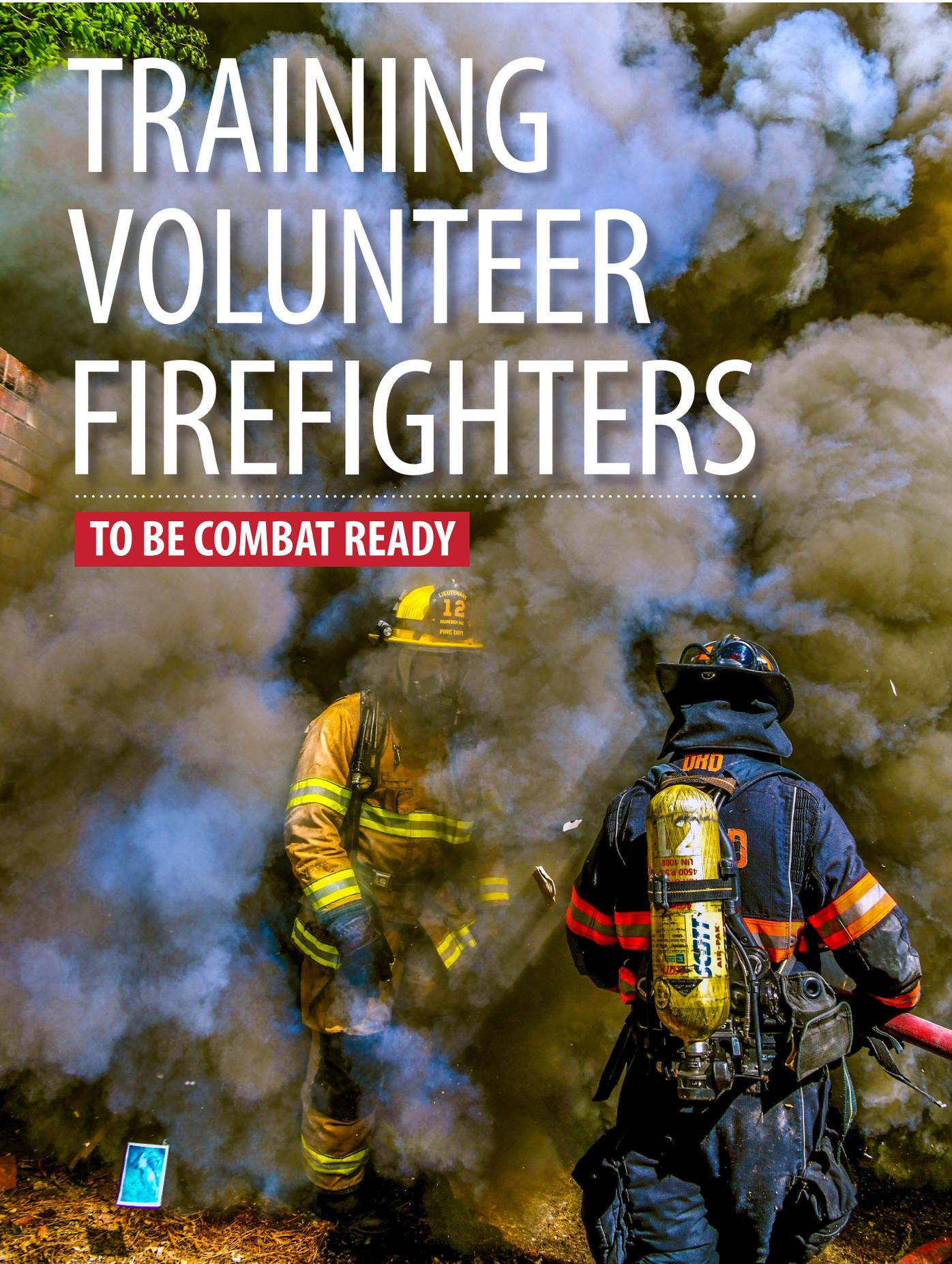




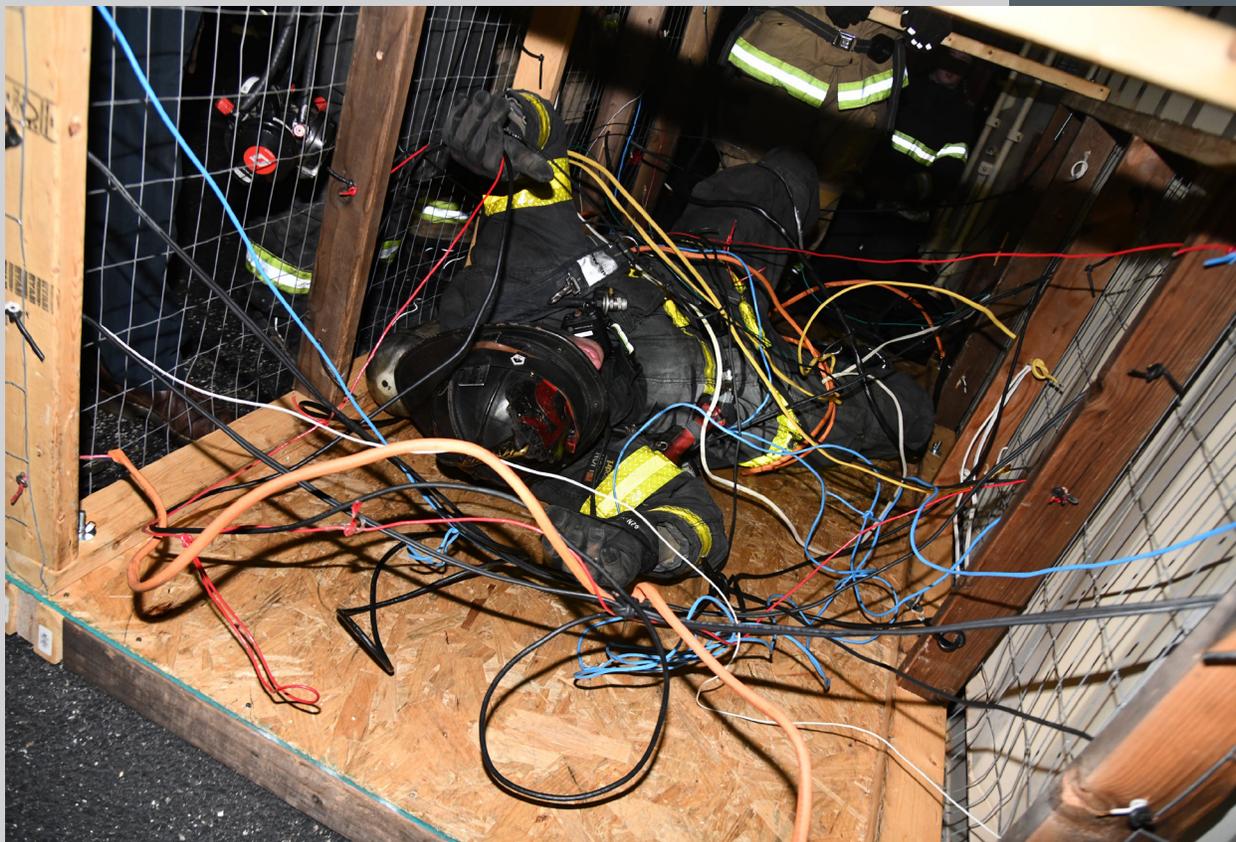
# TRAINING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

**TO BE COMBAT READY**



Firefighters are the backbone of this country. Volunteer firefighters sacrifice their time, energy, and in some circumstances their life in service to our citizens. This training manual is dedicated to providing information to chiefs, training officers, and firefighters who serve as professionals not because of a paycheck but because they are committed to saving the lives of others and protecting property from fire and other natural and man-made disasters.

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# INTRODUCTION

The training of volunteer firefighters is a constant challenge. With expanding department missions, decreasing time available, and limited budgets and resources, it can seem impossible for volunteers to get all of the training they need. We must remember how essential training is. All firefighters need to be ready when the call comes in – the public doesn't ask if you are paid or volunteer when they dial 911. They expect someone to respond quickly, take care of their problem in a professional and competent way, and BE NICE.

Developing a training program that meets the needs of the community and the individual firefighter requires planning, commitment, and time. The person in charge of training should be enthusiastic about the job. However, the job of training doesn't just fall to one person – everyone plays a part. There are so many teachable moments before and after emergency responses. These teachable moments can't be overlooked. Anyone who was on the scene can point them out and enhance the knowledge and awareness of the crew, or bring them back to the debrief or a station meeting to constructively highlight areas done well, areas that can be improved, and areas that would benefit from additional training.

Teachable moments are created when a unique, high-interest situation arises that lends itself to discussion of a particular topic. Most teachable moments come at a time when least expected.

Training officers are responsible for organizing training of volunteers with different skill sets. They identify individual and company training needs through needs and capability assessments and meetings with superiors and subordinates. A set of performance objectives can be developed based on these assessments and department priorities, and from those objectives the training schedule can be formulated. All training programs should include an evaluation component to gauge the student's ability to perform to the stated objectives. It is through this formal evaluation that the capability of firefighters performing basic skills on the fireground is known, which will assist incident commanders in selecting strategies and tactics.

"Why do we train so much? To be combat ready!"  
- Chief Tim Holman  
German Township Fire & EMS  
Springfield, OH

Training should be relevant, pertinent, interesting, and fun. Yes, training is serious business, but one of the motivational factors for volunteers is that they enjoy what they are doing and the people they are with. It is what keeps them active and engaged in the department and helps make the time and training demands placed on them more manageable.

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) and International Association of Fire Chiefs' Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) jointly developed this guide to help volunteer and combination fire departments develop and deliver a quality training program that specifically prepares their responders to be combat ready so they can best protect their communities and themselves.

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## SECTION 1

# TRAINING DELIVERY AND ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Training is one subject that brings out the emotion in many volunteer firefighters. Some say we have too much training while others say we don't have enough. One of the major goals for this guide is to provide local chiefs, training officers, and instructors with tools to develop a training program that is outcome based. We will show you how to develop a training program that enhances the students' ability to perform the necessary skills identified by your department. Once you have identified the critical skills for your firefighters, you will be able to develop tools to evaluate their ability.

Two key components to a successful training program are motivating your firefighters to want to attend and making the training worth their time. Training has to be relevant

**Training saves lives - most importantly your life and the lives of your brother and sister firefighters.**

to the skills you expect your firefighters to perform at the emergency scene. Training has to be planned. Volunteers have busy lives, so don't waste their time with training where the instructor is not prepared to deliver a quality training session. Offer trainings at different times and on different days of the week so that those who can't make one session have an option to attend that training at the alternate time. Instructors have to be enthusiastic about the subject they are teaching. Enthusiasm is contagious – if the instructor is enthusiastic, it is more likely the students will be as well.

Teaching students today is different than in the past. Young students are very connected to the internet world and may have more knowledge on the subject because they have done some research before showing up for class. To deliver training to today's student, the instructor will have to use a blended teaching style. Blended teaching techniques may include reading, research, online coursework, digital learning tools, and in-person drills. Despite the many improvements to online education, some things still need to be done in-person, such as skills training.

Instructors also need to recognize the value of their students. Keep them engaged and up to speed. Ask the experienced



members of the department to mentor newer members. Students have different knowledge levels that will require the adaptation of the delivery techniques. Engage the more experienced students who already have a knowledge base, such as by asking them to teach part of the subject or letting them demonstrate some of the skill sessions.

When building a blended learning program, instructors should consider the primary goals of each session, then consider what medium best suits the material. For resource constrained departments, remember that you don't have to reinvent the wheel for every training. Utilize resources, trainings modules, online platforms, drills, and ideas from other departments, state and national fire service associations, fire service training agencies, and other sources. Incorporate and adapt the pieces that make sense for your department's training program.

### **Training Development Questions**

**What skills do you expect a firefighter to perform? What knowledge do you expect a firefighter to have?**

While some may be opposed to new methods of training and education delivery, the majority will likely respond well to the flexibility and options that a blended learning program provides. In volunteer staffed fire departments, allowing volunteers flexibility to incorporate training in a way that fits their schedule will help in recruiting and retaining active members.

## SECTION 2

# SURVIVING THE JOB

Training isn't just about skills development. It is also about preparing our firefighters for the physical and mental impacts of the job so that they can maintain their health and wellbeing in one of the most difficult jobs there is. What firefighters learn during training is what they will take with them to the scene and throughout their fire service career. If you make health and safety priorities from the start, it will be engrained in the department culture. Focusing on health and wellness in all areas of training and response ensures your firefighters not only survive the job but thrive in it.

The intent of this section is to emphasize that health and safety should be built in as the cornerstones of any fire department training program.

Health and safety issues should be built into each training session.

However, while all of the practices included in this chapter are important, it can be overwhelming to think about how to incorporate them all. The key is to take it one step at a time. Start with the practice or practices that are the easiest to implement or will have the most impact in your department. Then over time expand to more practices.

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Every day, first responders in all levels of response face challenges. Whether in the field, at the station, or even at home, responding to a wide variety of incidents can become draining both physically and mentally. Behavioral health should be viewed as equal to physical health. If left untreated, conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress, and anxiety are no less debilitating than diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease. Those who live with untreated mental health or substance use disorders are dying decades earlier than the general population. It is imperative that we, the fire service, have the knowledge and background to address these issues with our boots-on-the-ground firefighters.

According to the American Psychological Association, approximately one in five adults experience behavioral health disorders. Emergency responders may be at increased risk of many behavioral health challenges, such as acute and post-

traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. Making sure your members understand these issues and establishing a plan for addressing them and providing support and help for those who need it are critical components to any department training program.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs' (IAFC) Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) released the Yellow Ribbon Report to provide best practices to support emergency responder behavioral health and wellbeing. This essential document can be downloaded at [www.iafc.org/docs/default-source/lvcos/20211103-iafc-yellow-ribbon-report.pdf](http://www.iafc.org/docs/default-source/lvcos/20211103-iafc-yellow-ribbon-report.pdf).

The document focuses on 11 best practices that should be included in every department leader and training officer's toolbox:

**Best Practice #1:** Create psychological safety inside your workplace by encouraging and employing the interpersonal skills necessary to seek others' input, invite feedback and ideas, and create an interpersonal climate in which others are willing to share their ideas and concerns.

**Best Practice #2:** Employ and model leadership excellence by focusing on the character of fire service leadership. Character-influenced competencies exercised by the leader help to maintain a psychologically safe environment. Model the virtues, values, and traits that best enable the desired character of great leadership.

**Best Practice #3:** Establish a peer-support program that includes trained peer counselors.

**Best Practice #4:** Provide health insurance for the firefighters and their families that specifically includes professional counseling by clinicians trained in fire service culture to understand the trauma firefighters and emergency medical service responders experience.

**Best Practice #5:** Have peer counselors sit down with personnel who have experienced a traumatic event to debrief the incident within 72 hours of its occurrence.

**Best Practice #6:** Train first-level supervisors how to initiate discussions with those who appear to be struggling with behavioral mental wellness, take appropriate action (including providing referrals), and follow up effectively.

**Best Practice #7:** Conduct training for all members about normalizing mental health impacts of the vocation and common

behavioral reactions to traumatic experiences. Show them how to access the support that is available through the department and other sources.

**Best Practice #8:** Conduct an orientation for candidates/recruits and their significant others during the hiring/application process that covers possible job-related behavioral wellness issues and the programs the department offers to treat both personnel and their families.

