

Preparing a Firefighter to be an Acting Company Officer

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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.

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### **Abstract**

Plant City Fire Rescue was experiencing a lack of interest from drivers to fill the acting company officer position. The lack of interest in filling the acting company officer position has caused Plant City Fire Rescue not to have people ready to fill company officer positions. The problem was that Plant City Fire Rescue does not have enough acting company officers? The purpose of the applied research project (ARP) was to determine what programs and components shall be facilitated to prepare a firefighter to become an acting company officer. Descriptive methodology was used to answer the following research questions: (a) What are the educational requirements to be an acting company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue? (b) What are the current educational requirements and job functions for a company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue? (c) What state or national standards are recommended to be a company officer? (d) What training requirements do other fire departments in Florida require to become an acting captain? (e) What other fire departments in Florida allow firefighters to be an acting company officer? The procedures included researching state and national standards pertaining to company officer development. An external survey was developed to determine what company officer development training was being conducted by Florida fire departments. One internal survey was designed to gather feedback from the drivers and captains on what processes need to be modified for acting company officer development. Lastly, a personal interview was conducted with the Battalion Chief of operations. The results determined that an acting company officer development program was essential for both the firefighters and drivers. Model programs were also identified that can be used as a template when developing driver and acting captain job descriptions and performance objectives. The recommendations further support the necessity to develop an acting company officer training program for Plant City Fire Rescue.

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### **Preparing a Firefighter to be an Acting Company Officer**

The company officer (Captain) within Plant City Fire Rescue (PCFR) is the first line supervisor that has the responsibility to manage assigned personnel. The company officer position has many responsibilities, which include training, pre-fire planning inspections, administrative duties, equipment repair, and discipline. The company officer has the added responsibility to prepare all assigned personnel for combat (Guzzi, 2011).

In order to improve the organization it is essential that Plant City Fire Rescue think of the future by preparing the firefighter to become an acting company officer. The current state of allowing only the drivers to become acting company officers does not provide Plant City Fire Rescue (PCFR) the amount of personnel needed to fill future company officer positions.

The problem was that Plant City Fire Rescue does not have enough acting company officers. The purpose of the applied research project (ARP) was to determine what programs and components shall be facilitated to prepare a firefighter to become an acting company officer.

Descriptive methodology was used to answer the following research questions: (a) What are the educational requirements to be an acting company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue? (b) What are the current educational requirements and job functions for a company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue? (c) What state or national training standards are recommended to be a company officer? (d) What training requirements do other fire departments in Florida require to become an acting captain? (e) What other fire departments in Florida allow firefighters to be an acting company officer?

### **Background and Significance**

Plant City Fire Rescue (PCFR) provides an all hazard response to approximately 34,000 residents within the eastern portion of Hillsborough County, Florida. The department serves the community out of two fire stations within 26 square miles. In addition, the department provides advanced life support emergency medical transport services for Plant City. The department is represented by 43 uniformed personnel, which includes one fire chief, one deputy chief, one EMS chief, one fire inspector, three battalion chiefs, six captains, six drivers and twenty-four firefighters (Plant City, 2015).

Plant City Fire Rescue (PCFR) has progressed from an all volunteer department to a career agency. In 2004, the department became a basic life support (BLS) licensed transport provider and then in 2007 began providing advanced life support (ALS) transport services within Plant City. In order to make this transition the chief had to convince the personnel that making this change was necessary to promote the agency in these challenging times. Furthermore, the firefighters had to attend the paramedic course in order for the department to provide this new service.

PCFR had a total of 12 driver positions prior to 2006. Since then there has been a reduction in driver positions. This reduction has caused a serious problem with not having enough candidates to sit for the captain promotional assessment. In 2008, the captain assessment was facilitated with only 3 drivers, and in 2011 the captain assessment had no drivers meeting the educational requirements as set forth in the captain promotional SOP. The fire chief decided to waive the educational requirement to allow for the captain promotional assessment to proceed. However, even though the educational requirements were waived only 2 out of 8 drivers stepped up to take the captain assessment. These candidates were advised that they would be required to

meet the department's educational requirements prior to being promoted. There were concerns among the rank and file because of this decision. At the beginning of 2015, PCFR attempted to facilitate a captain promotional assessment, but it was postponed because no driver's were interested in being promoted and none met the educational requirements. It is important to note that for a driver to become an acting captain they are required to complete a different educational requirement than what is required to actually promote.

Currently Plant City Fire Rescue has only 6 driver positions for future captain promotional assessments to pull from. There are two captains eligible to retire with no plan in place to insure succession. If no one is ready to step up to be a leader then succession is useless (Coleman, 2008). There are firefighters that currently meet the minimum educational requirements to be a captain. However, there is no mechanism in place for the firefighter to be mentored in order to become an acting captain. Although the driver position is a higher rank than the firefighter, it is difficult for a driver to practice company officer duties while on any incident since their primary job is to pump the fire apparatus. The need to determine what components or processes that are available to prepare a firefighter to become an acting company officer is essential for PCFR to insure that there are enough personnel ready to be promoted when the need arises.

The research is linked to the course *Executive Leadership* (EL) held at the National Fire Academy (NFA) (FEMA, 2014). The EL course covers the essential leadership core values that a company officer shall deem, such as: (a) exercising leadership, (b) decision making, (c) influence and persuasion (FEMA, 2014). The development of a company officer for PCFR is directly linked to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) 2014 strategic plan. The following two USFA goals are linked to this ARP, they are: (a) to improve the fire and emergency services



capability for response to and recovery from all hazards, and (b) advance the professional development of fire service personnel and of other people engaged in fire prevention and control activities (USFA, 2014, pp. 12-13).

### **Literature Review**

A literature review was begun at the National Fire Academy (NFA) Learning Resource Center (LRC) reviewing resources centered on company officer leadership and what training is recommended for a company officer. Further research encompassed reviewing PCFR policy and procedures, National Fire Protection Association standards, and searching the internet.

The company officer is a leader, supervisor, manager, and crew member. According to International Fire Service Training Association (2007) and Smoke (2005) the company officer provides leadership, is a role model, gives advice to peers, represents crew members in front of administration, resolves conflicts, and is a counselor when necessary. IFSTA (2007) suggests that the individual from an agency that makes the first impression to the public is the company officer. Also stated is that an acting company officer may not have the same level of authority as a company officer, but has the same responsibility (IFSTA, 2007, p.20).

The acting company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue is the rank of acting Captain. Plant City Fire Rescue SOP102.05 identifies the competencies to become an acting Captain. The competencies can be reviewed in Appendix A. Plant City Fire Rescue SOP 102.031 Captain Selection Process specifies the skills and educational requirements required to participate in the promotional process. The Captain promotional requirements are provided in Appendix B. The Plant City Fire Rescue Captain's job description (Appendix C) outlines the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) for the position.

While researching the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards it was

determined that there are three standards that pertain to training and development for a company officer.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1021 (2014), *Standard on Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* provides job performance requirements for a company officer. Chapter 4 of the standard outlines the following performance criteria that must be met to be a company officer. They are as follows: (a) General, (b) Human resource management, (c) Community and government relations, (d) Administration, (e) Inspection and investigation, (f) Emergency service delivery, (g) Health and Safety. The standard does not specify any differentiation between an acting company officer and a company officer.

Another standard, NFPA 1500 (2013), *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, states “fire departments shall adopt or develop training and education curriculums that meet the minimum requirements outlined in professional qualification standards covering a member’s assigned function.” (Chapter 5, p. 4).

The third standard addressing the training and development for a company officer is, NFPA 1561 (2014), *Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System*. This suggests that all members involved in a supervisory capacity within a command structure be trained in the incident management system.

The national standard is also found in the *Fire and Emergency Services Company Officer* textbook developed by the International Fire Service Training Association (2007). The textbook outlines the following group responsibilities for a company officer:

- Subordinates
- Organization
- Public

- Profession
- Family (p. 22)

The Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (2015) specifically outlines requirements to become a company officer. The PCFR captain training requirements meet this standard. The Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training Fire Officer I curriculum was updated in compliance with the 2009 edition of NFPA 1021(NFPA, 2009). The Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (2015) Fire Officer I curriculum includes the following courses:

- Building Construction for the Fire Service (40 hours)
- Company Officer (40 hours)
- Fire Service Course Delivery (40 hours)
- Firefighting Tactics and Strategy I (40 hours)

The following requirements must also be met to be Fire Officer I certified:

- Be certified as a Florida Firefighter II
- Must complete the Fire Officer I task book (Key job performance requirements)
- Must pass state written exam proctored by the Bureau of Fire Standards and Training
- Complete the Courage to Be Safe Course sponsored through the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

When the student has completed all training as outlined, then a Fire Officer I certificate is issued by the Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training, 2015).

