

BATTALION CHIEF TRAINING

Executive Development

Training Program Requirements for the Rank of Battalion Chief

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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 problem is the Lisle-Woodridge Fire District lacks a training program for aspiring battalion chiefs. The purpose of this research was to identify requirements of a training program for the rank of battalion chief. Action research was used to answer the following research questions:

(a) What standards exist for battalion chief training? (b) What knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for the rank of battalion chief? (c) What do current and past battalion chiefs feel are necessary components for battalion chief training? The procedures included review of nationally recognized institutions and professional journals, questionnaires, and personal interviews. The results show the need for a balanced training program to include operational and administrative objectives, with the operational objectives truly the priority.

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Introduction

The difference between good fire departments and great fire departments, the difference between capable leaders and great leaders is a matter of knowledge, knowledge that is gained through training and education (Coleman et al. 2006). In any occupation, having the knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish the job is the premise behind education and preparation. In the fire service, time on the job no longer prepares a person for promotion. Promotion through the ranks can not be expected without additional education and training and most would agree that the rank of battalion chief requires a higher level of training and preparation to efficiently transition from the company officer level. But the question lies in what training is necessary and beneficial? As a battalion chief, knowing what needs to be done and getting it done safely and efficiently can only be accomplished through education, training, and experience (Graner, 2004).

Many have come through the ranks and suffered the ordeal of “take the job and learn it”. It is time to stop subjecting personnel to that nightmare of trial and error. Personnel should be ready for that next step up their career ladder (Moore, 2002). The problem is the Lisle-Woodridge Fire District (LWFD) lacks a training program to prepare individuals for the rank of battalion chief. Without a battalion chief training program, the LWFD is unable to effectively develop individual knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed at the rank of battalion chief. The purpose of this research is to identify requirements of a training program designed to properly prepare individuals for the rank of battalion chief at the LWFD.

Action research methodology was used to gather and analyze data to answer the following research questions: (a) What standards exist for battalion chief training, (b) What knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for the rank of battalion chief, and (c) What do current and past battalion chiefs feel are necessary components for battalion chief training?

Current standards relating to battalion chief training will be explored. Data will be collected to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for a battalion chief. This will be completed with questionnaires and personal interviews. Fire departments will be questioned as to their requirements and success of battalion chief training. From those questionnaires, respondents having successful battalion chief training will be analyzed. Finally, training program objectives for battalion chiefs will be drafted and submitted to the fire chief for implementation.

Background and Significance

The LWFD is located in the western suburbs of Chicago. The district provides emergency services to a population of approximately 70,000 people during the night, and more than one 100,000 people during the day. Services are provided from five stations covering thirty square miles. In 1993, the fire district became the first fire district in the country to receive an Insurance Service Office (ISO) Class 1.

The fire district operates with three shifts working a twenty-four on and forty-eight off work schedule. A minimum of twenty-eight firefighters, paramedics, and officers staff two truck companies, four engine companies, four advanced life support ambulances, and a battalion car. The district's administrative staff includes the fire chief, two deputy chiefs, and three bureau chiefs assigned to training/safety, fire prevention, and emergency medical services.

The LWFD is undergoing substantial changes in its workforce. Through growth and attrition, the LWFD has inexperience at all levels. Sixty-one percent of the firefighters have less than ten years on the job. Of the lieutenants, sixty-three percent have less than three years as an officer. Seventy percent of the captains have less than three years in rank. The three battalion

chiefs all have less than two years in rank. This author has witnessed the transition of three new battalion chiefs' from the company officer level, and that has enticed this research.

The promotion to battalion chief is a challenging transition from the company officer level. The battalion chief is a vital position in leading and directing a shift. Developing strategy, being an incident commander, personnel management, budgeting, and labor relations are some of the new perspectives and responsibilities required by a battalion chief.

The last fifteen years have been stagnant regarding promotion to battalion chief at LWFD. The incumbents were quite capable in their positions and little thought was given to preparing their successors for the job. Suddenly, within fifteen months, all three shifts had new leadership at the battalion chief level. Lack of planning on the fire district's part to guide and prepare individuals for promotion to this level is a problem. There are many certifications, classes, and degrees available, but which ones are necessary and relevant? The intent of this research is not to reinvent the wheel, but to decide what our needs really are; what will work best for LWFD. With the commitment to being the best fire district possible, LWFD owes the employees and the community it protects to better prepare personnel for the promotion to battalion chief.

