THE BEST WAY TO DEVELOP QUALIFIED, COMPETENT FIRE OFFICERS IN THE BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

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An Applied Research Project submitted to the Department of Interdisciplinary Technology as part of the School of Fire Staff and Command Program

August 2002
Abstract

The rank of Lieutenant, the entry-level fire officer position within the Bloomfield Township Fire Department, is a position in which no formal fire officer training is required prior to promotion and which has no means of orientation, consistent evaluation, or mentoring after promotion.

The purpose of this Applied Research Project was to identify the deficiencies currently existing in BTFD’s fire officer training, investigate what others have done to address the training and orientation of new fire officers, and recommend a program that will develop qualified, competent first time fire officers for the Bloomfield Township Fire Department.

Descriptive and evaluative research was used to find out what programs have other fire departments used to train, orientate, or mentor new fire officers; what skills, knowledge, and abilities have others in the fire service identified as necessary for a line officer to possess; what issues or needs do our current fire officers identify as items that should be included in an officer development program; what are the skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the department’s job description for Lieutenant that are not currently being addressed through training; and, what program, either existing or created, will best prepare the Lieutenant to carry out the fireground, administrative, and station duties in a competent, complete manner.

The methods of research used in this Applied Research Project include a literature review, a survey of current Bloomfield Township Fire Department officers, an interview with the Program Coordinator of the local community college’s fire science programs, and an analysis of the job description for Fire Lieutenant.
The recommendations include training all fire officers to the level of Fire Officer I and II prior to promotion; develop an orientation program for new officers similar to what is already in place for probationary firefighters; develop a mentoring program for new officers similar to what is already in place for probationary firefighters; develop an evaluation program for new officers wherein they would be evaluated at one month, three month, six month, and one year intervals; and develop a program with the local college or through an organization such as the Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training to develop a program that specifically addresses the skills and knowledge identified through this Applied Research Project as those that are needed by the new fire officer to handle the administrative duties of the job.
# Table Of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................... 2  
Table Of Contents ............................................................................................................................... 4  
Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 5  
Background and Significance ............................................................................................................... 6  
Literature Review ............................................................................................................................... 8  
Procedures .......................................................................................................................................... 15  
Results ............................................................................................................................................... 16  
Discussion .......................................................................................................................................... 26  
Recommendations ............................................................................................................................... 28  
References .......................................................................................................................................... 30  
Appendix A ......................................................................................................................................... 31  
Appendix B ......................................................................................................................................... 32  
Appendix C ......................................................................................................................................... 35
Introduction

The rank of Lieutenant, the entry-level fire officer position within the Bloomfield Township Fire Department, is a position in which no formal fire officer training is required prior to promotion and which has no means of orientation, consistent evaluation, or mentoring after promotion. The only qualifications the fire officer candidate must have are five years of department seniority and have achieved “Class A” Firefighter status. Formal fire officer training is required within 30 months after promotion. The purpose of this Applied Research Project is to identify the deficiencies currently existing in BTFD’s fire officer training, investigate what others have done to address the training and orientation of new fire officers, and recommend a program that will develop qualified, competent first time fire officers for the Bloomfield Township Fire Department. Descriptive and evaluative research will be used to answer the following questions:

1. What programs have other fire departments used to train, orientate, or mentor new fire officers?
2. What skills, knowledge, and abilities have others in the fire service identified as necessary for a line officer to possess?
3. What issues or needs do our current fire officers identify as items that should be included in an officer development program?
4. What are the skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the department’s job description for Lieutenant that are not currently being addressed through training?
5. What program, either existing or created, will best prepare the Lieutenant to carry out the fireground, administrative, and station duties in a competent, complete manner?

**Background and Significance**

Bloomfield Township is a community of approximately 42,000 residents located in the heart of Oakland County, Michigan. The Bloomfield Township Fire Department (BTFD) is a career department comprised of 68 uniformed personnel and two clerical civilian personnel. The officer ranks in BTFD include a Chief, an Operations Officer, a Fire Marshal, three Captains, and nine line Lieutenants. The staff position of EMS Coordinator is a staff position in which the person assigned to this duty must be a Lieutenant. The staff position of Fire Inspector brings with it the rank of Lieutenant, but that rank is not retained if the position is given up. There is no prerequisite fire officer training for personnel testing for the rank of Lieutenant. The only qualifications candidate must have are five years of department seniority and have achieved “Class A” Firefighter status. “Class A” firefighter status is defined as having attained 4 years of department seniority and received a Fire Science Certificate. Once you become a Lieutenant you must receive your Michigan Firefighter Training Council Fire Officer I and II training within 30 months of promotion. The problem with this lies in the fact that the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services General Industry Safety Standards Part 74 (herein known as Part 74), which addresses rules and regulations that apply specifically to firefighting, states in Rule 7411 that, “An employer shall...(a) Provide training to an employee commensurate with the duties and functions that the employee is expected to perform. The training shall be provided before the employee is permitted to
perform emergency operations.” In preparing themselves for the promotional process, some individuals receive the Fire Officer training on their own prior to promotion. The majority, even if they have completed some of the training, wait until they are promoted to receive the required certifications. In fact, a survey of BTFD fire officers showed that only three of the 16 respondents received the training before they were promoted.

