

**Assessing the Need for a Full Time Training Officer in the Parma Fire
Department**

By: John French
Chief of Fire
Parma Fire Department
6655 Ridge Road, Parma Ohio, 44129

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ABSTRACT

The problem this study addressed was to determine if the full time position of Training Officer was needed in the Parma Fire Department. Through the years as Parma Fire grew from one station and a handful of firefighters to five stations and over one hundred uniformed personnel company officers were responsible for keeping the troops adequately trained. This became more and more difficult as increased activities placed more demands on the company officers and the increased size of the organization caused a reduction in the uniformity of the training between shifts.

The purpose of this study was to assess the Parma Fire Department and its training requirements to determine if the department needed a full time training officer. Utilizing descriptive research, a survey was used to obtain feedback on this topic from fire departments with similar demands and needs to learn how they overcame similar concerns.

The research questions were:

- What are the training requirements of the Parma Fire Department?
- What fire department factors should be assessed to help determine if a full time training officer is needed?
- How have other fire departments with similar needs addressed the assignment of a training officer?

This study began with the accumulation of data containing accepted standards and training requirements as indicated by national and local fire service entities. When the data was compiled in an orderly fashion it was reviewed to determine what the specific PFD training targets were and how to reach them.

The data showed that due to time constraints and increasing technical issues a change was needed. The final result was a recommendation to obtain a full time Training Officer within the Parma Fire Department. It was further recommended that the Parma Fire Department review and revise its training records management system.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Firefighters are the first group called upon when someone has a situation where lives or property are being threatened by anything from flooding to chemical reactions including fires. As said in the book used in our county fire school and one of the most respected fire service training books in the nation, Essentials of Firefighting by IFSTA:

“Firefighters are not extraordinary-they are ordinary people who often find themselves in extraordinary situations. They can not do everything at once, and they and the public must accept this fact. Bringing any emergency situation to a safe conclusion requires knowledge, ability and skill.”

This knowledge, ability and skill can only be attained and then maintained through continuous training because, “A firefighters training never ends”, (IFSTA, 2004). New ideas and tactics are constantly being introduced and additional training is constantly required to keep knowledge and skills current. While the basic concept of the fire service, protecting life and property and “putting the wet stuff on the red stuff” has not changed much over the centuries, the actual things firefighters do changes constantly to meet changes in society from building construction to people’s perspective on life itself. One area presently changing in Ohio is the passage of House Bill 401 which mandates minimum continuing education requirements for Ohio’s firefighters. All of this leaves the firefighter without continual and current training in a more dubious position than ever, where mistakes not only mean life-or-death, but a lack of training and accurate records documenting it can also mean the loss of a job.

In the past, firefighters would learn new methods for accomplishing tasks and they were ready to go to work. Fire departments maintained their records as they saw fit and trained when they could. Today's fire service must keep track of certifications in everything from fire ground tactics, hazardous materials and technical rescue to the most recent medical skills such as quick vascular access with bone drills. Each skill must be learned originally and reinforced periodically to keep the firefighter ready to act. Additionally, comprehensive records must be maintained indicating each attendee, instructor, class outlines and more. The days of unwavering sovereign immunity, while not gone entirely, are being challenged and fire departments are being found responsible for their actions as well as inactions.

The problem this study will address is to determine if the full time position of Training Officer is needed in the Parma Fire Department in order to meet existing training standards as well as the new State of Ohio Firefighter Continuing Education requirements. Through the years as Parma Fire grew from one station and a handful of firefighters to five stations and over one hundred personnel, the company officers were responsible for keeping the troops adequately trained and always at the ready. During this time PFD expanded from assisting the Parma Police with their ambulance service to taking over EMS and becoming an advanced life support provider. With each increase in fire stations an officer and four firemen were added until the present company officer strength of fifteen was achieved. The original concept of company officers providing most of the training became more and more difficult to maintain consistency between the shifts and crews as the department expanded. With each of the fifteen officers training a little different than the next each of Parma Fire's three shifts at each of the five stations to

operate somewhat differently, as if there were fifteen different fire departments. While the tactical training became less consistent it became more obvious that leadership and management training also needed more consistency. The author realizes that some of the blame for the fifteen different departments issue can also be attributed to inconsistency in supervision but this area would also be a key target for a more structured training program. When a firefighter trades or fills an overtime slot at a different station they sometimes find themselves out of touch with how that crew operates.