The National Fire Academy (USFA, 2015b) located in Emmitsburg, Maryland offers on campus courses designed to prepare those interested in becoming an acting company officer, or

company officer. The following courses are recommended:

- Conducting Local Risk Reduction by Company Officers
- Fire Protection Systems for Emergency Operations
- Command and Control of Incident Operations
- Command and Control of Fire Department Operation at Target Hazards

In 2014, the National Fire Academy (NFA) introduced a new curriculum called the Managing Officer Program (MO). This new program focuses on professional development for those individuals that want to become a new fire officer. The MO curriculum provides four elements: a) professional development b) education c) training d) experience and e) continuing education (USFA, 2015a). The requirements to be selected into the MO program are as follows:

- Experience level as a supervisor (acting officer time is acceptable)
- An associate degree or a minimum of 60 college credits
- Specified training (regional, and state training)

An agency that promotes professional development is the International Association of Fire Chiefs. They have published the *Officer Development Handbook*, which specifies four levels of fire officer development (IAFC, 2010). The supervising officer section incorporates the NFPA 1021 *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* as the basis. The handbook outlines four core components of supervisor training, they are as follows: (a) essential learning, (b) education, (c) experience, and (d) self-development. The learning requirement focuses on the individual completing state certifications and being trained commensurate to the NFPA 1021 standard (NFPA, 2014). The individual that is pursuing the higher level of education will have to attend the courses outlined in the handbook. The experience component is obtained by on the job training, assigned company officer mentor, and acting in an officer capacity. Lastly, self

development is completing various personal objectives as outlined in the handbook.

Daley (2013) states “there is a significant difference when making the transition from firefighter to company officer.” (p. 2). Prior to promotion it is imperative for the firefighter to have thorough knowledge of fire behavior and building construction. Also recommended is continuing education in the area of fuel loading, air tracking and compartment characteristics (Daley, 2013). Daley recommends that a company officer possess the following leadership traits: (a) strong tactical focus, (b) discipline, (c) inspiration, (d) know your troops, (e) be involved, (f) accept feedback, (g) be decisive, (h) walk the walk.

The Center of Public Safety (CPSE) offers a third party professional credentialing for the Fire Officer (FO). The Fire Officer (FO) credentialing is specific to the company officer level, once completed will enhance the capabilities of the individual and their agency. The benefits for the company officer completing the FO designation will provide (a) professional development, (b) continued education, (c) training and further promotional opportunities. Once the designation is achieved it is only valid for a period of three years (Center for Public Safety Excellence, 2015).

The literature review provided an understanding how important it is for an organization to prepare their personnel prior to advancement. The research provided several national and state training standards to reference when developing future acting company officers. Also identified, is that the responsibilities are the same for both the acting company officer and company officer.

### **Procedures**

The research included two survey instruments. The first survey (Appendix D) was sent out to Florida fire departments to obtain data pertaining to acting company officer development. The Florida Fire Chiefs Association (FFCA) was requested to assist with delivering this survey

instrument because of their capabilities to notify key individuals affiliated with a fire department. The survey questions were developed with the intent of determining what fire departments had an acting company officer training program. An additional request was: What are the specific training requirements used by other fire departments to become an acting company officer and company officer? What fire departments allow firefighters to become an acting officer? Finally, how many years shall an individual have on the job to act? The survey instrument only had a 20% return rate. The second survey (Appendix E) was an internal survey instrument that was sent to PCFR drivers and captains through the city email system. This survey instrument was developed with the intent to gain feedback from both the drivers and captains regarding the current acting company officer training program. Also solicited was if a firefighter shall be allowed to become an acting company officer. The survey also allowed the respondent to add specific comments and recommendations regarding the acting company officer development. The internal survey instrument target was 6 drivers and 6 captains. The internal survey instrument only had 42% of the drivers responding and only 57% of the captains responding. A higher return rate possibly could have been obtained if direction was sent through the Battalion Chief to remind the drivers and captains to complete the survey. Also more time may have assisted with a better return.

Both the survey's had their limitations. The survey instrument sent out to Florida fire departments provided data from 100 fire departments. This was determined to be problematic because the FFCA membership (2200) does not actually reflect the amount of fire departments in Florida.

A personal interview with PCFR Battalion Chief Vince Kiffner was conducted to gain feedback for training and developing acting company officers. He was chosen because of his vast

knowledge in the operations division of PCFR. His personal interview has been cited with documentation in Appendix F.

### **Results**

The research questions presented were guided by using descriptive research methodology.

The first research question asked: What are the educational requirements to be an acting company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue? The review of Plant City Fire Rescue Acting Captain SOP 102.05 (Appendix A) provided the following guidance: Only the driver is currently allowed to become an acting captain (company officer). The driver must have served a minimum of one year in the driver capacity. The following courses must also be completed: (a) Private Fire Protection Systems I, (b) Company Officer, (c) Firefighting Tactics and Strategy, (d) Building Construction for the Fire Service. The SOP also states a few exceptions:

- Fire administration reserves the right to place any eligible driver into an acting position, if a vacancy has been vacant for a long period of time.
- Fire administration has the authority to remove the acting privilege from any driver as part of a disciplinary action.
- Fire administration may waive the course requirements when necessary and on a case by case basis.

The courses that must be completed prior to being allowed to act are all part of the Fire Officer I curriculum administered by the Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (FBFST, 2015). However, there is one course (Fire Service Course Delivery) not listed in the SOP that must be completed prior to an individual being allowed to take the Fire Officer I certification exam. The data also indicated that the current acting captain program does not meet the National Fire

Protection Association (NFPA) 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* (NFPA, 2014).

Research question one was further answered by an internal survey delivered to 6 drivers and 6 captains. The survey instrument (Appendix E) solicited their input regarding the current training required for a driver to become an acting captain and whether they support a firefighter to become an acting captain. Further requested was their input on what other training and years on the job they recommend for a firefighter or driver to be able to act. Survey question one asked: How long have you been affiliated with PCFR? The question was developed to determine the amount of years that a driver or captain has with PCFR. The survey question had 4 out of 6 captains and 3 out of 6 drivers respond. The results of this survey question are presented in Table 1. The data presents that 57% of the Captains responding have between 11 and 15 years on the job. Also presented in the results is that a driver has between 16 and 21 years on the job.

Table 1: How long have you been affiliated with PCFR?

Position	Years with PCFR	Response Percent
Driver	16-20	28
Driver	21	14
Captain	11-15	57

Survey question three asked: How long have you been either a driver or captain with PCFR? The results from Table 2 indicate that 28% of the respondents have less than 5 years in position and 43% have between 11 and 15 years in position.



Table 2: How long have you been either a driver or captain with PCFR?

Years in Position	Response Percent	Response Count Per Section
Less than 5	28	2
5-7	14	1
8-10	14	1
11-15	43	3

Survey question four asked: Do you feel that the training provided by PCFR was adequate in preparing you for the position held? The results presented in Table 3 indicate that 71% of the respondents believe that PCFR provided adequate training for the position held. Also indicated is that 28% of the respondents do not believe training was adequate.

Table 3: Do you feel that the training provided by PCFR was adequate in preparing you for the position held?

Responses	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	71	5
No	28	2

Survey question 5 asked: In your opinion, shall a firefighter who meets all the educational requirements to be a driver and captain with PCFR be allowed to become an acting captain? The results in Table 4 indicate that 57% of the respondents believe that a firefighter that meets PCFR training requirements shall be allowed to act. However, the results state that 43% indicate that a firefighter shall not be allowed to act.

Table 4: In your opinion, shall a firefighter who meets all the educational requirements to be a

driver and captain with PCFR be allowed to become an acting captain?