The last two years has seen significant change in battalion chief personnel, and the LWFD has not been proactive in preparing individuals for the promotion. This author is right in the midst of this transition from company officer to battalion chief. Being one of the two eligible captains to take the next promotional test, this research has direct impact. The fire service has been and continues to address officer development, but the intent of this research is to focus on battalion chief training.

This topic relates directly to United States Fire Administration objective number five: to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (USFA, 2005). At LWFD, officer development has a focus on first line supervisor, not on development of chief level promotion. Employees may have the knowledge, but do they possess the skills and abilities to effectively perform as a battalion chief?

The Executive Development course of the Executive Fire Officer Program focuses on two goals: (a) to lead effectively and efficiently within a dynamic and complex organization by facilitating the development of teams and the application of research, (b) to develop and integrate change management and leadership techniques necessary in complex organizations (National Fire Academy, 2006). These goals directly relate to a battalion chief as he needs great leadership qualities to operate the shift to ensure the safety of the personnel and to uphold the mission of the fire district.

Literature Review

Training for battalion chief should come from a wide variety of sources beyond their local training. Organizations such as the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Community Colleges, and the Federal Government offer a wide variety of training programs (Graner, 2004).

The IAFC, in pursuit of the planned, progressive life-long process of education, training, self-development and experience, developed an Officer Development Handbook. This vision for the handbook was to provide a clear roadmap for success as a fire service officer. This handbook is a professional development planning tool that serves both incumbent and aspiring officers (IAFC, 2003).

The United States Fire Administration's (USFA) National Fire Academy (NFA) works to enhance the ability of fire and emergency services and allied professionals to deal more effectively with fire and related emergencies. Courses are delivered at the resident facility in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and throughout the nation in cooperation with state and local fire training organizations, local colleges, and universities (USFA, 2006).

The Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) is an initiative of the United States Fire Administration/National Fire Academy designed to provide senior officers and others in key leadership roles with an understanding of the need to transform fire and emergency services organizations from being reactive to proactive; with an emphasis on leadership development, prevention, and risk-reduction. The EFOP expects to enhance executive-level knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead transformations, conduct research, and engage in life-long learning. The officers enhance their professional development through a unique series of four graduate and upper-division-baccalaureate equivalent courses. The EFOP spans a 4-year period with 4 core courses. Each course is 2 weeks in length (USFA, 2007).

Colleges such as Texas A& M University and the University of Maryland provide an excellent avenue to enhance fire officer training for operational and administrative topics. The University of Maryland ranks among the top 20 public research universities in the nation. This college is uniquely positioned to address issues of homeland security with its highly ranked programs in public affairs, science and technology and its strong ties to nearby federal agencies and research laboratories. The faculty includes members who have served as senior government officials and public policy experts, as well as leading experts in arms control and nuclear and biological weapons. Seminars such as the National Fire Service Staff and Command Course presented by the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) are designed to assist fire officers in

modern concepts of emergency management by developing leadership skills and professional knowledge (MFRI, 2007).

An avenue for local level training on emergency operations is to utilize private companies such as Command School, Inc. Command School provides tabletop drills that will challenge, inspire and prepare personnel for any incident. Experienced professional facilitators bring real life incident command training in a dynamic training method (Command School, 2007).

Jeff Simpson (2006) explains that there are basically two traits that are needed to be successful as an officer. They are subject knowledge, to include tactics, operations, and technical disciplines. The other is people skills, which include listening, trust, credibility, authenticity, reliability, and awareness. The key to success in the people skills is to develop an understanding of what motivates your people, establish a solid foundation of trust, good listening skills, and provide good communication.

Although observation and education are critical to the development of chief officers, development of personality traits is at least an equally important process. Aspiring chief officers must study personality traits of successful leaders and continually evaluate themselves to make necessary adjustments. Five traits were found to be more common in determining the success or failure of aspiring chief officers. They are emotional stability, decisiveness, integrity, interpersonal skills, and technical and cognitive skills (Buckman, 2006).

There are departments that have training for chief level officers. The Chesterfield County, Virginia Fire Department has been developing and implementing programs for the past twenty years. They provide leadership training beginning with entry-level firefighter to the fire chief. They have several programs that include Officer Development I and II, and Applied Leadership.

Also beginning in 2008, they will require a bachelor degree for all seeking promotion to battalion chief. Highlights of their program include focused simulation training for different emergencies, meaningful conversations about life experiences, required reading on leadership books not related to the fire service, and written assignments related to the books (Avsec, 2006).

Chesterfield County also utilizes programs presented by the Darden Graduate School of Business at the University of Virginia. Darden offers a two-week leadership school for senior managers for both public and private sectors that encompasses a wide variety of leadership and management topics (Avsec, 2006).