The differences in operations between crews are lessened by PFD's Standard Operating Procedures but consistency is still lacking. Most importantly it must be remembered that firefighters operate as a crew under the direction of a crew leader (ICMA 2002). There is an overpowering need for the team concept and each member of the team must work as a member of that team, towards the same goals. When different crews develop different ways of working it becomes more difficult to trade and switch team members. Members' working together requires uniformity. Uniformity will only occur when everyone is working as part of the team in the same way they learned and subsequently practiced. These differences in operations can cause delays and miscommunications in achieving goals and tactical objectives and the author believes that these differences can be reduced through a more consistent training program.

The purpose of this study is to identify if a full time training officer is needed in the Parma Fire Department. If the research indicates that there is a need for the new position then the information gathered will be utilized to properly propose the need to the City of Parma Administration for planning and implementing the program for success.

Utilizing descriptive research, a survey will be used to obtain feedback on this topic from the author's department as well as departments with similar demands and needs.

The questions this study will investigate are:

1. What are the training requirements of the Parma Fire Department?
2. What fire department factors should be assessed to help determine if a full time training officer is needed?
3. How have other fire departments with similar needs addressed the assignment of a training officer?

Background and Significance

The City of Parma is situated in Northern Ohio within Cuyahoga County and sharing a border with the City of Cleveland on the North side and eight smaller cities on the remaining borders. Parma encompasses just under 21 square miles and has a population of approximately 83,000 people. The city experienced its most rapid growth during the sixties and seventies swelling to over 100,000 residents in the mid seventies. The Parma Fire Department (PFD) had its official beginning in 1924 with the department sharing a building with the Parma Police. After the police moved into their own station Parma Fire expanded to two additional stations in the 1950s, then two more in 1969 on the South side which provided the present total of five stations. The outlying stations are spaced out fairly evenly and divide Parma into four districts of about five square miles each. These outlying stations (Stations 1, 2, 4, & 5) each house an engine company consisting of a fire engine carrying an officer and two firefighters and a medic unit with two firefighter paramedics. The remaining station (Station 3) is located in the center of the city and has a ladder company consisting of an aerial truck with an officer and two

firefighters and a heavy rescue truck with two firefighters. In addition to the ladder company Parma Fire has its administrative offices at Station #3. The fire chief during the 1969 expansion was Leonard Ott. He noticed it was getting more and more difficult to provide consistent and structured training as the department grew so he made his first request to city administrators for a full time training officer in the 1969 PFD Annual Report. It was promptly denied for budgetary reasons.

The Parma Fire Department grew steadily through the mid and late 1900s in terms of the number of stations and the number of line personnel. It grew from sharing a building with the Parma police to fully staffing five stations. The position of chief was the one and only staff position on the department until an assistant chief was appointed in 1959. The first designated PFD fire prevention officer came to be in the late 1960s with another added in the seventies; the current number of three was attained in the late eighties. The Parma Fire Prevention Bureau became quite a necessity during this rapid growth of the city as the number of schools, commercial properties, industrial buildings and places of assembly grew from a few to several hundred and now well over three thousand. During this growth there were many times where training sessions had to be well planned, prepared and administered in a timely and professional fashion such as training line personnel to assist with building inspections, emergency medical response training, hazardous materials, technical rescue and more. During this same period the actual hands-on fire training became less frequent as other training and duties filled up the increasingly tight schedules.

The department experienced cycles where fire training became something mostly for the new guys and once a firefighter had fire school and a couple of working fires

under their belt they were just expected to do the right thing. New company officers would often emerge and work to inject new life into an organized training program but it never lasted long enough to become a consistent and structured program. Many worthwhile and valuable classes were provided but the overall training program never flourished and earned the status it deserved.

In the mid 1980s EMS became the forerunner in consuming valuable training hours. Once PFD's first class of paramedics hit the streets in 1986, it seemed that the department had become a medical service. EMS activities occupied over 80% of the department's time from ambulance runs, continuing education classes, and learning new techniques. As the department's EMS activities grew, the bulk of the EMS training was organized and presented by the medical control hospital. The hospital EMS Coordinator basically became the department's EMS Training Officer. EMS received the attention it deserved but other areas fell farther behind. If the areas of fire and management training would have had a similar entity the other training areas would be less of an issue today but no such program emerged. During this same time, company officers were assigned intermittently to handle training, but they often lost the battle for what little time there was in a day to the division of EMS and other issues. PFD run volume increased by over 300% through the 90s. Today, with over 13,000 responses annually and most of the runs occurring during the day and during weekdays, the same time that most training is held, it is apparent why an organized and consistent training division never fully developed.