Responses	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	57	5
No	43	2

Survey question six asked: How many years on the job shall a firefighter have prior to being allowed to become an acting captain? Only the respondents who answered yes to the previous survey question responded. Table 5 indicated that 50% of the respondents believe that a firefighter should have more than years on the job prior to being allowed to act. The results also indicate that 25% of the respondents think that less than five years is adequate.

Table 5: How many years on the job shall a firefighter have prior to being allowed to become an acting captain?

Proposed Years in Position	Response Percent	Response Count Per Section
Less than 5	25	1
5-7	25	1
More than 10	50	2

Survey question seven asked: What training would you recommend to prepare a firefighter or driver to be an acting captain? The results provided various opinions on what training shall be required for a firefighter to be allowed to act. Two of the seven (29%) respondents did state that the firefighter should acquire the Fire Officer I certification, and be trained in the incident command system. Further stated, was that personnel management training and mentoring must be done. Also stated was that an outside training facilitator be brought in to facilitate specific

training in leadership and becoming a company officer. All respondents answered this question. Survey question eight asked: Please list any other recommendations that you may have that will assist in preparing enough acting company officers to be ready for future captain promotional assessments? The respondents provided the following feedback (Appendix E):

- Have a set amount of time each month that an individual be mentored by a captain in order to prepare them to be an acting captain.
- Maintain consistent and standardized training among those individuals seeking to be an acting captain.
- If a firefighter is allowed to be an acting captain then the firefighter shall have 12 to 15 years on the job.
- The individual considered to be an acting captain shall have an understanding of fire behavior.
- The individual must have good leadership traits in order to make the transition from firefighter to supervisor.

An interview with a PCFR Battalion Chief of Operations (Vince Kiffner, personal communication, May 10, 2015) provided further feedback regarding the acting captain training requirements and development. He first stated that it is problematic to have only a pool of six drivers to pull from when training personnel to fill acting captain positions. Also stated is that the current acting captain training requirements need to be modified to incorporate interpersonal dynamic training, and create a mechanism where the driver can maintain proficient firefighting skills by filling the firefighter position on the apparatus. Further stated, was to allow a firefighter to be mentored to become an acting captain if they currently meet the driver and captain educational requirements. However, he recommended that both the driver and firefighter have 8

years on the job prior to being allowed to become an acting captain. Finally, he recommended that a driver shall be given additional points during the captain promotional assessment whereas the firefighter would not.

The second research question asked: What are the current educational requirements and job functions for a company officer with Plant City Fire Rescue?

The reviewing of SOP 102.031 (Appendix B) and the Captain's job description (Appendix C) provided the insight to what training was required to become a company officer (captain) for PCFR. The company officer qualifications are broken down into two areas, knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) and education and experience. It must be noted that the course requirement meets both the Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training Fire Officer I certification and NFPA 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*. During the research it was determined that there was not a job description for the acting captain position.

The third research question asked: What state or national standards are recommended to be a company officer? The research provided state and national standards for developing an individual to become a company officer. The Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (FBFST, 2015) provides a curriculum to certify fire officers. The company officer training certification meets the 2009 edition of NFPA 1021 standard. The following 40 hour courses must be completed prior to taking the state Fire Officer I certification exam:

1. Construction for the Fire Service
2. Company Officer
3. Fire Service Course Delivery
4. Firefighting Tactics and Strategy I

Also included in the curriculum is the Courage to be Safe course sponsored by the National

Fallen Firefighters Foundation. The FOI certification also requires the individual to complete a task book that specifically outlines key job performance requirements. This task book must be proctored by an individual who is a Florida certified Fire Officer I and Instructor I.

The National Fire Protection Association has developed the standard NFPA 1021(2014) *Standard on Fire Professional Development*, is nationally recognized standard that provides job performance requirements to become a company officer. However, the standard does not provide any training differences between an acting company officer and company officer. NFPA 1500 (2013) and NFPA 1561 (2014) also provide guidance in developing a company officer.

The National Fire Academy (USFA, 2015) has a model fire officer training program called the Managing Officer Program (MO). This program essentially focuses on professional development for those that want to become a fire officer. The MO program focuses on four essential training elements: a) professional development b) education c) training d) experience and e) continuing education.

An international agency that promotes professional development is the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). The IAFC has published the Officer Development Handbook which outlines four components that must be taught to a first line supervisor (IAFC, 2010). The following are the four components: a) essential learning b) education c) experience and d) self development. The handbook provides a task oriented outline that the individual can use to assist with professional development.

The fourth research question asked: What training requirements do other fire departments in Florida require to become an acting captain? The survey instrument (Appendix D) sent to Florida fire departments by the Florida Fire Chiefs Association has provided feedback to answer this research question. The survey instrument data indicated that 100 Florida fire departments

responded to survey.

Survey question three asked: What is the makeup of your agency?

Seventy-four percent of respondents answered they were from a career agency.

Survey question four asked: Which of the following rank represents your agencies company officer position?

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents answered the company officer position was lieutenant.

Also indicated was that only 17% company officer positions were called captains.

Survey question six asked: Please explain what your agency requires to be promoted to company officer? This question was a write in that was answered by 93 respondents (93% of total respondents) (Appendix D). The top company officer training requirements noted by the respondents are:

1. Fire Officer I state certification
2. Fire Service Instructor state certification
3. State Pump Operator certification
4. Associate Degree from an accredited college
5. NIMS classes

The fifth research question asked: What other fire departments in Florida allow firefighters to be an acting company officer? The external survey (Appendix D) sent to Florida fire departments will assist with answering this question.

Survey question five asked: What rank is eligible to be promoted to company officer? Table 6 data indicates that 57% of the respondents state that the firefighter is promoted to the company officer position. Further stated is that 33% of the respondents indicated that a driver is promoted to company officer.

Table 6: What rank is eligible to be promoted to company officer?

Promoted Position	Response Percent	Response Count
Firefighter	57	57
Driver	33	33
Other	10	10

Survey question seven asked: Does your agency use acting company officers to fill in at the company level? Table 7 data indicates that 94% of the respondents use acting personnel when filling in at the company officer level; 6% do not allow personnel to set-up to act.

Table 7: Does your agency use acting company officers to fill in at the company level?

Responses	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	94	93
No	6	6

Note: One respondent did not answer survey question seven.

Survey question eight asked: What rank is the acting company officer? This question was answered by those respondents that answered yes to survey question seven. The data shown in Table 8 indicates that 48% of the acting company officers are firefighters. Thirty-four percent of the respondents state that drivers are filling in to act. Four respondents did not answer this survey question.

Table 8: What rank is the acting company officer?

Rank	Response Percent	Response Count
Firefighter	48	46
Driver	34	33
Sergeant	1	1
Other	17	16

The research data confirmed that acting captain development can include the firefighter. Also identified is the latest acting company officer training standards and practices that can be referenced when developing an acting captain development program for PCFR.

### **Discussion**

The training and development of future acting company fire officers is essential for PCFR to fulfill its mission. The ability to have people trained to act and then ultimately be promoted to company officer accommodates succession. The fact that there are only six drivers that may pursue the educational requirements and desire to lead is a concern when filling future acting company officer positions. The acting captain position is essential when preparing someone to ultimately become a captain.

The literature review identified that there is no difference in responsibility between an acting captain and captain. International Fire Service Training Association (2007) suggests that the company officer is the individual that makes the first impression to the public. According to Daley (2013) and Smoke (2005) the company officer provides leadership, mentors others, resolves personnel conflicts, and disciplines when necessary.

The review of national standards, specifically NFPA 1021, *Standard on Fire Officer*



*Professional Qualifications* (2014) provided seven performance areas of training development that can be utilized in updating and enhancing the acting captain training program. A training entity in Florida that follows NFPA 1021 when certifying fire officers is the Bureau of Fire Standards and Training (2015). The state Fire Officer I certification includes the completion of four 40 hour courses and the completion of a task book outlining specific job requirements.

Another entity that specifies training commensurate to NFPA 1021 is the International Association of Fire Chiefs (2010). They have developed an Officer Development Handbook that will assist in updating the current acting company officer training program for PCFR. The handbook outlines the following area of training: learning, education, experience and self-development. Center for Public Excellence (2015) provides a Fire Officer (FO) designation that will assist in developing professional credentials of existing PCFR company officers. Furthermore, the designation process provides a roadmap that could be used as a guideline to train acting company officers.