**Best Practice #9:** Train and deploy spousal advocates to address common behavioral wellness issues as needed.

**Best Practice #10:** Encourage individuals to gain insights into traumatic and stress-inducing events in their lives that could affect their behavioral wellness. One effective tool is the Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory, which can be accessed for free online.

**Best Practice #11:** Develop and implement annual education sessions for all personnel that promote behavioral wellness, beginning in the academy/recruit school and onboarding process, and continuing throughout their careers.

In addition, the Yellow Ribbon Report offers the following tips to implement these best practices in the fire station.

- Prioritize the practices you plan to use, perhaps in terms of urgency or ease in application to have some early successes. Be sure to consult with internal or external experts during the development and implementation process. Be open to revisions at any point in the process, including after implementation. Set a time period (i.e., six months) to go back and examine whether the process is working as intended and what may need to be revised or added.
- Define the practice or approach to be implemented.
- State what specific issue(s) or behavior(s) the practice is meant to address. If possible, identify whether you have named a symptom or an underlying cause. (Example: low morale or decreased performance may be symptoms of a toxic workplace.)
- Describe the desired outcome clearly in terms of behaviors and/or results. (Note: this step is key to your success because you may discover you need to revise or add to the specific issue or behavior. For example, you may have focused on behaviors rather than on their root cause(s) and then realize you must address both.)
- Identify the individual and organizational consequences if failure to address the designated issue(s) or behavior(s).

- Identify the internal or external experts who can guide your efforts.
- Specify measures of progress and success.
- Develop accountability mechanisms.
- Identify a specific champion responsible for the implementation and give that person the authority to make things happen (Note: in most cases, this person will delegate tasks to others.)
- Develop a written implementation plan.
- Communicate the plan to relevant stakeholders.
- Periodically assess the extent to which the practice or technique is effective in achieving desired outcomes (without violating anyone's privacy).
- Make adjustments as necessary.
- If necessary or desired, select another practice or technique and repeat the above steps.

**Communication is not about talking, it is about listening.**

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) also provides free resources to incorporate behavioral health into the fire station. The Psychologically Health Fire Departments initiative includes a toolkit and training to help department leaders foster member wellbeing and support an engaged, successful, and high-performing workforce. The six key areas addressed are member involvement, health and safety, member growth and development, work-life balance, member recognition, and effective communication. Access the toolkit and training at [www.nvfc.org/phfd/#toolkit](http://www.nvfc.org/phfd/#toolkit).

The NVFC also maintains a Directory of Behavioral Health Professionals that includes local providers ready and equipped to assist firefighters, EMS providers, and their families. Providers either have firsthand knowledge of the fire and emergency services or have taken a training course provided by the Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance. The directory is updated monthly and can be a great resource for fire departments to provide to their members. Access the directory at [www.nvfc.org/phfd](http://www.nvfc.org/phfd).

In addition, the NVFC has several online courses focusing on behavioral health that can be used to train members on challenges they may face, warning signs to watch for, and what to do if they or someone they know need help. Find these courses in the NVFC Virtual Classroom at <https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org>.

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## EXPOSURE RISK REDUCTION

Since 2016, a major emphasis has been placed on the occupational health hazards that volunteer firefighters face. We now realize that cancer in the fire service has become an epidemic. In January 2022, the International Association of Fire Fighters announced that cancer is the leading cause of firefighter deaths in America. Cancer kills more firefighters than cardiac events, which is the leading on-duty cause of firefighter deaths. Firefighting is a dangerous profession, and a growing body of research and data shows the contributions that job-related exposures have in chronic illnesses, such as cancer and heart disease.

NIOSH undertook two large studies focused on firefighter cancer and concluded that firefighters face a nine percent increase in cancer diagnoses and a 14 percent increase in cancer-related deaths compared to the general population in the U.S. The number of volunteer firefighters that die from cancer is not necessarily reported accurately as many times when a volunteer dies from cancer, the death certificate information fails to mention they were a volunteer firefighter.

Why is cancer such a threat to firefighters? Some of it has to do with modern building materials and furnishings, which burn faster than before and, when burned, give off toxins and chemicals that can cause cancer. The other part rests squarely on the shoulders of the firefighters. Not wearing turnout gear properly, not wearing SCBA in hot and warm zones, not completing gross decon after an incident, and other actions that lessen the protection from carcinogens put firefighters at risk. This is where training is paramount. Train firefighters from the start on why they are at risk and what they can do to lessen those risks. Use proper cancer risk reduction techniques at all times during training and on scene. If these measures are always followed 100 percent of the time, they will be second nature to the firefighter and we can turn the tide on the firefighter cancer epidemic.

Building on the work that was done by those attending the National Firefighter Cancer Alliance meetings, the NVFC and the IAFC-VCOS joined forces to research and develop the Lavender Ribbon Report in 2018. The report highlights the 11 best practices for exposure risk reduction to help prevent occupational cancer for firefighters and provides guidance on how to implement these practices in a fire station. In 2021, the Lavender Ribbon Report Update was released to offer further information and motivation to support the 11 best practices.

The 11 best practices detailed in the Lavender Ribbon Reports are as follows.

**Best Practice #1:** Full personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn throughout the entire incident, including a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) during salvage and overhaul.

**Best Practice #2:** A second hood should be provided to all entry-certified personnel in the department.

**Best Practice #3:** Following exit from the immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) incident and while still on air, you should begin immediate gross decontamination of PPE using soapy water and a brush if weather conditions allow. PPE should then be placed into a sealed plastic bag and placed in an exterior compartment of the apparatus, or, if responding in personally owned vehicles, placed in a large storage tote, thus keeping the off-gassing PPE away from passengers and self.

**Best Practice #4:** After completion of gross decontamination procedures as discussed above and while still on scene, the exposed areas of the body (neck, face, arms, and hands) should be wiped off immediately using wipes, which must be carried on all apparatus. Use the wipes to remove as much soot as possible from exposed areas immediately.

**Best Practice #5:** Change your clothes and wash them after exposure to products of combustion or other contaminants. Do this as soon as possible or isolate in a trash bag until washing is available.

**Best Practice #6:** Shower as soon as possible after being exposed to products of combustion or other contaminants. “Shower within the hour.”

**Best Practice #7:** PPE, especially turnout pants, must be prohibited in areas outside the apparatus floor (i.e., kitchen, sleeping areas, etc.) and should never be in the living quarters.

**Best Practice #8:** Wipes, or soap and water, should also be used to decontaminate and clean apparatus seats, SCBA, and interior crew areas regularly, especially after incidents where personnel were exposed to products of combustion.

**Best Practice #9:** Get an annual physical, as early detection is the key to survival.



**Best Practice #10:** Tobacco products of any variety, including dip and e-cigarettes, should never be used at any time, on or off duty.

**Best Practice #11:** Fully document all fire or chemical exposures on incident reports and personal exposure reports.

It is critical that we train our firefighters to protect themselves. These best practices should be embedded in every fire station's training program, starting with rookie schools, as well as incorporated into the department's standard operating procedures. Download the two Lavender Ribbon Reports at [www.nvfc.org/lrr](http://www.nvfc.org/lrr).

## FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is committed to building a fire service where everyone goes home. As part of these efforts, they have created the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives to form the foundation for a safe, healthy, and thriving fire service.

As you build your training program, keep these 16 initiatives in mind and consider how you can implement them in your department. More information on these initiative as well as resources to help with implementation are available at [www.everyonegoeshome.com/16-initiatives](http://www.everyonegoeshome.com/16-initiatives).

The 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives are:

1. Cultural change
2. Accountability
3. Risk management
4. Empowerment
5. Training and certification
6. Medical and physical fitness
7. Research agenda
8. Technology
9. Fatality, near-miss investigation
10. Grant support
11. Response policies
12. Violent incident response
13. Psychological support
14. Public education
15. Code enforcement and sprinklers
16. Apparatus and design safety

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT:

When we talk about bullying in the fire service or workforce in general, the United States Labor Department came out with the following definition in 2014: *"any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site. It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide. It can affect and involve employees, clients, customers, and visitors."* (United States Department of Labor - OSHA, 2014). Vega in 2005 defined workplace bullying as: *"...unwanted, offensive, humiliating, undermining behavior towards an individual or groups of employees. Such persistently malicious attacks on personal or professional performance are typically unpredictable, irrational, and often unfair."* In general, bullying can be characterized as repeated actions toward another person that are unwelcome and perceived as negative, destructive, and causes negative interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes.

**Bullying, harassment, and discrimination are probably occurring in your department. Don't ignore the signs and symptoms.**

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Two million American workers report having been victims of workplace violence annually. The fire service is not immune to bullying and harassment, and it has a devastating effect on individuals, departments, and the entire fire service community. Bullying and harassment can impact mental wellbeing as well as job performance, in addition to opening a department up to lawsuits and negative public image.

There is also a clear impact on staffing. People do not want to join or stay with a department where they are not treated well. Research conducted by the NVFC in 2020 found that the main reasons that former volunteers left their department had to do with internal conflict and lack of support from leadership. The top four reasons cited were:

- Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others
- Department leadership that doesn't focus on or support the needs of members
- Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along
- Lack of camaraderie or sense of community among everyone in the department

Fire service leaders are responsible for the occupational safety and protection of workers' rights for a safe working environment. It is a part of leadership's duty to maintain a plan that monitors workplace bullying in their fire department and takes steps to reduce and eliminate it. Recognizing these issues is the first step to a resolution.

**Leaders are responsible for creating a psychologically safe working environment that does not tolerate bullying, harassment, or discrimination.**

Leadership needs to take a look at the culture that is developed within the station. Evaluate and review current policies and embrace changes needed using a top down, bottom-up leadership plan, develop and search out various educational and training programs that will assist in rectifying the issues, and develop an employee support plan to bring closure to the situations at hand.

Once again, an important component of this is training. All members of the department need to be trained on the anti-bullying and harassment policies of the department, what the repercussions are, what constitutes acceptable and non-acceptable behavior, and why it is important to maintain an inclusive culture free from this type of behavior. Personnel also need to be trained on what to do if they witness or experience bullying or harassment, and there should be a very clear policy in place on how these instances are reported and dealt with. Both IAFC-VCOS and the NVFC have resources on bullying and harassment, including a joint national statement against bullying harassment, and discrimination. These resources can be found at [www.nvfc.org/anti-harassment-resources/](http://www.nvfc.org/anti-harassment-resources/).

## SECTION 3

# WHY IS TRAINING IMPORTANT?

## THE VALUE OF TRAINING

Success in the fire service is predicated on several important foundational skills. What is success in the fire service? Fire service personnel going home to their family at the end of their shift? Quickly and responsibly responding to and handling all emergency types? Yes, and yes. For success to occur, both training and education must be an integral part of the fire department.

Being competent in the skills associated with primary search, hose line advancement, and water application are highly valued foundational skills.

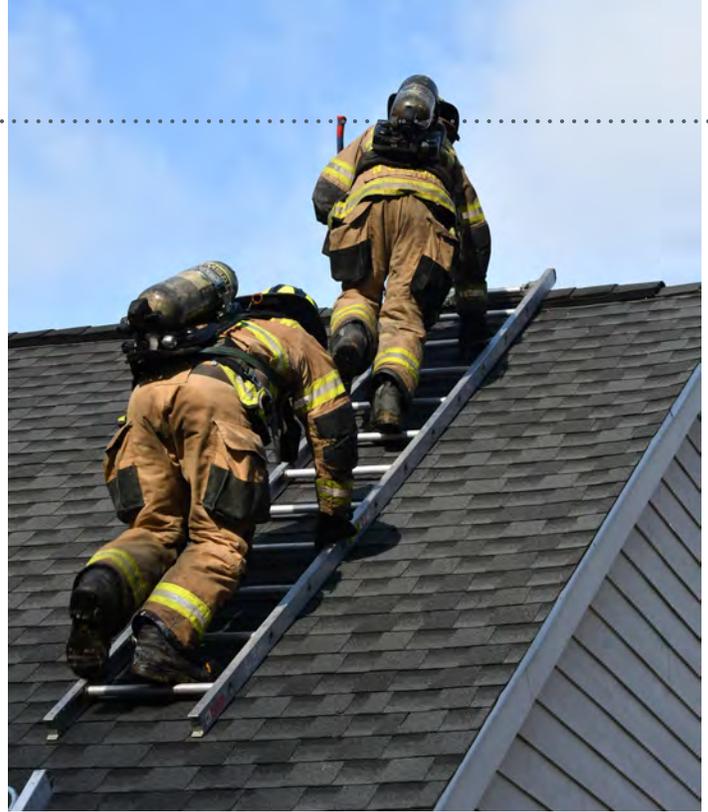
We tend to put a greater emphasis on training in the fire service. Equally important is the education component. We should view the education piece as the “what” or precursor to training – it provides the foundation so that personnel understand the need for the training and how it impacts the individual and the department. Training is the hands-on or psychomotor part of learning – the specific skills or knowledge needed to perform the task. Both are important!

When we place a significant value on something, it means we realize its importance. It also means we dedicate the right resources and foster long-term commitment to the concept or practice. When fire service leaders value training and education, they are saying that it is an unwavering activity and setting an example for others to follow.

## A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Created by the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) was established as a separate and independent research program to create objective scientific research findings in the field of occupational safety and health.

There are over one million firefighters in the U.S., and about two thirds of these are volunteers. Each year, 80 to 100 U.S. firefighters die in the line of duty, or approximately one



firefighter dying every three to four days. In 1998, NIOSH started investigating firefighter line-of-duty deaths (LODD). Using data collected from LODD reports beginning in 1998, researchers at NIOSH identified five causal factors that contribute to firefighter LODDs. These causal factors include:

1. Inadequate risk assessment
2. Poor communications
3. Inadequate command
4. Lack of accountability
5. Lack of SOGs or failure to follow SOGs

Each of these factors can be improved upon with proper training, thus reducing instances of firefighter deaths. NIOSH reports, which can be found at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire), are an invaluable tool to educate and train fire service personnel. The case study approach allows current and future members of the profession to learn from past incidents. Due to the high degree of objectivity that is associated with each report, we learn based on the facts of the incident. The reports also give fire service personnel an opportunity to assess his/her own organization's standard operating procedures and best practices.

The five causal factors that play a contributing role in LODDs serve as a worthy foundation to start and sustain training/education efforts in all fire service organizations. In many instances, overcoming the “five” requires very little in allocating financial resources to an organization for implementation purposes.

## COMPETENCY AND TACTICAL EFFICIENCY

Regardless of organization type (volunteer, combination, or career), fire service personnel across the nation carry out the same mission: protection of life and property. Although staffing levels and staffing and response deployment models vary, fire service personnel are expected to arrive in a timely manner, assess the incident within the hazard zone, come up with a plan of action, and carry out task level activities based on the response required.

Training in hoseline advancement may be considered a basic skill.

Our community members expect us to be highly trained, educated, and in possession of the right resources to carry out our fundamental responsibilities as fire service personnel. This means every firefighter and their company must be a “strong” or “competent” firefighter/company.

Competency is reached through education, training, research, and experience. You can't have one without the other – all of these are needed to achieve competency.