The impact this has on the department’s operations is hard to measure. Most candidates are experienced firefighters that have a good knowledge base and many years of experience. So, while they may function very well without the training, the fact remains that the classes contain information that is relevant and necessary for the fire officer. The future impact may be greatest in the way that it relates to Part 74. Since it is clear in the language of Part 74 that a fire officer must be trained prior to performing emergency operations, the department is open to great liability concerns if a firefighter is injured or killed under the supervision of a fire officer that has not completed the fire officer training but is functioning as such.

There is also no formalized orientation training to address the administrative and station duties that a Lieutenant is responsible for. This is addressed, for the most part, as problems and issues arise. There is no documentation or format for this training since it is considered informal. In the past, this has lead to inconsistent or non-existent training. If training was provided, it was given without guidelines or uniformity of subject matter. It has resulted in higher-ranking officers having to react to an officer’s lack of knowledge rather than the department being proactive in providing the training and education necessary for the officer to carry out his responsibilities in a competent, thorough manner.
The future impact, while hard to gauge, would be of the same nature as the present and past effects of inadequately trained officers.

This Applied Research Project is relevant to Eastern Michigan University’s School Of Fire Staff and Command in that fire officer development is the basis of the class.

**Literature Review**

A literature review for this topic was conducted to find existing research and information related to the subject of fire officer development. The literature review encompassed fire service journals and research papers.

Smoke (2001) writes, “More than any other position, company officers can turn the fire department’s mission statement into a reality. Through leadership and example, company officers can train their crews to reflect the department’s goals and standards.” He also writes about Retired Fire Chief Morton Shurtleff of Milton, Massachusetts who taught fire officer development courses at the National Fire Academy. When Chief Morton would ask students what they feared most about their new job as a company officer, the majority replied that they feared being promoted without the benefits of some sort of officer training. While they wanted officer training beyond the basic fire ground command topics, they also wanted training in such areas as discipline, counseling, grievances, and other personnel issues.

Kirin (1998) believes that, “One must consider quantitative data, the organizational culture, program cost, and particularly the human and behavioral aspects of people before developing and implementing any system. These factors all play a
significant role in the effectiveness of any potential fire officer development program recommended.” (Kirin, 1998)

Hensler (1997) makes a distinction between training and professional development education. He feels that training develops skills and techniques in order to prepare people for similar tasks needed on the fire ground. Education leads to information and knowledge that develops leadership potential. He is a proponent of formal education and urges current and future fire officers to seek college level education.

Connealy (2000) writes that in 1998, the Houston Fire Department began the process of developing an officer development program and 40-hour officer school for newly promoted officers. The forty hour officer school curriculum included classes on leadership, management theory, customer service, group dynamics, role of an officer, organizational structure and principles, written operating guidelines, and documentation and discipline. The officers were placed on a 40-hour schedule for one week to complete the training. Initially, the officers came from promotional eligibility lists for Captain, Senior Captain, and District Chief. Since it was a new program, some of the officers had already been promoted and others were close to being promoted. In the future, the goal of the department is to send members on the eligibility list to an officer school before their promotion.

Kefalas (1997) reported on a coalition that was formed in Oregon to assemble a formal company officer development program that was to be utilized prior to promotion. Five fire departments developed a curriculum that focused on emergency response, professional development, personnel management, and administrative management. The
program, in existence since 1994, utilizes a teaching approach that relies heavily on conceptual skills. It is designed to enhance problem solving and interpersonal skills.

Hawkins (2000) writes that the Alexandria, Virginia Fire Department created a program called the Leadership, Education, and Development (LEAD) Institute to provide a comprehensive leadership and training program for its officers. The first step they undertook was to develop a set of principles to guide the development of the program. The principles included:

- The curriculum couldn’t be abstract; it needed to be real. The subject matter had to be something the students could actually use.
- All curriculum components must have end objectives that are specific and measurable.
- Instructors must use innovative instructional techniques, such as case studies, role-playing, and group interaction.