The Alexandria Virginia Fire Department created the Leadership, Education, and Development Institute (LEAD), to provide a comprehensive leadership and training program for all department managers. They assembled a four-phase curriculum. Phase one focuses on individual development and thoughts to learn how they are as individuals, their strengths, and weaknesses. Phase two is directed at management skills. Communication, time management, team-building, leadership styles and process, and conflict management are topics covered by carefully chosen instructors (Hawkins, 2000).

Phase three of the program deals with two specific issues: the legal aspects of being a manager, and employee evaluations and the discipline process. The fourth phase focuses on specific internal programs to include management of emergency situations, customer service, local government, financial management, and governing body expectations. A graduation ceremony is held and participants receive a diploma and pin indicating completion of the LEAD Institute (Hawkins, 2000).

To summarize, officer development for the chief level officers is vital. There is abundant information in print to guide fire departments in their officer training. From the National Fire

Academy down to the local level, there are avenues to get the job done. There is no need to create or re-invent a program. Evaluate the needs and make battalion chief training fit your department. “Each step or progression in rank comes with added challenges and complexity. Professional development is the planned, progressive life-long process of education, training, self-development, and experience” (IAFC Handbook, 2003).

Procedures

The purpose of this research is to identify requirements of a training program designed to prepare individuals for the rank of battalion chief. Action research methodology was used to gather and analyze data to answer the author’s research questions. Research question (a), what standards exist for battalion chief training was researched through evaluation of current documents. For the national level, information was gathered from NFPA 1021, Standards for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications, 2003 edition. To narrow the focus, research on standards at the state level was restricted to Illinois. The Illinois Administrative code was explored to evaluate what Illinois requires and offers regarding battalion chief training.

For research question (b), what knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for the rank of battalion chief, a feedback questionnaire was created. The questionnaire was developed to obtain a background of the person completing the document, to questions pertaining to their department regarding training for battalion chief. To get a random sampling across the country, the questionnaire was e-mailed to the author’s EFOP Executive Development class. The class size was twenty-two students in departments across to United States. The questionnaire was e-mailed mid-April 2007, with a return date by May 15, 2007. One hundred percent of the class completed the on-line questionnaire. The questionnaire is included in appendix A.

Research limitations were noted in some data. The limited number of external questionnaires is not a true representation of the fire service as it is a very small percentage compared to the number of departments across the country. No specific criterion was used to determine which departments to include in the research. The target audience of the EFOP class provided a mix of departments across the U.S.

To address research question I, what do current and past battalion chiefs feel are necessary components for battalion chief training, personal interviews were completed with a series of seven questions. The questions were developed to incorporate the interviewee's past experiences as a battalion chief. The limitation of this procedure was the author's ability to contact battalion chiefs with experience that were regarded as effective in their position. Six people were chosen from the Chicago suburban area that have a reputation of being effective in the battalion chief rank. The personal interviews were completed in May and early June 2007. All interviewees were asked the same series of questions.

Definition of Terms

IAFC	International Association of Fire Chiefs
JPR	Job performance requirement- A statement that describes a specific job task, lists items necessary to complete the task, and defines measurable or observable outcomes and evaluation for the specific task.
LWFD	Lisle-Woodridge Fire District
NFA	National Fire Academy
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
USFA	United States Fire Administration

Results

Research question #1. What standards exist for battalion chief training?

The defining standard at the national level for fire officer qualification is the NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. Also referenced is NFPA 1041, Standard for Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications. NFPA 1021 clearly defines objectives with required knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed at completing stated objectives. The purpose of this standard is to specify minimum job performance requirements as a fire officer. The standard defines progressive levels of performance required at different officer levels. A Fire Officer I is a supervisory level, Fire Officer II is listed as a supervisory/managerial level, Fire Officer III is a managerial/administrative level, and the Fire Officer IV is listed as solely an administrative level. Each Fire Officer section is broken down into seven sections. They are: general knowledge, human resource management, community and government relations, administration, inspection and investigation, emergency service delivery, and health and safety (NFPA 1021, 2003).

The general knowledge section requires a certification of Fire Instructor I as defined in NFPA 1041, prerequisite knowledge in writing skills, and the ability to operate at all levels of the incident management system. It also includes knowledge of the organizational structure of the department, response districts, standard operating procedures, departmental budget process, and information management (NFPA 1021, 2003). It is clear that Fire Officer I is a fire company level position leading and directing a small team of firefighters.

