

**Developing a Recognition for Performance Program That Accomplishes the Needs  
and Goals of The Violet Township Fire Department**

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A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

2 August 2013

## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. 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.
2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: Greg Eisenacher

## **ABSTRACT**

The Violet Township Fire Department (VTFD) has always held a progressive philosophy with the management and motivation of personnel. The first career fire chief established the importance of motivation through involvement and participation within the fire department. Committee work and group participation has been a positive practice and has rewarded the fire department with great success. This philosophy was carried into the development of the recognition for performance program (RFPP), which was developed during the 2006 collective bargaining process between labor and management. A result of this process, VTFD implemented the RFPP to reward individuals up to an additional 2% of their base salary, in addition to all other compensation. This document identifies research and data on the subject of pay for performance, utilizing The International Association of Firefighters and The Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters, as key resources. Investigative and comparable research gathering were also used to identify programs within the private sector. Violet Township's most current program was analyzed and contrasted against an internal survey of career members of the fire department.

The research within this project was able to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the most current program. Positive results were the overall acceptance of the grading and evaluation process, desire to keep wellness and committee participation active, the requirement to maintain educational benchmarks and to continue the program as a portion of our overall compensation. The survey also established that a majority of survey participants desire individual performance evaluations. As a direct result of this discovery, the fire department has begun developing a process to deliver personnel evaluations and feedback. Identified

weaknesses were found to be an overall dissatisfaction of the current program, the administration process, how criteria is weighted for evaluation and scoring and the repetitive years of changes and updates without input from eligible participants. The research also identified that pay for performance comes in many different packages, programs and methods. Several departments were identified that recognize individuals that achieve goals, attend trainings and achieve educational benchmarks. Overwhelmingly the research identified instances of positive reinforcement within the fire service.

In addition the stakeholders and members of The Violet Township Fire Department should utilize this research to further evaluate and develop methods to responsibly motivate and compensate members in a manner consistent with the needs and goals of The Violet Township Fire Department.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

*This study addresses problems associated with the current Recognition for Performance Program (RFPP) at the Violet Township Fire Department. The current RFPP is not meeting the expectations of members and management staff.*

The RFPP has grown without direct influence from the majority of members, which has created negative morale, a lack of leadership and has failed to enhance the effectiveness of the department.

### **Purpose of the Study**

*The purpose of this study was to research the topic of recognition for performance by evaluating and comparing Violet Township's current RFPP to similar programs offered by other organizations. A positive result would be to develop recommendations for a program that is based on pertinent research, exceptional surveys and interviews with organizations that currently utilize a RFPP. All information gathered will be organized, formulated and structured to take into account the vision and direction from the chief of the department and township trustees. The position and opinions of the local bargaining unit must also be represented with the formation of the final product.*

### **Research Questions**

*The research questions that were applied are defined below.*

1. What are the opinions of our leadership staff and employees on the current RFPP?
2. Does the current RFPP at VTFD meet desired expectations?
3. What are the characteristics of an effective RFPP?

4. When informally evaluating subordinates at VTFD, what does our leadership staff consider important and measurable?

### **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Violet Township Fire Department currently operates three stations and has a daily staffing of 15 firefighter-paramedics. Thirteen of the daily staffing are career firefighters certified to the Firefighter II, EMT-Paramedic and Hazardous Material Technician level. They are complimented by 2 part-time firefighters certified to the Firefighter II and EMT-Basic level at a minimum. Each station is lead by a company officer, and each of the three daily shifts are lead by a battalion chief. A fire chief and assistant fire chief support VTFD administratively, along with a full time office manager. Violet Township is 42 square miles and encompasses the City of Pickerington.

The Violet Township Fire Department began as a volunteer department in 1954. In 1986, VTFD began hiring career members. At this time, a full time chief and 4 forty-hour firefighters were hired. The salary for a full-time firefighter-paramedic was \$4.45 per hour or approximately \$12,500.00 per year. The operating budget of the department at that time was \$380,000.00. Today, after 42 months of service the base salary for a career firefighter-paramedic is \$60,970.63. Also included within the compensation package is pension pick up, group healthcare and the possibility to work overtime. In 2011 the operating budget for the department was 8.3 million.

As cited above, the growth of the township from 1986 to the present has been substantial and extremely pertinent. One item has remained unchanged since the department's inception; the importance of a competent staff that delivers exceptional customer service. VTFD takes great pride in treating all of their customers as if they were their own family members regardless

of the simplicity or complexity of each and every call. In addition, VTFD places huge emphasis on training, education and professional development of all members.

Focusing on the public's perception has become a necessity for a successful fire department. On March 31, 2011 Governor John Kasich began a campaign to regulate and restrict many aspects of public service and labor organizations. Since then, the general public began to question the funding, compensation and benefit levels of public employees. This began with the formation of Ohio Senate Bill 5. Even though Ohio Senate Bill 5 was rejected on November 8, 2011, the way public safety agencies spend taxpayer dollars and compensate employees was forever changed. This caused the fire service, to put a cost on actions and day-to-day operations. As part of the suggested language of Senate Bill 5, compensation must be transparent and performance as well as individual accomplishments must be tied to salaries. (4117.26, 3317.13(C)) Publicly this topic developed momentum and was a huge part of the campaign. Currently, the collective bargaining agreement between the Professional Firefighters of Violet Township Local 3558 and Violet Township includes a recognition for performance program. This program established a form of bonus compensation that rewards employees for actions and certifications that are above and beyond current basic requirements. As communities call for transparency, linking compensation to performance appears to be an effective way to steer employee compensation into the future, while demonstrating financial responsibility.

*The potential impact this study could have on The Violet Township Fire Department is the creation of a fair and equitable pay for performance program that motivates employees currently functioning in a successful manner to continue being positive and productive, while at the same time, steering our underperforming members back onto a path that is in line with the vision and direction of the department. It is the intent of this paper to research the topic of*

performance recognition based pay structures, and to evaluate other public and private sector programs including the positions of applicable labor organizations. This paper will also contain research based on surveys and interviews of the stakeholders that are employed by The Violet Township Fire Department.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The fire service, and many other public agencies are currently facing immense pressure from their respective communities on the usage and distribution of taxpayer funds. The major catalyst in regards to the shift in public perception began with the downfall of the economy and more directly within Ohio, the formation of Ohio Senate Bill 5. Many who in the past were considered supportive, currently face the fire service, teachers, and many public workers with skepticism and opposition. Even after the referendum was voted down, communities have continued to call for transparency and financial accountability. It has become increasingly dangerous and reckless to consider the fire service as untouchable and above reproach.

