (Goodson & Sneed, 1998, p.41). Further, NFPA standards have been referenced in court cases even when not adopted by the authority having jurisdiction (Brodoff & Foley, 2002, p.389).

NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications identifies "the performance requirements necessary to perform the duties of a fire officer and specifically identifies four levels of progression" (NFPA 1021, 2003, p.5). Use of the NFPA 1021 allows fire departments and training agencies to develop training curriculums based on a national standard and tailored to local needs.

The primary benefit of establishing national standards is to provide both public and private sectors with a framework of the job requirements for the fire service.

Other benefits include enhancement of the profession, individual growth and development, and standardization of practices (NFPA 1021, 2003, p. 14).

NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program (2002) is a comprehensive standard involving risk management in the fire service. Its requirements pertinent to officer training underscore the importance of officer level training to personnel safety. They are as follows:

- Section 5.2.5 All fire officers shall meet the requirements of NFPA 1021, Standard on Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (p.13).
- Section 5.2.9 The fire department shall adopt or develop training and education curriculums that meet the minimum requirements outlined in professional qualifications standards covering a member's assigned function (p.13).
- Section 5.3.5 The fire department shall provide training and education events as required to support minimum qualifications and certifications expected of its members (p13).

NFPA 1500's requirement for officer training and certification based on a competency-based standard demonstrates the criticality of well trained officers to the safety and health of firefighters.

NFPA 1710 Standard for the Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments (2001), states in Section 6.3, Training Systems, "The fire department shall have a training program and policy that ensures that personnel are trained and competency is maintained to execute all responsibilities consistent with the department's organization and deployment as addressed in Chapters 4 and 5" (p. 12). This

encompassing standard's requirement for a training program that mandates training and competency for all responsibilities, includes officer training.

The Federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) was originally created for the private sector and as such local fire department personnel were not under the protection of OSHA regulations. However, OSHA allowed and encouraged state governments to create what is called OSHA State plans to cover public employees. These programs do cover local governments including municipal fire departments. Connecticut is an OSHA state and therefore covers the New Britain Fire Department.

OSHA 1910 Subpart L regulation (1980) concerning fire protection requires fire departments to provide training and education commensurate with those duties and functions fire department members are expected to perform (1910.156 (c)(1)). It also discusses the necessity for fire departments to have "competent leadership and supervision" (OSHA Subpart L, Appendix A, para 7). It also requires fire department supervisors, which include company officers and shift commanders, to be provided with training and education that is more comprehensive than that provided to the personnel they supervise (OSHA, 1910.156 (c)(1)).

Fire department officers should demonstrate skills in strategy and tactics, fire suppression and prevention techniques, leadership principles, pre-fire planning, and safety practices (OSHA Subpart L, Appendix A, para 7).

"OSHA has also cited NFPA standards in its enforcement procedures" (Brohoff & Foley, 2002. p.391). OSHA regulations carry the force of law and fines can be levied against fire departments violating relevant standards.

The preceding research has described what is desired, legally mandated and what the fire service appears to be moving toward. However, it is not what exists today in many fire departments. Cook (2001) observes the widespread problem,

In most cases, today's fire and rescue officers are left to learn on their own. Most have no backgrounds in management; by the time they get halfway decent at their jobs, their term of office ends, they are transferred, they retire, or they simply move on. Then their position is given to some other untrained soul (p. 71).

In this scenario, the problem is self-perpetuating, as there is no opportunity or mechanism in the system to break the cycle. The status quo is maintained and nothing changes.

Several authors speak to the issue of transition between firefighter and officer. Sullivan (2000) simply states, "We can no longer accept the fact that one day an individual is wearing a blue shirt and the next day he or she is wearing a white shirt (p.5). Advice to future officers in the *Fire Department Company Officer* book states,

The transition from firefighter to company officer is perhaps the most important and potentially the most difficult change in your entire fire service career. This transition is important to the fire department because the company officer is the vital connecting link between the fire company and the rest of the organization (Goodson & Sneed, 1998, p.7).

Not only is the transition important to the individual but also to the organization as Compton (2000) has spoken of earlier (p.25).

Shouldis (2005) acknowledges the necessity for training in this transition in stating, "Making the right training choice at the right time in an individual's development

can make the difference when it comes to achieving a comfortable transition from blue shirt to white shirt, follower to leader” (p.72). Shouldis (2005) continues in saying,

Having a scheduled supervisor training program can no longer be viewed as a luxury or mere formality. It is necessary to enhance operational readiness and improve personnel safety. By combining scene control and administrative and managerial modules, individuals can envision the duties of a front-line fire officer in the most productive manner (p.72).