A Fire Officer II also requires certification as a Fire Instructor I as defined in NFPA 1041. The required general knowledge section includes understanding local government, legislation and the law-making process, and functions of other bureaus, divisions, and

organizations as they relate to the fire service (NFPA 1021, 2003). The required knowledge in the seven sections under Fire Officer II is aimed at a multi-company officer with much of the knowledge required listed as department specific, such as standard operating procedures, policies, and procedures. The ability to communicate orally and in writing is listed in each of the required skills sections under Fire Officer II.

To certify as a Fire Officer III, the Fire Officer II shall be certified as a Fire Instructor II as defined in NFPA 1041, and meet job performance requirements listed in NFPA 1021. In the general knowledge section, requirements include knowledge of current national and international trends and developments, management and administrative principles, and public and private organizations that support emergency services (NFPA 1021, 2003).

The required skills for Fire Officer III also include the ability to communicate orally and in writing in all sections listed. In addition, interpersonal skills, motivational techniques, mentoring, and the ability to research are highlighted as required skills (NFPA 1021, 2003).

The Fire Officer IV certification contains a knowledge and skill level to function as the chief of the organization, strictly an administrative level. In Annex A of the Standard, it states that it is expected that the authority having jurisdiction requires additional credentials that could include fire degree programs, general education in business, management, science, and associated degree curricula. Fire officers are also expected to be ethical in their conduct and to ensure the provision of the best possible safety and service (NFPA 1021, 2003).

A survey was conducted in 1992 by the University of Illinois and the University of Maryland. It was learned that all fifty states have some type of certificate system in place. The state may develop its own set of standards and criteria, or they can adopt any or all of the nationally recognized standards as published by the NFPA (Fire Chief's Handbook, 2003).

Illinois has State Statute 50 ICLS 740 Illinois Fire Protection Training Act. The intent of this Act is to provide for the encouraging and aiding of local governmental agencies by upgrading and maintaining a high level of training for fire protection personnel. To comply with the goals and purposes required in the Fire Protection Training Act, the Office of the State Fire Marshall (Office) follows Administrative Code Title 41, Section 140; Policy and Procedures Manual for Fire Protection Personnel (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2007).

The Illinois State Fire Marshall's Office recognizes three levels of Fire Officer: Fire Officer I, II, and III. These levels meet and exceed all four levels of the Fire Officer identified in NFPA 1021.

The Office defines Fire Officer II as a person having responsibilities above a company officer, but less than the responsibilities of the fire chief or head of the department. Prerequisites include certification as a Fire Officer I, actively serving in Illinois as a firefighter, at least 5 years experience, and successful completion of three semester credit courses. To satisfy the credit hours, the Office requires four classes prior to certification: Management I and II, Instructor II, and Strategy and Tactics II. These are all 40 hour classes that require written exams to complete (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2007).

The Office identifies a Fire Officer III as a person that has administrative responsibilities and the authority to affect practices, policies, and procedures of the department. This person is, or reports directly to the fire chief or head of the department. Prerequisites for Fire Officer III include being certified as a Fire Officer II, at least 10 years of fire service experience, and completion of courses in communications, government structures, fire department operations, human resource administration, and fiscal planning. Also required is current administrative duties, and completion of a work experience document (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2007).

At the local level, there are no standards that go beyond what the State enforces. The local level focuses on job description and job requirements. The LWFD job description describes a battalion chief as an administrative and supervisory position that oversees significant portions of the Fire District's operations to include personnel, equipment, and stations. Qualification requirements for battalion chief at LWFD include State Fire Officer II certification and three years in the preceding rank of captain. In addition, recommended but not required are Fire Officer III certification, bachelor degree, and certified as an emergency medical technician (Board of Trustees, 2006).

Research question #2. What knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for the rank of battalion chief?

To determine what knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for the rank of battalion chief, a questionnaire and personal interviews were completed. For the questionnaire, the results are provided. Complete questionnaire results can be found in Appendix B. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix A.

Question # 1

What is your current rank?

Fifty-two percent responded they are a battalion chief.

Question # 2

What is your type of organization?

Eighty percent were from career departments.

Question # 3

How many members does your organization have?

Forty-two percent were less than 100 members; twenty-eight percent were between 100 and 200 members.

Question # 4

How much experience do you have in the rank of battalion chief?

Thirty-five percent were at 2 to 5 years, thirty percent were greater than 5 years, and thirty percent had no experience.

Question #5

What are your department's job requirements for battalion chief?

Twenty-eight chose time in rank, twenty five percent chose state officer certification, and thirteen percent chose associate degree.

Question # 6

Do you feel that newly promoted chiefs are prepared for the position?

Sixty-five percent answered no.

Question # 7

Does your department have a formalized training program for battalion chief?