With transparency in mind, the fire service must be proactive and responsible with all public funds collected and dedicated for fire and emergency medical services. It should not be a surprise that the most common line item in any fire service budget deals with employee compensation (All Business 2012). Fair compensation is necessary for attracting and retaining good employees (All Business 2012). Employee compensation is an extremely complicated topic and when negotiating most collective bargaining agreements, comes last after all other contract items have been agreed upon. In 2006, VTFD began the process of establishing a program that linked performance to compensation as an annual incentive. Incentive pay is a form of variable compensation that is closely linked to predetermined performance criteria (Lawler 1981). According to (Lawler 1981) pay is probably the most powerful reward that an

organization can offer. With pay being such an effective motivator and important to most people, compensation has the ability and leverage to influence behavior and performance (Lawler 1981). Using this theory, departments with defined mission statements and core values could start using recognition programs to reinforce these roadmaps to organizational success. The fire service traditionally utilizes companies and tactical units to accomplish fire ground priorities. These units are commonly comprised of individuals with different skill sets and various levels of experience. As we know from studying close calls and line of duty death (LODD) reports, one bad decision can have horrifying consequences. By creating and utilizing a recognition program that is closely tied to the vision and mission of the department, organizations can begin to guide individuals along positive career paths and to accomplish goals. Standard operating guidelines and directives are extremely important, but having employees functioning within the guidelines as a positive learned and reinforced behavior instead of the fear of discipline can be a more effective method (Kaplan and Norton 1992,1996). Based on the previous citation Kaplan and Norton (1992,1996), developed the theory of the balanced scorecard. Within this theory is a balance of employee empowerment and recognition of the organizational mission and values. Traditionally departments or sub groups of an organization are evaluated by their financial performance and individual incentives. These are quite often only tied to short-term goals (Kaplan and Norton 1992,1996). Using the balanced scorecard as a strategic management system, Kaplan and Norton found it easier to accomplish long-term goals. With this as a starting point, Kaplan and Norton believe that developing a recognition program should incorporate organizational philosophies into daily tasks. To support this statement, the book Carrot Principal (Gostick and Elton) conducted research that studies companies who recognize successful participation within the organization's values. These companies commonly

benefit from a return that is triple that of an organization that doesn't recognize performance (Gostick and Elton). The fire service has traditionally placed great emphasis on the role of the company officer. This study also references high morale and acceptance of the organization's values when immediate supervisors support positive recognition. The carrot principal also claims that consistency and increased employee accountability are additional benefits of recognizing performance. This statement was supported by the Jackson organizational study (Carrot Principle 2007). This study declared that 64% of employees surveyed would support a program that held all employees accountable equally for their contributions to the organization. The survey reflected that employees felt such a program would create consistency as well as, a balanced workload across the board.

With financial responsibility, positive motivation and well-rounded competent employees in mind, the Violet Township Fire Department developed a recognition program in 2006. The RFPP was initially developed and implemented as a product of negotiations for the collective bargaining agreement effective January 1, 2007. With the knowledge and foreshadowing of Ohio Senate Bill 5, the goal was to create an avenue of responsible compensation for all employees. With the formation of the RFPP, the Violet Township Fire Department created transparency by linking responsible compensation to performance as described within the document "Violet Township Fire Department Recognition for Performance Program revised 2012." This program measures several different avenues of successful employment agreed upon by Violet Township and The Professional Firefighters of Violet Township Local 3558. The general measurable categories of this document reflect the applicants current certifications, hours of training obtained outside the department, attendance of departmental training, participation in the annual physical and health screening process,

involvement in on duty accidents and committee participation (Appendix 1 VTFD Pay for Performance Document).

As described by the document *Creating an effective reward and recognition program* (Corporate Leadership Council 2006), 90% of companies maintain some form of recognition program. The goal of the majority of companies is to create a positive work environment, improve employee attitudes and motivate high performance. Located within the above source is research by Watson Wyatt Worldwide, that suggests that effective recognition programs yield a return to stake holders that is doubled when compared to an organization without a recognition program (Watson Wyatt 2005 as cited in Corporate Leadership Council 2006). The research from this article state that programs that reward high performance can be a cost effective and valuable tool to increase morale, productivity and revenue. These programs can lower employee turnover, absenteeism and employee stress. Key findings within the above source describe an effective program to be one that reinforces the organization's goals and values. Jim Brintnall, the author of "What Makes a Good Recognition Reward" also supports the above citation. Within this book, Mr. Brintnall uses the acronym SSMART to list the goals of an effective program. These goals include; supports organizational goals, sincere and simple, meaningful, adaptable, relevant and timely. (The Corporate Executive Board 2006) developed another survey that referenced 65% of companies with formal recognition programs. This survey declares that 97% of the organizations with formal programs directly align their program with the organization's business strategy, which creates a positive financial outcome.

Programs that link compensation to performance are not as prevalent within the public sector. Most information and resources cited above relate to private sector organizations. Many public service leaders question whether compensation structures linked to performance can work

within public service. The research titled “Does Pay for Performance Work in the Public Sector” completed in 2009 from the University of Texas Pan Am certified public manager program, discusses the differences in incentive plans within the public sector versus private sector organizations. The authors (Cantu, Flatau and Leftwich) state that private sector and public sector organizations have different philosophies in regards to recognition programs. Unlike public organizations that are funded with revenues tied directly to public approval, private organizations are not commonly concerned with external approval or public perception in regards to compensation methods. This is reinforced by the recommendations for implementation of a recognition plan within public organizations. The authors, recommend a meaningful evaluation process that is credible, fair and consistent throughout the entire organization. This document also places high value on the individual understanding of how individual contributions enhance and support the organizational mission. Cantu, Flatau and Leftwich also state that the accountability from each employee needs to recognize the overall effectiveness of the employee’s work rather than specific outputs or results.

To begin documenting current examples of pay for performance within the fire service, The International Association of Professional Firefighters was contacted on September 21, 2012 for a description of their position on pay for performance to be submitted with this research paper. On September 21, 2012 the AFL-CIO was also contacted via electronic mail with the same request. To this date, only the IAFF has provided research data and references to other pay for performance programs. Through the internet several departments affiliated within the Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters and AFL-CIO were found to have performance incentives within local bargaining agreements and supplied materials for this research project. As this project continues, references to these examples will be referenced.