“Organizational guidance, mentoring, and technical training will help overcome obstacles and barriers. The concept of career development will assist an individual to gain the proficiency needed to “climb the ladder” of responsibility” (Shouldis, 2005, p.72). This illustrates the necessity for an officer training not to be stand alone but rather as an integral part of an officer development program.

Company officer leadership, supervision and overall job performance impacts the rank and file of the fire department every day and in all aspects of the department’s work. Their technical competence, people skills, attitude and commitment have a direct effect on performance outcomes, morale and the work environment inside and outside the fire stations (Compton, 2006, p.50).

The fire service has become a multi-faceted preparedness and response agency. It manages fire prevention and suppression, fire/EMS prevention and education, hazardous materials, code enforcement and technical rescue situations. Consequently, the training provided to fire officer must keep pace with the expanding services and expectations.

“If the leaders of the organization have attained an educational level that allows them to supervise and manage the organization effectively, the department’s ability to achieve its complex mission is enhanced” (Strickland, 2003, p.304).

A Comprehensive Analysis and Planning Document was prepared for the City of New Britain and the New Britain Fire Department by Edcon Associates, Inc. It states, “In New Britain, Firefighters promoted to Lieutenant, Lieutenants promoted to Captains, and Captains promoted to Chief Officer are not given any additional training” (Edcon, 1995, p. 179).

The majority of this report’s findings are still true today. It documents what has existed in the New Britain Fire Department for many years. There is no officer training provided by the department to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of any company officer or shift commander.

In the Edcon Document, there are 16 training specific recommendations and three relate to the issue of officer training. They are listed below.

Training Recommendation # 153

“All of the department’s instructors should receive certification to the level of at least Instructor I. Certification for Instructor II, as well as any special certifications should be obtained by those instructors so engaged. The department should consider certification to Instructor Level I for all officers, as part of their supervisory duties” (Edcon, 1995, p. 182).

Training Recommendation # 155:

“Develop curriculum and conduct training for all officers: Lieutenant, Captain, and Deputy Chief. This Curriculum should align with the standards of the National Fire Protection Association, and include additions developed from the department’s mission statements and goals. Officers should receive training in methods of instruction, fireground strategy and tactics, engine and ladder company operations, safety, supervision, personnel administration, management techniques, report writing, and decision making” (Edcon, 1995 p. 182).

Training Recommendation # 158

“The department should encourage firefighters and fire officers to attend courses and seminars available in local colleges, the Connecticut Fire Academy, the National Fire Academy, and other training organizations. These are tremendous resources, and the benefits which would accrue to the department are immeasurable” (Edcon, 1995, p.183).

The Houston (TX) Fire Department conducts a 40-hour internal fire officer school for candidates on officer promotional lists. It also provides a 16-hour continuing education program for all officers. The program utilizes nationally recognized instructors from the public and private sectors that teach officers topics involving the latest information on leadership and management (Layman, 2005, p. 15).

The Alexandria (VA) Fire Department conducts an internal fire officer development program each fall. A quarter of all incumbent officers and all new officers that have been promoted since the previous session are required to participate. Instructors come from within and outside the department (Layman, 2005, p.19).

The Philadelphia Fire Department has had a structured process for officer training and development for many years. It consists of pre-promotional and post-promotional phases. The pre-promotional phase involves participation in a college-level fire science program with reward points given during the promotional process. The fire department pays for the tuition. The post-promotional phase is a two-week (80 hour) curriculum all new officers are required to attend. The course is mostly taught by Philadelphia Fire Department uniformed and civilian staff (Shouldis, 2005, p.69).

The Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA) Training Calendar (2006) offers many officer level training programs for local fire departments including Fire Service Instructor I & II, Fire Officer I, II, III & IV, Incident Safety Officer, Health & Safety Officer, Public Information Officer, Strategy & Tactics and NIMS / ICS (p. 17-19). The CFA offers training classes and certification through open enrollment programs at its facility to fire service members. A fire department may be sent personnel there or members may attend by their own volition. The CFA also offers in-service contract training to local fire departments of all fire officer level courses. In contract training, CFA instructors conduct training classes at the local fire department, many times while members are on duty.