Recognized on a national basis for fire and emergency service education is the National Fire Academy. The recent addition of the Managing Officer Program (MO) assists those individuals who are pursuing fire officer advancement (USFA, 2015). They also offer other courses specific to the company officer development.

The review of the job description for captain provided 10 essential job functions, and 13 knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's). Educational components consist of five years of firefighting experience, two years as a driver, and completion of state Fire Officer I certification. Also noted was the lack of job function training commensurate with the captain job description. The lack of this training for a new company officer will not allow them to perform to the level expected by PCFR administration.

The review of PCFR standard operating procedures for acting captain and captain provided a noted difference in required educational requirements. Specifically, the acting captain educational requirements do not meet the national (NFPA, 2014) or state (FBFST, 2015) standards for Fire Officer I certification.

The external survey (Appendix D) sent out to the Florida fire departments through the Florida Fire Chiefs Association (FFCA) emphasized that a majority of the respondents utilize acting company officers when backfilling. Further recognized was that 85% of the respondents require the state Fire Officer I certification for their personnel to be an acting company officer or company officer. Further noted, was that 45% of agencies in Florida are requiring a minimum 5 years on the job prior to becoming an acting captain whereas PCFR requires only 4 years.

The survey instrument (Appendix E) introduced internally to the drivers and captains produced feedback that could enhance the current acting company officer training development. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents agreed to allow the firefighter that met the captain educational requirements to become an acting captain. Seventy-one percent of respondents stated that the current company officer educational requirements required are adequate. Overall, consensus from respondents was that a firefighter must have a minimum of ten years on the job prior to being allowed to act. Finally, the respondents identified that (a) mentoring, (b) incident command training, and (c) basic supervisory training should be provided to enhance the development of preparing the firefighter or driver to become an acting captain.

The research has provided the programs and components for PCFR to enhance the acting captain development training program.

### **Recommendations**

The data obtained from this ARP provided state and national training standards that can be referenced when developing an acting company officer training program for PCFR. The problem was that PCFR does not have enough acting company officers is comprised of two components, the lack of an acting company officer development program and the lack of interested drivers to step-up into the acting role.

The first recommendation for PCFR is to establish a committee whose members shall include a driver, company officer, battalion chief, and administration that will be tasked to review and update job descriptions for company officer and driver. These job descriptions must conform to knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) specific to the job function. Creating an acting company officer job description shall also be completed by this committee. Input from current acting company officers should be solicited to establish expectations and responsibilities.

The second recommendation is to determine why there is a lack of interest from drivers to pursue the acting company officer position. A committee should be established from within fire administration tasked with determining why drivers are not pursuing advancement. Once this has been determined; the focus should be to identify what should be included in the acting company officer program. Finally, an SOP should be developed providing a roadmap for the driver to become an acting company officer.

The third recommendation is to develop an acting company officer training program commensurate to the standards outlined in NFPA 1021, *Standard on Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* (NFPA, 2014) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs *Officer Development Handbook* (IAFC, 2010). The state Fire Officer I certification should be continued to be required through the Florida Bureau of Fire Standards and Training.

The final recommendation is to allow the firefighter that currently meets the driver educational requirements should be trained as an acting company officer. Prior to proceeding with this recommendation, PCFR should insure by in from the current drivers and officers. Based on the survey feedback (Appendix D) 57% of the departments are allowing the firefighter to be acting company officers. However, most do not have driver positions. PCFR may need to consider dissolving the driver position to facilitate allowing the firefighter an opportunity to advance.

Future readers seeking to improve either their acting company officer or company officer developmental training program are encouraged to be in compliance with state and/or national standards. The resources available today should provide the tools necessary for any fire department to develop or enhance any training development.

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**Appendix A****Plant City Fire Rescue****Standard Operating Procedure****Acting Captain 102.05**

**PURPOSE:** To provide guidelines and criteria for Driver Engineers to be eligible to perform regular duties of the Station Captain in his/her absence.

**SCOPE:** This procedure shall be used by personnel working in higher classification as an Acting Captain.

**POLICY:** The Acting Captain assignment will be determined and distributed fairly by the Battalion Chief.

Personnel scheduled for regular duty will have priority for the acting position, if eligible, over the person on recall, unless the person on recall is a captain.

**A. CRITERIA FOR ACTING CAPTAIN**

1. Driver Engineer should have served a minimum of one year as a driver.
2. Driver Engineer should have completed the following classes before filling in as an Acting Captain:
  - a. Private Fire Protection Systems I
  - b. Company Officer
  - c. Tactics and Strategy I
  - d. Building Construction for the Fire Service

**B. EXCEPTIONS**

1. If it is determined to be a long range vacancy, administration reserves the right to move any eligible Driver Engineer into that position.
2. Administration has authority to remove or suspend the acting privilege of any Driver Engineer as part of a disciplinary action.
3. Administration may waive, only when necessary and solely on a case by case situation, either item A2 or 3 above in order to effectively operate the department.

## Appendix B

### Standard Operating Procedure

#### Captain Selection Process 102.031

**PURPOSE:** To establish procedures creating an eligible listing of employees for promotion to Captain.

**SCOPE:** This procedure is to be followed in order to create an eligible list of employees for filling of management level positions in the Department. The testing herein listed is designed to identify those candidates possessing the qualities in a candidate that will enable this Department to meet its goals and objectives.

**POLICY:** A notice of examination shall be posted at least three months prior to the date fixed for the beginning of the examination.

Minimum of two candidates must apply and test for the testing process to continue.

Department members requesting the opportunity to sit for the written exam shall first meet the minimum qualifications as set forth in this procedure.

Members must complete two years as a driver engineer for promotion to Captain.

Members requesting to participate shall submit a written memorandum of intent to the Fire Chief, through the Chain of Command and shall have said memorandum in the office of the Fire Chief no later than five business days following the announcement of the promotion process. The memorandum of intent shall be in written form and must carry the signature of the requesting participant. Other forms such as email, facsimile, etc. are not to be considered as written form and will not be accepted.

#### A. POSITION REQUIREMENTS

1. Captain:
  - a. Critical Skills / Expertise:
    - i. To be eligible for Captain an individual must have completed the departmental Officer Development Program.
    - ii. A thorough knowledge of the City of Plant City, including streets and water systems. A thorough knowledge of public buildings gained through pre-fire planning and self-study. Thorough knowledge of the elements of combustion and methods of proper extinguishment. Considerable knowledge of chemistry as it applies to toxic and flammable properties of various elements. Considerable knowledge of fire service hydraulics and pumping operations. Considerable knowledge of the proper techniques to perform rescues and first aid operations. Ability to



perform difficult and dangerous work under emergency hazardous conditions. Ability to be a member of and to direct a team. Knowledge of various types of building construction and related terminology. Ability to deal tactfully and professionally with the public. Ability to gather information and other related data to be used for fire investigation purposes.

- iii. Must possess and maintain current Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic certification with the State of Florida. Must comply with the Bureau of Fire Standards and Training for the State of Florida.

**B. Minimum Qualifications:**

- i. The Florida State Fire Officers Certification Level I. Applicant must have completed (1) year experience as a driver engineer Plant City Fire Rescue, Applicant must possess a valid Florida Driver's license applicable to operating emergency vehicles. Applicant must have passed medical testing as set forth by the City of Plant City Fire Rescue during the previous twelve months to the date of the ability test.

## **Appendix C**

### **CITY OF PLANT CITY**

#### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

**JOB TITLE:** FIRE SHIFT CAPTAIN

**DEPARTMENT:** FIRE RESCUE

#### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION:**

Responsible supervisory work in the direction of the activities on a shift.

#### **ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:**

1. Directs the operations and training activities of the department on a shift.
2. Responds to fire alarms. Directs the route to be taken to the fire and upon arrival determines what apparatus and equipment are needed. Makes decisions as to the best methods of extinguishing fires and directs operations until relieved by a superior officer.
3. Supervises laying hose lines, directing and varying the pressure of water streams, placing of ladders, ventilation of buildings, rescue operations, administering of emergency medical service, and placement of salvage covers.
4. Sees that all station equipment is returned to proper place after a fire has been extinguished and that all equipment is in working order at all times.
5. Supervises cleaning of quarters, equipment and apparatus at a fire station.
6. Inspects personnel and maintains discipline. Transmits orders and information to firefighters. Evaluates performance of subordinates.
7. Participates in training activities and studies modern firefighting methods and techniques. Leads drills of company evacuations. Keeps records.