Tactical and task level efficiency is not a passive process. It requires a tremendous amount of ongoing commitment at every level in a fire service organization to attain and maintain tactical/task level efficiency. The “active” process toward attainment of efficiency consists of the following:

- Organizational assessment of current operations and professional development offerings
- Assessment of hazards and incident types in the primary response area
- Current versus needed training resources
- Instructor certification
- Formation of a comprehensive professional development plan
- Commitment from every member in the organization to be a “student of the profession”

## CREDENTIALING AND CERTIFICATION

Credentialing is attaining an educational degree or achieving a professional qualification associated with a particular profession. It is the hallmark of dedication and professional development against the backdrop of a rigorous set of activities. Individual firefighters may want to achieve credentialing to further or advance their fire service careers, or existing leaders and training officers may want to pursue credentialing to enhance their capabilities, knowledge, and professionalism.



There are different credentialing organizations serving the North American fire service. One is the U.S.-based Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE), which offers credentialing designations in the following programs:

- Chief fire officer
- Chief EMS officer
- Chief training officer
- Fire marshal
- Fire officer

CPSE states the following as benefits of a credentialing designation:

- Highlighting your professional growth
- Documenting strategies for your career enhancement and development
- Demonstrating your commitment to lifelong learning, skill development, and community service
- Affirming your dedication to proficiency and delivery of all-hazard services to your community
- Improving your chances of being hired and promoted by identifying you as a candidate with superior skills, knowledge, and leadership capabilities
- Fostering a source of pride for you or those in your agency you encourage to become credentialed



Another credentialing organization is the UK-based Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE). Founded in 1918, IFE awards grades of credentials to fire service professionals. In its most recent strategic plan, the IFE describes its aim as one of promoting, encouraging, and improving the science, practice, and professionalism of fire engineering. Its overarching strategies include:

- Facilitating awareness
- Fostering professionalism
- Increasing knowledge
- Providing independent leadership
- Promoting the IFE and organizational development

As part of their qualifications for one or more designations, both organizations require applicants to have a college degree. For more information on these two organizations, visit their web sites at [CPSE.org](http://CPSE.org) and [IFE.org.uk](http://IFE.org.uk) (or [ife-usa.org/](http://ife-usa.org/) for the U.S. branch).

The International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI) offers a credential designation designed to provide instructors a direct pathway to develop and advance as professional educators and bridge the gap between fire service professional development, the professional credentialing of instructors, and the accreditation of emerging training curriculums and e-learning platforms and programs.

Highlights of the ISFSI program include:

- Generational differences
- Training for fireground adaptability
- Technology driven integration
- Alternative methods of learning
- Developing tactical decision games

Learn more at <https://learn.isfsi.org/training-officer>.

In addition, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1041: Standard for Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications identifies the minimum job performance requirements for fire service instructors. NFPA standards provide the individual an opportunity to verify they can perform a skill to an agreed upon professional standard. The NFPA professional qualifications programs are usually adopted at the state level by the organization that certifies firefighters. Becoming certified to an NFPA standard shows the public, employer, and others you have demonstrated knowledge and skills.

## CREATING TRAINING THAT IS VALUED

While seat time, test scores, and attendance records can demonstrate completion rates for a training program, they do not tell the full story. In the volunteer fire service, there has to be a measurable return on investment (ROI) for the individual as well as the department. This ROI translates to more efficient and safer operations. Members value training that is validated (measured), relative (pertinent to their job), and is outcome based. Training can produce impressive results, but there must be an effort toward preparation, presentation, and evaluation. When designing a value training program, it will require each of those steps be used.

Skills training should build confidence along with competence.

The outcomes associated with attending training has to build skill competence and confidence in their ability to perform under adverse conditions. When conducting training, you can't replicate the adrenalin that firefighters experience at an emergency incident, but you can design some stress into the training that tries to replicate some of the noises and distractions that impact a firefighter's ability to perform the tasks. When you're training firefighters on how to do a specific task, you're showing them the most optimal, safe, and time-efficient way to carry out a process. Training is where habits are formed.

Having a solid training program also reduces liability for the department and the individual firefighter. Well-trained firefighters will be better prepared for response and have less chance of making mistakes on scene. In the instance of negative outcomes, being able to prove your firefighters had the proper training and followed that training can help mitigate bad publicity for the department or even lawsuits.

As if efficiency, cost savings, liability reduction, and consistency aren't reason enough to adopt a well-rounded training program, training will also give firefighters the confidence they need to perform their job. A confident firefighter who knows how to



do his or her job will be happier than one who has to stumble through a process, unsure about how to do things the right way.

Since training provides a lot of value, it might be confusing to hear that those in charge of training still often struggle to prove their program's merit. When organizations make financial cuts, training budgets are typically the first to get the axe. In the fire service, cutting training can have a significant negative impact to the safety and wellbeing of the firefighters, to the reputation of the department, and to the protection of the community. Firefighting is just like a team sport – the team has to practice over and over again to not get it wrong.

The very first step to ensuring your training adds value is to conduct a proper training needs analysis. There is a huge difference between “want” and “need.” Volunteer training focus should be on the “need” of training to enhance firefighters’ ability to perform their duties. Training needs may vary by department and region and should be identified through this needs analysis.

**Training needs analysis includes a look at the various risks in your community that might require a fire department response.**

## SECTION 4

# THE ROLES OF THE TRAINING OFFICER, INSTRUCTOR, AND STUDENT

The training officer is one of the most important positions within a fire service organization. While this role is crucial to career, combination, and volunteer departments, it can be especially critical in a volunteer department that has limited staffing. Assigning one member as the training officer and empowering that person with the authority they need will help ensure that quality training opportunities will be developed and delivered to the volunteers.

The previous sections highlighted why departments need a quality training program. It is a critical piece in reducing stress and building confidence to meet each of the organization's missions and goals. As with all organizations, the program put forth by the fire training officer protects the agency from liability, protects the responder on and off the job, and enables the department to provide efficient and effective services to the community.

This section outlines some of the functions and responsibilities of the training officer as well as what is required of the instructor and the student.

### ROLE OF THE TRAINING OFFICER

The role of the training officer is ever expanding. They are expected to be administrative gurus, community risk reduction specialists, emergency incidents experts, and interpersonal coaches, each of which are specialized disciplines in and of themselves. However, three primary roles that a training officer needs to fulfill in order to implement a successful training program with desired outcomes are to create a positive learning environment, create a safe learning environment, and promote enthusiasm while learning.

### Create a Positive Learning Environment

Creating a positive learning environment is actually easier than one may think. Table 1 highlights a few key elements that teachers have used over time that work with all ages or demographics.

**TABLE 1**  
Steps to a Productive and Positive Learning Environment

STEP	OUTCOME
1. Make learning relevant.	Learning must take theory and translate it into reality. Too many “what if” scenarios won’t give the learner the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to apply what is needed when it is needed.
2. Develop a code of conduct.	Set clear expectations and agree upon positive and negative behaviors.
3. Employ a positive actions curriculum.	Adjust the learning environment to the student, yet adhere to the code of conduct and foster positivity by not allowing bullying or belittling of other students or instructors.
4. Help members develop motivation.	Learning is like life, intrinsic and internal (intrinsic) motivation drives the individual much better than external (extrinsic) (Kiel, 1999). Help members develop skills that make them feel confident and accomplished.
5. Reinforce positive behaviors.	Recognizing and reinforcing positive behaviors is the best way to create and maintain a positive learning environment.
6. Always respond with positivity.	As the training officer, maintaining a positive attitude will demonstrate how you want the class to respond. Staying positive will keep them positive.

Source: Loveless, B. (2022). *Strategies for Building a Productive and Positive Learning Environment*. Retrieved from Education Corner.



### Create a Safe Learning Environment

Public service organizations are grounded in safety. When the community or individuals are no longer safe, we are called in to re-establish that safety. The learning environment is no different. It is the obligation of the training officer to ensure all rules and regulations are followed both inside the classroom and in training structures to ensure the safety of all attendees, students, and instructors. There are a number of standards and recommendations from the NFPA, IFSTA, PROBoard, and others that serve as good guidelines for structuring various classes to meet competency. Competency should be the goal as opposed to certification. Certification and competency should go hand-in-hand; however, many times, someone with a certification may not be able to perform the task when needed. Competency requires repetition and realistic application.

Competency in performance should be the overall goal of training.

### Promote Enthusiasm while Learning

The energy that the training officer or presenter brings to the class is contagious. A positive and enthusiastic presenter creates a positive and energetic group of participants. Maintaining some variety of topics and skill application will keep the student engaged. As the coordinator, the training officer needs to select appropriate instructors who, in turn, present the curriculum. Select those with both interpersonal and professional skills.

## ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTOR

The instructor has the responsibility to deliver the course material in such a manner that the student, regardless of experience or knowledge, is able to absorb it. Civility is also an important instructor responsibility. Each instructor will have their own

The instructor style should compliment the delivery of the material.

style; however, there are some foundations that should be consistent between all:

- Deliver the training in a manner that assists the student in learning the material.
  - > Adapt teaching methods and materials as necessary.
  - > Be prepared to deliver the material.
- Establish clear and measurable objectives for education and training.
  - > Revise as appropriate to meet stated outcomes.
  - Encourage students to explore learning opportunities inside and outside the organization.
  - Enforce the aforementioned code of conduct for the students.

Instructors should also be respectful of their students. For volunteers especially, remember that they are taking time out of their busy schedules to be there. Start and end educational and training sessions at the stated times, come prepared to teach the subject, and stick to the relevant material and subject matter.

Instructors can be from the fire and emergency industry or from outside; however, the responsibilities of the instructor remain constant. The expectations set by the training officer and the environment upheld by the instructor creates a learning condition where the student will walk away with the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to perform tasks assigned to them.





## ROLE OF THE STUDENT

Each person in the learning environment has roles and responsibilities, and the student is no different. Unreceptive, disruptive, or unprepared students not only hinder their own educational experience but can negatively impact the learning experience of the other students as well.

Some very simple guidelines each student is expected to follow are:

- Attend class.
- Be on time.
- Bring all necessary supplies.
- Take good care of equipment and apparatus.
- Complete all homework assignments on time.
- DO THEIR BEST.

Students have a responsibility in the learning process as well as the instructor.

In the end, it is up to the student to learn. The training officer coordinates the big picture to align mission, goals, and objectives. The instructor presents the material in a way so that students can learn and perform. The students ask critical questions and work diligently to demonstrate understanding and skill.

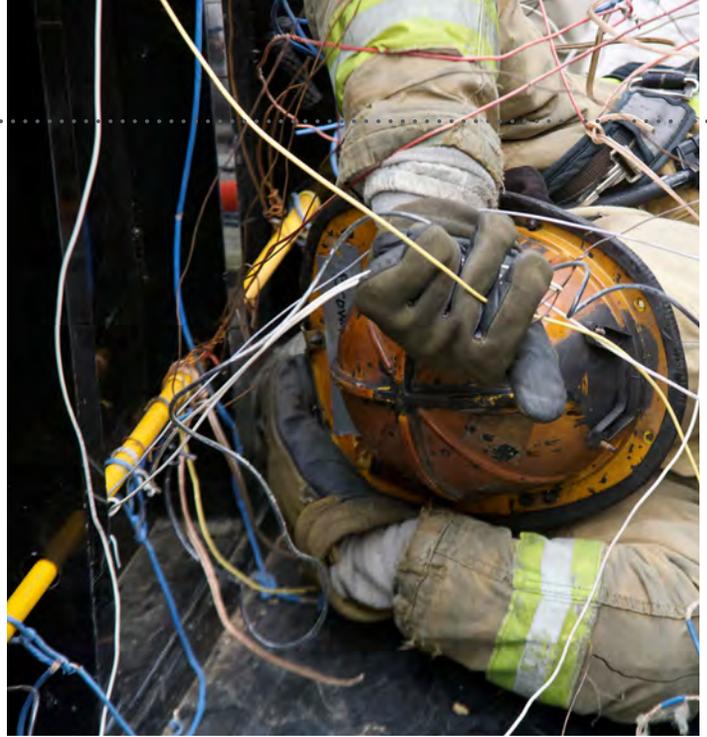
## SECTION 5

# PLANNING TRAINING

Having a solid planning routine is essential to success in the fire service. Not only does it provide a framework for learning and practice, but through planning you can develop goals for service delivery to the citizens as well as keep firefighters engaged, a key factor in retention. Developing an education and training plan to meet your department's needs and goals will result in far more success than deciding at the last minute before a drill what topics will be covered or simply doing the same things over and over.

Training should also follow a repetitive cycle. This cycle can be based on the seasonal events in your area, weather conditions, or as a culmination of different skills sets. The value of following a cycle is not only one of planning, but also in a refreshing of skills and the ability to use feedback from after action reviews to enhance previous training topics when they come up again. Repetitive training topics could be considered “plays,” just like a football team would run. The more the plays are practiced, the smoother they will be run and become muscle memory. Also, with a solid set of plays, it becomes easier to call an audible. For generations, it has been said that “no two fires are the same.” That is not an entirely true statement. Minor details may vary, but things like construction types, weather conditions, water supply, apparatus, and equipment carried are predictable in your area. The predictable factors become the groundwork for developing your plays. The plays can be compiled into a playbook, which becomes a comprehensive training plan and leads to the development of a training doctrine.

With the planning process, there should be adequate scheduling of the training event in advance and the appropriate length of time for completion should be factored in. The assignment of instructors, assistant instructors, and logistics is more successful when time is available to plan. In many departments, trainings have historically been conducted on a designated evening during the week. However, as department makeup changes and volunteers have busier off-duty schedules, alternatives may need to be researched to accommodate your members. For instance, if a department has volunteers that work evening shifts, schedule an alternate time for the training before those shifts start or on weekends. One of the keys to a successful training program is flexibility. Today's volunteers may also have family obligations that might prevent them from attending training on a certain day.



By scheduling an alternative date for each training, the training officer will be better able to keep all of the volunteers trained and competent.

At the same time, providing the schedule for all of the training dates well in advance will help members plan their own schedules accordingly. If a volunteer knows at the start of the year that training will be provided on Tuesday nights and Saturday afternoons every week or the first and third Monday and Saturday every month, it will be easier for them to determine which of the trainings work for their schedule and block those times off for training.

The designated instructors must not only be versed in the topic, but also enthusiastic. If the instructor is not an enthusiastic advocate for the topic at hand, the entire session could lose momentum. Instructors should be prepared ahead of time and, if possible, communicate their expectations and goals for the training in advance.

For the planning of expectations and goals, departments can adopt drills from NFPA 1410, Standard on Training for Initial Emergency Scene Operations as a benchmark and adapt them to their operational procedures. This can actually be done with many NFPA job performance requirements. All NFPA standards can be viewed online for free at [www.nfpa.org/freeaccess](http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess). The NVFC and New England Volunteer Fire & EMS Coalition also teamed up to develop an Engine Company Training Evolutions document to provide volunteer fire companies with six model engine company drills based on NFPA 1410. This can be accessed at [www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NVFC-Company-Evolutions-Dec2017.pdf](http://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NVFC-Company-Evolutions-Dec2017.pdf).

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Instructors should maintain a good instructor to student ratio for learning and safety, being mindful that the newer a skill is to someone, the lower the instructor to student ratio should be. As a student gets more experience in performing a skill, the instructor should be able to transition from teaching, to coaching, and finally to observing.

There are five steps to teaching skills:

1. Teach them how to do it.
2. Demonstrate for the student how to do it.
3. Student demonstrates to the instructor.
4. Student repeats the skill to increase competency.
5. Instructor provides feedback to the student.