The fire service is growing by leaps and bounds into an ever increasing organization responsible for not only putting out fires and helping injured people, but

also becoming an all hazard response team. This includes the original roles and then adds everything from fire prevention, cause and determination, injury prevention, public education, technical rescue, hazardous material response, disaster preparedness and more. The author realizes that the fire service of the early 1900s was called on for most of these same types of instances but he also realizes that the fire departments of today are expected to know exactly what to do and how to mitigate these situations efficiently and correctly. The days of showing up and using manila rope at a high angle rescue (and maybe getting away with it) are over. In the early days such an event that ended disastrously would simply be justified by claiming an equipment failure. The fire department of the past paved the way for today's fire service and for that today's firefighters should be grateful. But the firefighter of today also owes their predecessors something. Today's firefighters owe it to them to have learned from them and they must now plan and organize for the future to prevent making the same mistakes of the past. Training can no longer fill a time slot that has already been picked over by every other fire department service and duty. Training, all training including EMS, fire suppression as well as management training must become a priority in fire departments now and it must be considered second only to response activity.

Today's fire service is expected to have the right equipment and the knowledge to go with it to bring an ever expanding array of scenarios to a safe and happy conclusion. Parma Fire has met these challenges in several areas, from a well equipped and trained cadre of EMS instructors, SCBA technicians with a repair station and purchasing power, firefighters trained in computer skills, radio technicians and more. Some of the burden has been eased by participation in the Southwest Emergency

Response team (SERT) of which PFD is a member. PFD has recently approached the issue of training again, and on January 1, 2007, the department began a new training program. A group of instructors was assembled and a curriculum was adopted. PFD has signed a contract with Cuyahoga Community College to provide a curriculum and to track State required hours. The PFD instructors are reviewing the material, planning the classes, developing class outlines, presenting the training and working on a records system. A captain is assigned as the department's Training Officer in addition to his duties as a company officer and shift commander. While PFD is making progress there remains a need for more uniformity.

The potential impact this study could have on the Parma Fire Department is that it can provide information and guidance on improving one of the department's biggest areas of concern, training. One valuable benefit that came from this study was that it provided an organized and more detailed description of where PFD is now in regards to training, what additional training needs PFD had and how other fire departments have addressed similar training needs. This will enable PFD to work towards becoming a better, more organized and more consistently trained fire department. Training among the members of the PFD will improve and this will cause the firefighters to operate more similarly on each crew. Improving the training program will cause more consistency which will have many positive effects on the fire ground including reducing injuries, increasing effectiveness of activity and overall improvement as a fire department.

If this project would have lead to the conclusion that a full-time training officer was not needed, the information gathered would assist PFD in strengthening the present training programs or directing efforts in another direction to accomplish the desired

training objectives. Since the study indicates that a full time training officer is a valid need for the department the study will be presented to the City of Parma's Safety Director to pursue the creation and filling of the position. The study will then be used to help form the foundation for the new position. Whether or not a full time training officer was needed, the department can only benefit from the information gathered and the networking performed for this study.

It is the author's belief that the Parma Fire Department Training Officer, full-time or assigned company officer will be able to utilize the information gathered in this document to better plan, organize and implement a more structured training program. The training program that is implemented will most likely include all areas of training from new recruit orientation, EMS, fire suppression and through to the areas of management and leadership. It is the author's belief that the training officer will teach some of the topics but be more responsible for coordinating, monitoring, recording and organizing all of the training within the department. In the present era of regionalization the training officer should also be expected to work with neighboring fire departments to increase the joint training and improve joint operations as well.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed during the research portion of this paper included; training records and annual reports from the Parma Fire Department; Executive Fire Officer Research Projects; NFPA Standards; ISO Standards; fire training manuals used in a local fire training academy; and articles from a monthly magazine well known for its contribution to fire training.

According to the most recent PFD Annual Report (2007 PFD Annual Report) the Parma Fire Department logged 10,182 hours of training for the year. This reflected all of the training that was entered into the Fire House data system throughout the year in the areas indicated in Table 1.

PFD Training Hours for 2007

Training Topic	Hours	% of Total	Description
Specialized	389.5	3.83%	Tech Rescue, SWAT, SERT
Fire Schools	420	4.13%	Fire Academy, Ohio FS
Hazmat	471	4.63%	PFD Hazmat Training, non-SERT
Administrative	581.4	5.71%	Policy/ Procedure review
Company	2185.25	21.46%	Single Company training
Fire/ Shift Training	2309.25	22.68%	Fire Training as a Shift/ multi-company
EMS	3825.25	37.57%	All EMS training
Total 2007	10181.65	100.00%	Total Training Hours

Table 1

As indicated the area of EMS lead the way in hours spent training and by no small margin. The prevailing reason for this is that the training hours for EMS are mandated by the State. If a paramedic doesn't fulfill specified training requirements the paramedic card is revoked and the paramedic can not function as such. Additionally, EMS training is better organized and more consistent because the medical control hospital provides the curriculum and most of the instructors for the EMS training.