The Institute for Technology and Business Development in downtown New Britain is affiliated with Central Connecticut State University. It offers a broad range of management, leadership and administrative training to businesses, government entities and non-profit groups (CCSU/ITBD, Training Programs). The programs of the ITBD are offered at its modern classroom and conference facilities. Organizations may also contract with ITBD to conduct the program on-site at the customer's location.

PROCEDURES

This project was conceived while taking the Executive Leadership course as part of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This project is intended to provide guidance to the New Britain (CT) Fire Department in establishing an officer training program.

Descriptive research methodologies were used to gather research for this project. Initial research was conducted at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy campus. Literature searches were done on the LRC computerized card catalog. Further research was done from the author's home via the Internet on the LRC system. Search of the Internet was also done. Key words and phrases searched include officer training, officer development, staff development, career planning and succession planning. Books, periodicals, technical reports, government reports and Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Projects were searched for. The author's personal library of books and trade journals was also used in the research process.

Initial research was broader and directed at officer development programs generally and then more specifically to officer training programs. The Officer Development Handbook of the International Association of Fire Chiefs was examined, as it stands alone in the topic of officer development.

A survey concerning the existence of officer training and development programs by Connecticut fire departments was conducted via U.S mail. The project survey form is located in Appendix A, the survey results in Appendix B and the participating fire departments in Appendix C.

The survey was conducted of 50 Connecticut career and combination fire departments. Of the 50 sent out, 36 were returned for a 72 % return rate. This return rate appears to be a satisfactory response rate and able to provide information on the issues discussed in the survey. The 50 surveys sent out represent all Connecticut career and combination departments with some exceptions. Some members of the Career Fire Chiefs Association list are not municipal fire departments and were not surveyed.

The project survey asked if the fire department had a formal officer development program. It then asked if the department requires any professional certifications / training / education to become eligible for any level of promotion. Further, it asked if the department provided duty commensurate officer training or certifications for newly promoted officers. Lastly, it asked whether any noted officer training is provided internally or externally

An examination and compilation was performed of the professional certifications obtained by New Britain Fire Department officers at the ranks of Lieutenant, Captain and Deputy Chiefs. The results were derived from information provided by the Connecticut Fire Academy, Certification Division. The results are located in Appendix D.

A telephone interview was conducted with Mr. Jeff Morrissette, State Fire Administrator for the Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Connecticut Fire Academy. Questions were relevant to the project topic and survey. His organization operates the training and certification system for Connecticut's firefighters and fire officers. Mr. Morrissette is a long-time volunteer firefighter and a veteran public servant in his State Fire Administrator role and thus has a perspective from both sides of fire training issues.

Limitations of the research procedures include the following.

- A formal officer development program encompasses the expectations, opportunities possible career paths available to all staff as they enter and proceed through the operational line rank system. It is understood that a comprehensive personnel development program encompassing all department positions should also be developed. This includes all line staff and support staff positions such as fire marshals, research and planning, mechanics and training division staff. However, this project only relates to an officer training program and does not discuss an officer development program or department-wide personnel development program.
- This project only relates to an officer training program for new and incumbent Lieutenants, Captains and Deputy Chiefs.
- While experience is vital to the development of an effective fire officer, its discussion is beyond the scope of this project.
- Career and combination departments were surveyed versus including volunteer departments in Connecticut. As there are several dozen career and combination departments in the state, there are over 300 volunteer departments and in many instances there are several per town. This was a survey cost consideration.
- Connecticut fire departments were surveyed versus conducting a national survey. This was done as a matter of time, cost and simplicity.

Definitions:

ANSI Acronym for American National Standards Institute

Certification A measure of competence vouched for by an entity that is licensed or accredited to issue the certification.

Consensus Standard A guideline in the form of a standard which is considered voluntary until adopted by the authority having jurisdiction. Consensus standards may become regarded as the standard of care for the related industry.

Education The process of delivering essentially academic knowledge. Adult education is generally delivered in traditional and nontraditional settings by institutions of higher learning and is part of a program of study that leads to a degree or certification granted by an accredited degree-granting institution.

NFPA Acronym for National Fire Protection Association

OSHA Acronym for Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Training The process of delivering essentially vocational skills and knowledge. Training is delivered through either traditional or nontraditional modalities by a broad spectrum of institutions and generally results in the achievement of a certain training objective, which may or may not be part of a program of study leading to a certificate.