#### **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**

#### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:**

- Knowledge of and skill in the operation and maintenance of the various types of apparatus and equipment used in firefighting activities, together with ability to supervise the effective use of such equipment and apparatus.

- Knowledge of emergency medical treatment principles and methods and skill in their application.
- Knowledge of fire prevention methods and of City ordinances on Fire Prevention.
- Ability to learn and remember the locations of fire hydrants and streets.
- Ability to lead effectively and maintain discipline.
- Ability to exercise sound judgment, to promote harmony, and to cooperate with other officers.
- Ability to prepare clear and concise reports.

**EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:**

- High school graduation or possession of an acceptable equivalency diploma.
- Five (5) years experience in firefighting.
- Served as a driver operator for two years.

**LICENSES, CERTIFICATIONS OR REGISTRATIONS:**

- Florida Certification as a Firefighter.
- Possession of an appropriate Florida Commercial Driver's License.
- Florida EMT Certification

**ESSENTIAL PHYSICAL SKILLS:**

- Meet physical requirements as indicated for State certification.
- Must endure sustained acts of physical exhaustion and endure periods of duty under unfavorable and life threatening situations.
- Driving heavy vehicles and equipment.
- Heavy (45 pounds and over) lifting and carrying
- Reaching/Climbing/Pulling
- Good vision/hearing (with or without correction)
- Walking/Standing
- Crawling/Kneeling/Bending
- Balancing/Smelling/Stooping
- Jumping/Throwing/Running

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS:**

- Hazardous conditions: flames, fire, chemicals, smoke, heat, gases, moving vehicles, falling structures and debris, electricity, poor ventilation, and poor lighting.

## Appendix D

### Survey Instrument to Florida Fire Departments

Q1 Export ▾

**What is the name your agency? (This question is to prevent duplication, your agencies name will not be cited).**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 1

● Responses (99)   ▲ Text Analysis   📁 My Categories

Categorize as... ▾   Filter by Category ▾   Search responses  🔍 ?

Showing 99 responses

Escambia County Fire Rescue 5/1/2015 1:03 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
Pace Fire Rescue District 5/1/2015 12:10 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
Pinellas County EMS and Fire 5/1/2015 11:17 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
Hallandale Beach Fire Rescue 5/1/2015 8:13 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
Palm Beach County Fire Rescue 5/1/2015 7:38 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
Tamarac Fire Rescue 5/1/2015 7:34 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
Plantation Fire Department 5/1/2015 7:17 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>

Q2 Export ▾

**How many personnel are within your agency?**

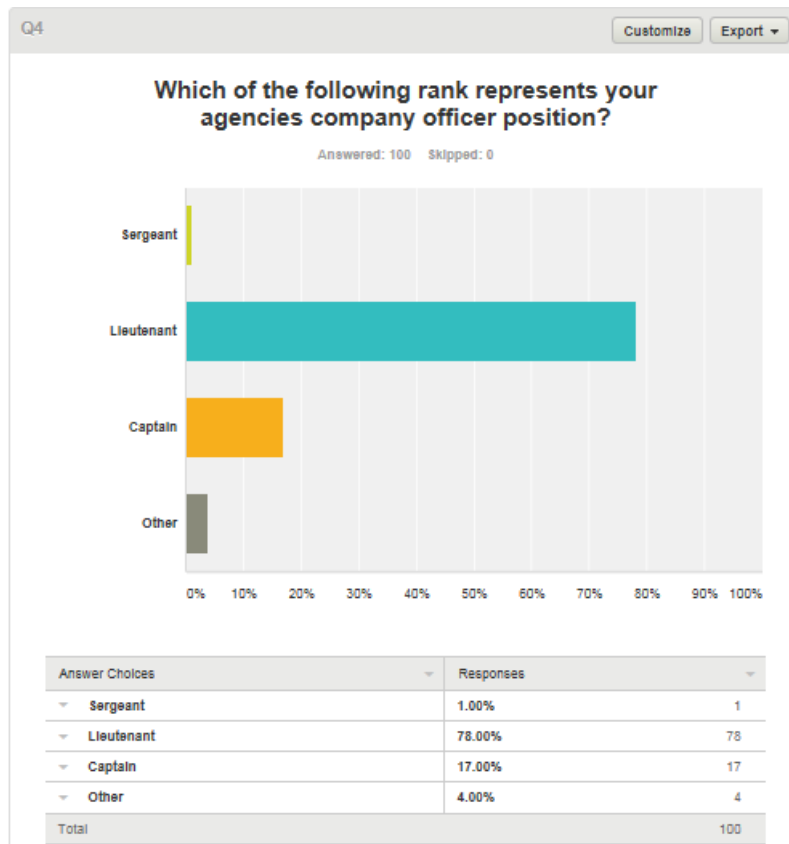
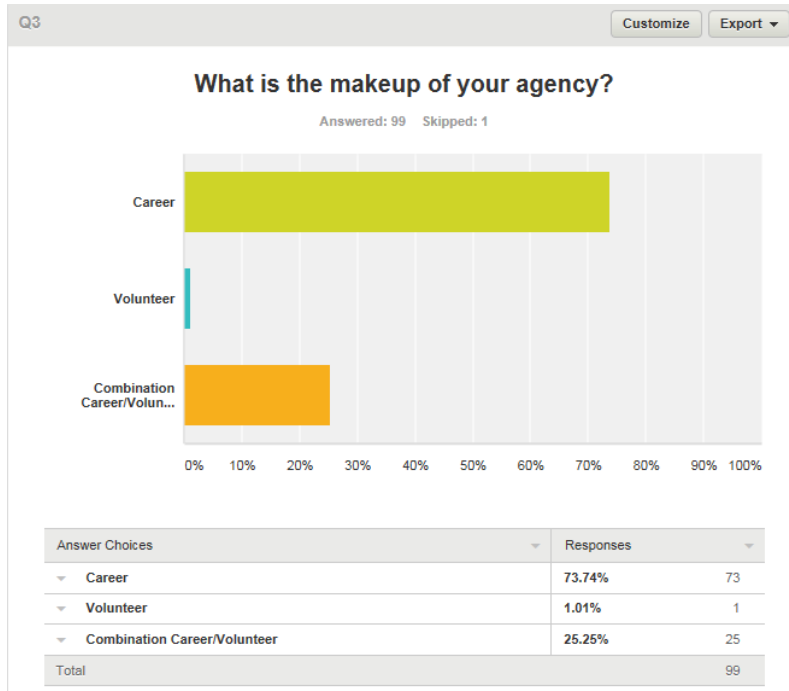
Answered: 99 Skipped: 1

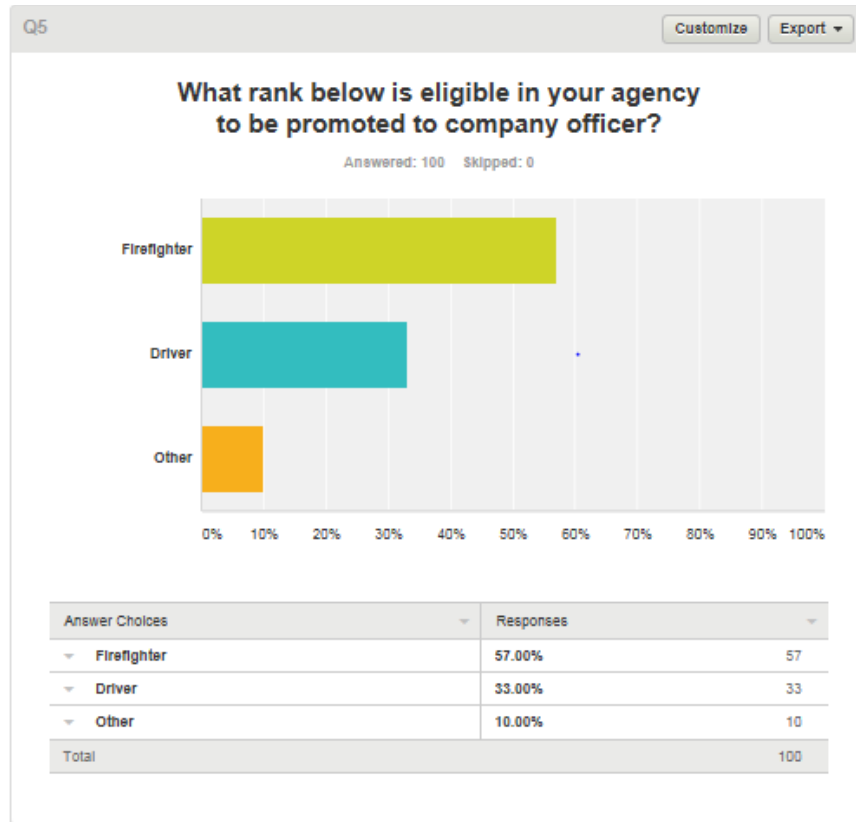
● Responses (99)   ▲ Text Analysis   📁 My Categories

Categorize as... ▾   Filter by Category ▾   Search responses  🔍 ?