Based on the above principles, the LEAD team developed a curriculum of 4- and 8-hour modules that included the following topics: Mission and Values of the Fire Department, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Self-Directed Professional Growth and Development, communications skills, time management, team-building skills, and leadership styles and process. Time was also spent reviewing training techniques and responsibilities, conflict management and resolution, the legal aspects of being a manager, employee evaluations and the discipline process, management of emergency situations, customer service, the fire department as part of local government, and financial management.

Hawkins, who was Chief of the Alexandria Fire Department during the implementation of the program and at the time of this article, wrote “The LEAD Institute
team and I believe that participants are better prepared to handle many different situations. The overall knowledge of attendees has improved, which seem to have minimized problems in running the department.” He attributes the success to a blend of instructors from within and outside the organization and an ongoing evaluation of the program. The cost of the program was $5,000 in overtime to design the course and annual costs of approximately $24,000 in overtime and instructor wages. Hawkins concluded by writing, “If any department wants to embark on a LEAD Institute they’ll need to invest the dollars. If you want quality, commit the financial resources to make it happen.”

Booth (1999) writes that a survey conducted of paid departments over 100 personnel showed that 36% required candidates to attend specific training courses prior to promotion. While noting that offering training to a large number of candidates initially seems to be inefficient, he states that this may be a narrow view of the costs and benefits. Offering supervisory training to individuals that may not be immediately promoted may help that individual gain some insight into the decision-making processes of their supervisor. This training is also useful in instances, of short or long duration, where the person may be in charge of an incident as a senior firefighter. The survey also showed that almost two-thirds of the departments that didn’t require this training before promotion recommended such training.

In his article on officer mentoring programs, Lytle (2001) writes that, “Time on the job and a stack of certifications don’t necessarily mean someone’s ready to lead. The fire service has many hands-on training programs for firefighters, engineers and paramedics. We mentor, teach, train, and evaluate our people quite well—until they
reach the company officer level.” He believes that mentoring programs offer true hands-on leadership and decision-making experience, help develop a prospective company officer’s self-confidence, and gives them a safe environment to test new skills. An added bonus, he believes, is that mentoring programs allow for evaluation of the new officers. Weaknesses can be addressed and strengths developed. He states, “Decision-making skills, communication and staff relations are difficult to judge until you see an officer in action.” (p. 52-53)

The four phases of the mentor program Lytle writes about includes selecting the mentors, training the trainers, making the match, and evaluations. In selecting the mentors, Lytle writes that it is important to select skilled, experienced mentors who are motivated to provide a positive learning experience. They should be true teachers, not just instructors. In the second phase, the mentors are given an eight-hour class that covers leadership, adult learning, coaching and counseling techniques, and communications skills. The third phase is matching a mentor with a new officer. Lytle explains they are usually paired with a mentor from a different station, saying, “This challenges the intern to work well with different people in a strange environment—good experience for future company officers.” The final phase is the evaluations of the new officer. There are evaluations given daily and “major” evaluations given after the sixth and twelfth shifts. Examples of the competency sign-off sheets and the evaluation forms used in this program are included in Appendix A.

Fleming (2002) believes that line officer preparation involves more than just technical skills. He writes that, “Line officers need the same type of training that’s provided by businesses and other organizations to individuals accepting first-line
supervisory positions.” Included in this training are the management functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. He also believes that decision-making and communications, as well as the difference between management and leadership should also be included. (p. 51)

This writer conducted an interview with Ron Deadman (2002, Deadman), Program Manager of the Oakland Fire Training Institute at Oakland Community College. Deadman is well versed in the different training programs, locally and nationally, that are available for officer development.

Deadman was asked whether he thought the new format of the fire officer training classes prepares the student for the administrative duties of an officer. He stated, “For a first level company officer it takes a huge step from where we were before. You have to remember before we had no technical skills, we strictly taught inter-fireground relationships…you had to move up to higher levels in officer training to understand how things touched you and how they touched other individuals. Now, this program steps it back…it teaches diversity training to help you understand where others are coming from. It’s a beginning, but it needs a lot more in my mind.”