After action reviews from incidents can be used to verify if the training goals are meeting the needs of the department or be used to enhance or adjust the training materials. It is imperative that training be constructive and work towards a goal of improvement and building competency, efficiency, and safety.

For more information, the NVFC has a course in its Virtual Classroom on Planning and Implementing a Training Program. This can be accessed at <https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/products/planning-and-implementing-a-training-program>.



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## SECTION 6

# TRAINING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This section looks at some of the things to consider as departments develop or review their standard operating guidelines and procedures (SOGs/SOPs).

## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR VOLUNTEER STAFFED FIRE DEPARTMENTS

What are the rules of engagement for your department's structural fire response? Your department should have clear policies and procedures for this, and training should be conducted that prepares firefighters to follow these rules of engagement.

For instance, an example rules of engagement may look like the following:

- Interior fire suppression operations will not commence until a minimum of 6 firefighters are on scene AND a 360-degree scene assessment is completed.
- Command shall be established by one of the first arriving firefighters.
- A backup line shall be pulled, charged, and staffed when crews are operating in an offensive strategy.
- Apply water to the fire as quickly as possible, in sufficient volume and from the safest position.
- A minimum of 1,000 gallons of water shall be on scene before initiating offensive operations when there are no fire hydrants.
- When there is less than 50% of water in the pumping engine water tank the interior crew shall evacuate to the exterior.
- When conducting primary search, one firefighter with a charged hose line shall stay at the door of the room being searched to protect the firefighter.
- Request mutual aid as soon as you know your staffing response will be limited and the problem is bigger than you have available staff.

- At least 2 firefighters should be positioned outside the hot zone in full PPE/SCBA and appropriate equipment to act as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT).
- As more staff arrive, implement the accountability system.

In 2010, the IAFC Safety, Health, and Survival (SHS) section developed the Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Survival and The Incident Commander's Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Safety to better prepare and guide firefighters and incident commanders for risk analysis and decision-making on the fireground. The North American Fire Training Directors partnered with the SHS in 2014 to develop the Rules of Engagement for Fire Service Training to help prevent injuries and deaths during training events. Adapt these rules of engagement for your department's policies and procedures to help increase the safety of firefighters on the training ground and on the fireground.

Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Survival:

1. Size up your tactical area of operation.
2. Determine the occupant survival profile.
3. DO NOT risk your life for lives or property that cannot be saved.
4. Extend LIMITED risk to protect SAVABLE property.
5. Extend VIGILANT and MEASURED risk to protect and rescue SAVABLE lives.
6. Go in together, stay together, come out together.
7. Maintain continuous awareness of your air supply, situation, location, and fire conditions.
8. Constantly monitor fireground communications for critical radio reports.
9. You are required to report unsafe practices or conditions that can harm you. Stop, evaluate, and decide.
10. You are required to abandon your position and retreat before deteriorating conditions can harm you.
11. Declare a Mayday as soon as you THINK you are in danger.

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The Incident Commander's Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Safety:

1. Rapidly conduct, or obtain, a 360-degree situational size-up of the incident.
2. Determine the occupant survival profile.
3. Conduct an initial risk assessment and implement a SAFE ACTION PLAN.
4. If you do not have the resources to safely support and protect firefighters, seriously consider a defensive strategy.
5. DO NOT risk firefighter lives for lives or property that cannot be saved. Seriously consider a defensive strategy.
6. Extend LIMITED risk to protect SAVABLE property.
7. Extend VIGILANT and MEASURED risk to protect and rescue SAVABLE lives.
8. Act upon reported unsafe practices and conditions that can harm firefighters. Stop, evaluate, and decide.
9. Maintain frequent two-way communications, and keep interior crews informed of changing conditions.
10. Obtain frequent progress reports and revise the action plan.
11. Ensure accurate accountability of every firefighter's location and status.
12. If after completing the primary search little or no progress toward fire control has been achieved, seriously consider a defensive strategy.
13. Always have a rapid intervention team in place at all working fires.
14. Always have firefighter rehab services in place at all working fires.

Rules of Engagement for Safe Fire Service Training:

1. Have a clear purpose for the training exercise and use a TRAINING PLAN with defined outcomes and learning objectives. Review the plan with all participants BEFORE training begins.
2. Establish and maintain a clear chain of command during training. Designate a training incident commander/lead instructor. Don't let participants pull rank and compromise safety.
3. Never allow freelancing during training. Require the use of staging and accountability systems.
4. Use only QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS who possess both certification and experience in the subject they are teaching.
5. Adhere to all national, state, and local standards for conducting training.
6. Only conduct training under ACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS. Don't place participants in a realistic environment before they are ready for it. Never use live victims during high-risk training.
7. Use all possible SAFETY PRECAUTIONS during training, even if they exceed what is possible during an actual emergency event. Even though it's "just training," never overlook safety precautions.
8. Require all participants to be MEDICALLY CLEARED before they participate in strenuous training. Enforce appropriate rehabilitation and monitoring during and after training.
9. Make sure the training is appropriate for the skill level of all participants and that they know what is expected of them.
10. Allow all participants to STOP – without penalty – if they don't understand their assignment or if they sense something unsafe during training. Stop, talk, and decide on a safer approach. EVERYONE is a safety officer.

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## TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

SOPs and SOGs should include the training requirements expected of volunteers, and these should be communicated clearly to the volunteer during the recruit and onboarding process. An example of what these requirements may look like is as follows:

A volunteer shall become certified at the firefighter I level within 18 months of joining.

A volunteer that is not certified shall not participate as a member of the team for initial interior fire suppression operations.

A volunteer shall attend a minimum of 24 hours of training annually on fire suppression tactics.

- This includes a combination of in-class instruction and practical application
- Training topics may include handling and care of tools, donning and doffing PPE/SCBA, water application techniques, ventilation, operating the pump, handling hazardous materials response.

Training plans should then be developed to enable volunteers to meet these training requirements. An example training plan may look like the following:

- Skill 1 – SCBA operational check, donning, cylinder removal and refill, emergency operations
- Skill 2 – Primary/secondary search
- Skill 3 – Ground ladders and utility control
- Skill 4 – Hose line advancement
- Skill 5 – Water supply and pump connections
- Skill 6 – Roof/basement cut and roof/basement ventilation
- Skill 7 – Knot tying and tool/equipment hoisting, rope inspection and storage
- Skill 8 – Salvage operations
- Skill 9 – Using lighting equipment
- Skill 10 – Riding fire apparatus and working at an emergency scene
- Skill 11 – Driving apparatus and operating the pump

SOPs/SOGs should also include a list of general rules to ensure the health and safety of all firefighters performing operational tasks. An example of these is as follows:

- A physical assessment shall be conducted annually to determine “fit for duty” as an interior firefighter.
- A member shall not drive any fire apparatus within 8 hours of drinking alcohol.
  - > A member attending fires or drills under the undue influence of intoxicants shall be charged in writing and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Conduct an annual assessment of emergency operations that includes a written report on lessons learned.
  - > These identified lessons learned help to develop training for the coming year.
- Conduct annual evaluations of the level of service, how well they deployed when dispatched (whether they dispatched enough people with the right equipment), and response times.
  - > Develop a plan to address identified deficiencies.
- Develop a community risk reduction plan to identify and prioritize risks and the potential need for fire and emergency medical services.
  - > Determine the resources necessary to address those risks and reduce those risks to the extent possible.
- Members found in possession or use of drugs including illegal narcotics will be dismissed if found guilty after the presentation of written charges.
- An active member shall be required to attend at least [percent] of meetings and activities.
  - > Persons whose work schedules interfere with attendance at regular meetings or trainings will notify the secretary in writing.

## SECTION 7

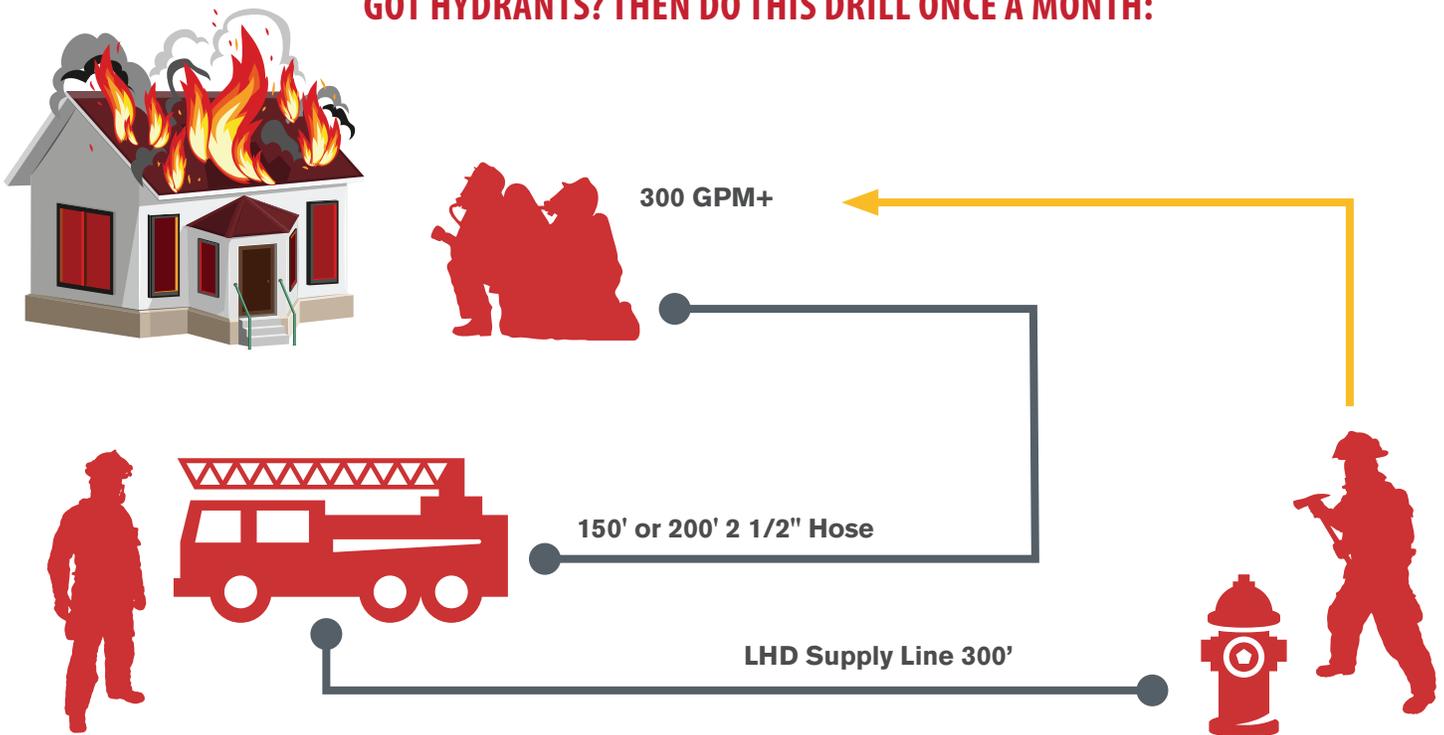
# ASSESSING FIREFIGHTERS' CAPABILITY

In order to improve or maintain proficiency with basic fire attack skills such as using SCBA, stretching hose, and flowing water, firefighters must practice repeatedly and every month. Practice should be done in small teams and engine companies, as you would work on the fireground. Twelve firefighters watching three firefighters demonstrate a skill isn't sufficient and doesn't make the most of valuable volunteer time. Instructors should plan hands-on training that everyone has an opportunity to participate in. Tom Brady doesn't skip practice because he's the best quarterback in the world; he practices throwing the football dozens of times a day.

Hands-on skills training and drills are necessary to keep firefighters competent and efficient. Get out of the classroom and go into the parking lot and practice how your first arriving engine is going to operate for the first 8 to 10 minutes at a fire. Staff your engine as it would typically arrive at a fire (two, three, or four firefighters – be realistic). Drive around the block, pull in the fire station, don your SCBA, stretch the hose, and flow water over the roof of the fire station. Set a goal for how long this will take, such as less than three minutes from when you stop the truck. Let your officer practice his/her radio report and 360-size-up using a photo of a building in your district with smoke, flames, or a person hanging out a window to do the radio report. If you do this regularly, your crew will be fast and effective at knocking down a fire.

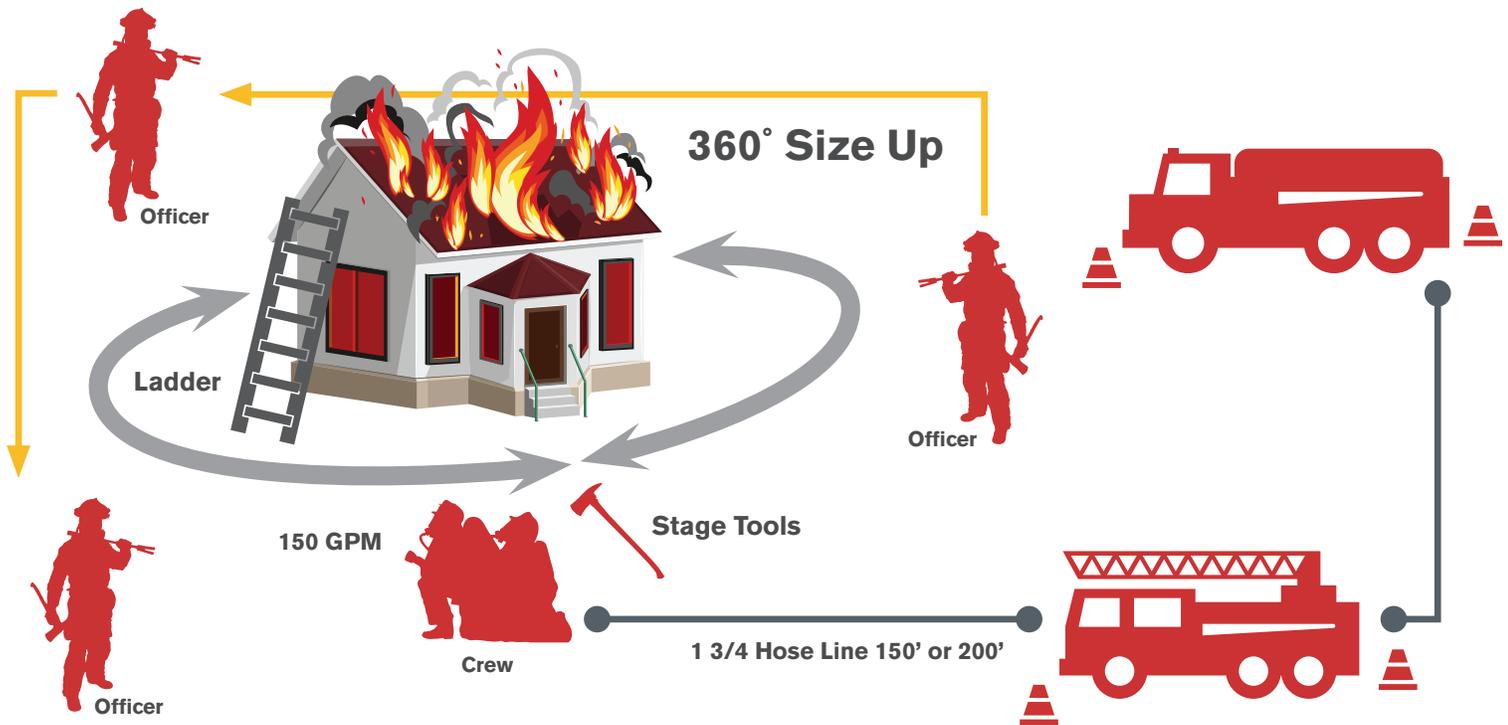
This kind of training doesn't need a fire academy and instead requires creativity, an instructor with the courage to do something different, and a plan. These drills should become the department's template for assessing the effectiveness of the firefighter, engine/ladder company, and department.