Eighty percent answered no.

Question # 8

If yes to the previous question, what does it include?

Thirty percent chose to write-in their response. The responses included working out-of-rank and having a training program in the development stages. Twenty percent chose college course work, and twenty percent chose seminars and workshops.

Question # 9

In your opinion, what components would make up an effective training program for battalion chief?

Out of eighteen choices, writing skills, communication skills, and incident command scored the highest.

Question # 10

Choose what you feel to be the top five components of an effective training program for battalion chief.

Out of the same eighteen choices, communication skills, incident command, and a ride-along program scored the highest.

Research question # 3. What do current and past battalion chiefs feel are necessary components for battalion chief training?

Personal interviews were completed with current and past battalion chiefs. All were asked the same seven questions with the following summary of results.

Question # 1

What is your current position?

All interviewee's have served as a battalion chief.

Question # 2

How long did you serve as a battalion chief?

Time of service was from two years to 10 years.

Question # 3

What was your job function before battalion chief?

All respondents came through the ranks as a company officer.

Question # 4

How did you prepare to be a battalion chief?

State fire officer certification was most common, with a mention of associate and bachelor degrees. Mentoring by current battalion chiefs, identifying weaknesses, and classes involving fire ground command were also utilized to prepare for the position of battalion chief.

Question #5

What would you have done differently in preparation for battalion chief?

The responses included being mentored, having better direction and feedback from superior officers, attending classes regarding communications and writing skills, and management classes closer to the time of promotion.

Question # 6

What advice would you give aspiring officers to help them prepare for the rank of battalion chief?

Responses included on-the-job training through mentoring and ride-a-long program with current battalion chiefs. Being able to size-up fire buildings is a priority. Learn as much as you can and continue education through state certification and college degrees. Expand your knowledge beyond the fire ground to human resource skills, budgeting, and labor relations.

Question #7

If you could pick five subject areas for a battalion chief training program, what would they be?

Fire ground operations were chosen as a priority by almost all interviewees. Other subject areas targeted as a priority included oral and written skills, leadership, mentoring, budgeting, and labor relations.

Discussion

Progression in rank comes with added challenges and complexity. Fire service personnel must be aware of this fact and ready to deal with it. Professional development is the planned, progressive life-long process of education, training, self-development, and experience (IAFC Handbook, 2003).

Regarding education, Chesterfield County, VA is a department that is putting to action requirements for promotion. Avsec (2006) explains that candidates for promotion to all officer ranks must complete formal education requirements. Beginning in 2008, captains that seek promotion to battalion chief must have completed a bachelor-level degree program.

Requiring bachelor-level education also satisfies many job performance requirements for Fire Officer III as described in NFPA 1021. Under skills required to obtain a Fire Officer III, the ability to communicate orally and in writing is the priority (NFPA 1021, 2003). It is this author's opinion that bachelor-level degree gives the aspiring officer a more well-rounded balance of learning that can improve one's ability in communication skills.

Although all the literature reviewed stressed the importance of higher education, the questionnaire and personal interviews proved the contrary. The questionnaire showed college course work receiving less than five percent of the votes for the top five components of an effective training program for battalion chief. National Fire Academy course work also scored quite low, at less than six percent as a component for an effective training program.

The personal interviews proved that formal education was important, but it was not considered the priority. Chief Mikel's advice for aspiring battalion chiefs is to expand education beyond operations and tactics. He stressed the importance of human resource management, budgeting, and labor relations (personal communication, June 6, 2007).

Although Battalion Chief John Hojek did not view college degrees as a priority, writing and communications skills are areas that need attention in preparing for promotion. He feels the number one priority for aspiring battalion chief officers is proficiency in tactics and strategies. He stated, “The BC needs to be the “rock” on the fire ground. The leader that remains calm and can read the building instills confidence in the firefighters that the situation is under control” (personal communication, June 6, 2007).

Chief Hojek’s advice for aspiring battalion chiefs is to focus on training. On-the- job training by riding with different battalion chiefs and finding a good mentor would better prepare for the promotion to battalion chief. Fire ground classes on operations and building size-up along with the ability to know your people are topics that he deems necessary and beneficial to be a successful battalion chief (personal communication, June 6, 2007).

All personal interviews showed emergency operations as a priority for a training program with efficiency in this area accomplished through mentoring and on-the-job training. The classroom has its place in preparing individuals, but actually fulfilling the role with a mentor for support is a safe and effective way to learn the job. Leadership classes and firefighter safety are two other areas that all the interviewee’s deemed a priority.