When asked whether there was a class available to fill the gap in teaching fire officers administrative skills, Deadman stated, “The class you’re (this writer) taking, Staff and Command, it’s a good class. It’s a huge jump, but the commitment for what—10 weeks out of 10 months—is a huge commitment of resources for a small community.” He went on to talk about the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer program, saying that they are now allowing Captains into the program because they see the need for “administrative recognition”. 
Again discussing Eastern Michigan’s Fire Staff and Command school, Deadman stated that he would like to see the program formatted so that the students would go for three, four, or five week program three times over a three year period. He would see each session as a building block for the next, saying, “That’s how I would envision a program to develop for advancement in administrative roles in the fire service.”

When asked about the concept of an officer candidate school, he stated that this is a sound concept as long as it is made available prior to promotion. He believes that such a school would be good especially if the school is a prerequisite to be eligible for the position. Once the person has been promoted, Deadman advocates formal evaluations on an ongoing basis.

When asked what he thought the skill that most line officers lack he stated, “Communication, first and foremost. They lack the ability to communicate on an even level.” He explained this by saying that a lot of officers don’t know how to communicate inter-generationally, across economic lines and across racial lines. This hinders their effectiveness.

When asked about general oral communications, Deadman stated that he believes that the electronic forms of communication: email, voice mail, etc. have hurt our ability to communicate since there is less interaction demanded on a daily basis.

In regards to Part 74, Deadman was asked what his interpretation of the standard as to whether a fire officer has to be trained prior to promotion. He stated that the death of a firefighter in Auburn Hills, Michigan is a good example of what MIOSHA looks at as far as training. He said that in MIOSHA’s investigation of the incident, they asked whether the officers and acting officers on the scene were formally trained, either through
the MFFTC Fire Officer class series or through an in-house training program. The statement said that if the officers had neither, they were in violation of Part 74. “That is the clearest statement that has been ever been made in regards to Part 74. In that statement they are saying that you can train yourselves, but you have to document what you trained them on,” said Deadman. He also added, “It’s not my interpretation that counts, it’s the lawyer’s.”

When asked to what standard your in-house training would have to meet to be accepted by MIOSHA, Deadman stated that it should comply with all the requirements of NFPA 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. He also stated that the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) requires 24 hours of officer development training a year.

He stated that his understanding is that if officer training is mandated as a pre-requisite to a position then the municipality is not obligated to pay for it. It is the individual’s choice to seek promotion. If it is mandated after the fact, the municipality is responsible to pay for the training.

**Procedures**

The research procedure used in this Applied Research Project started with a literature review utilizing the research resources available through Eastern Michigan University’s library. Additional resources were requested via interlibrary loan from the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center.

An interview was conducted with Ron Deadman, Program Manager of the Oakland Fire Training Institute. Deadman is well versed in the different training programs, locally and nationally, that are available for fire officer development.
BTFD’s job description for Fire Lieutenant was analyzed to see what skills were needed and not addressed in training prior to a new officer assuming the responsibilities of Lieutenant.

A survey of all BTFD officers, with the exception of this writer, was conducted to ascertain the following information:

- What is the current level of training for BTFD officers
- What level of training did they possess when they were promoted to fire officer
- What skills did they believe they lacked when they were first promoted to fire officer
- What skills do they believe they currently lack to perform their job as fire officers
- To what extent were evaluations done for newly promoted fire officer within the first six months after promotion
- What is their opinion of establishing an orientation and mentoring program similar to the program that currently exists for probationary firefighters
- What other ideas might they have to improve the training of fire officers within BTFD

**Results**

The results of the Applied Research Project were reached through a literature review, an interview with the program manager of the local community college, a survey of current BTFD officers, and an analysis of BTFD’s job description for Fire Lieutenant. The results of the literature review and interview are included in the Literature Review.
section of this Applied Research Project. The following are the survey results and the results of the job description analysis:

**Survey Results**

A survey was conducted of all BTFD officers, with the exception of this writer. A response was received from all 16 officers. The following is the results of the survey:

**Education**

- The average department seniority was 22 years. The longest tenure was 29 years and the shortest was 15 years.
- The average number of years as an officer was 9.5. The longest time as an officer was 17 years and the shortest was 2 years.
- Twelve officers (75%) have Fire Officer I and II certification. Five officers (31%) received both certifications after promotion. Six officers received Fire Officer I after promotion. Nine officers (56%) received Fire Officer II after promotion. Three officers (18%) received Fire Officer I, II, and III before promotion.
- Eleven officers (69%) have Fire Officer III certification. Eight officers (50%) received Fire Officer III after promotion.
- One officer has only Fire Officer I certification.
- Three officers have no Fire Officer training.
- Twelve officers have completed Associate’s Degrees in Fire Science.
- Three officers have completed Associate’s Degrees in other subjects.
- Three officers have completed Bachelor’s Degrees in Fire Science.
- Four officers have completed Bachelor’s Degrees in other subjects.
Three officers are currently working towards Bachelor’s degrees, one officer is working toward a Master’s degree and one officer is working towards an Associate’s degree.

