



International
Association
of Fire Chiefs



National
Fire Protection
Association

Fire Officer

Principles and Practice
THIRD EDITION



Chapter 3 Fire Fighters and the Fire Officer (Fire Officer I)

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Describe the fire officer's basic tasks.
- Describe a typical fire station workday.
- Describe the transition from a fire fighter to a fire officer.
- Discuss the fire officer's role as supervisor.

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Discuss the fire officer's role as commander.
- Discuss the fire officer's role as trainer.
- Describe the activities a fire officer performs to maintain an effective working relationship with his or her supervisor.

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Describe the importance of integrity and ethical behavior.
- Describe how to maintain workplace diversity.
- Describe the concept of the fire station as a business work location.

Introduction

- A fire officer is responsible for managing a work unit.
- Much of what a fire officer does consists of routine administrative activities.
- Supervising and managing fire officers usually report to higher-ranking officers.

Fire Officer's Tasks

- Four basic vital tasks:
 - The beginning of shift report
 - Notifications
 - Decision making
 - Problem solving

The Beginning of Shift Report

- Provide a report at the start of the workday.
 - Provide on-duty staffing information and a sick leave list.
 - Note the location and condition of apparatus.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Ellman

The Beginning of Shift Report

Today's
Date is:
May 29

	Total	Paramedics	Fire Officer	EMS Officer	Prearranged Callback	Annual Leave	Vacancies	Detail Out-of-Operations	Injury Lv or Light Duty	LWOP	Fire OIC	EMS OIC
Minimums	10	3	2	1							Smyth	Willow
Today's staffing	9	3	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	Smyth	Willow
Next day staffing	8	2	1	0							Smyth	????

Today's shortage	Why?	PM Surplus	Next Day's Shortage	Why?
Engine Officer	O/R	none	Engine Officer	Off Rep
			Medic Officer	Leave

Sick Leave	Detailed Out of Ops	Next Day APPROVED Leave
None	Capt. Johnson	FF Tolliver
		Lt. Willow

Injury Leave/Light Duty
None

Vehicle Status		
	Engine 7746	Eng 46
Messages for the Chief:	Rescue 7099	Res 46
Vehicle 7234 overdue for preventative maintenance	Medic 6322	Med 46
Rescue 46 thermal imager broken	Reserve Engine 7234	Eng 35
Furnace malfunctioning	Reserve Medic 4276	Med 11
Fire Chief at 46 for dinner @ 1830	Battalion 9 5040	shop
	Reserve Suburban 5107	BC 09

Courtesy of Mike Ward.

Notifications

- Some information must be passed up the chain of command quickly.
 - Exposure reports
 - Information the chief needs to know
 - Anything that someone at a higher level may call to inquire about

Decision Making and Problem Solving

- Chiefs want officers to run the fire stations.
- Chiefs prefer that officers propose solutions to problems.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Ellman

Example of a Typical Fire Station Workday

- Includes activities such as:
 - Line-up and equipment check
 - Cleaning
 - Physical training
 - Productivity activity
 - Study time
 - Special station activity

Example of a Typical Volunteer Duty Night

- Equipment check
- Classroom session, skill drill, or community outreach activity
- Cleaning

Transition from Fire Fighter to Fire Officer

- Four major career changes:
 1. Completion of probationary training period
 2. Beginning of work as a fire company commander
 3. Beginning of work as a chief officer
 4. Retirement

Promotion to Company-Level Officer

- Responsible for supervision, performance, and safety of fire fighters
- Fire chief's representative



Courtesy of Captain David Jackson, Saginaw Township Fire Department

Fire Officer as Supervisor– Commander–Trainer

- Three roles of company officer:
 - Supervisor
 - Commander
 - Trainer

Supervisor

- Functions as the representative of the fire chief
- Issues orders and directives
- Follows rules and regulations



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Ellman

Commander

- Functions as the commander at the scene of an emergency incident
 - May function as the initial incident commander



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Ellman

Commander

- A fire officer who is going to establish command should have:
 - Detailed knowledge of responding companies
 - Mastery of local procedures
 - Ability to issue clear direct orders



© Courtesy of William Moreland

Trainer

- The fire officer is responsible for the skill, confidence, and competence of the fire fighters under his or her command.