The questionnaire found that communication skills were selected as the most important component of an effective training program. There are classes both inside and outside the fire service arena that would enhance communications skills. Companies such as Skillpath Seminars offer business orientated conferences and seminars that include training on management and supervision, leadership, coaching and teambuilding, communications, and interpersonal skills (Skillpath, 2007).

In the fire service arena, the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute offer seminars to assist in the professional development of fire service leaders with classes on motivating your staff, communication skills, and managing disciplinary action and grievances (Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, 2007). The National Fire Academy is another avenue to enhance knowledge and skills. Classes such as Leadership and Administration, Fire Service Communication, and Interpersonal Dynamics in Fire Service Organizations (USFA, 2006) are ways to enhance skills and abilities to be an effective battalion chief.

The questionnaire also proved that incident command training and a ride-a-long program are priorities of a training program. To be a good operations chief, you have to prepare yourself through training and by getting experience to reinforce the training. Much depends on personal commitment. Those that take the time to prepare themselves for the big one will be confident even during the worst situations (Hawkins, 1998). Command and operations training can be accomplished locally by other staff chiefs, through seminars such as Fire Command School, and at the NFA by attending courses in the incident management curriculum.

The author's interpretation of the results is balanced training. The questionnaire and personal interviews proved that emergency scene operations are the priority. Being in charge of the entire scene as opposed to a fire company is a drastic change. Utilizing a good mentor to help relate real-life experiences and require ride-a-long experience are invaluable ways to develop knowledge, skills, and abilities.

There are numerous avenues to provide training for battalion chief. College course work and degrees are becoming a necessity. There are numerous seminars and classes on leadership and communications offered that can help prepare for promotion. The business world offers classes that directly relate to the fire service regarding leadership and communications. To be an

effective battalion chief, one needs balanced training. Emergency operations, communication skills, and leadership qualities are the author's opinion of training priorities.

The organizational implication of this research for LWFD is time and budget. Attending classes can be time consuming and require funds. If LWFD requires training for battalion chief, it will require money, both in salaries and tuition. This could be the stumbling block as most department decisions center on the budget. This implication can be overcome with some planning and commitment from the Chief and the Training Division.

Recommendations

Through this research, the immediate recommendation is to assign a mentor to all aspiring for promotion to battalion chief. Objectives for ride-a-long time with a current battalion chief will be established and documented. The focus of this training will be on operational development to transition from a company officer to incident commander. Objectives will include battalion chief job description, department standard operating procedures, incident command procedures, communications, and a work experience document. Administratively the following will be covered: discipline process, grievance procedure, sexual harassment, drug and alcohol, and violence in the work place. An acting battalion chief performance objectives document for immediate implementation is included in Appendix C.

To make this mentor and ride-a-long training effective, all current staff chiefs need to be informed of this process, and most importantly, they need to support it. The training and operations chiefs must work with the mentors and trainees to ensure meaningful and beneficial training is completed and documented. Open lines of communications are vital to foster an on-

going environment of teamwork to accomplish the stated objectives. Included in the appendix is the document developed for immediate implementation.

Long term recommendations are such because they will have to be agreed upon between the staff and the union. Budgetary concerns are necessary to address as with training there is cost. But with proper preparation, battalion chief training costs can be added to the training budget to ensure it gets accomplished. College course work to include a bachelor degree requirement will be recommended.

Other items to budget for will include classes on incident command and emergency operations with Fire Command School, leadership and communications classes by Skillpath Seminars, and a class from the incident management curriculum at the National Fire Academy. In addition, training by the University of Maryland and Texas A & M University can also be budgeted for to improve one's knowledge, skills, and abilities to be an effective battalion chief.

To evaluate the training program, the department's yearly performance review will suffice to rate job performance. To get specific feedback on the training objectives and classes attended, all battalion chief candidates will be interviewed by the operations and training chiefs to discuss the effectiveness of the training and ways to make improvements.

In conclusion, this author recommends to those wishing to replicate this research or implement battalion chief training in their department to focus on questionnaires and personal interviews to help establish their training criteria. This research as well as published literature clearly supports the need for chief officer training, but communication with current and retired chiefs will ensure real life experiences can be shared and training objectives defined to increase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of aspiring battalion chiefs.

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Appendix A

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June 10, 2007

Dear Sirs,

I am in my first year of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. I am completing a research paper on identification of training requirements for battalion chief. I am requesting that you complete this on-line questionnaire for my research attached to the link below. Your response is anonymous and confidential. It is ten questions in length and will take less than five minutes to complete. Please complete the survey by May 15th. If you would like a copy of the results, let me know.

