

Analysis of Recruit / Initial Fire Fighter Training Curricula

Executive Summary

March 2015

Introduction

The level of training provided to recruit or initial fire fighter candidates in fire service training institutions is widely varied in curricula and the number of hours in the structured training programs. While NFPA professional qualifications standards are not intended as training documents, many training institutions refer to the standards when designing and implementing their curriculum. Furthermore, the two major international accreditation agencies – namely Pro Board and IFSAC – require that training institutions meet or surpass the training suggested within the NFPA 1001 standard for consideration of accreditation.

NFPA1001 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualification is developed and published by the National Fire Protection Association and recommends the minimum competency of job related skills typically required to perform the duties of professional firefighters. The standard is expressed as a series of Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) that must be accomplished in an accredited training program, and does not dictate how the training must be completed. As it stands, NFPA 1001 is broken into two sections: Firefighter I and Firefighter II. A distinction in some jurisdictions is made that volunteer firefighters need only to be trained to Firefighter I.

While the NFPA 1001 standard lists the specific Job Performance Requirements and information necessitated to complete these tasks, the standard does not discuss the amount of time that is required to properly address these requirements. As a result, it has been seen that different institutions assess the importance of each JPR differently, and as a result, it is possible that the proportion of the training time for each JPR varies widely between training institutions across North America. For this reason, an investigation into the standard practices of training institutions is warranted to address this dearth of information. A recommended timeline to accompany the NFPA 1001 standard would help to increase the uniformity of the training programs across North America.

Objective

The purpose of this project is to identify state and provincial fire service training institutions and survey them about their curriculum and the number of formal training hours that they provide for recruit or initial fire service fire fighter training, including awareness and operations level hazardous materials. For ease of comparison, this study focused on firefighter students training for employment with municipal fire departments and therefore does not consider those trained by the Canadian Military or United States Department of Defence.

Conclusion

This study provided an analysis of the amount of training typically provided to students of fire training institutions across North America. A survey requesting details on the time spent on Job Performance Requirements was sent to 70 potential respondents from state and provincial fire fighter training institutions. This study analysed the responses of training directors from 16 fire fighter training institutions, representing 3 Canadian provinces and 13 American states.

From the responses, it was found that the average firefighter training curriculum encompasses approximately 270 hours of theoretical and skills-based training. The curriculum in all cases covered Firefighter I and II, as well as HAZMAT Awareness and HAZMAT Operations. Further training was often provided, including subjects such as fire investigation and emergency driver training. A clear distinction between volunteer and career fire training courses was not noted.