© Glen E. Ellman

Trainer

- Three recommendations to assist fire officers in training:
 1. Develop a personal training library.
 2. Know the neighborhood.
 3. Use problem-solving scenarios.

Developing a Personal Library

- Use a notebook with subject-matter tabs.
 - NFPA 1001 topic headings, school curricula, personal list, and so on
- Keep notes from training events and handled incidents.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Ellman

Developing a Personal Library

- Obtain copies of textbooks and references used in fire fighter training and promotional examinations.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by Glen E. Ellman

Know the Neighborhood

- Conduct walkthroughs.
- Take pictures.
- Maintain good relationships with building managers in the district.



Courtesy of Mike Legeros

Use Problem-Solving Scenarios

- Present a fact-based situation.
 - Let company members use the code to solve the problem.
 - Identify the occupancy use group.
 - Identify the issues.
 - Look up the applicable regulations.
 - Make decisions.

Fire Officer's Supervisor

- Every fire officer has a supervisor.
- Every fire officer has an obligation to work effectively with his or her supervisor.
 - Keep the supervisor informed.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Courtesy of MIEMSS

Fire Officer's Supervisor

- Fire officers should not hesitate to make decisions appropriate for their level of responsibility.
- If your decision will have an impact that goes beyond the fire officer's scope of authority, talk to your supervisor.

Integrity

- Complex system of attributes that determine moral and ethical actions and reactions
- Demonstrate behaviors by adhering to a moral code.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Courtesy of MIEMSS

Ethical Behavior

- Includes making decisions and modeling behavior consistent with the department's:
 - Core values
 - Mission statement
 - Value statements

Workplace Diversity

- EEOC enforces civil rights in the workplace.
- Many fire departments have changed their practices to comply with civil rights laws.
 - Each fire department should reflect the diversity of the community it serves.

The Fire Officer's Role in Workplace Diversity

- Actionable items
 - Employee behaviors that require immediate corrective action
 - Failure to act is likely to create a liability and a loss for the department.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning. Photographed by
Glen E. Eilman

The Fire Officer's Role in Workplace Diversity

- Hostile workplace/sexual harassment
 - Employers have a duty to maintain a harassment-free work environment.
 - Sexual harassment: Unwanted, uninvited, and unwelcome attention and intimacy in a nonreciprocal relationship.

The Fire Officer's Role in Workplace Diversity

- Hostile workplace/sexual harassment (cont'd)
 - “Hostile work environment”: Subjecting an employee to discrimination.
 - Social media and 24-hour news can bring rapid attention to even minor incidents.

The Fire Officer's Role in Workplace Diversity

- Handling harassment or hostile workplace complaints
 - A complaint can be filed with the federal or municipality's EEOC office or with the fire department.
 - The fire officer should know the department's procedure for handling complaints.

The Fire Officer's Role in Workplace Diversity

- Keep an open mind.
- Treat the person with respect and compassion.
- Do not blame the person.
- Do not retaliate against the person.
- Follow procedures.
- Interview the people involved.
- Look for contradictions.
- Keep it confidential.
- Write it all down.
- Cooperate.

The Fire Station as a Business Work Location

- Educate employees on workplace rules and regulations.
- Promote the use of “on-duty speech.”
- Be the designated adult.



© Jones & Bartlett Learning, Kimberly Potvin

The Fire Station as a Business Work Location

- A company-level officer should walk the fire station at various times during the workday.
- Having a reputation as someone who knows what's going on helps encourage appropriate workplace behaviors.

Summary

- The fire officer is responsible for the people and resources at his or her fire station and work location.
- The beginning of shift report is provided to the chief within the first quarter hour.
- The new supervising fire officer must make prompt notifications.

Summary

- Chiefs typically want new officers to make decisions within their scope.
- Each fire department should have annual goals.
- Transitioning from fire fighter to fire officer changes how the individual relates to the organization.

Summary

- A fire officer has a larger sphere of responsibility than a fire fighter.
- A company officer's duties are: supervisor, commander, trainer.
- Keep your supervisor informed and make appropriate decisions for your level of authority.

Summary

- Model integrity and ethical behavior.
- Recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices are guided by the EEOC.
- Follow procedures when you encounter a complaint.
- Consider the fire station or facility as a business work location.