The City of Montgomery, Ohio along with The Ohio State Fire Marshall and Ohio Department of Administrative Services researched the topic of high performance organizations (HPO). According to their presentation (The Essential Blueprint for Getting HR to HPO) high performance is the simultaneous delivery of the following three items: high quality products and services, outstanding customer value, and sound financial performance. Within this study is the reference to a Gallup survey based on disengaged workers. The Gallup survey referenced 1,000 employed adults. Of the 1000 surveyed, 19% were considered actively disengaged, 26% engaged and 55% not engaged. The following criteria was measured with the above groups: average workdays missed in the past year, how many polled had stress at work that negatively caused them to behave poorly with their family and what percentage have the important things they want in their lives. The 26% considered engaged averaged 3.76 missed workdays, 14% felt that stress at work affected their families and 50% felt they have the important things in their lives. The 19% considered actively disengaged averaged 8.55 missed workdays. Of the actively disengaged, 43% felt that stress at work affected their families and 15% felt they have the important things in their lives. This poll emphasizes how a poor work environment has an affect on all aspects of our lives. To combat the reality of the above Gallup Survey, the City of Montgomery created a proactive stance that involved realigning their strategies on the management of their workforce. The new strategy was titled “The blueprint for a high performance organization” (The essential blueprint for getting HR to HPO 2011). The three components targeted in the blueprint are: developing job descriptions, developing a new hiring process and establishing a performance achievement program. Developing job descriptions and a new hiring process was the city’s way of discovering people who were a right fit for the city’s values and mission. The goal of creating precise job descriptions allows employees to have

defined expectations with less emphasis on individual technical skills and more emphasis on leadership, management and team skills. The cohesion of the job descriptions creates a support structure for the city's new vision and mission statement. It also provides for better service to the community by requiring higher performance by all employees, regardless of rank. The last component of the blueprint is a performance achievement program. The performance program in the City of Montgomery has four components: employee goals, employee appraisal tool, 360° peer feedback and pay for performance. The following program has been broken into 5 steps or processes (City of Montgomery, The essential blueprint for getting HR to HPO 2011).

Step 1. Supervisor completes their portion of the appraisal form.

The supervisor's appraisal is directly linked to the employee's job description. Each employee is evaluated within the same four fundamental areas of work, based on their job description, leadership, management, technical skills and team skills.

Step 2. Employee participation.

The employee must prepare a report on the previous year's goals and suggests goals for the upcoming year. Goals set must reflect organizational departmental and personal growth.

Step 3. 360° peer feedback.

The peer feedback is based on a summary submitted by a committee of four to six fellow employees. The peer group is comprised of peers who have served with the employee or who have a regular working relationship with the employee being evaluated. The employee as well as the supervisor work together to interpret the results of the submitted peer review.

Step 4. Draft review of performance appraisal.

The department head for consistency, reviews steps one through three. The department head also works with the supervisor to create goals for the employee to accomplish the forthcoming year. This process is then reviewed by the city manager to ensure quality and consistency.

Step 5. Pay for performance.

Within the City of Montgomery is a defined minimum and maximum salary compensation schedule. As a supplement, an employee has the ability to earn a merit based increase, as long as it falls between the minimum and maximum salary requirements. The merit-based bonus is based on the employees performance appraisal score described in the above steps. The annual merit based incentives are available annually until the employee reaches the top of his pay range. The minimum score that an employee must achieve to become eligible for a merit bonus is “meets expectations.” Fire Chief Paul Wright described this as the baseline or what an average firefighter would be rated. The specific rating for each performance category are as follows: superior, exceeds expectations, meets expectations, needs improvements and unsatisfactory.

The benefits from the City of Montgomery’s PFP system have been described as rewarding those who perform well and at the same time, sending a message to those who do not perform well (City of Montgomery Fire Chief Paul Wright). The City of Montgomery believes that this program is a more equitable method of compensating employees versus a traditional step method. This plan is also solely based on the employees’ performance, not years of service or longevity. The City of Montgomery also believes this allows them be more flexible as they possibly will be forced to deal with declining resources.

The City of Los Angeles City, California has several benchmarks for city firefighters. If achieved, firefighters are compensated over and above their base wage. Within the Memorandum of Understanding submitted October 13, 2011, appendix D-2 of the agreement

documents several achievements that are compensated with a bi-weekly bonus. Examples of the bonus achievements are: Hazardous Material affiliation, arson investigation, recruitment officer, safety educator, emergency medical technician, hydrant planning and public service officer. The appropriate bonus amounts range from a 1.0 percent bonus to an \$830.00 bi-weekly payment.

The City of Memphis Local 1784 has an incentive targeted in article 44 of the local bargaining agreement. The incentive references educational incentive pay based on years of completed college work. The program offers compensation to employees ranging from at least 25 hours or one year of college to four years or a bachelor's degree. The range of incentive compensation is 1.0 percent to 7.5 percent. Firefighters in the City of Miami, IAFF Local 587, have a similar educational incentive program. In article 18.17 of the local bargaining agreement, employees that currently have or successfully obtain, a college or university degree shall receive an incentive bonus. The incentives are based on degree levels ranging from an Associate's Degree (\$1,200), Bachelor's Degree (\$2,200), Master's Degree (\$3,200), and Juris Doctor, Ph.D., Ed.D, D, M.D (\$4,200). Local 587 also has an incentive bonus schedule based on certifications. The qualifying certifications are hazardous materials technician, fire service instructor, fire service inspector, certified diver, and S.W.A.T. affiliation. Each of these certifications qualifies for a five percent annual pay supplement.

According to the 2012-2014 Performance Program from The Washington Township Fire Department in Dublin Ohio, the township requires employees to be responsible for several elements to become eligible for a performance bonus. According to the above document, employees must complete their portion of the annual performance evaluation by November 1, accurately record goals and accomplishments, be free of any written disciplinary action and meet expectations of their position's core competencies. If the above elements are fulfilled, the

following bonus amounts are applicable in direct regard to the employees' overall performance score.

- 0.00-2.49(Unsatisfactory/needs improvement) 0%(Bonus)
- 2.50-2.99(Meets expectations) 1%(Bonus)
- 3.00-3.49(Meets expectations) 2%(Bonus)
- 3.50-4.00(Exceeds expectations) 3%(Bonus)

This program also awards bonus compensation in addition to the employees base or contract step wage. Within the literature review of this paper, all documented program sources submitted have the possibility of compensation over and above the employees base wage. The research methods utilized have not been able to discover any fire service agency that have a compensation structure solely based on performance. David Sirota, a contributing author from *The Enthusiastic Employee*, makes a direct reference to this topic. He is quoted as saying, "Most organizations have a pay for performance system of one kind or another. The organizations that do not, or have it for a segment of the workforce, tend to be unionized environments or government agencies. In those cases pay increases are negotiated or are simply the consequence of tenure and promotion." *The Enthusiastic Employee* moves on to differentiate between two different classifications of evaluating performance. One of the evaluation processes refers to piecework, or employees that are affiliated with the production or sale of an item or product. These employees are compensated by the specific accomplishment in regards to the production or sale of the item or product. The authors describe two different consequences of this compensation method.