Link: Battalion Chief Questionnaire # 332729

Thank you very much for your time,

Jeff Toepper
Captain
Lisle-Woodridge Fire District

Battalion Chief Training Questionnaire

Question 1. What is your current rank?

- Chief
- Deputy/Assistant Chief
- Battalion Chief/ Shift Commander
- Company Officer
- Retired Chief

Question 2. What is the type of your organization?

- Career
- Volunteer
- Combination

Question 3. How many members does your organization have?

- Less than 100
- 100-200
- 201-400
- Greater than 400

Question 4. How much experience do you have in the rank of battalion chief?

- None
- Less than 2 years
- 2 to 5 years
- Greater than 5 years

Question 5. Check all that apply. What are your department's job requirements for battalion chief?

- Time in rank
- State Officer Certification
- NFPA 1021 Fire Officer II
- NFPA 1021 Fire Officer III
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor Degree
- Masters Degree
- Other

Question 6. Do you feel that newly promoted battalion chiefs are prepared for the position?

- Yes
- No

Question 7. Does your department have a formalized training program for battalion chief?

- Yes
- No

Question 8. Check all that apply. If yes to the previous question, what does it include?

- College course work
- Seminars/workshops
- Ride-a-long program
- National Fire Academy course work
- Instruction from staff chiefs
- Other

Question 9. Check all that apply. In your opinion, what components would make up an effective training program for battalion chief?

- College course work
- Seminars/workshops
- Ride-a-long program
- National Fire Academy course work
- Instruction from staff chiefs
- Labor relations
- Incident command
- Strategy and Tactics
- Fire protection systems
- Time management skills
- Communications skills
- Writing skills
- Finance and budgeting
- Conflict resolution
- Ethics
- Disaster management/cooperative planning
- Orientation to city/municipal management
- Other

Question 10. Choose what you feel to be the top five components of an effective training program for battalion chief.

- College course work
- Seminars/workshops
- Ride-a-long program
- National Fire Academy course work
- Instruction from staff chiefs
- Labor relations
- Incident command
- Strategy and Tactics
- Fire protection systems
- Time management skills
- Communications skills
- Writing skills
- Finance and budgeting
- Conflict resolution

Ethics
Disaster management/cooperative planning
Orientation to city/municipal management
Other

Appendix B Battalion Chief Questionnaire Results

Q1

What is your current rank?

Chief	2	9.52%
Deputy/Assistant Chief	2	9.52%
Battalion Chief / Shift Commander	11	52.38%
Company Officer	6	28.57%
Retired Chief	0	0.00%

Total	21
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Mean	3.00
Standard Dev.	0.89
Variance	0.80

Q2

What is the type of your organization?

Career	17	80.95%
Volunteer	0	0.00%
Combination	4	19.05%

Total	21
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Mean	1.38
Standard Dev.	0.80
Variance	0.65

Q3

How many members does your organization have?

Less than 100	9	42.86%
100-200	6	28.57%
201-400	1	4.76%
Greater than 400	5	23.81%

Total	21
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Mean	2.10
Standard Dev.	1.22
Variance	1.49

Q4

How much experience do you have in the rank of battalion chief?

None	6	30.00%
Less than 2 years	1	5.00%
2 to 5 years	7	35.00%
Greater than 5 years	6	30.00%

Total	20
Mean	2.65
Standard Dev.	1.23
Variance	1.50

Q5

Check all that apply.

What are your departments job requirements for battalion chief?

Time in rank	15	28.85%
State Officer Certification	13	25.00%
NFPA 1021 Fire Officer II	5	9.62%
NFPA 1021 Fire Officer III	2	3.85%
Associate Degree	7	13.46%
Bachelor Degree	4	7.69%
Masters Degree	0	0.00%
Other	6	11.54%
Total	52	
Mean	3.29	
Standard Dev.	2.36	
Variance	5.58	

Other Option [Other]

we dont have BCs
 combination of degree and time in rank of Captain
 10 years mininum total experience
 Safety Officer, NFA Command and General Staff Positions in the ICS
 Chief Officer within three years of appointment

Q6

Do you feel that newly promoted battalion chiefs are prepared for the position?

Yes	7	35.00%
No	13	65.00%
Total	20	
Mean	1.65	
Standard Dev.	0.49	
Variance	0.24	

Q7

Does your department have a formalized training program for battalion chief?

Yes	4	20.00%
No	16	80.00%
Total	20	

Mean	1.80
Standard Dev.	0.41
Variance	0.17

Q8

Check all that apply.

If yes to previous question, what does it include?