Showing 99 responses

Approximately 300 5/1/2015 1:03 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
30 5/1/2015 12:10 PM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
15 5/1/2015 11:17 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
90 5/1/2015 8:13 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
1,452 5/1/2015 7:38 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
102 5/1/2015 7:34 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>
250 5/1/2015 7:17 AM <a href="#">View respondent's answers</a>





Q6 Export

### Please explain what your agency requires to be promoted to company officer i.e. Fire Officer I, Fire Science Degree, years in position etc..?

Answered: 97 Skipped: 3

● Responses (97)
🔍 Text Analysis
📁 My Categories

Categorize as... Filter by Category Search responses

Showing 97 responses

- Company Officer Leadership, FF Tactics 1, Building Construction, ICS 100, 200, 700, Anti-Terrorism. 5 years of full time firefighting experience, 2 with ECFR

5/1/2015 1:03 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
- Fire Officer I

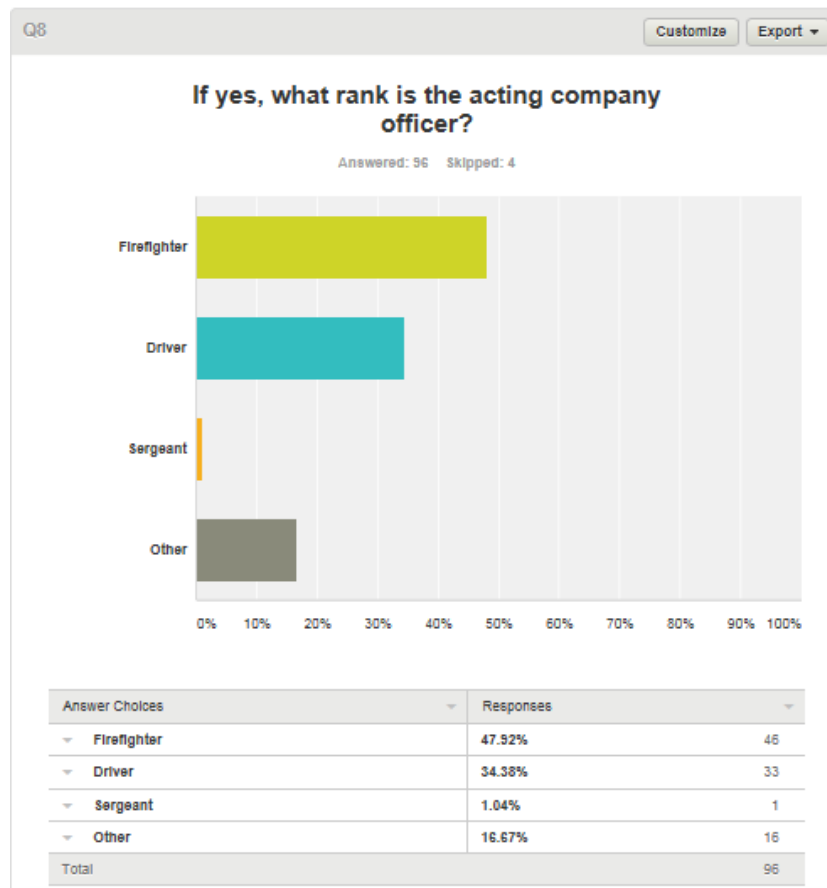
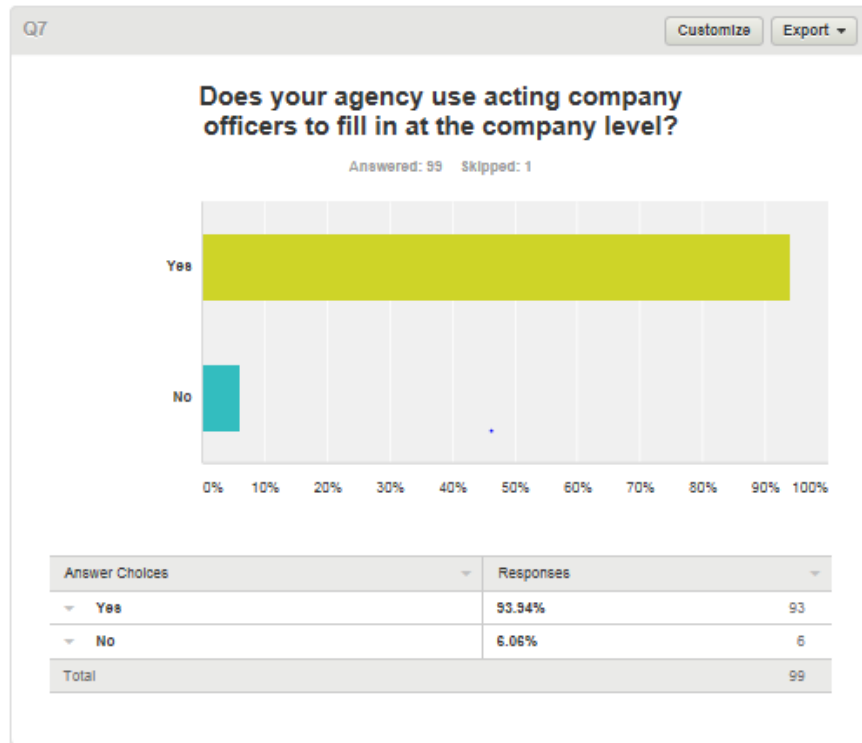
5/1/2015 12:10 PM [View respondent's answers](#)
- AS and BS

5/1/2015 11:17 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
- Must have 3 years on the job and FO1

5/1/2015 8:13 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
- (3) College classes Strategy, Tactics, Company Officer -Time in position

5/1/2015 7:38 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
- FO1 with 5 years of service or 3 years with AS degree in FS or EMS - all require paramedic

5/1/2015 7:34 AM [View respondent's answers](#)
- Crew chief training taskbook completion, modeled after state fire college. Actual fire ground experience and several away from the fire ground items mentoring, coaching, recruiting & retention, counseling and recognizing



Q9 Export ▾

### If your agency allows the firefighter to be an acting company officer, please explain the requirements to act up?

Answered: 82 Skipped: 18

● Responses (82)   ▲ Text Analysis   📁 My Categories

Categorize as... ▾   Filter by Category ▾   Search responses  🔍 ?