1. There can be no motivation for the employee to make improvements to the job description or overall output of the job that would benefit the entire organization. Within piecework, the employee develops methods to improve production, but typically doesn't reveal them to benefit individual compensation.

2. Basing compensation on physical exertion removes the greatest benefit of the human workforce. This is the ability to think and motivate ourselves as well as the organization. The ability to participate and benefit the bigger picture is something that is commonly lost within basing compensation on piecework or commission sales programs. The second evaluation process described within this book is merit pay based upon a subjective review of the employee by a supervisor. As within many organizations, differences of opinions and philosophies will always exist. Subjective opinions can be affected by several factors and in the end have adverse affects on morale and employee output. With these two evaluation scenarios in mind, the author has documented a recommended strategy for effective compensation.

- Employee compensation should include both base pay and variable pay.
- Base pay should be competitive and should keep up with inflation.
- Variable pay is in addition to base pay and should be based on group performance rather than individual accomplishments.
- Variable pay should be distributed as a percentage of the employee's base salary.
- Individual performance should be rewarded by "honors."

After reading *The Enthusiastic Employee*, it appears that the fire service and the private sector have become more inline with the way they respectively motivate their internal customers.

Other common characteristics are appraising group dynamics and the performance of the entire organization. The importance of the employee being at their best and the costs of assuring that both sides of the organization management and labor, are both equally important. Herb Kelleher, Southwest Airlines Founder, is quoted with saying “There is one key to profitability and stability during either a boom or bust economy: employee morale.” With the public sector progressing towards customer service and public accountability, the philosophy of transparency and recognizing performance over what is expected, is a necessary objective. According to the report “Issues to Consider in Implementing a Pay For Performance Program” by Alexis Dow, there exist several philosophical differences in regards to public and private compensation packages. Referenced within this report are the following comparisons:

<b><u>Private Sector</u></b>	<b><u>Public Sector</u></b>
Market data is the primary role.	Market data has a limited role.
Competiveness is critical.	Affordability is critical.
External approval is not required.	External approval is required, (legislative).
Public perception is not important.	Public perception is critical.
Plans reflect corporate philosophies.	Most states have formal evaluation systems.
Plans are incentive awards based on meeting organizational goals and individual recognition.	Limited managerial discretion to vary individual award values.

Within the public sector, Alexis Dow suggests that pay for performance plans can succeed. Dow goes on to list four important baseline criteria that most commonly contribute to a successful program. These criteria are, positive political climate, engaged employees, managers who are

properly trained to implement it fairly and consistently and constant evaluation by supervisors.

In addition, Dow lists the following suggestions for a positive outcome:

1. A compelling, well-defined, fully articulated and fact-based business need.
2. Employees who are highly motivated by monetary rewards.
3. Clear links between the organization's employee performance and pay.
4. Meaningful rewards consistent with individual, team and organizational achievements.
5. Structured and consistently applied performance management systems.
6. The program itself must be measured for success.
7. Employee participation in design, implementation and monitoring.
8. Full and consistent funding.
9. Continuous training for new and existing managers and staff.
10. Program proponents who lead by example.
11. The switch to performance-based compensation is positioned as an organizational development initiative.
12. Continuous flexibility and refinement.

Implementing a pay for performance program can trigger unforeseen negative consequences and can be perceived as a threat. If a system or plan is not researched, analyzed and marketed adequately the organization's performance and effectiveness can become worse than before implementation. The following factors have been identified within public and private sector organizations as being detrimental to successful pay for performance plans (Issues to consider in implementing a pay for performance program 2004).

1. Failure to link employee performance objectives to the organization's objectives produce weak support within the organization.
2. Invalid performance appraisals lead directly to program creditability problems.
3. Lack of adequate financial rewards and budget cycle barriers.
4. The performance-reward connection is not clear.
5. The performance-effort connection is not clear.
6. Money may not be a prime motivator for some employees.
7. PFP can become an administrative burden.
8. Faulty assumptions by PFP proponents lead to unmet expectations.
9. PFP systems have failed when participants, policy makers, media or others publicly criticize one or more aspects of the plan, subjecting the entire system to a level of scrutiny it could not withstand.

Even with proper planning and careful development, The Harvard Business Review believes that systems for compensation based on performance can possibly fail to reach desired goals. Bruno Frey and Margit Osterloh, the authors of *Stop tying pay to performance*, state that the idea that people work for money has been thrown overboard by leading scholars. They claim research shows human beings are not interested solely in material gain. They care for the well being of other individuals and value recognition from coworkers. Frey and Osterloh believe most employees apply themselves because they find their work challenging and worthwhile.

## PROCEDURES

The intent of this research project was to research the topic of pay for performance and gain the appropriate knowledge and experience necessary to evaluate and improve the current performance program in existence at VTFD. The materials used to develop the content of this paper came through investigative and comparable research. Within the research, three different types of research gathering were utilized. The first method was a general research of existing data and opinions regarding pay for performance. This included the local library, the Internet and the research database of papers submitted to the Executive Fire Officer program at the National Fire Academy and, the research paper database of the Ohio Fire Executive program. Obtained was existing information and programs from public and private organizations. The second type of data collection was a formal request through The Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters and the International Association of Firefighters. These two organizations are based on state and national affiliations respectively for professional career firefighters and paramedics. These contacts allowed the research to span the fire service within Ohio as well as, the fire service throughout The United States and Canada. The final type of research gathering was from an internal survey of the career members of the Violet Township Fire Department.

The survey was physically distributed, to 45 career members of the Violet Township Fire Department. It was comprised of three general background questions, 17 questions and statements related to this project's research questions and four general statements. The survey was tested and reviewed by three graduates of the Ohio Fire Executive program from within the fire department. The 45 career members who were considered were comprised of; the fire chief, three battalion chiefs, 10 lieutenants and 31 firefighters. The completed surveys were broken

down and analyzed based on five opinions ranging from; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. The survey targeted the current goals of the existing program, performance, safety and behavioral modification. The four general statements at the conclusion of the survey, solicited the opinions of the respondent regarding the future of the current program.

### **Definition of Terms**

- AFL-CIO- American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations
- EMT- emergency medical technician: a person who is trained to give emergency medical care at the scene of an accident or in an ambulance.
- IAFF- International Association of Professional Firefighters
- Local Bargaining Unit- a group of employees represented by a union in collective bargaining.
- LODD Report- line of duty death report
- Memorandum of Understanding- a document that describes the general principles of an agreement between parties, but does not amount to a substantive contract.
- OAPFF- Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters
- RFPP- recognition for performance plan
- State Fire Marshal- an appointed position by the governor of Ohio that represents the highest-ranking member within the fire service in Ohio.
- Step Pay- a form of compensation that is guaranteed money based on time in grade or other defined accomplishment.