Four officers are Certified Fire Service Instructors. They all received the training after promotion.

**Question 3**

*When you first started your fire officer position which skills do you feel you were least prepared to perform?*

- Firefighting tactics and strategies-2
- Planning and organization-5
- Delegation-5
- Problem solving-1
- Performance appraisals-10
- Written communications-2
- Oral communications-0
- Instructional techniques-6
- Safety-1
- Computers-8
- Cultural diversity-4
- Conflict resolution-6
- Public Education-3
- Public Relations-1
- Fire Prevention-4
- Other-0

**Question 4**

*What subjects do you feel you need training in today?*

- Firefighting tactics and strategies-0
- Planning and organization-0
- Delegation-1
- Problem solving-0
- Performance appraisals-2
- Written communications-0
- Oral communications-0
- Instructional techniques-3
- Safety-0
Question 5

When you were first promoted to fire officer, what in-house training did you receive?

Orientation program-1
“Shown the ropes” by experienced officer-11
None-5
Other-2

Question 6

Within your six-month probationary period, were you given an evaluation of your performance as an officer?

No-10
Yes-6

Question 7

Do you feel that new fire officers would benefit from an orientation and mentoring program similar to the program currently in place for probationary firefighters?

Yes-13
No-3

Question 8

Do you have any ideas or suggestions that would improve the development of new fire officers in Bloomfield Township Fire Department?
The following are excerpts from the comments that were listed for this question:

- Encourage (pay for) all interested to attend fire officer program before promotion and stress educational methodology. Everyone could benefit from a basic PowerPoint class.

- A new officer should “do” time on all shifts equally thru his probation, on all shifts, at all stations. Also do time with day personnel- EMS, FM, and Insp.

- Dale Carnegie course, 7 Habits of Successful People, Time Management.

- Time at Station 1, more interest in fire officer classes (this is both the employer and employee), time spent with each staff officer to learn what they do and develop respect for the work others do.

- I think new officers would benefit from working at Central, being mentored by a Captain, and then working with a Lt. at an outstation for a couple months before promotion. The real development should be preparing firefighters to be officers. Those on the Lt. list should begin an officer training program.

- There should be a system that allows a new officer to discuss his decision-making skills with a senior and experienced officer.

- Require 10 years experience and Fire Officer I and II prior to promotion…maybe an Associate’s Degree, too.

- Six months at Central handling daily duties, working with day personnel would be a benefit.

- All new officers should be trained in handling people/personnel issues to better progress them along. Most new officers are well trained in fire tactics and strategies—which you need the most is training on how to be a good boss and dealing with personnel.
- Engine 1 should have an officer, just as the other three engines do. This would be a good assignment for a new officer—under the guidance of the Captain.

**Job Description Analysis**

The job description for the position of Fire Lieutenant for Bloomfield Township Fire Department (Appendix C) was analyzed to see what skills were needed and not addressed prior to a new officer assuming the responsibilities of Lieutenant. Listed below are the “Essential Job Functions” and “Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities” where there may be lack of training and knowledge by a new officer.

**Essential Job Functions**

1. **Supervise fire personnel at an incident and make decisions as to the best methods of mitigating the situation**- This function requires knowledge beyond that of a firefighter since the officer is expected to supervise personnel and decide how to mitigate a situation. This training would come from Fire Officer I and II classes. If the new officer has not completed this training prior to promotion, his knowledge base would not be sufficient.

2. **Supervise the placing of apparatus, laying of hose, placing of ladders, ventilation of buildings, and other firefighting operations**- While the officer may have the knowledge and skills to accomplish this task as a firefighter, without additional training he may not have the proper knowledge to supervise such activities.

3. **Participate and supervise in the preparation of daily log sheets, maintenance records, fire and rescue, and other reports**- Most of this assignment is something the officer would have been responsible to do as a firefighter. Since he
is now supervising the proper completion of such reports, it would be advisable to have a thorough knowledge of the flow of the paper work, what is done with the paper work when it is completed, and the importance of thorough and complete reports. This is a task that could be addressed in an orientation program.

4. **Assist in conducting in-service training activities** - Certification as a Certified Fire Instructor, or at a minimum, attending the education methodology portion of the Fire Officer classes, would be recommended to accomplish this job function.

**Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities**

1. **Considerable knowledge of departmental rules and regulations** - The new officer may have knowledge of the departmental rules and regulations from a firefighter’s perspective but not the adequate knowledge to administer them from a supervisory role. This knowledge could be obtained through an orientation and/or mentoring program.

2. **Ability to lead, command, coordinate, and discipline firefighters** - This task takes in a lot of the functions that an officer is expected to perform. The ability to lead, command, and coordinate firefighters may be an inherent quality that the officer possesses. It may be an ability that needs to be honed. Without a vehicle to evaluate these skills it is not know what is needed. An evaluation of the officer at various intervals of his probation would help to identify any problems or deficiencies. The ability to discipline firefighters comes from the knowledge of what is appropriate discipline and what the department policy on discipline entails. This is not knowledge the officer would possess without further training.
This knowledge could be obtained through an orientation and/or mentoring program.

3. **Knowledge of the laws, rules and regulation relating to fire control and fire prevention** - The officer may possess the knowledge of the laws, rules and regulations relating to fire control, but unless he has spent time in the fire prevention bureau, his knowledge of the laws, rules and regulations of fire prevention is most likely limited. An orientation rotation with the fire prevention bureau would enhance the officer’s knowledge in this area.

4. **Possess good interpersonal skills and the ability to write clearly and precisely** - The interpersonal skills needed as an officer differ from those needed as a firefighter. This is a skill that is never perfected, only something that a person should continuously try to improve. However, there are basic fundamentals of good interpersonal skills that can be taught. This can be learned through special seminars or somewhat through the fire officer classes. It is also something that should be evaluated on a regular basis to see if the officer is improving his interpersonal skills. The officer may have the ability to write clearly and precisely, but without orientation to what writing clearly and precisely means and evaluation of the officer’s writings, it is not known if the officer possesses the skills need to accomplish this task. This can be addressed in an orientation program, and if additional skills were needed, a technical writing class would give the officer the knowledge needed. Ongoing evaluation of the officer’s writings should also be done.
The combined results of the literature review, interview, survey and job
description analysis were used to answer the following questions that were originally
posed in the introduction of this Applied Research Project:

1. **What programs have other fire departments used to train, orientate, or mentor new fire officers?** The literature review shows that most departments that have written about their programs are doing a combination of pre-education in the form of an officer candidate school, and an orientation and mentor program once the individual is promoted to officer.

2. **What skills, knowledge, and abilities have others in the fire service identified as necessary for a line officer to possess?** The key skills, knowledge, and abilities that were identified through the literature review include discipline, counseling, grievances, leadership, management theory, customer service, role of an officer, written communications, oral communications, conflict management and resolution, and employee evaluations. It also identified the traditional management functions of planning, organizing, directing and controlling.

3. **What issues or needs do our current fire officers identify as items that should be included in an officer development program?** The fire officers identified performance appraisals (10), computers (8), instructional techniques (6), conflict resolution (6), delegation (5), cultural diversity (4), and fire prevention (4) as skills they felt least prepared to perform. The officers identified conflict resolution (6), fire prevention (5), and instructional techniques (3) as skills they still feel they need training in today.

4. **What are the skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the department’s job description for Lieutenant that are not currently being addressed through training?**
The following are the areas listed in the Fire Lieutenant job description where there may be a lack of training and knowledge by a new officer:

- Supervise fire personnel at an incident and make decisions as to the best methods of mitigating the situation
- Supervise the placing of apparatus, laying of hose, placing of ladders, ventilation of buildings, and other firefighting operation
- Participate and supervise in the preparation of daily log sheets, maintenance records, fire and rescue, and other reports
- Assist in conducting in-service training activities
- Considerable knowledge of departmental rules and regulations
- Ability to lead, command, coordinate, and discipline firefighters
- Knowledge of the laws, rules and regulations relating to fire control and fire prevention
- Possess good interpersonal skills and the ability to write clearly and precisely

5. What program, either existing or created, will best prepare the Lieutenant to carry out the fireground, administrative, and station duties in a competent, complete manner? The literature review and interview with Deadman show that a program that offers pre-promotion education in the form of Michigan Firefighters Training Council Fire Officer classes, orientation after promotion, and mentoring after promotion will best prepare a new Lieutenant to carry out the fireground, administrative, and station duties he is expected to perform.
Discussion

The role of the first level line officer in the fire service, whether it is Sergeant, Lieutenant, or Captain is very complex. It requires the officer to be knowledgeable, skilled, adaptable, thorough, competent, friendly, stern…the list could go on and on. And while all of the above are things that he must be as a firefighter, he now must perform them in one of the most important roles in the fire service. To go into this role without training is setting one up for failure, or at least initial failure before trial and error kicks in and educates the officer the hard way. We don’t expect new firefighters to start this way and we shouldn’t expect new officers to, either. As Lytle (2000) said, “We mentor, teach, train, and evaluate our people quite well—until they reach the company officer level.”