If the same accountability was applied to fire training there would not be this void of regularly scheduled training hours. Prior to 2008 a firefighter was not required by the State to attend any continual training once their original certifications were met. HB 401 has changed this as it does specify minimum required training hours. Fire departments in Ohio will now be forced to implement a well organized training program and reviewable training records system in order to maintain the certifications of their personnel.

The category of Fire/Shift Training, which ranks second in hours of training, is a record of entire shift and multi-company training. This category includes training that the entire shift participates in that is non-EMS. Examples include incident critiques, reviewing new equipment or procedures and any hands on training where all stations participate in even if by grouping companies together. Grouping companies allows for some companies to be in-service for a rapid response while others are committed to drills. One additional area in need of attention is PFD's record keeping system. The current records system has been in place for approximately four years and it is presently being reviewed for improvement and possibly replacement. The system is part of a fire service software program titled "Fire House" and it is very basic. The system allows too much room for error as it comes out of the box and it must be updated and personalized to match each departments needs. Additional training is acquired through a computer based system PFD received through a \$17,000 Assistance to Firefighters Grant in 2005; Action Training. This training is very thorough and it is an interactive program but it is entirely computer based and does not involve practical time or crew building training. Records for this training are not included in 2006 as the computer used for this training was not fully functional until late in 2007.

Information reviewed from the PFD Annual Reports (1990 through 2005) indicates an increase in run volume of over 300% over the last 15 years. Records also indicate that the PFD run volume is higher during the week (figure 2) and also peaks between the hours of 0800 and 1900 (figure 3). This is an interesting and unexpected statistic that causes concern as over 90% of PFD training falls into the same time frame.

This causes the company officer assigned the additional responsibility of the training officer to have little time to devote to the actual training program without neglecting company duties.