- Township- a unit of local government, usually a subdivision of a county, found in most Midwestern and northeastern states of the U.S. and in most Canadian provinces.
- Trustee- an elected official within the township form of local government.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations should be noted throughout this research. First, this research was specifically designed and structured for internal use within The Violet Township Fire Department. The research was based on an established pay for performance system that was a product of negotiations between the local bargaining unit and Violet Township. As of January 1, 2013, the recognition for performance program discussed in the literature review of this project was discontinued for the current collective bargaining agreement effective January 1, 2013-December 31, 2015. It was mutually agreed to take the term of the agreement and develop new goals and gain the opinions of stakeholders in order to redevelop a plan that truly meets the needs of the fire department and township.

## **RESULTS**

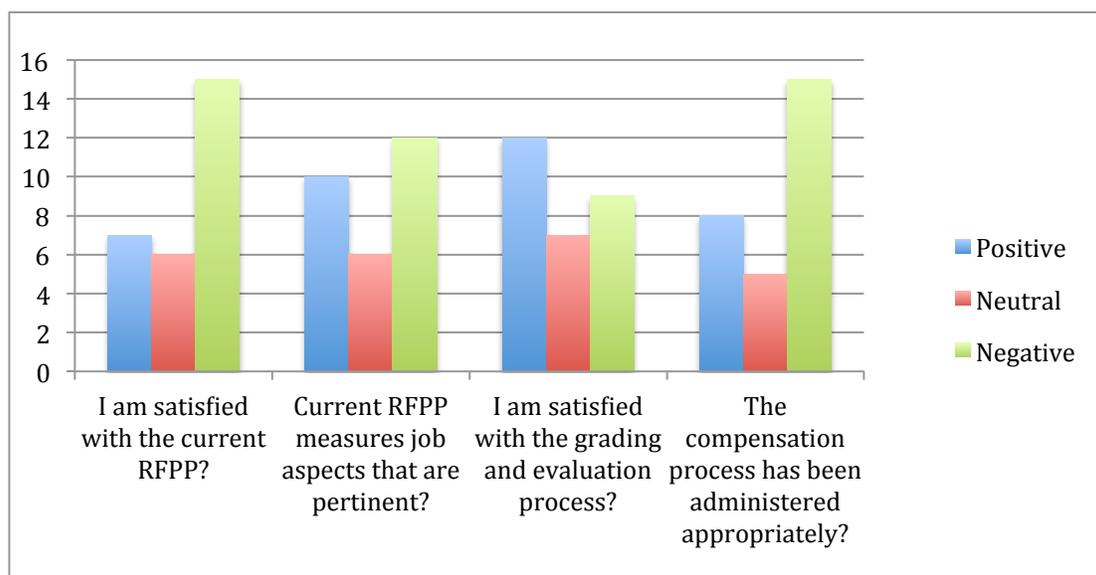
As submitted in the purpose of this project, it was the intent to research performance recognition and to look into the fire department's current RFPP and make recommendations to the department's stakeholders. In addition to an internal research survey, the following research questions were proposed:

1. What are the characteristics of a successful RFPP?
2. What are the opinions of our leadership staff and employees on the current RFPP?

3. When informally evaluating subordinates at VTFD, what does our leadership staff consider important and measurable?
4. Does the current RFPP at VTFD meet desired expectations?

The internal survey identified and summarized the opinions and attitudes of career Violet Township Firefighters. The survey was developed based on the purpose of this project and the proposed research questions. Each research question was used to create four or five survey questions that further broke down and developed each of this project's research questions. The information identified reflected a positive, neutral or negative opinion on different characteristics and categories of the program in place as well as, general opinions on the performance program. Out of 45 possible participants, 28 surveys or 62% were completed and returned. Of the 28 completed surveys, 19 held the rank of firefighter and 8 held the rank of lieutenant through Fire Chief and 1 N/A. The final demographic was the member's employment status during the inception of the program in 2006. Twenty-three of the participants were career members of the fire department and five were not career members in 2006, when the program was developed and implemented. The research survey utilized within this project is a measurement of attitude. In scoring or tabulating survey responses, "negative" was used to classify those responses marked disagree or strongly disagree. "Positive" responses were reflections of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed to the survey's statements.

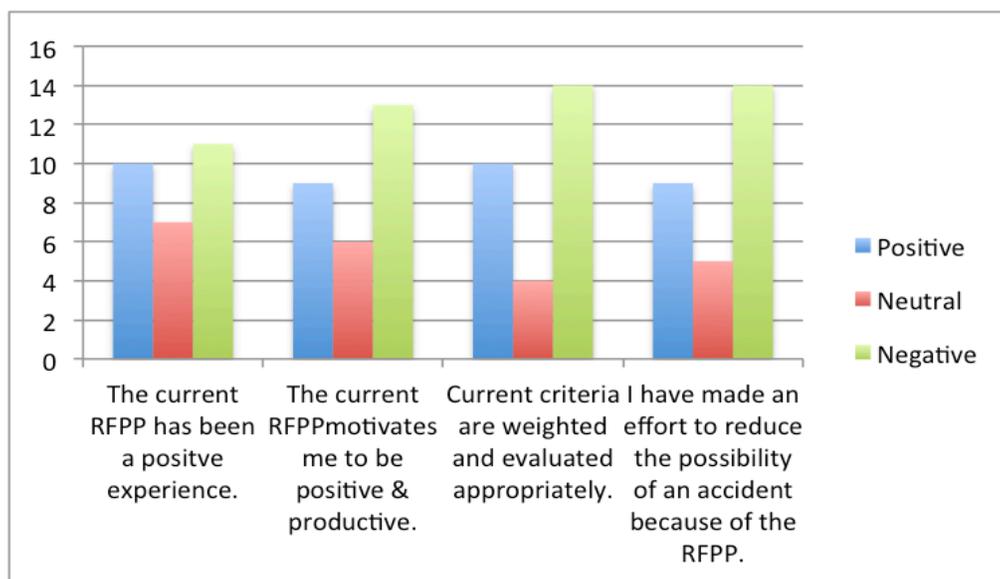
**Table 1**     Research Question #1 *What are the opinions of our leadership and staff on the current RFPP?*



The first research question was developed to gain an understanding of the membership's opinion regarding the most current program, which expired December 31, 2012. As shown in Table 1, the majority of participants were not satisfied with the program, the measured criteria or the administration of the program. However, 43% approved of the grading and evaluation process. The 12 positive responses are referencing the grading and evaluation committee process that is comprised of three unit shift stewards of the bargaining unit and one member elected at large. The grading and evaluation group is comprised 100% of bargaining unit members and

confirms that this aspect of the program should be considered in the future. From the establishment of the program, there were differences of opinion between the bargaining unit and the township regarding the timely distribution of the bonus checks.