Showing 82 responses

All of the requirements to be lieutenant.  
5/1/2015 1:03 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

---

Must complete a Task Book  
5/1/2015 12:10 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

---

N/a  
5/1/2015 11:17 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

---

Must be on a current promotional list, if not available, a completed a upgrade task book is required.  
5/1/2015 8:13 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

---

Must be next on the list.  
5/1/2015 7:38 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

---

Must have passed a promotional test to act on a suppression unit. they are able to act on a rescue unit with training and sign off without participating in the promotional test.  
5/1/2015 7:34 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

---

See #6  
5/1/2015 7:17 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Q10 Customize   Export ▾

### Does your agency require the same education/training for the acting company officer as for the company officer?

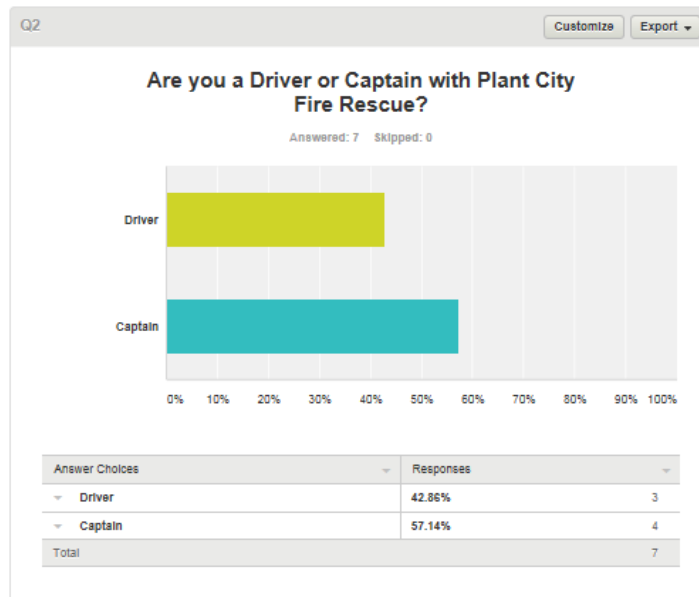
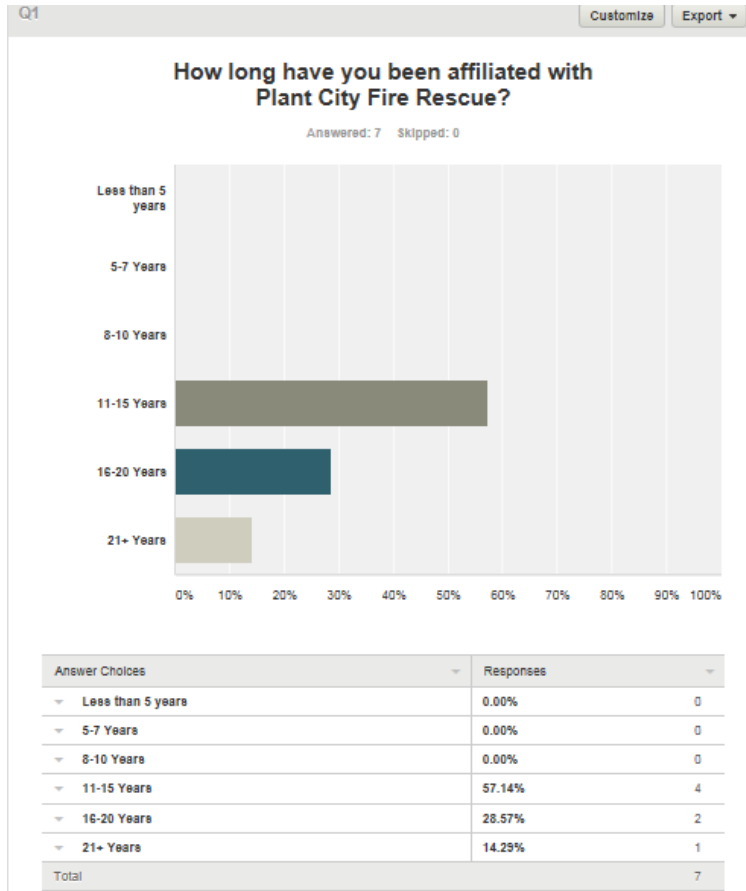
Answered: 97 Skipped: 3

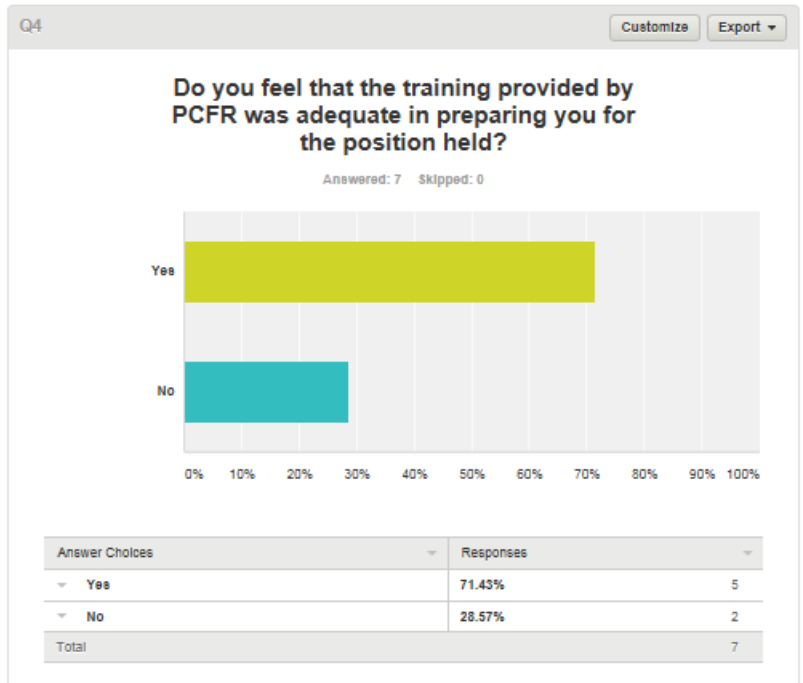
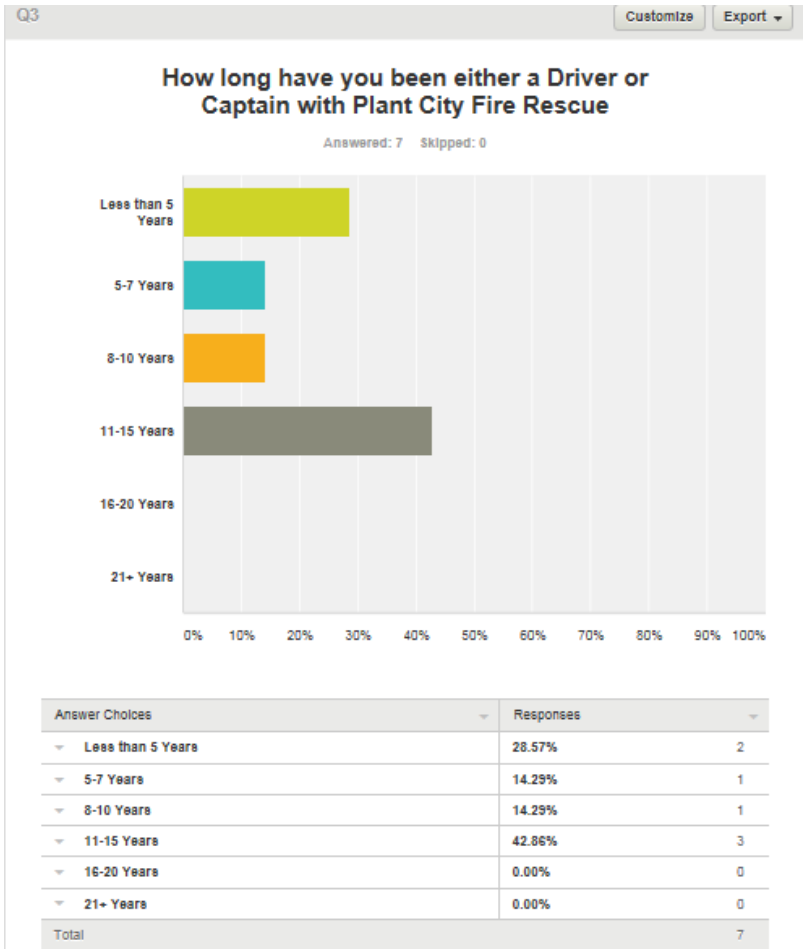
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	58.79%   58
No	40.21%   39
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>