PFD Daily Response Activity for 2006

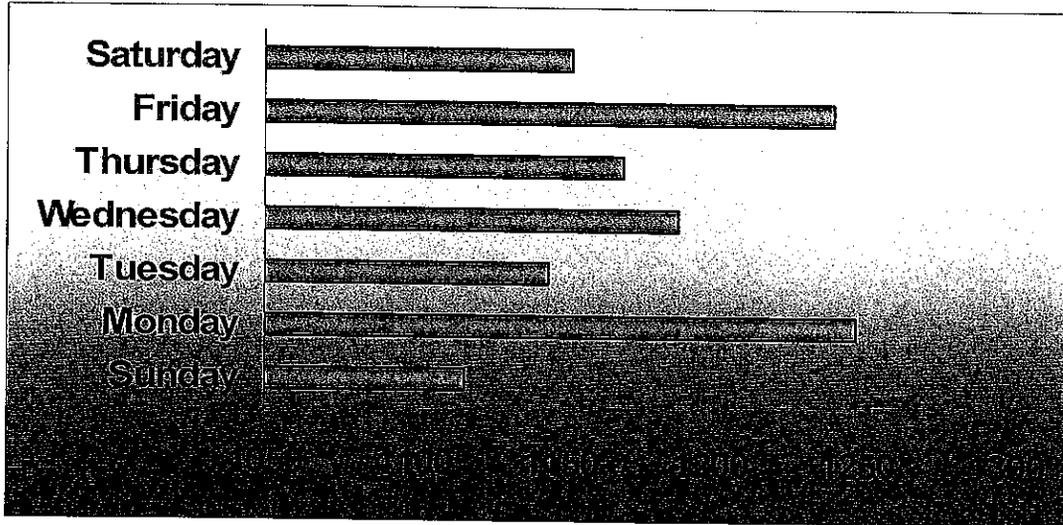


Figure 2

PFD Hourly Response Activity for 2006

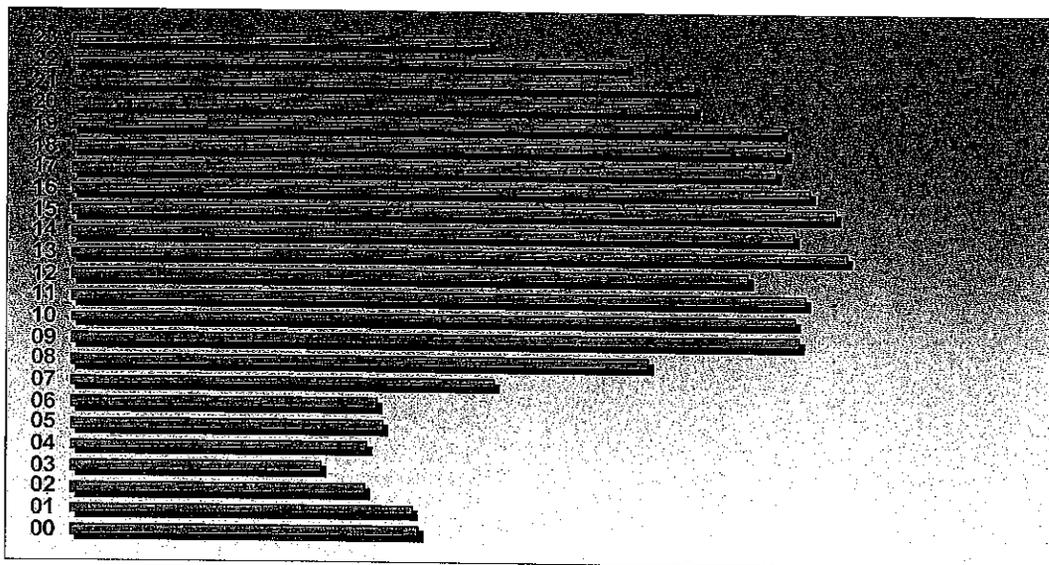


Figure 3

NFPA has several standards that address differing areas of training including the base or foundation NFPA standard on the development of a fire department, NFPA 1201 (2004). This standard's purpose reflects the importance of training to the NFPA, "the fire department shall have a training program and a policy that ensures that personnel are trained and competency is maintained to effectively, efficiently, and safely execute all responsibilities consistent with the department's mandate in Chapters 2 and 3." These chapters of the NFPA standards cover the entire purpose for having a fire department from programs and procedures to fire prevention activities and then putting out fires. They also address other emergency services fire departments provide as well as how the fire department should be working together with their local governments. Within this standard there is an extensive section covering the Training Officer (4.11.3, pp7) which lists their various responsibilities from supervising the instructors, meeting applicable professional standards, furnishing subjects, developing schedules and reporting activities. It is apparent that most of a training officer's time should be utilized to plan, organize and manage the training program.

NFPA 1401, *Fire service Training Reports and Records* (2006), stresses the trend of litigation in today's society and sets extensive standards on training records. This standard further explains that accurate and complete training records as specified within 1401 as being one of the methods a fire department can limit its liability. Nine pages of this document are examples of training documents, a very thorough record keeping system intended to be utilized as a guide. The keeping of accurate records is not the end of the record keeping process but it is part of the continuous cycle of improvement. The records are to serve as a tool for the department to administer the human resource

development of the fire service organization. By reviewing this standard one can see that accurate and complete record keeping involves much more than simply documenting each firefighter's presence at specific training classes; it also becomes a guide to tracking efficiency and developing a plan for constant improvement. Accurate and well kept records can then be utilized for analysis by the training officer to assess the effectiveness of the training in terms of staffing, time and financing. The records can also be used to develop specific objectives and evaluate compliance as well as deficiencies in the training program. In reviewing the extensive preparation, planning, organizing, information gathering and subsequent evaluating, assessing, and reporting of an accurate and complete training records system it is apparent that much of a training officers time must be spent performing records management. The time commitment to establishing and maintaining a thorough and accurate training records system would appear to be very extensive and become one more activity fighting for the same time period as most of a fire department's daily activities.

NFPA 1410 (2005) is an entire standard with the purpose of specifying minimum requirements for evaluating training and performance for initial fire suppression and rescue procedures. The document contains over sixteen pages of very specific duties, procedures and responsibilities of first and later arriving responders in relation to their departments particular staffing and it also includes the accepted time required for each activity. In reviewing these detailed evolutions and their reference to individual department's "normal staffing" the need for department specific standard operating procedures is emphasized. The drafting, evaluating and scheduled review and revision of

a departments standard operating procedures will also require much involvement of the training officer.

As stated in the green book, *Managing Fire and Rescue Services (2002)*, training programs can be simple or they can be complex depending greatly on the size of the organization. Regardless of the size or complexity all programs require certain elements to be successful. The elements are: training for incoming personnel, in service training, staff development, learning from incidents, training for special operations and training records.