**Table 2**      Research Question #2 *Does the current RFPP meet desired expectation?*



The second question begins to determine if the membership's expectations are being met since the program's inception in 2006. In each of the four survey questions in Table 2, a negative response was documented. This reflects that overall expectations were not being met. The largest difference between positive and negative responses is noted on the question that asks if the respondent made an effort to reduce the possibility of an accident. As the local bargaining unit president during the development of the program, this was not what the committee had intended to accomplish. The reduction of accidents, injuries and workers compensation claims was the original intent during the development of this portion of the program. The fact that 46% of respondents did not feel the program motivated them to be positive and productive was also

counterproductive to the original intent of the program. The township also mirrored the negative results within this portion of the survey during the most recent labor negotiations. These opinions caused the bargaining unit and the township to agree to allow the current program to expire in the bargaining agreement beginning January 1, 2013.

**Table 3** Research Question #3 *What are the characteristics of a successful RFPP?*

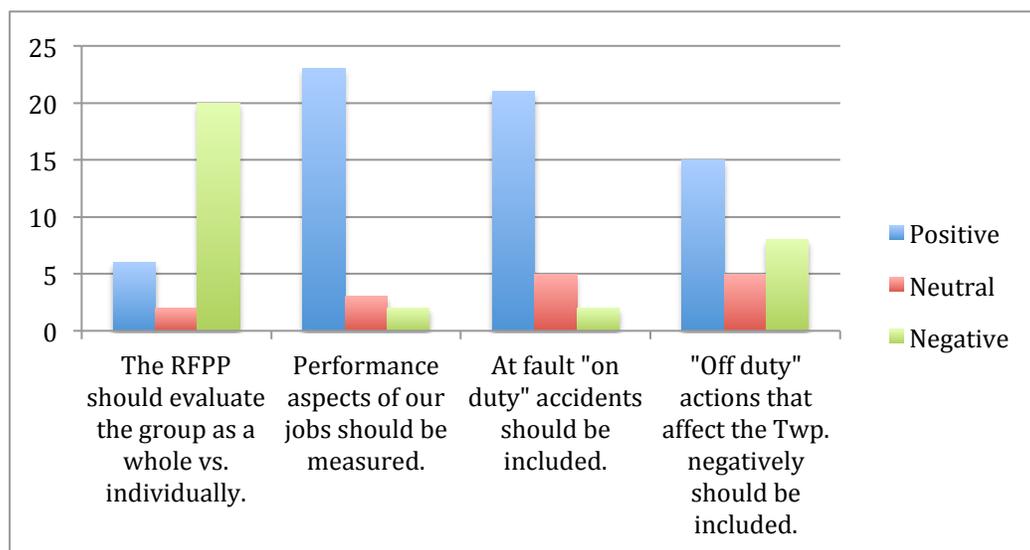
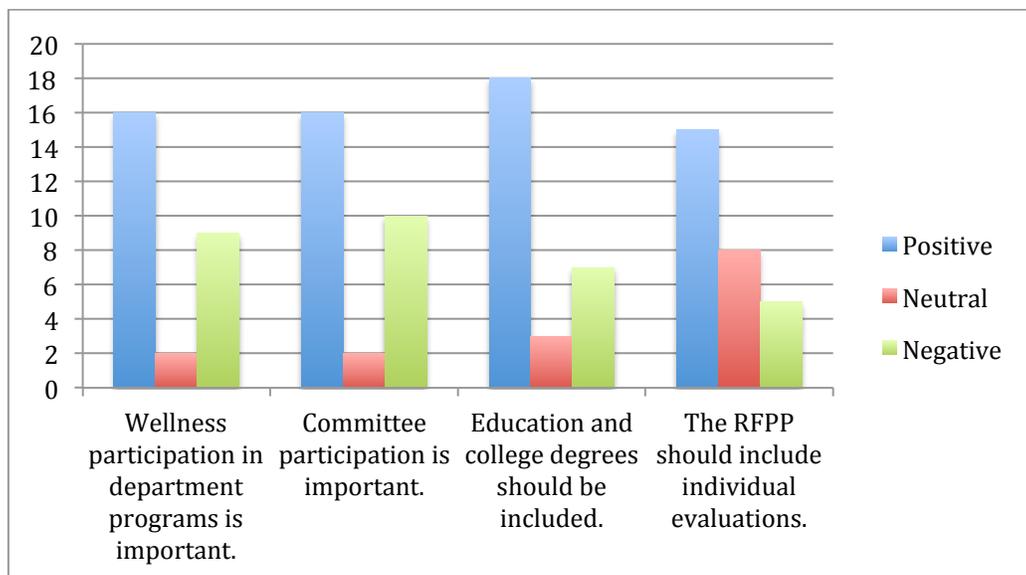


Table 3 focuses on the content and rated performances within our careers as Violet Township firefighters. The majority of the statements surveyed were possible future additions to our program. The referenced statements have been recently discussed in labor-management meetings and presented as possibilities to the collective bargaining unit. The first statement in Table 3 clearly defines the opinions of members with regards to evaluating the group as a whole. 71% or 20 out of 28 submitted negative responses. Of the respondents, 82% overwhelmingly supported measuring specific performance aspects of our jobs as paramedics and firefighters (Table 3). The majority of survey participants favor developing more formal evaluations on their performance within the fire department. This is reflected with a 54% positive response to the

statement, “This program should include formal individual evaluations.” This statement is found in Table 4.

**Table 4** Research Question #4 *When informally evaluating subordinates at VTFD, what do you consider important and measurable?*



The final research question submits statements to gain opinions on what we use to informally rate our peers. The first three statements regarding wellness, committee work and educational goals are measured criteria within the most recent program. The overwhelming positive response to these statements located in Table 4 reinforces the established criteria. As mentioned above, the last statement creates an opportunity to take the program to another level. The fire department only uses formal evaluations as a firefighter transitions from the 12-month probationary period to a protected firefighter under the current collective bargaining agreement.

## DISCUSSION

It was no surprise that literature resources supporting pay for performance were readily available. However, locating research and data that was applicable to the fire service and to this

research proved a challenge. The information found and utilized within this research supported using benefits and compensation to reinforce a desired outcome. The Violet Township Fire Department has been managed by rewarding desired outcomes since the department's transition to career paid status in 1984. Good actions, trustworthy behavior and courage under fire rewards volunteer firefighters with rank. The ultimate reward for preparation and desired behavior is promotion and rank above other department members. So from the findings within this research, pay for performance and the achievement of desired outcomes is critical within our department and the fire service. Creating a program to motivate and drive outcomes toward standard and predictable actions are true benefits.