RESULTS

The following questions were answered following project research.

Question 1. What is the need for an officer training program in the New Britain Fire Department ?

There is a critical need for an officer training program the New Britain Fire Department. The macro fire service nationally has demonstrated that fire departments need to train all personnel in all job functions to a level commensurate with their respective duties. This includes company officers and shift commanders. In New Britain this translates to Lieutenants, Captains and Deputy Chiefs. This has been done through the development of national consensus standards. The multiple NFPA standards refer to the need for training from different perspectives depending on the particular standard. NFPA 1710 is concerned with the effectiveness of officers to effectively manage and lead companies and shifts. NFPA 1500 is concerned with officer training from a safety perspective.

OSHA 1910.156 clearly requires that fire officers receive a higher level of training than the firefighters under their command. This has been an OSHA regulation for many years yet the New Britain Fire Department continues to provide no training to officers that is more comprehensive than that provided to firefighters they supervise.

A review and compilation of fire service certification records of New Britain Fire Department officers was done from information provided by the Connecticut Fire Academy. A complete information chart is located in Appendix D.

The information shows that only 4 % of lieutenants and 20 % of captains are certified as a Fire Officer I. It also shows 11 % of Lieutenants and no Captains or Deputy chiefs at the Fire Officer II level. It also shows only 36% of lieutenants and 20 % of captains as having the highest certification of Firefighter II (FFII). The FFII issue is a problem in two respects. First, it illustrates that only a third of the lieutenants and a quarter of the captains have demonstrated a competency level that the firefighters they lead should have. Second, Firefighter II is prerequisite for taking Fire Officer I (FOI) so the majority of company officers in New Britain are not even eligible to enroll in a FOI course.

This information regarding professional certifications most profoundly demonstrates the real need for an officer training program in the New Britain Fire Department. The low percentages of certifications indicate a lack of related training. Personnel may be performing to the best of their abilities, as officers but have not demonstrated competency according to national standards the fire service itself has developed.

Any employee in any job function should receive appropriate training for the job they are performing. In the fire service, NFPA standards recommend it, OSHA mandates it and experience demonstrates it. The Nbfd enrolls its new firefighters in the Connecticut Fire Academy Recruit School to allow them to safely learn the fundamentals of firefighting. However, after a few years those same firefighters, now with some experience, can be promoted to lead other firefighters without any commensurate training as a company officer. Such a situation does not create effective companies and creates potentially unsafe situations for the officer, firefighters and the public they are protecting.

Question 2. What do other fire department do relative to officer training and education?

The survey conducted as part of this Applied Research Project illustrated the following results for 72 % of Connecticut's career and combination fire departments. The survey results are described below.

1. Fire department has an officer development training program:

Yes 11 % No 89 %

Of the negatives, 34 % are planning a program.

- The Milford Fire Department commented, "Lieutenants are sent to Fire Officer I and Fire Service Instructor I, Captains are sent to Fire Officer II and Battalion Chiefs are sent to Fire Officer III or Command School. They are sent to the Connecticut Fire Academy for the Fire Officer programs."
- The Danbury Fire Department commented, "Succession / officer classes planned."
- The Norwalk Fire Department commented, "We are developing a program but are at the very beginning of the process."
- The Meriden Fire Department commented, "There is a lack of staff and funding to carry out a program."
- The South Fire District commented, "The department is not large enough to have one."
- The Bradley International Airport Fire Department commented, "Only 10 officers total including Chief and Deputy. It would not be cost effective. Officers are encouraged to obtain certifications from Connecticut Fire Academy training calendar. We may offer an instructor course in the fall."

2. Fire department requires professional certifications / training / education to become eligible for promotion:

Yes 50 % No 50 %

- The Danbury Fire Department commented, “Professional certifications are required prior to pay-step increases, i.e. Firefighter I, Firefighter II, and Pump Operator.”
- The Greenwich Fire Department commented, “Lieutenant-15 college credits; Training Captain-Associate’s Degree; Deputy Chief-Bachelor’s Degree, Fire Officer I and Fire Service Instructor I.”
- The Middletown Fire Department commented, “A minimum of Fire Service Instructor I for the Training Officer and Shift Captains, Shift Commander must be minimum of Fire Officer I. No prerequisites for other ranks.”
- The Stratford Fire Department commented, “Pump Operator for top-step firefighter, Fire Service Instructor I for Lieutenants, Fire Service Instructor II and Safety Officer for Captain, and Fire Officer I for Assistant Chief.”
- The Poquonnock Bridge Fire Department, “Captains must be Fire Officer I and Fire Service Instructor I within 12 months of appointment - most candidates already have the certification.”
- The Ridgefield Fire Department commented, “Each level of rank has educational and training requirements.”
- The University of Connecticut Health Center commented, “Lieutenant candidates are need Fire Officer I and Captains need Fire Officer II.”