### GOT HYDRANTS? THEN DO THIS DRILL ONCE A MONTH:



**Objective:** To place an initial exterior 2 1/2" attack line of a minimum 150' in-service and flowing a minimum of 300 gpm using a single engine (or engine-tanker) with staffing of the average number of personnel that ordinarily respond. A forward lay of LDH supply hose from a hydrant (if available) shall be established of a minimum 300'. (1 1/8" tip flows 300 gpm at 65psi. 1 1/4" tip flows 300 gpm at 45psi.)

## NO HYDRANTS? THEN DO THIS USING YOUR ENGINE AND TANKER/TENDER:



**Objective:** To place an initial exterior 2 1/2" attack line of a minimum 150' in-service and flowing a minimum of 300 gpm using a single engine (or engine-tanker) Objective: To place an initial 1 3/4" attack line flowing 150 gpm in operation (transitional fire attack or offensive fire attack) in a safe and effective manner using a tender/tanker for water supply. Engine/quint company to do a 360-size-up, stretch and charge line, stage tools, raise a ladder, and attack the fire. Have the tanker/tender arrive 2-3 minutes later and connect to the engine.

An added benefit of these drills is that they are fun and fast. Each drill can be set up, executed, and reset in about 15 minutes. Rotate who is riding in each seat and do it again. If you have two or three engines, each one can be doing the drill with a different crew at the same time. Repetition is what builds competency and confidence. The more you do in practice, the better your chances are to do it right when it will make a difference.

Repetition is a key learning aid because it helps transition a skill from the conscious to the subconscious and creates muscle memory. During fireground operations we want firefighters to think but being able to quickly assess the situation and act upon it with the necessary skills is imperative. Through repetition, a skill is practiced and rehearsed over time. Repetitive training along with feedback are crucial for successful acquisition of skills.

In addition to training for the most common scenarios, remember to also train on low frequency but high-risk events. Vertical ventilation is one example of a low frequency/high risk event. Deliberate practice with both high and low frequency

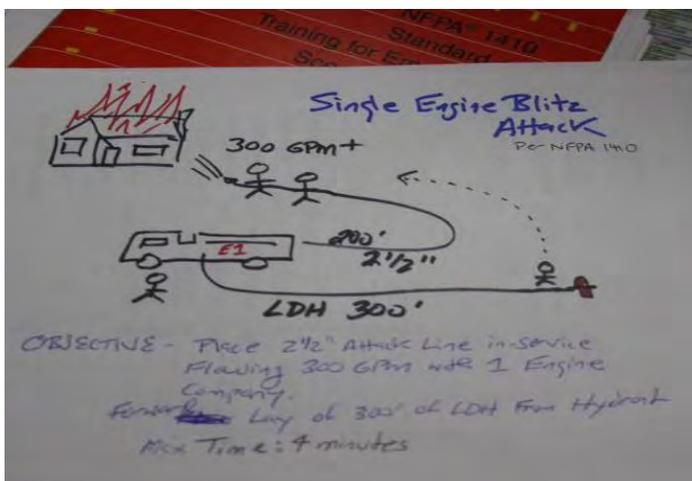
skills results in a marked improvement of students' capabilities. What we are looking for in the performance is quicker, better, and smoother execution.

Practice until you can do these evolutions every time in three minutes smoothly and efficiently.

These drills don't require computer graphics and complex instructions; you can draw the instructions out by hand if needed.

These drills also have the added benefit of enabling you to assess the capabilities of your firefighters, your engine/ladder companies, and your department as a whole on a regular basis.

Each of one of these drills should have attached to it some objective performance measure that the department adopts. For instance, the overall measure might be to successfully flow water onto the simulated fire in 3 minutes from the time of arrival at the drill location. Or it could be 4 minutes, which is up to you and your department to determine.



Within the drill there can be a series of performance measures on everything from getting off the truck in proper PPE, wearing seatbelts on approach, transmitting a proper initial radio report, or staging certain tools at the point of entry. These can be as simple as checking the box “YES” or “NO” as to whether the firefighter or company accomplished the task as the department expected them to.

A simple score sheet such as this could be used for either of the above examples:

	SATISFACTORY	UNSATISFACTORY
Was a minimum of 300 gpm delivered within 2 minutes?		
Were nozzle pressures and flows correct?		
When deploying the hose line from the hose bed was it done efficiently?		
Were the hose layouts from the water source to the engine adequate?		
Were streams operated without major interruption?		

The score sheets can be as complex as your organization requires. Appendix D has an example of a more complex skills assessment form.

The important issue is not how complex your score sheet or training evolution is, it is that you have a score sheet with at least one objective performance measure. As your training program evolves and you become more comfortable with performance measures, you can increase the complexity of the drills and skill assessment.

In today’s world it is not enough to say you’re the best fire department around – you need to be able to prove it. In order to get funding, write successful grants, demonstrate need, and properly set community and political expectations, you need objective evidence of what you can and can’t do. This means you must have performance standards and you must use them.

These performance measures will also inform areas where skills may be lacking and more training is needed. It is far better to find out during training and drill sessions that your members aren’t strong in a certain skill or technique and fix it than to have the safety of the firefighter, crew, and public put in jeopardy due to insufficient capabilities to meet the emergency.

## FOCUSED TRAINING

To be most effective, fire training should be focused on the risks your community and fire department face or are likely to face. All too often, fire training focuses on areas of lesser need. For instance, training for an airplane crash when your community lacks an airfield is not a good use of valuable training time. Most fire departments would be better off practicing how to raise ladders than reviewing plane crash procedures.

There is a long list of training topics that can be distractors and keep you from focusing on what is likely to get your firefighters hurt. Unless your community has a specific need and a history of certain incidents like maritime firefighting, aircraft fire and rescue, active shooter incidents or civil unrest, high-rise operations, building collapse, trench rescue, large animal rescue, missing persons, tornados, nuclear radiation, and earthquakes, don’t spend time and money training for these rare incidents.

You should, however, have a plan in place for how your department would address these rare or occasional incidents and work with other agencies that would be responding to make sure your plans are aligned, but limit how much time you spend practicing for incidents that are not likely to happen. That plan should be something like: Respond with the engine and the ambulance – assess the scene for safety – isolate the incident and remove civilians from the danger zone – call for the appropriate resources (regional technical teams, experts, etc.), and protect



exposures until help arrives. This kind of plan works well for dozens of one-off incidents.

What should your department spend most of its time training for? This is where it is important to know your community's risks and potential hazards. Look at response data from the last 20 years to determine what are the most common types of incidents and put those at the top of the list. Then move on to the less likely incidents.

Conducting a community risk assessment is also an important step to identify both what are the emergencies most likely to happen as well as the low frequency but high impact events that could occur. For instance, a community that has a major highway should be ready for hazmat incidents, or one that has a college should be prepared for a fire or emergency at that institution. Vision 20/20 has resources to help fire departments conduct a community risk assessment, including a guide available at <http://riskassessment.strategicfire.org>.

All fire departments should first and foremost be prepared for single family house fires. Additionally, you should train for and be proficient in handling the emergencies that your residents and elected officials expect you to handle. It may be different from what your data tells you, but meeting community expectations is critical to having the public and political support needed for successful fundraising, public funding, and recruiting.

How do you know what the public and politicians expect from you? Poll them. Using a simple online polling tool such as Survey Monkey, ask the elected and appointed officials in your community, along with the leadership of your partner agencies and members of the public what risks they expect you to be most prepared for and which ones are lower priorities.

You should also work with local officials, historical societies, and chambers of commerce to determine if there are any buildings that have special historic, cultural, or economic value to the community that warrants special attention and extra capabilities for your fire department. Once identified, the department can create a special preplan for those sites and practice it once every year or two.

If your community does not have fire hydrants, hold an annual field exercise with mutual aid tankers/tenders to get hands-on practice rather than simply having a plan on paper or talking about how to conduct a water shuttle in a meeting.

Once you know which emergencies your department should be ready for and what capabilities your department realistically has to meet potential emergencies, clearly communicate this to your community, especially public leaders, via a published report. This report should highlight which risks the department is focusing on, why they are focusing on these risks, and which risks are beyond the department's capabilities. Doing this will

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save you political problems and it will properly set community expectations.

Be sure to share this information with your firefighters and tell them you are going to focus training on the priority areas. Then build an annual training schedule that allocates the most time to the high risk and high expectation incidents. Once or twice year you can mix it up by covering a low probability risk, but don't overdo it.

## REQUIRED TRAINING

You must conduct training that is required by state and local law, but you don't have to let that training dominate your training program.

First, determine what training federal, state, and local laws and regulations require. You might think you know, but you need to be certain. Read the actual law or regulation. You may find that not all of the training you thought was required really is. For instance, many states have a law or regulation that requires some kind of infection control training for firefighters. As a result, many departments are putting on two-, four-, or even eight-hour training programs in the mistaken belief that these kinds of hours are required. In many cases, the law or regulation does not require that many hours. Instead of relying on what others are doing, what vendors tell you, or what has been done in the past,

check the source yourself and verify what really is required and what isn't.

For training that is required, deliver it in ways that are palatable for your volunteers. Avoid long all-day sessions to "knock-off OSHA in day." Nobody learns from these and they can feel like torture to sit through. Instead, try breaking the required topics up into 15-minute mini-sessions. Present one required mini-session each drill night before going out and doing hands-on training.

Some departments successfully assign many of these required topics for online, independent study. For instance, firefighters could watch a webinar from the IAFC-VCOS or take an online class from the NVFC or their state fire training academy. The department could even create its own training videos or webinars to use for independent study. When the firefighter completes the class and turns in their certificate, they receive credit for the drill time and a stipend (if applicable).

### Recognizing Successful Accomplishment

Give out Tootsie Pops! They're fun, come in different flavors, cost next to nothing, and offer a way to give immediate recognition for an accomplishment. Do this after a group completes a training evolution. Think this is meaningless? Try it for a while and then stop. They will be disappointed for not getting a Tootsie Pop.

## SECTION 8

# NFPA AND OSHA STANDARDS

There are a lot of standards that provide guidance on how fire departments should operate. This section will focus on those provided by the NFPA and OSHA.

The Illinois Fire Chiefs Association developed a Required Training Self Assessment Guide an evaluation instrument

## NFPA STANDARDS

NFPA standards are not law, but rather consensus standards developed by fire service industry leaders and stakeholders intended to minimize the effect of fire and other hazards and increase the safety of responders. Some states, localities, or departments may adopt NFPA standards, and others may use them as a guide to improve the professionalism and safety of their firefighters and EMS providers. Departments that adopt or utilize NFPA standards and train their firefighters to the standards may also reduce their liability risks.

Chief and training officers should be aware of relevant NFPA standards and work towards compliance. Chiefs have the authority to adapt NFPA standards to fit their department's situation. See Appendix E for more information. The NVFC also has an online course designed to help chiefs understand their ability to adapt NFPA standards. This course is available at <https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/products/fire-chief-authority-under-nfpa-standards>.

Training officers can use NFPA standards as components of a comprehensive training program.

- NFPA 1000 series includes standards used by state fire training academies to create certification categories.
- NFPA 1400 series are training standards that can be used by the training officer to create training classes.
- NFPA 1700 series includes recommended practices on how fire departments should be fighting structural fires.
- NFPA 1500 and 1800 series are safety related.

- NFPA 1900 series are apparatus design, equipment maintenance, and testing standards.

To break it down more specifically, below is list of some of the NFPA standards found in the stated series. All NFPA standards can be accessed for free online at [www.nfpa.org/freeaccess](http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess). Standards go through a revision cycle every three to five years to keep content relevant and up to date.

- > 1001 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications
- > 1002 Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications
- > 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications
- > 1041 Standard for Fire and Emergency Services Instructor Professional Qualifications
- > 1401 Recommended Practice for Fire Service Training Reports and Records
- > 1403 Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions
- > 1404 Standard for Fire Service Respiratory Protection Training
- > 1407 Standard for Training Fire Service Rapid Intervention Crews
- > 1410 Standard on Training for Emergency Scene Operations
- > 1451 Standard for a Fire and Emergency Service Vehicle Operations Training Program
- > 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program
- > 1521 Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications
- > 1561 Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety
- > 1581 Standard on Fire Department Infection Control Program
- > 1582 Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments
- > 1584 Standard on the Rehabilitation Process for Members During Emergency Operations and Training Exercises
- > 1670 Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents
- > 1700 Guide for Structural Fire Fighting

- > 1851 Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting
- > 1852 Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)
- > 1901 Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus
- > 1911 Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Emergency Vehicles
- > 1932 Standard on Use, Maintenance, and Service Testing of In-Service Fire Department Ground Ladders
- > 1936 Standard on Rescue Tools
- > 1971 Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting
- > 1981 Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) For Emergency Services
- > 1982 Standard on Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS)

## OSHA STANDARDS

Many states have adopted federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules into law within their state rules and regulations. Check with your department of labor to determine what OSHA rules are law within your state. Violations of law can result in fines.

Here are four statements from OSHA standards that might be applicable to your fire department's training and operations.

### 1910.155 (c)(41)

Fire protection  
(c) Definitions

(41) "Training" means the process of making proficient through instruction and hands-on practice in the operation of equipment, including respiratory protection equipment, that is expected to be used and in the performance of assigned duties.

### 1910.156(b)(2)

Personnel. The employer shall assure that employees who are expected to do interior structural fire fighting are physically capable of performing duties which may be assigned to them during emergencies. The employer shall not permit employees with known heart disease, epilepsy, or emphysema, to participate in fire brigade emergency activities unless a physician's certificate of the employees' fitness to participate in such activities is provided. For employees assigned to fire brigades before

September 15, 1980, this paragraph is effective on September 15, 1990. For employees assigned to fire brigades on or after September 15, 1980, this paragraph is effective December 15, 1980.

### 1910.156(f)

Approved self-contained breathing apparatus with full facepiece, or with approved helmet or hood configuration, shall be provided to and worn by fire brigade members while working inside buildings or confined spaces where toxic products of combustion or an oxygen deficiency may be present. Such apparatus shall also be worn during emergency situations involving toxic substances.

### 1910.156(c)

Fire brigades

(c) Training and education

(1) The employer shall provide training and education for all fire brigade members commensurate with those duties and functions that fire brigade members are expected to perform. Such training and education shall be provided to fire brigade members before they perform fire brigade emergency activities. Fire brigade leaders and training instructors shall be provided with training and education which is more comprehensive than that provided to the general membership of the fire brigade.

(2) The employer shall assure that training and education is conducted frequently enough to assure that each member of the fire brigade is able to perform the member's assigned duties and functions satisfactorily and in a safe manner so as not to endanger fire brigade members or other employees. All fire brigade members shall be provided with training at least annually. In addition, fire brigade members who are expected to perform interior structural firefighting shall be provided with an education session or training at least quarterly. *(Note: This is a huge section of the standard that gives a fire department, fire chief, and training officer specific and measurable training and education expectations.)*

(4) The employer shall inform fire brigade members about special hazards such as storage and use of flammable liquids and gases, toxic chemicals, radioactive sources, and water reactive substances, to which they may be exposed during fire and other emergencies. The fire brigade members shall also be advised of any changes that occur in relation to the special hazards. The employer shall develop and make available for inspection by fire brigade members, written procedures that describe the actions to be taken in situations involving the special hazards and shall include these in the training and education program.