College course work	1	10.00%
Seminars/workshops	2	20.00%
Ride-a-long program	2	20.00%
National Fire Academy course work	1	10.00%
Instruction from staff chiefs	1	10.00%
Other	3	30.00%

Total	10
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Mean	3.80
Standard Dev.	1.87
Variance	3.51

Other Option [Other]

out of rank training during captaincy
its a hodge podge of whats available
Working on a program at this time

Q9

Check all that apply.

In your opinion, what components would make up an effective training program for battalion chief?

College course work	15	5.91%
Seminars/workshops	14	5.51%
Ride-a-long program	14	5.51%
National Fire Academy course work	14	5.51%
Instruction from Staff Chiefs	15	5.91%
Labor relations	16	6.30%
Incident command	18	7.09%
Strategy and tactics	15	5.91%
Fire protection systems	9	3.54%
Time management skills	17	6.69%
Communications skills	18	7.09%
Writing skills	19	7.48%
Finance and budgeting	11	4.33%
Conflict resolution	19	7.48%
Ethics	16	6.30%
Disaster management/cooperative planning	10	3.94%
Orientation to city/municipal management	13	5.12%
Other	1	0.39%

Total	254
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Mean	8.99
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Standard Dev.	4.81
Variance	23.17

Other Option [Other]

Organizational Expectations of the position

Q10



Choose what you feel to be the top five components of an effective training program for battalion chief.

College course work	5	4.39%
Seminars/workshops	3	2.63%
Ride-a-long program	10	8.77%
National Fire Academy course work	6	5.26%
Instruction from Staff Chiefs	7	6.14%
Labor relations	7	6.14%
Incident command	14	12.28%
Strategy and tactics	9	7.89%
Fire protection systems	2	1.75%
Time management skills	7	6.14%
Communications skills	15	13.16%
Writing skills	5	4.39%
Finance and budgeting	2	1.75%
Conflict resolution	9	7.89%
Ethics	4	3.51%
Disaster management/cooperative planning	3	2.63%
Orientation to city/municipal government	4	3.51%
Other	2	1.75%
Total	114	
Mean	8.68	
Standard Dev.	4.49	
Variance	20.20	

Other Option [Other]

Fire Simulation

**Appendix C
Acting BC Performance Objectives**

<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>LISLE WOODRIDGE FIRE DISTRICT ACTING BC ORIENTATION PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES</p> </div>  </div>				
<p>ALL THE FOLLOWING TASKS SHALL BE PERFORMED WITH ASSIGNED MENTOR OR CHIEF OFFICER. THE COMPLETED PACKET SHALL BE FORWARDED TO THE OPERATIONS AND TRAINING CHIEFS.</p>				
REQUIREMENTS	OFFICER INITIALS	DATE	TIME SPENT	MEMBER INITIALS
Review Battalion Chief's Job Description				
Review BC's car to include operation, equipment, radios, and computer				
Discuss all District Emergency Operations SOG's				
Radio procedures: Terminology , MABAS Alarms, fire ground channels				
Perform Radio drill with Dispatch for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire to a 2-11 • Haz Mat to a Box level • Technical Rescue to a Box level • URRT to a Box level • EMS to a Box level 				
Discuss expectations of IC to include Command structure, Unified Command, and NIMS				
Explain Specialty Team response: With-in LWFD, Mutual-aid, CART response, Statewide				
Lead scenario-based practical drill to include common fireground communications				
View Command van and procedures for elevated alarms: Westmont and Dupage County				
Visit Ducomm Dispatcher				
Complete 5 shifts with a BC:				
Day 1: Complete work experience document				
Day 2: Complete work experience document				
Day 3: Complete work experience document				
Day 4: Complete work experience document				
Day 5: Complete work experience document				

REQUIREMENTS	OFFICER INITIALS	DATE	TIME SPENT	MEMBER INITIALS
ADMINISTRATIVE				
Explain Grievance Procedure to include the BC's role				
Explain the Discipline process to include the BC's role and paperwork involved				
Explain BOT 1.12 Sexual Harassment				
Explain BOT 1.14 Drug and Alcohol				
Explain BOT 1.19 Violence in the Work Place				
Explain SOG 1116 Bomb Threat Code 1				
Explain BOT 1.16 Media Relations				
EAP Contacts and procedure for referral				
Perform shift scheduling to include filling overtime, vacation, WRD's, and shift trades				
Trustee & Commissioners locations, station visits, mail run				

Notes:

Having reviewed the above with Captain _____, I recommend that he/she is granted the right and responsibility of Acting Battalion Chief.

Captain: _____ Date: _____

BC: _____ Date: _____