The author's department has developed a fairly extensive process for addressing the area of training incoming personnel, as have most departments. Parma Fire's in service training and special operations training has also improved greatly in the last few years but the other areas need to be addressed more thoroughly. This was further demonstrated by a 2004 survey of Parma Fire by the Insurance Services Office (ISO). The department received a 2.79 out of a possible 9 points for training. The recommendation for improvement included improving the training program and the records for training. The ISO lists many specific areas of training including the length of drills, specific topics, the time of day the drills were conducted and training facility needs. These items must also be woven into the PFD training program and the record keeping system modified to accept it. While the validity of the ISO and the timeliness of their methods can be questioned, it is an indication that there is room for improvement in the Parma Fire training program. As stated by the ISO, "a community committed to saving lives and property needs trained firefighters, proper equipment, and an adequate supply of water" (ISO PPC 2003). In the ISO rating of a community's fire protection the

following breakdown is used for rating the areas of concern, 10% for receiving and dispatching alarms, 50% for the fire department and 40% for the water supply.

Included in the area of the fire department are the type and extent of training, number of participants in training, firefighter response to emergencies, and maintenance and testing of firefighting equipment. These ratings point towards an emphasis on training, and there is a fairly extensive description of training items as well as points lost for incomplete training records within the ISO standards.

In reviewing the literature used for this research project it is apparent that the PFD training program has strengths as well as many weaknesses. Past training records indicate a large percentage of training time is already devoted to EMS which is approximately 80% of the department's response activity. The present record system makes more specific comparisons difficult at best, and the development of a new training record system would be a priority for a new training officer within PFD. A well rounded and efficient training program involves researching training needs, developing a solid plan and developing accurate record keeping. Having an individual to commit the time required to perform these tasks professionally and efficiently is the goal of most fire departments and deciding if an existing company officer can handle these responsibilities with their present assignments is the pressing question.

Procedures

This project started with the realization that the Parma Fire Department needed to address the training of its members. There wasn't one particular event or one consistent problem in the department's performance but there was a degradation of the uniformity required for the fire services crew or team concept to be effective. While the actual

catalyst for the timing of this study was the introduction of legislation by the State of Ohio, HB 401(2006) which mandates continuing education requirements for firefighters in the State of Ohio, Parma Fire began to work towards improving the training program in 2005. One of the initial steps in this direction occurred when an internal survey (Parma Fire Training Officer, 2004) was conducted by the author to assess the department's training process and in particular the question of whether PFD's company officer's believed a full time training officer was needed. While the survey was informal the results showed very few, one out of sixteen, did not believe the position was needed. The survey was introduced with a paragraph explaining the author's goal of improving the PFD Training program and included the questions in Figure 4.

Questions within an internal survey of PFD regarding the position of Training Officer

- Why do we need a Training Officer?
- What rank should the TO be?
- How should we go about organizing this for success?
- How should the T. O. fit into the rank structure? At what pay scale? Is the T.O. able to take a higher promotional test than the level prior to T.O.?
- Would you consider taking this position?
- How do we attract an individual that really wants this position for the right reasons and increase the chance for success?
- Should the T.O. have to commit to a minimum amount of time of service?
- What will this individual's job description be? EMS? Administrative duties?
- If anyone has information or documents that would assist in writing a job description please forward them to me?
- What would the shift officers' role be in training when we have a T.O.?
- Do you have any suggestions for things or areas not mentioned here?
- Would you suggest anyone for this position?
- Should we form a committee to hammer out the details? Would you want to be involved at all?

Figure 4

Once the need was identified, a committee of volunteers was formed from within the ranks of the department to develop a process for filling the position and writing a job description to define exactly what this individual would do. This research study was intended to complement the work of the PFD Training Officer Committee, identify if and why this position was needed and to further direct the program towards success. As stated in the study the department was not unaware of the need for an improved training program throughout the past years but the various attempts at improvement never attained the success that was desired.

This study began with the accumulation of data containing standards and training requirements as dictated within PFD as well as various other departments and entities. A survey (Appendix 1) was utilized to assess other fire departments with similar needs to ascertain how they addressed the area of training and the assignment of a training officer within their departments. The survey was sent to thirteen fire departments of similar size in the State of Ohio. It was expected that this group would provide valuable input from fire departments of similar size and needs striving to meet the same standards and state requirements as PFD. Assistance was obtained through the U.S. Fire Administration's voluntary survey records to develop a list of fire departments in Ohio that are career departments and have between four and seven fire stations. The actual break down included departments with the following number of stations: nine with four stations, three with five stations, one with six and one with seven stations. The number of departments surveyed was determined by the number of career departments in the State of Ohio that are similar to Parma Fire which was indicated by the number of stations being between four and seven. There are fourteen departments in the 2007 USFA census as operating

out of four, five, six or seven stations including Parma. The same survey was also answered by Parma Fire to assist with comparisons. The survey asked questions related to each departments size, rank structure, training program and whether or not the department had a training officer. Additionally, each department was asked for an assessment of their departments' successes and perceived needs regarding their training programs.