In 2006, VTFD set out to use the above assumption to develop a program to responsibly reward employees with bonus compensation over and above the base salaries established in the collective bargaining agreement. As described in the literature review, the only goal was not to just reward performance, but to show the public that our employees' compensation is responsible and transparent. Currently the newly implemented collective bargaining agreement effective January 1, 2013, does not contain a pay for performance program. Management and labor have decided to take the three years of the current agreement and reestablish the goals and needs of our stakeholders. Because of a mixture of poor administration and loss of employee buy in, the program lost trust and became a source of great contention within the rank and file, leadership and trustees. After researching recognition for performance, evaluating the internal survey data, several pros and cons can be offered. The following figure summarizes what is currently facing Violet Township's most recent program.

<b><u>Pros</u></b>	<b><u>Cons</u></b>
<i>Local &amp; management jointly developed the program.</i>	<i>Have new leadership with new philosophies. The program did not evolved with emerging issues.</i>
<i>The program was based on several pertinent aspects of our jobs.</i>	<i>Committee involvement and "true" participation was difficult to measure.</i>
<i>Program rewards were reviewed and decided by career firefighters in the bargaining unit representing all ranks.</i>	<i>The program was poorly administered. Issues and delays with the distribution of bonus checks.</i>
<i>Annual changes to the program were possible with input from labor &amp; management equally.</i>	<i>The program changed too rapidly and without influence in the manner the program was developed, which resulted in loss of trust and "buy in".</i>
<i>Twp. Trustees 100% behind the program and were extremely happy with creating an avenue for responsible and transparent compensation.</i>	<i>Trustees and bargaining unit lost common ground and philosophies differed as the program grew and matured.</i>
<i>Desire of the survey participants to tie formal evaluations and specific measured performance criteria to the program.</i>	<i>Judging "at fault" accidents proved difficult and extremely controversial.</i>
<i>61% believe that the RFPP should continue as a portion of the compensation package.</i>	<i>Did not create specific contract language, outlining the program specifics to achieve consistency.</i>

**Figure 1.** Summary of pros/cons facing the most current recognition for performance program, based on the research within this research project and the internal survey submitted to all career members of the Violet Township Fire Department.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the stakeholders within The Violet Township Fire Department regarding recognition for performance include:

- Continue the collaboration between the bargaining unit and Violet Township.
- Continue to include the RFPP within the collective bargaining agreement.
- Include all specifics within the contract language. For example, clarities, terminologies, grading criteria, definitions and all administrative benchmarks.
- Conduct further research on formal evaluations.

- Create a feedback process that returns statistics and job performance criteria to all members within the fire department.
- Establish goals that reflect “Violet Townships Rules to Live By...” Positive, Productive, Safe and Trained”
- Continue to include committee work, wellness participation, and educational goals in the program.
- Continue the objective evaluation and grading process executed by unit stewards and other bargaining unit members.

If a RFPP program is going to be implemented in future bargaining agreements, buy in from all stakeholders within Violet Township must be obtained. As with any plan or initiative, equal participation and accountability must be achieved. At the program’s inception seven years ago, the township trustees were impressed with the “out of the box” thinking of the negotiating team and what a RFPP brought to the table. Over time, Violet Township’s leadership principals and workforce have grown and evolved. Opinions and difficulties regarding the recognition for performance program only identifies a need for the mutual commitment to do what’s best for Violet Township. This is the basis of how the fire department functions from day to day and what has caused the fire department to achieve great heights. The desires and opinions of the workforce were obtained within the research of this project. Examples of existing programs and subject matter sources were also cited. Obtaining the specific goals, and opinions of the township trustees and fire chief is the next essential step. Applying leadership and mentoring with goals and positive planning will achieve a motivating, successful and responsibly funded recognition for performance program.

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## APPENDIX 1 – VTFD\_PAY FOR PERFORMANCE DOCUMENT



## Violet Township Fire Department

### Recognition for Performance Program Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department of Public Safety Certification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Rank or Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit (select one):  1 Unit  2 Unit  3 Unit  40 Hour

Evaluation Period Date: January 1, 2011 - December 31, 2011

#### Certification Statement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Candidate) hereby certify that all statements made on this application are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false statements or documentation may subject me to disqualification, or denial. I understand that the sole purpose in submitting this application, its contents, and attachments, is to evaluate my qualifications for recognition.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

#### Declination Statement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Candidate) decline to submit an application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:



## Violet Township Fire Department

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### Recognition for Performance Program

#### Definitions

**Certification Sheet:** The member shall print off a copy of their certifications from the Ohio Department of Public Safety's web site at:

<http://ems.ohio.gov>

Under the column/section heading of Online Services, Click on Certification Verification. The direct link is:

<https://www.dps.state.oh.us/certrenewal/Verification.aspx>  
(you must remember the letter "s" in the https statement)

You **must** include a copy of this form with your packet.

#### Measured Dimensions:

**Certifications:** To receive credit the member must provide the committee with copies of each certification they held during the evaluation period. Only certifications that require re-certification or continuing education will be accepted. A college degree is the only exception in this section that does not require re-certification. Only the listed certifications will be accepted, **no additions.**

**Training outside the Fire Department:** To receive credit the member must have their 35 hours of training time used as documented in the chief's training book. *Reference to this dimension is the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), Article 10.*

**Department Monthly/Sponsored Training:** To receive credit for this section the member must attend department monthly/sponsored training. Either the member was at the training or they were not.

**Physical Participation:** Credit will be granted for participating in all the phases of the physical. You must complete all sections to receive the 100 points credit.

**Accidents:** In this section, all accidents are defined per the Township's drug free work place policy. If it is determined that you are not found at fault by the accident investigation committee ("Assignable Causes") you will not be charged with an accident.