## SECTION 9

# DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING TRAINING BEST PRACTICES

Developing best practices to use in training helps to create more efficient, safer fireground operations. Training success is a planned, organized process. Certain components and elements drive the program forward and result in positive learning outcomes.

Today's learners have different learning styles and fire service instructors must have the ability to vary their teaching styles to assist today's learners. Many younger firefighters may multi-task effectively, have a quick learning curve because they researched the topic beforehand, and are accustomed to online learning. The days of PowerPoint, lectures, and sitting in a classroom for hours are gone. While hands-on training is both effective and necessary, theory can often be incorporated into the training program through online supplemental education. Expecting students to learn is at the core of training, and developing best practices will help with learner outcomes.

The following list of best practices are suggestions of things that can be incorporated into a training program in order to prepare a firefighter to be competent at the skills necessary to respond to emergency calls.

1. Develop an annual written education/training plan for your department. Provide a copy to all firefighters so they know what to expect at the start of each year and can plan/prepare accordingly.
2. Conduct a training assessment for all firefighters to ensure they can don PPE/SCBA and advance a handline to the front door within 3 minutes.
3. Ensure safety policies require firefighters to wear PPE/SCBA in all hot/warm zone designated areas.
4. Teach the concept: Do NOT RISK the life of a firefighter for a building.
5. Offer monthly training for interior structural firefighters.
6. Train all drivers of emergency apparatus to come to a complete stop at all controlled intersections.
7. Ensure that all firefighters are wearing seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion.
8. Ensure that firefighters understand how to read smoke and fire (volume, velocity, density, and color) to predict fire growth.
9. Train firefighters on how to do a 360-degree assessment of a scene before the response strategy is selected.
10. Treat each other with respect in training and in all fire department activities

When developing your list of best practices for an effective training program, consider the following.

### *Clear Training Outcomes*

Define training outcomes to include learning objectives, expectations, performance, and evaluation. Understanding and conveying clear objectives and outcomes up front will assist the student in achieving the goals and enable the training officer and instructor to fairly evaluate if these goals were in fact achieved.

Debriefs should also take place at the conclusion of a training evolution to reinforce the lessons learned as well as how to improve practices. Debriefs must be ankles and respectful discussions. Everyone should be able to contribute to the discussion without fear of retribution.

### *Plan the Training*

Quality training modules are properly designed and planned to lead to learning outcomes. Fire instructors must carve out time to plan the training session. Maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning includes the physical setting and the proper connection with the students. Utilizing non-traditional experiences is a good method of changing the stimuli with today's learners. Movement, standing rather than sitting, and implementing props, tools, and hands-on techniques provide for more stimulation and student engagement. Ensuring that all equipment is in proper working order in advance and planning the timing of evolutions is critical. Taking the time to practice, plan, and coordinate the activities will elevate the learning outcomes and ensure students have a positive experience.

### *Preparation*

Great instructors prepare lessons for success. Having the knowledge is critical, but sharing the knowledge is a skill. Being able to instruct is both an art and a science. It takes practice to teach a lesson. Running through the entire lesson plan prior to teaching will prepare the instructor for an effective lesson. Efficient and effective teaching helps students learn and

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communicates to them that their time is valuable. Take the time to prepare for the lesson and become the subject matter expert, and demonstrate pride, confidence, and enthusiasm while teaching. The result will be a better learning outcome for all.

### ***Demonstrations Using Props***

To be effective, learners must listen, see, and do. Instructions that are designed to share information through introduction, enforce education through demonstration, and allow students to test their learning by practicing hands-on skills are keys to success. Utilizing props during the introduction of a new technique is an exceptional strategy. Ensuring in advance that the props are pre-arranged and in proper working order is necessary and shows that you are prepared. Allowing students to learn, watch through demonstrations, and immediately demonstrate the newly learned skillset back to the instructor will reinforce the lesson.

As previously stated, training sessions are more about hands-on skills development and maintenance than lecture. Today's learners are passionate about learning through application. Fire instructors must be passionate, positive, encourage student feedback and participation, and must engage students. By beginning the lesson on time, demonstrating enthusiasm and knowledge throughout the lesson, and ending at the designated time the instructor values the firefighters' time and builds a strong rapport for learning.

### ***Adult Learners***

Instructors who use adult learning techniques and understand different learning styles will garner a better learning outcome. Adult learners want to know how this material can be applied in their immediate lives and that it has meaning. They have limited time; therefore, they are seeking effective and efficient learning opportunities. Adult learners are quick to implement new skills and are excited about gaining new knowledge. A successful fire instructor will capitalize on the opportunity and provide efficient, relevant lessons in a timely manner.

### ***Blended Learning***

Successful training classes use blended delivery techniques. We live in a very busy time; everything is moving at a fast pace. Today's fire instructor must adapt to this. Providing blended learning gives a balance for many individuals that have non-traditional schedules. Allowing firefighters to access the teaching modules via electronic means opens up more opportunities for success. Blended learning provides students with encouragement, flexibility, and a means to learn at times that work with their schedules. While hands-on learning is certainly a necessity in firefighting, some of the required learning can be obtained

through other delivery options. The fire instructor must be willing to be creative and flexible.

### ***Annual Assessment of Skills***

In the fire service, there are some skill sets that require an annual, quarterly, or even monthly refresher. Those skills should be reinforced through proper instruction and evaluation. To maintain competency, mandatory skills should be evaluated and assessed on an annual basis. Keeping in mind the value of one's time, communicate the opportunities through creative scheduling. For skills or knowledge that can be delivered through a self-paced, online program, utilize a platform that will evaluate those necessary refresher segments.

### ***LMS-based training***

LMS or learning management systems increase training expectations and accessibility. A learning management system is a digital learning environment that manages all aspects of training. Managing user information for personalized delivery, tracking, job functions, and preferences helps the department maintain efficient and effective use of time. Departments can develop their own LMS or utilize existing trainings from vendors, training agencies, and state and national fire service organizations.

## **CONCLUSION**

In order to develop successful training modules, the fire instructor must incorporate teaching practices that make a difference. Successful instructors are creative in their instruction, delivery, and evaluation of performance as well as enthusiastic, energetic, knowledgeable, interesting, and accessible. Prompt, encourage, and challenge students in order to achieve optimal learning.

# SECTION 10

## FIRST DUE RECOMMENDED FIREFIGHTER PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The idea that firefighters should meet a set of performance standards can be met with resistance in some volunteer departments. There is a feeling that since we are “just volunteers” it would be too difficult to require members to meet certain standards or that enforcing these requirements would have a negative impact on recruitment and retention. However, this is a misguided line of thinking. It is just as important that volunteers are prepared for the job as it is for their career counterparts. Firefighter and community safety and response success are dependent on the firefighter being well-trained and knowledgeable to fulfill the task at hand. By making sure firefighters meet specific performance standards, you will know that they are best prepared for their job as a volunteer professional firefighter.

In order to become better at anything, a goal has to be set. To obtain that goal, we have to take measurable actions towards the successful completion of the goal. The same is true in our training. Training without a goal in mind, or a standard, just gives us haphazard opportunities to get together. Training should be designed to impart new knowledge or enhance skillsets. In order to achieve goals or performance standards, you must be able to measure a firefighter’s proficiency for the services your department provides. It is through training that you get firefighter skills up to that standard.

**Training should be delivered to help the firefighter demonstrate the basic skills needed on almost every fire.**

Training can seem overwhelming if the intention is to go from zero to sixty in one or two sessions. To help reduce the potential overload of training, break it down into digestible modules of application, such as getting ready for the alarm, the actual response, first due on scene, second due, ladder operations, water supply, and so forth.

Using the idea of SMART goals can help you to take subjects within each of those modules and develop manageable training

programs to achieve a standard that meets the module. The acronym SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable or action oriented, realistic, and time sensitive.

For example, take the idea of setting some standards for the first due arriving company. First, it is important to consider your organization’s resources and capabilities. Regardless of how another organization performs, the idea is to establish your organization’s baseline and then set the goals to increase your organization’s performance standards. Do not get overwhelmed by trying to achieve everything at once. Build a basis for looking at the skillset, and then build a training program that utilizes the SMART goal’s objective to reach the desired outcome locally, which may eventually lead to reaching or coming close to that “national” standard.

So, what might a first due performance standard look like? An example may be along the lines of the following:

- Firefighter will don PPE within 2 minutes.
- Firefighter will don SCBA within 2 minutes.
- Firefighter will perform a primary search of a structure.
- Firefighter will pull a 200’ – 1 ¾” preconnect and advance to the front door.
- Firefighter will open the door and advance a charged line 40’ into the building.

Departments can utilize NFPA 1720 as a guide, keeping in mind the chief’s ability to adapt the standard for their department’s situation. Most important, however, is making sure your firefighters are equipped with the skills and proficiencies to do their job safely and effectively.

As noted in the example above, a basic performance standard to start off with may be being able to go from your street clothes to full turnout gear including SCBA and on air in 2 minutes with everything done properly – hood in place, pants buckled, coat and all flaps closed. Not everyone may be able to do this in 2 minutes, but the more you run the drill, the more firefighters will be able to achieve this.

<b>S</b>	<b>SPECIFIC</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>MEASURABLE</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>ACHIEVABLE</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>REALISTIC</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>TIMED</b>

After the firefighters have mastered this performance measure, take it a step further and move it to a fireground scenario. For instance, try to measure from the moment the airbrakes set to go on air, with each crew member performing their specific duty, such as gathering the hand tools, pulling the preconnected line and stretching, and being able to set the engine, ready the pump, and charge the line. Can everyone complete their designated tasks within the 2 minutes?

Now the timeframe provided for these drills may vary, but the idea is to create a performance standard for the organization that is realistic. Maybe start with a longer timeframe and then shorten it later as the firefighters' competencies improve.

How about the task of establishing a water supply? Again, departments need to set the performance standards based on their specific circumstances. That performance standard will look differently to perform a hydrant hook up and charge the line versus a district that must rely on drop tanks and tanker/tender shuttles. Regardless of how you establish the water supply, develop a performance standard and then set the goal to train to meet that standard within a reasonable amount of time.

How about the task of having a company officer perform a detailed size-up and 360-degree walk around of the incident and relaying that information on the radio in a clear and concise manner to incoming units? Sounds simple enough, but again setting the performance standard and training to meet this standard will make sure that this is done correctly on every incident. Standards and training should also address likely "what if" scenarios that could happen. For instance, what happens when you are short staffed and may be performing multiple functions? In this scenario, the company officer needs to be prepared to complete and relay the size-up along with other initial tasks they are doing.



In short, when it comes to performance standards, remember that it is not always the fastest time that matters but rather that the tasks are done efficiently and in a correct manner every time. Do not be afraid of standards, but make them realistic for your department, always with a goal to improve them if possible. Think about it this way – if you set a goal to lose 20 pounds but do not set any performance measures or specific actions to eat healthier and exercise more, then you may never reach the goal. Likewise with firefighter training, if you never set the goal or specify performance standards to achieve then you have no way of measuring success. And we have to make success obtainable, fun, and purposeful to keep firefighters driven to meet the goals and achieve success.

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# APPENDIX A

## RESOURCES

Please note, the following is not a comprehensive list, but to the best of our knowledge at the time of publication here is a sample of resources, trainings, and organizations that are available.

### STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

#### NFPA Standards – Free Access

National Fire Protection Association  
[www.nfpa.org/freeaccess](http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess)

#### NFPA 1041 Standard for Fire and Emergency Services Instructor Professional Qualifications

National Fire Protection Association  
<https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=1041>

#### NFPA 1410 Standard on Training for Initial Emergency Scene Operations

National Fire Protection Association  
[www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=1410](http://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/all-codes-and-standards/list-of-codes-and-standards/detail?code=1410)

#### OSHA Standard 1910, Occupational Safety and Health Standards, Subpart L, Fire Protection

Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
[www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.155](http://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.155)

### ONLINE TRAINING

#### NVFC Virtual Classroom

National Volunteer Fire Council  
<https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/>

#### Planning and Implementing a Training Program

National Volunteer Fire Council  
<https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/products/planning-and-implementing-a-training-program>

#### IAFC Online Learning

International Association of Fire Chiefs  
<https://www.iafc.org/learn-and-develop/online-learning>

#### NFPA Online Learning Center

National Fire Protection Association  
<https://www.nfpa.org/OnlineLearning>

#### National Fire Academy

U.S. Fire Administration  
<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/nfa/>

#### Fire Hero Learning Network

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation  
<https://www.fireherolearningnetwork.com/>

#### Fire Safety Academy

UL Fire Safety Research Institute  
<https://training.fsri.org/>

#### Responder Safety Learning Network

Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association's Emergency Responder Safety Institute  
<https://learning.respondersafety.com/>

#### The Fire Academy

Clarion Events Fire & Rescue Group/Fire Engineering  
<https://thefireacademy.com/>

#### FireRescue1 Academy

Lexipol  
<https://www.firerescue1academy.com/>

#### Fire & Rescue Training

Lexipol  
<https://www.lexipol.com/industries/fire/>

#### Firefighter Continuing Education Training

Vector Solutions  
<https://www.vectorsolutions.com/course-search/catalogs/fire-department-training-courses/>

#### Free Hazmat Training Courses

TRANSCAER  
<https://www.transcaer.com/training>

### ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

#### National Volunteer Fire Council

<https://www.nvfc.org>

#### International Association of Fire Chiefs

<https://www.iafc.org/>

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## **Volunteer & Combination Officers Section**

*International Association of Fire Chiefs*

[www.iafc.org/about-iafc/sections/vcos](http://www.iafc.org/about-iafc/sections/vcos)

## **Volunteer Workforce Solutions**

*International Association of Fire Chiefs*

[www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/volunteer/vws](http://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/volunteer/vws)

## **Center for Public Safety Excellence**

[www.cpse.org/](http://www.cpse.org/)

## **Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program**

*National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*

[www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/)

## **Fire Safety Research Institute**

*UL*

<https://fsri.org/>

## **Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives**

*National Fallen Firefighters Foundation*

[www.everyonegoeshome.com/16-initiatives/](http://www.everyonegoeshome.com/16-initiatives/)

## **International Fire Service Training Association**

[www.ifsta.org/](http://www.ifsta.org/)

## **International Society of Fire Service Instructors**

[www.isfsi.org/](http://www.isfsi.org/)

## **Institution of Fire Engineers**

[www.ife.org.uk/](http://www.ife.org.uk/)

## **National Fallen Firefighters Foundation**

[www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)

## **National Fire Protection Association**

[www.nfpa.org/](http://www.nfpa.org/)

## **North American Fire Training Directors**

<https://naftd.org/>

## **Visions 20/20 (Community Risk Reduction)**

[www.strategicfire.org](http://www.strategicfire.org)

## **RESOURCES**

### **Engine Company Training Evolutions as Referenced in NFPA 1410**

*National Volunteer Fire Council and New England Volunteer Fire & EMS Coalition, Inc.*

[www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NVFC-Company-Evolutions-Dec2017.pdf](http://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NVFC-Company-Evolutions-Dec2017.pdf)

### **Yellow Ribbon Report**

*International Association of Fire Chiefs*

[www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/vcos-yellow-ribbon-report-under-the-helmet-performing-an-internal-size-up](http://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/vcos-yellow-ribbon-report-under-the-helmet-performing-an-internal-size-up)

### **Psychologically Healthy Fire Departments Toolkit and Training**

*National Volunteer Fire Council*

[www.nvfc.org/phfd/#toolkit](http://www.nvfc.org/phfd/#toolkit)

### **Directory of Behavioral Health Professionals**

*National Volunteer Fire Council*

[www.nvfc.org/phfd](http://www.nvfc.org/phfd)

### **Lavender Ribbon Report**

*National Volunteer Fire Council and International Association of Fire Chiefs Volunteer and Combination Officers Section*

[www.nvfc.org/lrr](http://www.nvfc.org/lrr)

### **Volunteer Fire Service Culture: Essential Strategies for Success**

*National Volunteer Fire Council*

[www.nvfc.org/volunteer-fire-service-culture-essential-strategies-for-success/](http://www.nvfc.org/volunteer-fire-service-culture-essential-strategies-for-success/)

## **ARTICLES AND BOOKS**

### **15 Secrets to Teaching Adults**

*Busy Teacher*

<https://busyteacher.org/7273-teach-adults-15-secrets.html>

### **Teaching Adults – What Trainers Need to Know About Adult Learning Styles**

*By Helen W. Post for the Family Advocacy and Support Training (FAST) Project of the PACER Center*

[www.ioaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/teachingadults-whattrainersneedtoknow-sml.pdf](http://www.ioaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/teachingadults-whattrainersneedtoknow-sml.pdf)

### **How to Teach Adults**

*By Dan Spalding*

[www.amazon.com/How-Teach-Adults-Jossey-Bass-Education/dp/1118841360](http://www.amazon.com/How-Teach-Adults-Jossey-Bass-Education/dp/1118841360)

# APPENDIX B

## SAMPLE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS BASED ANNUAL TRAINING TOPICS PLAN

This sample training topics plan should be adapted to meet the risks, capabilities, and needs of your specific fire department as well as any state or local training requirements.