3. Fire department provides “duty commensurate” officer training / certification for newly promoted officers:

Yes 44 % No 56 %

Of the affirmatives, 88 % use NFPA 1021, Standard for Officer Professional Qualifications as the standard for training.)

- The Branford Fire Department commented, “We will be doing 3 days of training for our new Captains.”
- The Willimantic Fire Department, “When promoted, need to complete Fire Officer I certification.”
- The Hartford Fire Department commented, “Prior to being promoted candidates are taken off line and sent to the (Hartford) Training Academy for a week.”
- The Poquonnuck Bridge Fire Department commented, “We try to send them to leadership type training as available.”
- The Watertown Fire Department commented, “Must complete one officer level class every year to remain an officer.”

Note: The only standards mentioned by all departments surveyed were the NFPA standards. The two exceptions were the U.S. Submarine Base and Bradley International Airport Fire Departments. Both use NFPA standards but also use other standards specific to their agency’s expanded scope beyond that of a municipal fire department.

4. Fire department organizationally provides relevant officer training:

Internally 56 % Externally 83 % Both 44 %

- The Middletown Fire Department commented, “Annually, we provide mandatory officer training on various subjects.”
- The Naugatuck Fire Department commented, “Personnel are sent to the Connecticut Fire Academy and regional fire schools, also sent internally to employee assistance program and diversity/harassment training.”
- The North Haven Fire Department commented, “Personnel are sent to external and internal training for officers already in rank.”
- The Norwalk Fire Department commented, “We are using both internal and external resources with the majority of the training provided by Connecticut Fire Academy.”
- The Poquonnock Bridge Fire Department commented, “Training provided through the Connecticut Fire Academy, National Fire Academy and other seminar based training. Each officer is budgeted a minimum of 30 hours of overtime for attending classes, more upon request to attend advanced programs.”
- The Stratford Fire Department commented, “We bring in officer level training as the budget allows.

This research shows that although only 11 % of departments have a formal program, 34 % are planning to develop one. While only 44 % of departments provide “duty commensurate” officer training, comments indicate a desire to move towards increased training for officers. Noteworthy is that 88 % of departments are using NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications as a curriculum guide for its officer training.

Question 3. What resources are available to the New Britain Fire Department for developing officer level training and education?

The resources available for developing and implementing an officer training program can be categorized as internal and external generally based on who does the training. A department may choose to develop an internal program tailored to its needs whereas another department may contract with a regional or state training agency to provide the training. Depending on the situation, internal program development may be seen as more cost effective since it may use staff already in place. Externally provided training program may not require as much staff time but comes with the cost of contracting with the selected training agency.

New Britain Fire Department training officer is a certified fire instructor. The other staff person in the division is not certified as an instructor. There are ten other fire officers in the department that are certified instructors. This is a valuable resource the department might use in developing an internal program. It is not plausible for a training officer to solely teach a department officer training program.

For officer level training regarding issues such as sexual harassment and diversity training, the City of New Britain's personnel department offers instruction to all municipal departments upon request.

Central Connecticut State University, located in New Britain, has its Institute for Technology and Business Development in the city's downtown that offers a multitude of outreach training to the business, government and non-profit communities. It offers many management and leadership training workshops appropriate for the fire service. This is another quality resource which is local, convenient, relevant and cost-effective.

Another external resource is the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA). It routinely contracts with fire departments in offering a full range of training programs in-house, frequently while career members are on duty. This includes all officer level courses such as Fire Officer I and II, Fire Service Instructor I and II as well as Incident Safety Officer. In the survey for this project, 83% of departments use an outside agency for its officer training. In fact, the Connecticut Fire Academy was the only training organization providing this service mentioned in the survey comments.

The CFA is an excellent resource available to the New Britain Fire Department for officer training. It offers a training program with the certification as an integral component. The department does not have to develop the program or supply instructors. It is a proven and standardized resource and can be tailored to the department.