Pre-educating the fire officer candidate in fireground tactics and strategies from an officer’s perspective is very important. First and foremost, the safety of the other personnel on the fireground may be at stake if an officer is ill prepared to perform as a company officer. Secondly, and almost as importantly, Part 74 states very clearly that personnel must be trained prior to performing emergency operations. It is likely that a new officer could respond to a structure fire on the very first call of his very first shift. This training needs to be given before promotion. As Deadman said, in the event of a line of duty death, MIOSHA will look at your training records to see if the officers or acting officers were trained. If they were not, they will be considered in violation of Part 74. And, as Booth (1999) noted, it may seem inefficient to offer a large number of officer candidate training when only a fraction will be promoted. But, it will pay dividends when those individuals have gained insight into the decision making processes
of their supervisor or may use the training when placed in the role of an acting officer or senior firefighter.

An orientation should be a very integral part of a new officer’s training. BTFD currently does this quite successfully with probationary firefighters. It is not meant to be all-inclusive training, it’s just what is says—orientation. An overview of what is expected of a new Lieutenant would go a long way in avoiding conflicts and problems that arise when the officer makes an error due to a lack of knowledge in a particular area.

Part of this orientation should also include spending time with all staff officers in the department. This will give them a better understanding of the staff officer functions and how they interrelate with the line functions. Extra time should be spent with the fire prevention bureau. It was identified in the officer survey that fire prevention was an area that officers felt they lacked knowledge, both as new officers and as experienced officers. It is interesting to note that more officers felt they needed training in fire prevention as experience officers (5), than as new officers (4). Knowledge of fire prevention laws, rules, and regulations was also identified as a potential training-deficient area in the job description analysis.

Consistent, formal evaluation of new officers is a must. The survey showed that 10 of 16 officers were never evaluated within the first six month after promotion. Feedback is very important if an officer is expected to improve on his weakness and expand on his strengths.

A mentor program would be the finishing touch for new officer education. This would give the officer an opportunity to be observed by an experienced officer. It would
also, as Lytle (2001) noted, “…give them a safe environment to test new skills.” He also believed that a mentorship would allow for more accurate evaluations, saying, “Decision-making skills, communication and staff relations are difficult to evaluate until you see an officer in action.”

**Recommendations**

1. Train fire officer candidates to the level of Fire Officer II prior to promotion so they are trained to fulfill the duties of Lieutenant as soon as they are promoted. This would also bring the department into compliance with Part 74 and reduce the future potential for liability.

2. Develop an orientation program for new fire officers similar to the program already in place at BTFD for probationary firefighters. The program example noted in Appendix B is an example of the format that may be used.

3. Develop a mentoring program for new fire officers similar to the program already in place at BTFD for probationary firefighters. The new officer would enter this program after promotion but prior to receiving his initial assignment. The officer should spend time on a 40-hour schedule with all staff officers, learning the roles and responsibilities of these individuals. Special attention should be give to the Fire Prevention Bureau since this area was identified in the job description analysis and the survey as areas where more training is need. While on this schedule, the new officer should be given an assignment to complete that requires the involvement of all three units. This will help the officer to see the communication and cooperation it takes to
accomplish a goal that involves integration between the staff personnel and the suppression units.

4. Develop an evaluation program for new officers wherein they would be evaluated at one month, three month, six month, and one year intervals.

5. Work with the local college or through an organization such as the Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training to develop a program that specifically addresses the skills and knowledge identified through this Applied Research Project as those that are needed by the new fire officer to handle the administrative duties of the job.
References


Appendix A

Appendix A consists of copies of orientation and evaluation sheet that were part of the article by Lytle. See next three pages.
Appendix B

BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP
FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE OFFICER SURVEY

NAME (optional) _____________________________________ RANK: _____________

YEARS OF SERVICE: __________________YEARS IN CURRENT RANK: ________

YEARS AS BTFD FIRE OFFICER: ______________

1. What training and education currently have? (Please check all that apply)

_____ Fire Officer I
_____ Fire Officer II
_____ Fire Officer III
_____ Associate’s Degree in Fire Science
_____ Associate’s Degree- Other (Please list degree(s): __________________________)
_____ Bachelor’s Degree in Fire Science
_____ Bachelor’s Degree- Other (Please list degree(s): __________________________)
_____ Currently working towards a _______________________ degree
_____ Certified Fire Service Instructor
_____ Other (Please list all applicable training: _________________________________)