Results

Ten departments including PFD responded to the survey and the results were that only three of the respondents did not have a full time training officer including PFD. One department indicated that they have two full time training officers with one designated for EMS and one for fire and rescue. In all departments with a training officer the minimum rank for the position was captain and included battalion chief and deputy chief. In all three of the responses without training officers the acquisition of a full time training officer was listed as a priority. All but two of the respondents listed additional funding and training staff as a current need to improve their training programs. While there appears to be substantial differences in the rank structures of the departments the need for more resources to manage training and training records was an overwhelming similarity.

The reference materials reviewed for this study indicated that training and training records are only secondary to response activity in the department's list of priorities. The data was organized and reviewed to determine common training targets or expectations and methods to reach and maintain them. The information reviewed demonstrated an overall increase in the training demands placed on the fire service for various reasons including an increased concern for safety, meeting widely accepted standards, avoiding

litigation, new or existing state requirements and the ever increasing role of the fire service. In addition to the aforementioned issues there has been a drastic increase in the number of skills requiring certification as well as periodic recertification from the disciplines of technical rescue and hazardous materials to the public service activities such as child safety seat installation and juvenile fire setter counseling. As the role of the fire service is expanding it is also taking on a more technical aspect which is straining the less formal training programs and training records management systems of the past.

With the increasing demands placed on the fire service in terms of educational requirements and daily activities it is becoming evident that the need for more specifically dedicated and specialized individuals are required to meet manage areas such as training.

Discussion

The overall goal of PFD has been to provide a well organized, highly professional, efficient and most importantly pertinent training program throughout its membership in all areas from EMS and fire response to proper documentation and leadership skills. The need for training and areas where technical training is needed are increasing. The consequences for not meeting the accepted training standards can be devastating to a fire department and the community. While this situation continues to escalate the number of responses and public service calls grows as well which makes the function of training officer as an assignment to a line officer even less realistic. Parma Fire has grown in terms of size and activities to the point where the management of a quality training program appears to be beyond the scope of its present staff.

In addition to the need for PFD to improve the overall training program the

records keeping system was also determined to be in need of restructuring. Accurate and pertinent training records can be utilized to continually assess and direct the PFD training program where it needs to go.

This study has revealed that the position of Full Time Training Officer is essential in the Parma Fire Department to meet the department's needs and present requirements. It is also evident that the majority of Ohio fire departments that are similar to Parma Fire in size and needs have responded to this area by obtaining a full time training officer and the few that haven't yet, consider it a priority for the future.

Recommendations

The author recommends that this study be reviewed by the City of Parma Administration and a date set for a public presentation of the findings at a regularly scheduled Council Meeting. The presentation will include a brief history of how the area of training has evolved including how the gap was formed between what PFD has accomplished in terms of training and where it should be according to widely accepted standards, respected experts in fire service training and fire departments in Ohio that are similar to Parma Fire. This would be explained as a situation that is not uncommon and examples will be provided from the survey data that was collected. It will be explained that this position is necessary and it will have a direct and measurable impact on the PFD and our community.

I also recommend that the PFD training committee be tasked with drafting a job description for the new position. The fire departments that responded to the survey could be solicited for input in this area in an effort to streamline the process. As indicated in the research PFD's records system should be reviewed for revision or replacement to

further improve the training program. While the records management system may appear as an add-on to the original goal of this research project, its importance in the successful implementation of a training program was found to be paramount during this research.

An accurate and accessible records system was found to be a key factor in the success of every training program reviewed for this project and it was listed as a high priority in most of the fire departments surveyed. Pertinent and well kept records don't simply prove who attended what class but they are utilized as a tool for consistent improvement. Weak areas can be identified for directing future efforts towards improvement and strong areas can be condensed for directing resources elsewhere.