### Risk management

- Blood borne pathogens
- Vehicle driving
- Structural collapse
- Slips, trips, and falls
- When to use SCBA
- Behavioral wellness
- Reducing exposures to carcinogens
- Scene physical/verbal assault by patient/bystander/citizen

### PPE / SCBA donning and doffing

- Have gear organized for immediate deployment and conduct a daily inspection
- Donning and doffing PPE within 1 ½ minutes
  - Hood first
  - Bunker pants
    - All fasteners are secured
    - Make sure the hood is appropriately secured under the bunker suspenders
- Coat
  - All fasteners are secured
- Donning and doffing SCBA within 2 minutes and go on air
  - Facepiece is in place
    - Facepiece seal was verified before going on air
  - All fasteners are secured
  - Operate the emergency bypass valve
  - Demonstrate PASS device activation
  - Declare a mayday using the radio
  - Replace the air cylinder
  - Decon SCBA

- Fill empty air cylinder
- Don helmet
  - Chin strap secured
- Demonstrate skip breathing technique or other air conservation skill

### Decon

- Demonstrate decontamination and sanitizing SCBA
- Demonstrate gros decon technique for turnout gear

### Fire Suppression

- Advance a 1 ¾" line to the front door
- Demonstrate use of TIC to find fire in a structure
- Advance a charged 1 ¾" line in the front door
  - Bleed the air from the handline
  - If possible, operate the nozzle by flowing water
    - Adjust water stream for straight or fog application
  - Flow water off the ceiling
- Setup an exterior 2 ½" line for defensive operations
- Setup an exterior portable master stream device for protection of exposures
  - Maximum pressure of 175 psi at the device
  - Point the nozzle in the desired direction
  - Open the valve slowly discharging water

### Ladders / Ventilation

- Remove, carry, raise, and climb a 24' extension ladder
- Identify roof types and how to complete vertical ventilation
- Start and use a ventilation saw
- Use ventilation fan to conduct positive pressure ventilation
- Ability to read smoke and forecast what will happen without intervention
- Assist conscious victim down ladder

### Search and Rescue

- Conduct primary search operation on first floor
- Demonstrate proper room search technique
- Remove a found victim
  - Extremities carry removal
  - Firefighter drag removal
- Demonstrate using a TIC to assist in search and rescue
- Demonstrate actions to take when disoriented

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## Engine Operations

- Properly position apparatus near hydrant.
- Engage pump before leaving the cab
- Exit the cab and deploy wheel chocks
- Make a hydrant connection
- Pump correct pressures to 1 3/4" reconnect 200' pre-connects using tank water
- Pump correct pressures to 2 1/2" reconnect 150' pre-connects using tank water
- Switch from tank to hydrant
- Operate transfer valve (pressure/volume)
- Pump multiple lines of different pressures
- Lay lines and make connections for supplying another apparatus
- Set up a foam operation
- Explain the uses of all apparatus appliances
- Demonstrate a knowledge of friction loss and GPM formulas

## Driving

- Demonstrate proper driving techniques on a road course a minimum of 5 miles long
  - Complete at a minimum of 5 right hand turns backing
  - Complete at a minimum of 5 left hand turns backing
- Perform preventive maintenance on apparatus
  - Check tire pressure / fill if low
  - Check oil fluid / fill if low
  - Check transmission fluid / fill if low
  - Check pump primer fluid / fill if low
  - Explain the responsibilities of the driver and the officer during apparatus operations
- Each competency shall be performed by all drivers and fill-in drivers. Bold items indicate competencies that must be performed by officers.

## Extrication

- Stabilize vehicle using cribbing
- Operate hydraulic rescue tool displace roof with hydraulic tool
- Displace door with hydraulic tool
- Displace windshield using axe
- Displace steering wheel

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## APPENDIX C

# EXAMPLE MISSION AND VALUE STATEMENTS FOR A DEPARTMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

*Courtesy of Des Plaines Fire Department Division of Training & Safety*

### MISSION

To be a resource for all members of the Des Plaines Fire Department resulting in programs and training that make a difference in our ability to safely deliver effective emergency services.

### VISION

That all programs, evolutions, curriculums, and policies are created and delivered with an outcome of making the end user:

- Better
- Faster
- Safer
- Smarter
- Achieve the goal

**EVERYONE GOES HOME, NOBODY GETS HURT, AND EXCELLENT SERVICE IS DELIVERED.**

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles are essential to the success of our program.

1. Safety, survival, and service delivery are the primary outcomes.
2. Training is user-centered and easy to use.
3. Performance measures are identified and attainable within the resources and established procedures of the department.
4. Achievement of the mission will be met through the development of programs that are:
  - Realistic
  - Relevant
  - Referenced
  - Performance-based
  - Member involved
5. Constant improvement of the individual, company, station, shift/battalion, and department drive the delivery of all training.
6. Training will serve a purpose, and every training minute must matter.
7. Every detail is important, and no corner will be cut.
8. Everyone is empowered to STOP training that is judged unsafe or when understanding of the expectations of the instructor are unclear.
9. Minimum is never acceptable. We cannot train to “just get by.”
10. Accountability and professionalism in all actions and details.

**DON'T TRAIN UNTIL YOU GET IT RIGHT, TRAIN UNTIL YOU CAN'T GET IT WRONG.**

# APPENDIX D

## EXAMPLE TRAINING SKILLS PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

### ABC FIRE DEPARTMENT

#### Probationary Training Skill Performance Checklist

**Directions:** While wearing full protective clothing (helmet, hood, boots, gloves, coat, and trousers) and a SCBA unit, the candidate shall demonstrate the following: a conservation of air breathing technique; a procedure for air flow interruption; a technique for air supply depletion. Do you have any questions?

**Evaluator:** Select one procedure each from the conservation of air and the depletion of air tasks below; indicate to the candidate which option is selected and mark the same on this skill sheet. All candidates must do the SCBA failure procedures.

**Performance Outcome:** Pass/ Fail will be determined by 4 of 4 items being performed correctly.

Skill Sheet 4 - SCBA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS	Test Date	Candidate #
Reference NFPA 1001 - 2013 Edition, Chapter 5 JPR 5.3.1, 5.3.9	Test Site	

No.	Task Steps	Initial Test		Retest	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	<b>CONSERVATION OF AIR</b>				
1a.	Upon command from the evaluator, demonstrate controlled breathing (e.g., inhale through the nose, exhale through the mouth, and control breathing rate)				
1b.	Upon command from the evaluator, demonstrate skip breathing (e.g., take a breath and hold, take another breath, exhale, and repeat same)				
2.	<b>DEPLETION OF AIR SUPPLY</b>				
2a.	Emergency procedures when out of air with no air re-supply available; call a Mayday then activate pass device and establish filter breathing while staying as low as possible, exit hazardous area rapidly				
2b.	Emergency procedures when out of air with transfill or buddy breathing capability available; call a Mayday then activate pass device, attach transfill hose or buddy breather hose to both SCBA units; exit hazardous area				
3.	<b>SCBA FAILURE</b>				
3a.	Emergency procedures when air is not flowing into the face piece: 1. Call a Mayday then; 2. Activates PASS device 3. Check cylinder is fully open 4. Close mainline, if present 5. Open bypass slowly 6. Close bypass after each breath 7. Open bypass for next breath 8. Exit hazardous area rapidly				
4.	Were tasks completed in a SAFE manner? ( <i>NO Indicates Automatic Failure</i> )				
		PASS		PASS	
		FAIL		FAIL	

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## SKILL SHEET 4 - SCBA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Evaluator Comments	
Evaluator Signature	Evaluator #
Re-Test Evaluator Signature	Evaluator #

*NFPA 1001, 2013 Edition, Revised Mar 2016*

## APPENDIX E

# HOW TO USE NFPA STANDARDS TO YOUR DEPARTMENT'S ADVANTAGE

By Chief Joe Maruca, West Barnstable (MA) Fire Department

Most often firefighters and fire chiefs think of the volumes of standards issued by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) as a giant anvil about to fall on their heads. The common attitude is that the standards and the NFPA are the enemy. They don't work in the real world. Nobody can follow them!

It's an understandable feeling. Chiefs and firefighters generally don't know how these standards are created, but more importantly, they don't understand how NFPA standards are designed to be used. Most of us get our knowledge of the standards second and third hand from others who don't know what they are talking about. We've never actually read the standards; they aren't easy reading. Most of our knowledge of the NFPA standards is mythology or based upon selective excerpts. All too often NFPA standards are used as weapons to destroy a chief or a department instead of tools to build a department.

What most chiefs don't know is that they, as fire chief, have a lot of power under NFPA standards in their role as the "authority having jurisdiction" or more commonly, the AHJ.

Almost always, the fire chief is going to be the AHJ for NFPA standards that apply to firefighting operations or the management of the fire department. However, there are 50 states, and each state has multiple laws about how a fire department is organized, so you have to know your legal system. In some jurisdictions, a fire commissioner, a president, a board of engineers, or some other entity could be the AHJ, but for most of the big issues it will be the fire chief.

Here's an example of the AHJ language found in NFPA standards (usually in Chapter 3 of the standard):

*3.2.2\* Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). An organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing the requirements*

*of a code or standard, or for approving equipment, materials, an installation, or a procedure.*

Each NFPA standard has a statement known as the equivalency clause, typically in Chapter 1 of the standard, that says that the AHJ has the authority to adopt or modify the NFPA standard. Yes, you the fire chief, using your authority as the AHJ can modify NFPA standards to fit the needs of our department and your community. Madness you say! Impossible says the media, the politicians, and the firefighters who wish to beat you over the head with the standard.

Here's an example of an NFPA equivalency clause:

*1.3.1 It is not the intent of this document to limit or restrict the use of other inspection, testing, or maintenance programs that provide an equivalent level of system integrity and performance to that detailed in this document.*

*1.3.2 The authority having jurisdiction shall be consulted and approval obtained for such alternative programs.*

The fire chief (AHJ) has the power to decide what standards to adopt, in full or in part, and whether to modify them, so long as you have valid and rational reasons for doing so.

For instance, NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments, says that a rural community should assemble six firefighters and engine at fire in 14 minutes or less, 80% of the time. You, as the AHJ, can adopt NFPA 1720 but in your adoption, you can modify it to exempt the houses in certain remote areas. Here's what you might put in your adoption document:

*The XYZ Fire Department hereby adopts NFPA 1720 as its standard for organization and response performance, except that it excludes from the response performance standards all the beach houses on Sandy Neck Beach that can only be accessed by the sand road.*

The XYZ Fire Department is now an NFPA 1720 compliant fire department. The fact that it has exempted an entire neighborhood from the response standard is OK. It works because there are valid reasons for exempting the neighbor. It is at the far distant end of the department's response district and travel time is routinely long, and access to the houses is by a sand road. Only 4x4 fire apparatus, with limited seating, can reach the houses and travel on the sand road is very slow. It isn't reasonable for residents of these beach houses to expect the same response

as if their house was in the center of town on a paved road. Yes, you're going to do the best you can for a fire on the beach, but you aren't going to promise any particular level of service.

Lots of people will tell you that you can't do this. They'll tell you if you change the standard, you aren't following the standard and somehow it doesn't count. The states and the federal government do this all the time. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted NFPA 1 as the statewide fire code, but in doing so, the legislature made 178 pages of amendments to the standard.

One reason that many firefighters don't understand that the chief can modify the standard is a lack of understanding that NFPA standards are consensus standards, not laws or regulations. Consensus standards are when an industry, through some form of representatives or trade association, puts out industry standards that the various industry members may or may not use. The fact that the industry has formally put these practices into the form of standards gives them great weight when determining the best practices, but they aren't requirements.

The only time you must strictly follow an NFPA standard as written is when it is enacted into law or regulation by Congress or your state government or adopted by your local government. Otherwise, which standards you follow and how you modify them is up to the AHJ, typically the fire chief. Once its law, you have an absolute obligation to follow it.

There are some limits. The AHJ should only use its power to modify for good reasons and not simply out of oppositional defiance to being "told what to do." Valid reasons for modifying a standard include, but are not limited to, topography, lack of resources (including money), traffic patterns, local laws and restrictions, collective bargaining agreements, road and bridge restrictions, and public policy. If you do any kind of risk-benefit or cost-benefit analysis or other reasonable analysis that concludes your best course of action is modify the standard, then you have the power to do so.

Whenever you adopt an NFPA standard you should do in writing, and when you adopt it with modifications you should spell out the modifications in writing. Share your adoption and modifications with your community, your elected officials, and your firefighters so that expectations are clear.

So why bother? NFPA standards make a great template for how to do all of the operational tasks that your fire department needs to accomplish. They can show you how to set up your truck maintenance program, what thermal imaging training should

include, the best practices for keeping all the firefighters safe, and what kind of quarterly and annual reports you should wow your elected officials with. There is more to the standards than most fire departments can use in your lifetime, but if you look, you find gems that will help make your department succeed and improve.

Here are some more examples of how you can draft an adoption and modification of some common NFPA standards.