2. Of the training listed above, what have you received since becoming an officer?

_____ Fire Officer I
_____ Fire Officer II
_____ Fire Officer III
_____ Associate’s Degree in Fire Science
_____ Associate’s Degree- Other (Please list degree(s): __________________________)
_____ Bachelor’s Degree in Fire Science
_____ Bachelor’s Degree- Other (Please list degree(s): __________________________)
_____ Certified Fire Service Instructor
_____ Other (Please list all applicable training: _________________________________)
3. When you first started your fire officer position which skills do you feel you were least prepared to perform?
   _____ Firefighting tactics and strategies
   _____ Planning and organization
   _____ Delegation
   _____ Problem solving
   _____ Performance appraisals
   _____ Written communications
   _____ Oral communications
   _____ Instructional techniques
   _____ Safety
   _____ Computers
   _____ Cultural diversity
   _____ Conflict resolution
   _____ Public Education
   _____ Public Relations
   _____ Fire Prevention
   _____ Other (please specify)________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________

4. What subjects do you feel you need training in today?
   _____ Firefighting tactics and strategies
   _____ Planning and organization
   _____ Delegation
   _____ Problem solving
   _____ Performance appraisals
   _____ Written communications
   _____ Oral communications
   _____ Instructional techniques
   _____ Safety
   _____ Computers
   _____ Cultural diversity
   _____ Conflict resolution
   _____ Public Education
   _____ Public Relations
   _____ Fire Prevention
   _____ Other (please specify)________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________________
5. When you were first promoted to fire officer, what in-house training did you receive?
   _____ Orientation program
   _____ “Shown the ropes” by experienced officer
   _____ None
   _____ Other (please explain)________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

6. Within your six-month probationary period, were you given an evaluation of your performance as an officer? _____ YES _____ NO

7. Do you feel that new fire officers would benefit from an orientation and mentoring program similar to the program currently in place for probationary firefighters? _____ YES _____ NO
   If not, why? _________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

8. Do you have any ideas or suggestions that would improve the development of new fire officers in Bloomfield Township Fire Department?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

Works under the direction of Fire Captain, Fire Department and/or Township Official to supervise or assist in supervising fire fighting personnel on an assigned shift; responsible for proper records of personnel; responsible for the proper care and maintenance of fire stations and equipment; and to perform related work as required, including those of Firefighter. In the absence of a Captain, the senior Lieutenant (time in rank) may assume duties of Captain as required.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS:

A Fire Lieutenant shall:

Assign personnel to apparatus.

Supervise fire personnel at an incident and make decisions as to the best methods of mitigating the situation.

Participate in rescue, pumping, ventilation, salvage, and other fire fighting operations.

Supervise the placing of apparatus, laying of hose, placing of ladders, ventilation of buildings, and other fire fighting operations.

Participate in administering first aid and life saving techniques.

Assign personnel to daily work assignments such as cleaning, painting, maintenance of equipment, cooking, and other such activities.

Supervise the cleaning and care of fire fighting apparatus, equipment, fire stations and grounds.

Participate and supervise in the preparation of daily log sheets, maintenance records, fire and rescue, and other reports.

Assist in directing proper response equipment to incidents.

Participate in continuous training programs and maintain proper certifications.
Assist in conducting in-service training activities.

Interact with the public concerning fire department matters.

Supervise tests on apparatus and equipment.

Perform related work as required.

These examples do not include all of the tasks which the employee may be expected to perform and are not listed in rank of importance.

**REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

The Fire Lieutenant must have:

Knowledge of principles, practices and methods of modern firefighting with the ability to apply this knowledge to various situations.

Considerable knowledge in the operation and maintenance of equipment and apparatus used in firefighting.

Considerable knowledge of the geography of the city, including high target areas, location of fire hydrants, and fire department connections.

Considerable knowledge of departmental rules and regulations.

Ability to lead, command, coordinate, and discipline firefighters.

Knowledge of the laws, rules and regulation relating to fire control and fire prevention.

Knowledge of first aid and skilled in application.

Possess good inter-personal skills and the ability to write clearly and precisely.

Physically fit, mentally alert, and mechanically skilled traits.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

Must have five years seniority to be eligible for promotion to Lieutenant.

Must obtain a Fire Science Certificate within two years of promotion.