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City of Parma, Ohio

DEAN DEPIERO
MAYOR



6655 Ridge Road
Parma, Ohio 44129

JOHN FRENCH
CHIEF OF FIRE

Phone: 440-885-1217
Fax: 440-885-8165

To: Chief XXXXXXXXXXXXX

From: John French, Chief of Parma Fire, OFE class #7

As the chief of a fire department I realize how valuable your time is, but I am asking for your help in improving my department and our training program. In an effort to better my department and myself I have enrolled in the Ohio Fire Executive program through the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association. A good portion of the training involves the completion of a research project that will be used to benefit each attendee's department. My research project involves assessing the need for a full time Training Officer for my department. The attached document is a survey which I have developed and will use to obtain data for this worthwhile project.

I am planning on sending this survey to 12 fire departments in Ohio that I have identified (using the U.S. Fire Administration's fire department census) as being similar to my department in size. The fire departments are career departments with between 3 and 9 fire stations. If you or an individual from your department could fill out this survey and return it in the enclosed self addressed and stamped envelope it would be greatly appreciated. Please return your survey in a timely manner. If you would like a copy of the data collected please indicate at the end of the survey and include your name and address or email information.

Thank you again for your assistance and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

John French
Chief of Fire
440-885-8829,
Chiefs Office Fax: 440-845-1045
chfrench@parmafire.org

Fire Department Training Survey

John French, OFE #7

1. How many years have you been in the fire service? _____

2. Please describe the area your fire department serves:

Population _____ Square miles _____

Please estimate the percentage of the following in your community:

Residential _____%	Commercial _____%
Industrial _____%	Undeveloped _____%

3. Please describe your fire department:

• *Circle one:* Career Volunteer Part Time Combination

- Number of Stations _____
- Number of active firefighters _____
- Daily minimum staffing _____
- Do you provide EMS transport? _____
- Number of total responses in 2006 _____

4. Please describe your department's fire training program:

- Are there minimum fire training hour requirements? _____
- If there are minimums, what are they _____ hours per _____ and or _____
- Do you believe your department training program is adequate? _____
- Is your department planning changes in the fire training program to meet future state training guidelines? _____. If yes what changes

- What one change could your department do to most improve its training program?

5. Does your department have a full time Training Officer? _____

- What is their rank? _____
- What hours does your TO work? _____
- Does your TO have EMS responsibilities? _____
- What are the EMS responsibilities? _____

-
- Do they have other responsibilities outside of training? _____
 - What are the other responsibilities? _____

-
- In general terms, what are their training responsibilities? _____

-
- Is your TO effective and part of a successful program? _____
 - How could the TO program in your department be most improved? _____

6. Please describe your department's EMS training:

- Does your department conduct its own EMS training? _____
- If not, who conducts EMS training? _____

7. Do you believe a company officer can effectively fulfill the additional duties of Training Officer? _____

8. Please give general comments on your ideas on qualities of a successful Training Officer and training program.

Thank you for your time and if you would like a copy of the data collected in this survey please indicate here. Yes/ No

Stations	Num of Firefighters	Daily Min Staffing	Population	Chiefs	Deputy Chiefs	Assistant Chiefs	Battalion Chiefs	Training Officer	Deputy Fire Marshal	40 Hour (staff) Captain	Shift (line) Captain	Lieutenants	Rank of Training Officer	Train Officer Hours	Adequate training program?	How could your department's training program be improved
1	4	48	17	43,000	1								Bat Chief	48	N	Acquire a 40 hour Training Officer to train all crews more consistently, more funding
2	5	62	19	50,393	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	19	N/A	N/A	N	Acquire a FT (40hr) Training Officer to improve consistency between shifts, improve records
3	6	84	28	62,000	1	6	0	0	0	0	9	13	DepChief	40	N	More funding for more training as well as more training staff
4	4	56	17	70,000	1					1	2	13	Captain	40	Y	Additional funding for training, more continuity between shifts in training.
5	5	70	21	51,000	1	3	0	1	0	4	17	0	Captain	48	N	More team type training (continuity), have TO/Safety Officer on duty at all times
6	4	34	10		1	3	0	0	0	0	10	0	N/A	N/A	N	Acquire a Training Officer (Deputy Chief), too many issues to list
7	5	62	19	52,000	1	1	3	2	0	2	5	10	Captain	40	Y	More funding for off-site training, have great resources (2 Training Officers) but need more \$.
8	5	84	25	83,000	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	10	N/A	N/A	N	Acquire a full time Training Officer (40 hr/week) to train crews more consistently
9	7	90	28	65,358	1	2	3	1	0	1	10	23	Captain	40	Y	COs accept ownership for four employees, replace rank with more academically qualified
10	4	50	13	45,000	1	2	0	1	0	1	4	12	Captain	40	Y	Develop repeatable training, require competency, TO needs to be focused on training