**Example 1:**

The XYZ Fire Department hereby adopts NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments (2020 Edition), as its organizational and deployment standard, subject to the following amendments and options:

- A. A Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) may also be known as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT).
- B. The XYZFD shall use the rural area response time and staffing as set forth in Table 4.3.2 Staffing and Response Time, except that no response time shall be assigned to incidents on Sandy Neck Beach or in Wilderness areas inaccessible by paved road.
- C. The XYZFD will provide special operations as follows: Motor Vehicle Extrication and Hazardous Materials Response at the Operational Level.
- D. The XYZFD will not provide special operations as follows: Maritime/Marine Fire and Rescue, Aircraft Fire and Rescue, High Angle Rescue, Low Angle Rescue, Trench Rescue, Hazardous Materials Response at the Technical Level and Swift Water Rescue. The XYZFD will respond to these incidents, but mutual aid from state and regional responses teams will be relied upon for technical operations.
- E. Communications Facilities are a regional communications facility under the control of the County Sheriff's Office and do not comply with NFPA 1221. The XYZFD lacks the funding to operate its own NFPA 1221 compliant communications facility. The YZFD lacks the legal or political power to have the regional communications facility become NFPA 1221 compliant.

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**Example 2:**

The XYZ Fire Department hereby adopts NFPA 1582, Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments (2022 Edition), subject to the following amendments and options:

- A. Medical exams will be provided for firefighters every three years (tri-annually) due to a lack of funding and because a risk benefit-analysis indicates that with only a dozen fires a year, spacing out medical exams beyond one year is appropriate to provide.
- B. New recruits may participate in recruit training prior to taking a medical exam if a medical exam cannot reasonably be provided due to scheduling and financial issues, and if training would be substantially delayed waiting for a medical exam.

But what about lawsuits? Everyone talks about how some slick lawyer is going to beat you up on the witness stand and make you liable for failing to follow NFPA standards. It's a great story, but it doesn't happen. Yes, the standards can be used in a lawsuit to try and demonstrate the best practices and what you should have done, but they don't define legal liability (unless they've been adopted by law). In order to be liable, you must have had a legal duty and your violation of that legal duty must have been the cause of the harm.

Now, go and grab a copy of NFPA 1720 and read it. At its core, it's only about four pages long. Then check off each item that you are already doing. You'll be surprised how much you already use the standard. Then highlight the easy items to adopt with simple administrative and operational changes. Start with these easy changes and when you have completed them, adopt the standard only exempting the parts you cannot meet (think topography and beach neighborhoods, isolated homes in woods, mountaintops, and such) and those harder but achievable items that you might tackle one a year for a few years.

Doing this will give you a roadmap to success, an instant strategic plan of sorts, so that over a few years, your department can distinguish itself from others by demonstrating excellence through the use of the standards. Your firefighters, your community, and your political leadership will be impressed.

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## APPENDIX F

# TRAINING FOR FAILURE – BUILDING RESILIENT PROBLEM SOLVERS

By Dr. Richard B. Gasaway, *Situational Awareness Matters*

*Reprinted from the 2022 edition of the NVFC's Firefighter Strong publication.*

Perhaps you're going to think I've been out in the sun too long when you read this proclamation: You should make more mistakes! What? It's true. But before you stop reading this article out of disdain for such an absurd statement, please gift me just five minutes of your time to understand, from the perspective of neuroscience, why I think you should fail more in order to improve your preparedness as a responder.

You've heard it. Maybe you've even said it: "I've learned more from the mistakes I've made in life than the things I've done right." Is that coincidence? Or can it be validated with science? The answer is: It can be validated with science. To understand how this happens, let's dive into the learning brain.

You have many kinds of memory, and you learn things in many ways. The process of learning is, in fact, so complex, that I won't take it on in this article. Stated simply, when you learn your brain makes connections between nerves – pathways from one piece of information to another. Think of it as driving your car to the grocery store. The pathway to the store is memorized in the brain so you can get there, almost automatically because you have traveled the pathway so frequently.

But what happens when the road you always travel on the way to the store is closed? If you have traveled alternate routes before, you know ways to get around the closure and you will likely be able to easily navigate a new route. But what if you are in a strange town and you have to find your way around streets you never traveled before? It would take you a lot longer and you may end up getting lost. In fact, you might not make it to your destination before the store closes.

## FINDING ALTERNATE ROUTES

When your normal road of travel is closed, you wander around until you find a new road. Now, for all future trips to the store you have two, maybe even three ways to get there. If the first road is closed, or even congested, you can quickly and flawlessly take an alternate route.

Now let's put this in the context of a firefighter or EMS provider. Think of practicing some skills over and over again as the equivalent of traveling the same road over and over again to the grocery store. So long as the road is open and passable, no worries. So long as the cognitive or muscle memory skill you are performing works, no worries. But what about when it doesn't work? What are you to do then? Wander aimlessly, trying new ways of doing your task on the fly? This could be risky if you are at an emergency scene where time is critical and the safety of you, your crew, and the person having the emergency is on the line. The better solution might be to have alternate ways to accomplishing the task (i.e., alternate roadways) already memorized. Just in case.

The alternate roadways in the brain provide you with solutions to problems when the regular solution doesn't work. When you have alternates, you can become a resilient problem solver and find quick solutions to novel problems. The brain actually rewires itself (i.e., builds new roadways) as it learns from mistakes.

## BUILDING FAILURE INTO TRAINING

You can help members become resilient problem solvers by building failure into training. However, I want to issue you two big warnings. First, always ensure you are using safety best practices when building failure into evolutions. It is never the goal to teach someone a lesson by allowing him or her to get hurt or be put into harm's way unnecessarily. That is negligent behavior on behalf of the instructor or supervisor.

Equally important, building failure into training should only occur after the students have learned, practiced, memorized, and perfected the RIGHT way to do things. Building their skills and confidence is very important.

Once they get good at the skills, then it's time to build failure in. But don't do it with malice. Tell them, in advance, that the evolution is going to fail and you want them to think of and implement novel solutions to the problem. Some novel solutions may work, some may not. Out of failure the brain rewires and builds new roadways and your responders become resilient

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problems solvers – quickly able to detour around roadblocks that arise at emergency scenes.

Not every emergency scene will go the expected way, and your responders need to be prepared for that. Train responders for success based on best practices first. Once they get really good at what they do and their confidence is high, tell them they need to learn novel solutions to unexpected situations and change the scenarios so that what they do will not work. Debrief the failures and discuss what worked and what did not and why. Challenge with questions like: What worked well? What didn't work well? Why did things not work as you thought? What did you learn from this?

The purpose of scripted failures is not to embarrass. It's to build alternate solutions into the collection of mental options. Make sure everyone knows this up front. Enthusiastic students who understand the motive of failure is to learn should welcome the opportunity to fail for the sake of learning and will be far less likely to resent an instructor who might otherwise seem to be taking joy in the sadistic act of creating failure among students.

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## APPENDIX G

# TIPS FOR THE NEW INSTRUCTOR – BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN 1041 AND THE REAL WORLD

By Christopher LeDoux, Iota (LA) Volunteer Fire Department

*Reprinted from the NVFC's Dispatch newsletter.*

When I joined my local volunteer fire department in 2005, I was as green as green could get. I was thirsty for knowledge but didn't know exactly how to go about getting that knowledge. My department didn't have much of a training program. The overall culture of the department was a very "good ole boy" environment, and it didn't take me long to notice that training more often than not took a back seat to everyone visiting for a few hours and calling it a night. I tried to attend as many local and state offered trainings as I could, but those weren't very frequent in those days. Most of what I learned I picked up on the emergency scene.

Fast forward to 2012. I had been taking the initiative to put together some type of organized training on our drill nights. That April, my department voted to create a training officer position and it was given to me. I was handed the reins to a training program that was basically nonexistent. I was given very little direction on what to do or how to do it. Does this sound familiar to anyone out there?

I slowly was able to build up a training program that was semi-successful, but it was still lacking. In 2015, I made myself read the IFSTA Instructor book. For those who have studied from any of the available instructor books out there, they aren't what I would call thrilling reading material. But I learned lots of good information and successfully passed the Fire Instructor 1 certification. I followed that up by passing the Fire Instructor 2 certification in 2016. I was officially certified, but I'd be foolish to say I was qualified.

Then in 2016, my department went through changes in administration and, along with that, a BIG culture change. I

had left the department for a short time and returned to find a department that was seeing lots of changes...good, positive changes. I was no longer the training officer in 2016, but I was often asked to assist or lead in trainings.

In January 2017, our department policies were changed and the 3rd assistant chief position was entrusted with being the chief of training & fire prevention. We held elections, and I was voted into that position. Here I was, training officer again, just with a different color helmet. But things were different this time. I had evolved as a firefighter. I had evolved as an instructor. For lack of better words, I had grown up. I also had a young, progressive fire chief who entrusted me to lead the training program as I saw fit. Talk about an intimidating time!

As time has gone on, my department has continued to transform our culture and we've become what others have said is the "standard" for what a volunteer fire department should be. We've obtained 50+ IFSAC certification. We've organized and hosted two state-wide weekend mini schools, where volunteer fire officers could come get valuable training. We've put on the first ever recruit academy in our parish, where new volunteers could come and get a solid baseline of knowledge and skills.

Since then, I've been approached by numerous people who were handed the reins to their volunteer department's training program. Many of these, much like I once was, were certified instructors but were thrown to the wolves and given little to no direction on how to lead a training program. I exchanged countless phone calls and texts with these people, giving tips and having ideas bounced off of me. Don't get me wrong, NFPA 1041 and Fire Instructor I & II courses are great and are much needed. But do they truly prepare you to be handed the responsibility of leading a volunteer fire department training program? Sure, you'll learn the laws of learning. You'll learn how to create and edit lesson plans. You'll learn that you must have a spare bulb for your overhead projector (insert eye roll). But does 1041 truly prepare you for what you will be doing in the real world? This was where "Tips for the New Instructor" was born.

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The following list is in no particular order. You'll notice that some of these tips have relevance for fire officers and NFPA 1021. I cannot take full credit for this list as I had multiple of my instructor friends review the list and give their input.

1. **Figure out what works for you.** You can try to copy the teaching styles of other instructors, but you need to figure out what works for you.
2. **Don't try to reinvent the wheel, but don't be afraid to change the tire.** There are lots of resources out there for training purposes but that doesn't mean they are a perfect fit for your department. Don't try to completely overhaul that resource, but edit it as you need.
3. **Remember the basics.** The basics are some of the easiest things to get complacent with. It's not feasible to do an advanced search and rescue class if there are still people who struggle with donning an SCBA.
4. **Listen to your people, even when they aren't talking.** Some people will tell you the training they want/need. For others, you will need to be observant to identify weaknesses. Either way, pay attention to them to see what training needs to be addressed.
5. **Always be a student.** Take as many classes as you can. Not only will this improve you personally, but it will help you to grow as an instructor.
6. **Be a leader.** As the training officer, you are responsible for the growth and knowledge of your people. That may seem scary (and it is) but embrace it. Show your people the way, and lead by example.
7. **Don't be afraid to step on some toes, as long as you step with truth.** Individual personalities can be a funny thing, especially with volunteer firefighters. You will have every personality, from God's gift to the fire service, to the person who doesn't believe in themselves, to the person who has seen it all and got the t-shirt after only 6 months of service. The truth and facts can be a hard pill for some to swallow.
8. **You will NEVER make everyone happy.** Always keep the best interest of the department and community in mind when making decisions. Refer to #7 again.
9. **Always give 110% to your people.** Not everyone has the same level of dedication and commitment, and that will frustrate you beyond your imagination. As a training officer, you have to give 110% or else you are wasting their time. You can't control their dedication, but you can control yours.
10. **Build your contacts.** There are plenty of knowledgeable instructors out there. Become friends with these people. You can bounce ideas off of them, swap training materials, etc.
11. **Know your job.** Sit down with your administration and see exactly what your position will entail. Determine what the training requirements are each year.
12. **Stay organized.** It can get pretty overwhelming with lesson plans, training records, and notes everywhere. Figure out a way to stay organized and it will go a long way to staying sane.
13. **Communicate, communicate, and communicate.** Ensure that you have a simple and effective way to pass on training reminders to your people. When you give classes, you should speak clearly and loudly. Poor communication is a fast way to grow confusion.
14. **Set expectations early.** Whether it's your expectations for the overall training program or for an individual training, set those expectations and communicate them clearly.
15. **Train your replacement.** It's not realistic to believe that you will hold the position forever. It doesn't matter if you've held it for 15 days or 15 years, you should take the time to start training a replacement. There are a number of reasons why you may leave your position before you originally planned to. It is up to you to make sure there is someone waiting in the wings to take your spot.
16. **Leave your ego at the door.** Egos can destroy an organization. You are here to better your organization, not tear it down.
17. **If you learned it, then share it.** As a training officer, you will get lots of opportunities to attend training. Take those things you learn and bring them back to your dept. It is selfish to keep that knowledge to yourself, especially if you are using it to hold over another.
18. **Lead by example.** When your people are training on skills, you should be training on skills. You don't have to be the fastest or the strongest, but participate side by side with them. This is one of the biggest ways to earn their respect.
19. **Think before you speak.** You may need to discipline someone. Someone may keep pushing your buttons. You hold a position of authority, rank, and respect. Don't ruin that by running off at the mouth. Discipline in private, not in public. Take a breath, think about it, then reply. Sometimes the best reply is none at all.

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20. **Teach within your means.** You will be looked at as the foremost expert on most all fire training activities, but that doesn't mean you really are. If you aren't good at ropes and knots, don't teach it! Find someone within your department or an outside instructor who excels at it and let them teach it. The last thing you want to do is teach incorrect information.
  21. **Keep the best interest of your department and community in mind.** Your position is all about "them," not you. Every decision you make should be made to have a direct positive impact on your department and the community you serve.
  22. **Be realistic with your training.** Try your best to make trainings as close to real world as you can safely and affordably get. Be realistic with your training ideas. A class on aerial operations sounds all good and fun, but if your department doesn't have an aerial, is it really a realistic topic? You will only have limited opportunities to train; make the most of them.
  23. **Stand by your decisions.** You will second guess yourself. People will question your decisions. Stand by those decisions. Having a flip/flop attitude towards your own decisions can cause breakdowns in leadership and respect.
  24. **Don't forget where you came from.** Remember what it's like to be a young, new firefighter. You were once young and dumb too. Don't steal someone's passion.
  25. **Have fun!** The fire service can be very fun. The adrenaline, the excitement of live fire, all the things that we love about this job. Yes, there are times where we need to be serious. But don't forget to have some fun too.
  26. **Stick to your training plan.** Don't deviate in mid-drill as this will cause confusion on the established goals.
  27. **Establish a culture of safety.** Allowing unsafe acts such as freelancing and reckless cowboy behavior during training will only lead to those same acts on the emergency scene. Establish that culture of safety and hold everyone accountable for it.
  28. **Train like you play so you can play like you train.** Success on the training ground will lead to success on the emergency scene. Cutting corners during training will lead to cutting corners during an emergency.
  29. **Have an open door policy.** Make yourself reachable to your people. They may not want to talk to you in a crowd but would feel more comfortable in a one-on-one situation. Take steps to ensure that can happen.

30. **You won't always be right.** Accept criticism. Understand that you will make mistakes. Give your people the permission to correct you if the situation occurs.
31. **Find a mentor.** A mentor is someone you can look up to. Someone you can always turn to for honest advice. A mentor will help to pick you up when you are down.

With nearly 70 percent of the United States fire service being volunteer, I'm sure there are people reading this list that have either experienced this or are currently experiencing this. Will every tip on this list be applicable to you and your department? Doubtful. Being a new instructor or training officer is hugely intimidating, but I believe that this list will help you in bridging the gap between 1041 and the real world. Good luck, train hard, and don't play with matches!