A phone interview of approximately 20 minutes was conducted with Mr. Jeff Morrisette, State Fire Administrator for the Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA). Mr. Morrisette stated the Connecticut Fire Academy offers 22 different levels of fire service certification. NFPA standards are used in all levels of CFA curriculum development. He noted most Connecticut career fire departments send new firefighters to the Academy's Firefighter Recruit School but only a minority of departments send new or incumbent officer's to its Fire Officer I or II classes. He did say that fire chiefs are increasingly providing in-service CFA fire officer training to department officers. He could not give specific numbers or percentages without further research. He stated it took many years for departments to embrace sending new firefighters to the CFA for recruit training. He

similarly sees departments participating in officer training trending upward with time. He concluded by saying some of the problem is budgetary and thus takes time to resolve.

He stated that the CFA training programs are a great resource to the Connecticut fire service. By enrolling a fire department member in a CFA program or contracting an in-service course at the fire department, the organization can be confident that it will be taught according to NFPA standards by experienced instructors with a nationally accredited certification process. While it has a moderate cost, it has established quality and a resultant good value.

DISCUSSION

“We can no longer accept the fact that one day an individual is wearing a blue shirt and the next day he or she is wearing a white shirt (Sullivan, 2000, p.5). This statement cuts to the heart of the discussion about fire officer training. We should not tolerate it. The fire service has collectively tolerated it. We have not been teaching our fire officers the fundamentals of their positions. We typically send our new firefighters to a fire academy for basic training and fire chiefs are required to have college degrees but we have let the company officers and district / shift commanders slip through the cracks of our training system. The fact that this situation even exists demonstrates that our system really is not a system. The New Britain Fire Department is no exception, as it does not provide any officer training to its line Lieutenants, Captains and Deputy Chiefs. As illustrated in this project’s Literature Review, there are two different worlds in the realm of fire officer training. The first is the world of what should be, what is recommended, the industry standard of care and even legally mandated by law. In this world we have NFPA standards which have been developed by the fire service and have

been referenced as our standard of care. We have OSHA laws that, in half our states including Connecticut, are legally mandated regulations. We also have fire chiefs and other fire service leaders expounding on the merits of the necessity for officer training. All parties involved say officers must be trained commensurate with their job duties. Yet, “Many fire officials point to a lack of staff development training as a serious issue for their organization” (Forsman, 2003, p. 229). This brings us to the second world.

The second world is the real world where things are not always as they should be. In most fire departments, firefighters are still promoted one day and are, without any training, leading a company of firefighters the next day. In the survey for this project, only 44 % of departments offer some form of “duty commensurate” training for newly promoted officers. While 44 % is not the 100% it should be, comments by Mr. Morrissette and survey participants indicate officer training increasing over time.

I wholeheartedly agree with Compton (2000) in the view of training and development being responsibility both the employee and the organization (p.25). This is an enlightened view. In this project’s survey, 50% of the departments require some level of certification, training or education to be eligible for promotion. This is a convenient and effective method to solve some of the officer training issues. It reflects the shared responsibility of the employer and the employee. However, “duty commensurate training” is still clearly the employer’s responsibility (OSHA, 1980, 1910.156). Even a firefighter who is certified as a Fire Officer I before being promoted to Lieutenant still needs department indoctrination and position orientation training.

If training can be described as instruction for an employee's current job, then development may be described as preparation for an employee's future job (Compton, 2000, p.36). Training is for today and development is for tomorrow. Today is priority.

Research revealed to the author the need for not only officer training but also an officer training and development program. We need to train officers to perform their current duties but also develop them for future roles as well (Compton, 2000, p.36). To expand the training and development program, an organization-wide personnel development program should also be established. In this way, all positions in a fire department would have expectations, opportunities and possible career options delineated. However, training for those in current officer roles must be the priority.

Fire department leadership needs to consider officer training a priority. Cost was mentioned in the survey results as a reason for not providing officer training. However, if we consider it a priority the money will be allocated. The fire service is proficient at justifying new apparatus that costs upwards of a million dollars each. Perhaps we need to view officer training as important as new vehicles, which it is. Then perhaps the standard recommended, operationally needed and legally mandated officer training will occur.

This is a critical safety issue for the officers, firefighters and the public. As Shouldis (2005) writes of such training, "It is necessary to enhance operational effectiveness and improve personnel safety (p.72).