**Bonus Training:** Bonus training is training over and above 35 hours of your training time. These are hours that the department either:

1. Paid for the class or
2. Sent you to the class

Each of these trainings must be documented in the chief's training book, and approved by the chiefs. You will receive additional credit for up to 50 hours of training above the 35 at a point value of 0.5. (Ex. If you had 50 hours above the 35 you would receive an additional 25 points.) *Reference to this dimension is in the CBA, Article 10.*

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO COMPLETE FORMS ON THE  
FOLLOWING PAGES – ITEMS MARKED AND LABELED IN  
YELLOW ARE FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**



## Violet Township Fire Department

### I. Certifications:

\_\_\_\_\_ Copy of Certification Ohio Department from Public Safety's site

EMS Certification Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Certification Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Certifications with copies attached:

- Fire Instructor
- EMS Instructor
- BLS Instructor
- Fire Safety Inspector
- Car Seat Tech
- College Degree
- Current National Registry
- Blue Card ( Completed)

**Possible Points: 25**

1 = 10 point  
2 = 15 points  
3 = 20 points  
4 or more = 25 points

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Certification Points Awarded** *(official use only)*

### II. 35 Hours of Outside Department Training

\_\_\_\_\_ Total number of training hours attended

\_\_\_\_\_ **Training Time points awarded** *(official use only)*

**Possible Points: 25**

14 or less = 0  
15-19 = 5  
20-24 = 10  
25-29 = 15  
30-34 = 20  
35 or more = 25

### III. Department Monthly/Sponsored Trainings (12 maximum)

\_\_\_\_\_ Total number of Monthly/Sponsored training attended

\_\_\_\_\_ **Department Monthly Training points awarded** *(official use only)*

**Possible Points: 25**

2 or less = 0  
3-4 = 5  
5-6 = 10  
7-8 = 15  
9-10 = 20  
11 or more = 25



## Violet Township Fire Department

### IV. Department Physical Participation

\_\_\_\_\_ Lab Work

\_\_\_\_\_ Stress Test

\_\_\_\_\_ Physical with Dr. Serrano

\_\_\_\_\_ **Department Physical Participation points awarded** *(official use only)*

Possible Points: 100  
3 sections = 100  
Less than 3 sections = 0

### V. Accidents:

Date	Type of Accident	Explanation

If more space is needed, please check this box and attach additional documentation

Yes, I have had an accident – deemed at fault

Yes, I have had an accident – deemed not at fault

No, I have NOT had an accident

*\* ALL accidents require a report to be attached*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Accident points awarded** *(official use only)*

Possible Points: 25  
Had an accident = 0  
No accidents = 25



# Violet Township Fire Department

## VI. Incentive Points – Check all that apply

<input type="checkbox"/>	Fitness Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Part Time Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hiring Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	SCBA repair/purchasing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hose repair/purchasing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gear purchase/care	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uniform purchasing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cot repairs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Radio repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Events committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	CPR committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	EMS/OPS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Infection control	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hazmat Coordinator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Toy Drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medic 2011 Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Big Brother
<input type="checkbox"/>	EMS/MECC committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prevention tours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Union/Assoc. Officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Truck/Engine 2011	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuition committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Station Rotation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Health benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rope Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trench truck committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	COST team	<input type="checkbox"/>	Explorers/Mentors
<input type="checkbox"/>	ISO	<input type="checkbox"/>	Juvenile Firesetter	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 gas meter care
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chain Saw care	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategic Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Car Seat tech
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer/IT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medic Box redesign	<input type="checkbox"/>	Downed Firefighter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Barr Golf Outing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Doug Barr Memorial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Open House
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognition for Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parades		

\_\_\_\_\_ Total number of incentive participation  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Incentive points awarded *(official use only)*

**Possible Points: 5**  
 1 = 1 point  
 2 = 2 points  
 3 = 3 points  
 4 = 4 points  
 5 or more = 5 points



## Violet Township Fire Department

**Bonus Section** (Hours above 35 Training Hours documented in the chief's training book)

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Number of outside Trainings hours

\_\_\_\_\_ **Department Sponsored Training points awarded** *(official use only)*

**Possible Points: 25**  
**Maximum hours over 35 hours allowed = 50 hours**

For every hour over 35 hours of outside training hours, add .5 points (1/2 point) up to the maximum of 25 points (50 hours)

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# Violet Township Fire Department

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Certification points awarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ Training Time Points awarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ Department Monthly Training Points awarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical Participation Points Awarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Accident points awarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ Incentive Points awarded
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bonus Training Points awarded

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Points**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Percentage**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fire Chief

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Other Fire Department designee/officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Review Committee Members

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 2 – RESEARCH SURVEY**

To all Professional Firefighters of Violet Township Local 3558

As part of The Ohio Fire Executive program, I am completing an applied research project. Attached is a survey that has been developed to assist in gathering feedback and opinions regarding our recognition for performance program. I will be extremely grateful if you would take a few minutes and complete this survey.

The purpose of my project is to evaluate our current program, look at other programs in existence, research the concept of pay for performance and then make recommendations to the stakeholders within Violet Township.

The survey can be completed anonymously and sealed in an envelope. All responses will be kept confidential. Completed surveys should be placed in my mailbox at station 592.

Thank you for your time and your valuable comments.



## VTFD RECOGNITION FOR PERFORMANCE SURVEY

This survey is part of an applied research project within the Ohio Fire Executive Program. Please return the completed survey to Lieutenant Eisenacher by January 31, 2013. Completed surveys should be sealed in an envelope and placed in my mailbox at station 592.

*(RFPP = Recognition for Performance Program)*

### Background Questions

1. What is your current rank within VTFD? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many years have you been a career firefighter at VTFD? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Were you part of Local 3558 when the current RFPP was introduced? \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree</u></b>	<b><u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u></b>
<b>What are the opinions of our leadership and staff on the current RFPP?</b>					
I am satisfied with the current RFPP.					
The current RFPP measures job aspects that are pertinent.					
I am satisfied with the grading & evaluation process.					
The compensation process has been administered appropriately.					
<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree</u></b>	<b><u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u></b>
<b>Does the current RFPP meet desired expectations?</b>					
The current RFPP has been a positive experience.					

The current RFPP motivates me to be positive & productive.					
I have modified behaviors at work in a positive manner because of the RFPP.					
Current criteria are weighted and evaluated appropriately.					
I have made a conscious effort to reduce the possibility of an "at fault accident" because of the RFPP.					
<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Strongly Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree</u></b>	<b><u>Strongly Disagree</u></b>
<b>What are the characteristics of a successful RFPP?</b>					
The program should evaluate the bargaining unit as a whole instead of individually.					
Performance aspects of our duties as paramedics and firefighters should be measured.					
At fault "on duty" accidents should be included.					
Off-duty actions that affect the township in a negative manner should be included.					
<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Strongly Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree</u></b>	<b><u>Strongly Disagree</u></b>
<b>When informally evaluating subordinates at VTFD, what do you consider important and measurable?</b>					
Individual wellness and participation in departmental health programs are important.					

Committee involvement is important.					
Educational goals and college degrees should be included within the program.					
This program should include formal individual evaluations.					
<b>Statement</b>	<b><u>Strongly Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Agree</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral</u></b>	<b><u>Disagree</u></b>	<b><u>Strongly Disagree</u></b>
<b>General comments</b>					
I would like the program to continue as a part of my compensation package.					
I consider the RFPP a positive way to motivate performance.					
I believe this program should continue, but only after the measurable criteria has changed.					
I believe this program should include a larger financial bonus.					
<b>Please take a moment and give any further comments that you would like to contribute regarding pay for performance.</b>					