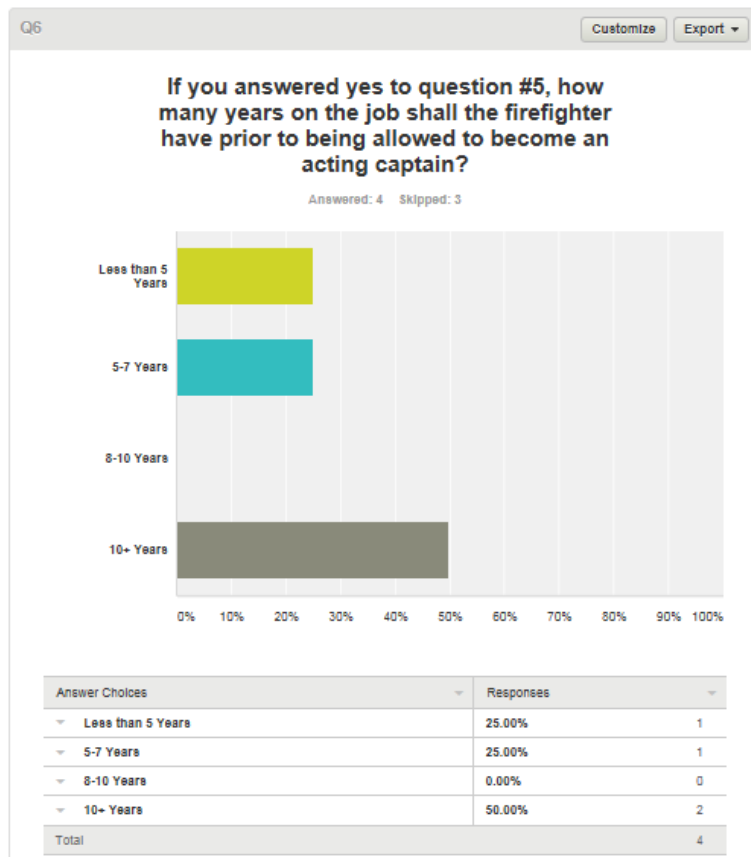
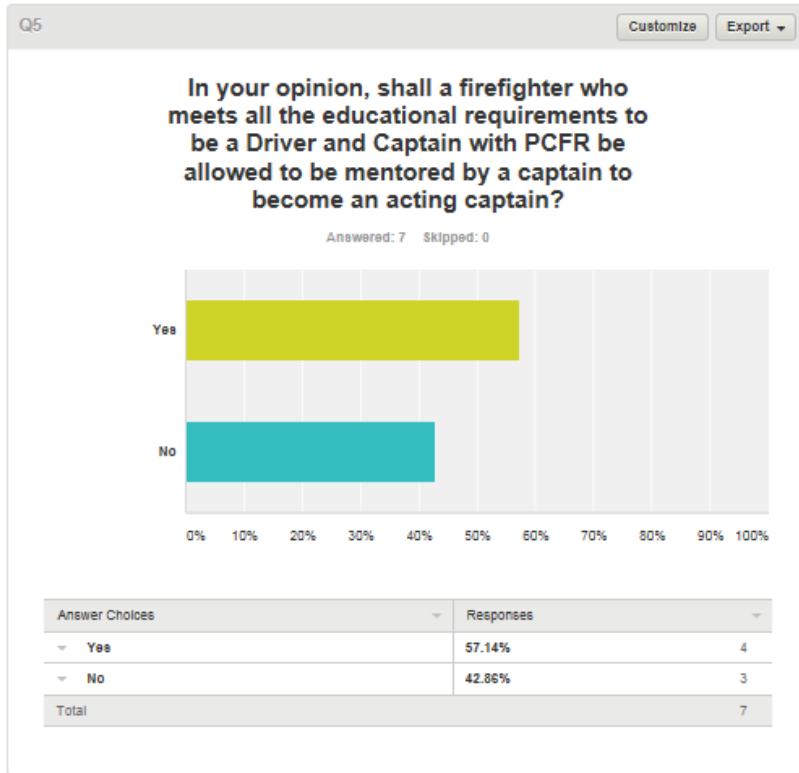


## Appendix E

### Internal PCFR Driver and Captain Survey







Q7 Export ▾

### What training would you recommend to prepare a firefighter or driver to be an acting captain?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 0

● Responses (7) ▲ Text Analysis ▶ My Categories

**PRO FEATURE**  
Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

Upgrade [Learn more »](#)

Categorize as... ▾ Filter by Category ▾ Search responses

Showing 7 responses

That all are treated equally when training. Should follow rank structure from FF to D/E however can be altered from D/E to the next ranks because of compression and quality of individual.  
5/22/2015 10:15 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

A workshop by an outside source. Educating them on all aspects of the job and responsibilities. A continued annual training in areas of the job  
5/22/2015 9:55 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

dont think that the ff should be able to hold the a/c position, but if so then firefighter needs to know the d/e position, the d/e must be competent in that position, Fire Officer 1, OJT including daily operations, company level daily training requirements & how to conduct, ICS for PCFR, shadowing the capt few shifts then acting with capt  
5/21/2015 12:44 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Only the positon under Captain should be able to act up as a acting captain. Some traditions in the fire service you should not change. To prepare the Driver is for the Captain to review company books, handouts, hands on training, and to sit in the seat under his or her supervision.  
5/19/2015 9:00 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**BE MENTORED BY A WELL RESPECTED CAPTAIN AND LEARN FROM HIS EXPERIENCES.**  
5/19/2015 6:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Q8 Export ▾

### Please list any other recommendations that you may have that will assist in preparing enough acting company officers to be ready for future captain promotional assessments?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 1

● Responses (6) ▲ Text Analysis ▶ My Categories

**PRO FEATURE**  
Use text analysis to search and categorize responses; see frequently-used words and phrases. To use Text Analysis, upgrade to a GOLD or PLATINUM plan.

Upgrade [Learn more »](#)

Categorize as... ▾ Filter by Category ▾ Search responses

Showing 6 responses

Better training prior to testing and do not change ANY part of testing after training has been done.  
5/22/2015 10:15 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Mandatory step up time on a monthly basis often a period of consecutive shifts. Displaying consistent routine rather than occasional opportunity.  
5/22/2015 9:55 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

maintain consistency in the training across department and with the requirements needed for the a/c position  
5/21/2015 12:44 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

A firefighter should be only a acting driver. A Driver should only be the position to be a acting captain. Unless it is needed a 12 to 15 year firefighter could possibly test having experience.  
5/19/2015 9:00 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

**LEAD ON YOUR CREW BY EXAMPLE SO IF YOU GET CAPTAIN YOU WILL BE RESPECTED.**  
5/19/2015 6:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I suggest if the department looks at firefighters or drivers for promotional exams that the individuals need to be critized on their personality. For example, are they a motivated individual, are they well respected amongst their peers, are they natural leaders, are they model employees, do they have the fortitude and personality to deal with the daily stresses of a captain in the fire servive. I also believe that some employees may need

## Appendix F

### Personal Communication

Vince Kiffner

May 10, 2015

Vince Kiffner currently holds the rank of Battalion Chief with Plant City Fire Rescue. He provides oversight to the operations division during a specific shift. He has a total of 27 years experience with Plant City Fire Rescue. Chief Kiffner was chosen because of his experience working with the company officers on daily basis.

The purpose of the interview was to gain Chief Kiffners perspective on the current acting company officer training development. The following questions and responses were generated:

1. Do you think the department is at a state of crisis because there are only 6 drivers to pull from to become an acting captain and ultimately be promoted?

He stated that it is definitely a problem when you only have a small amount of personnel to train in the acting captain role. Having only six drivers to only train is problematic for the department.

2. Since the driver currently is the only position able to become an acting captain are you concerned that the drivers only stay at the apparatus and pump?

Yes, he does agree that the driver only stays attending the apparatus during an incident. The driver has no continued experience in firefighting and tactics.

3. Do you believe that the current acting captain training program is acceptable for insuring that the department has personnel ready to be promoted? What new training standards or development would you recommend that we add to the current training development?

He suggests that the current acting captain training requirements include interpersonal dynamic training, and create a mechanism that will allow the driver to be the firefighter on the apparatus during a shift to maintain firefighting skills.

4. Do you think that a firefighter who meets the educational requirements for both driver and captain shall be allowed to act?

He does support allowing the firefighter in becoming an acting captain if they meet all the requirements for a captain.

5. How many years on the job should a driver have prior to being allowed to act? How many years on the job should a firefighter have prior to being allowed to act?

He stated that both the driver and firefighter should have 8 years on the job prior to being allowed to become an acting captain.

6. How would you recommend that the department proceed in training the firefighter to become an acting captain?

The department would have to create an avenue for the firefighter to be mentored by their captain. Also needed is additional training in interpersonal dynamics. Also suggested is to provide the firefighter educational leave in order to meet the educational requirements required.

7. During the promotional testing process, how would you set-up the assessment scoring to accommodate the firefighter to test along with the driver?

He stated that the driver should be given additional points for holding the rank of driver when computing the final promotional assessment score.