Company officers and shift commanders are the backbone of any fire department. "Whether they're called lieutenants, captains, or other titles, the role of company officers is of great value to the organization. They are very important people" Compton, 2006, p.50). As such, we should provide them with the very best training available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This project has demonstrated the need for an officer training program for the Lieutenants, Captains and Deputy Chiefs New Britain Fire Department.

The following actions are recommended to begin the process of developing an officer training program in the New Britain Fire Department. They focus on training that will give personnel the skills needed to perform their jobs effectively. Some preliminary actions must be accomplished first to allow eventual fire officer certification.

- Conduct an in-service Firefighter II training and certification program for all department members. This will bring all firefighters and officers up to the same minimum competency level. This program can be conducted with existing training staff, line personnel certified as Fire Service Instructors and assistance as needed from the Connecticut Fire Academy. This will then allow personnel to be enrolled in a future Fire Service Instructor I course.
- Contract with the Connecticut Fire Academy to conduct an in-service Fire Service Instructor I certification course for all current Lieutenants, Captains and Deputy Chiefs. This will allow personnel to be enrolled in a future Fire Officer I course.
- Contract with the Connecticut Fire Academy to conduct an in-service Fire Officer I course to all current Lieutenants, Captains and Deputy Chiefs.
- Develop an in-house orientation and indoctrination program for new officers.
- Examine the method to train and certify all Captains to the Fire Officer II level and Deputy Chiefs to the Fire Officer III level.
- Establish a process to begin development of a comprehensive staff development program including a formal officer development program.

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Appendix A

Survey of Connecticut Fire Departments Concerning Officer Development / Training / Education Programs in Fire Departments

Please take a few minutes and complete this survey and return it in the enclosed envelope. It is part of a research paper for the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program.

1. Fire Department _____

2. Career Dept. ____ Combination Dept. ____ Total Personnel ____

3. Does your department have a formal professional officer development program for members? **Yes No** _____

If Yes, please explain _____

If No, is one planned? **Yes No** _____

4. Does your department require any professional certifications / training / education to become eligible for any level of promotion? **Yes No**
If yes, please explain? _____

5. Does your department provide “duty commensurate” officer training / certification for newly promoted officers? **Yes No**

If Yes, is NFPA 1021, Standard for Officer Professional Qualifications used as the standard for training ? **Yes No** _____

If No, what other standards / curriculums are used? _____

6. Does the department provide the relevant officer training **internally** or **externally** by organizations like the Connecticut Fire Academy?

Additional Comments: _____

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Appendix C

Connecticut Fire Departments Participating In the Officer Training Program Survey

Career

- Bradley International Airport Fire Department
- Bridgeport Fire Department
- Bristol Fire Department
- Danbury Fire Department
- Hartford Fire Department
- Manchester Fire Department
- Mashantucket Pequot Fire Department
- Meriden Fire Department
- Middletown Fire Department
- Milford Fire / Rescue Department
- Naugatuck Fire Department
- Norwalk Fire Department
- Norwich Fire Department
- Stamford Fire / Rescue Department
- Stratford Fire Department
- United States Naval Submarine Base (Groton) Fire Department
- University of Connecticut Health Center (Farmington) Fire Department
- Willimantic Fire Department

Combination

- Allington (West Haven) Fire District
- Branford Fire Department
- Enfield Fire Department
- Glastonbury Fire Department
- Greenwich Fire Department
- Groton Fire Department
- Hamden Fire Department
- Mansfield Fire Department
- North Haven Fire Department
- Poquonnock Bridge (Groton) Fire Department
- Ridgefield Fire Department
- South (Middletown) Fire District
- Southington Fire Department
- Suffield Fire Department
- Wallingford Fire Department
- Watertown Fire Department
- West Haven Fire Department
- West Shore (West Haven) Fire Department

Appendix D

**Fire Officer Certification Levels
of New Britain, Connecticut
Fire Department Officers ***

	<u>Lieutenants</u>	<u>Captains</u>	<u>Deputy Chiefs</u>
Firefighter II	36 %	20 %	0 %
Fire Service Instructor I	18 %	10 %	50 %
Fire Service Instructor II	0 %	10 %	0 %
Fire Officer I	4 %	20 %	25 %
Fire Officer II	11 %	0 %	0 %

* Results obtained from information provided by the Connecticut Fire Academy Certification Division and reflect the highest certification level attained by officers.