



International
Association
of Fire Chiefs



National
Fire Protection
Association

Fire Officer

Principles and Practice
THIRD EDITION



Chapter 7 Leading the Fire Company (Fire Officer I)

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Describe the role of the fire officer as both a leader and a follower.
- Identify leadership styles used in the fire service.
- Identify types of power used in leadership.

Fire Officer I Objectives

- Describe leadership in routine situations.
- Describe the leadership challenges related to the fire station work environment.
- Describe the leadership challenges related to the volunteer fire service.

Introduction

- Leadership is “the process by which a person influences others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.”

Introduction

- Leadership attributes:
 - Beliefs
 - Values
 - Ethics
 - Character
 - Knowledge
 - Skills

Introduction

- The position of fire officer confers authority, but does not make a person a leader.
 - Bosses tell people to accomplish a task.
 - Leaders make people want to achieve goals and objectives.

The Fire Officer as a Follower

- Leaders can be effective only to the extent that others are willing to accept their leadership.
- A fire officer has to be both a leader and a follower.

Leadership Styles

- Autocratic
 - Iron-hand approach
 - Used when the fire officer needs to maintain high personal control of the group



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Leadership Styles

- Democratic
 - Consultative approach
 - Used when:
 - Planning a project
 - Developing a daily work plan



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Leadership Styles

- Democratic (cont'd)
 - Specialized fire companies often use this approach when faced with an unusual emergency situation.
 - Execution of the plan often involves an autocratic command style.

Leadership Styles

- Laissez-faire
 - Free-rein style
 - Effective when:
 - Working with experienced fire fighters
 - Handling routine duties

Power

- The capacity of one party to influence another party
- One of the first works on management of power was Machiavelli's *The Prince*, published in 1532.

Power

- French and Raven's power types:
 - Legitimate power
 - Reward power
 - Expert power
 - Referent power
 - Coercive power

Power

- Gary A. Yukl divided French and Raven's types into two categories:
 - Personal power
 - Positional power
- Yukl added two more categories:
 - Information power
 - Ecological power

Leadership in Routine Situations

- Most fire officer leadership activity is directed toward routine situations.
- This includes being well prepared to perform in emergency situations.

Leadership in Routine Situations

- Effective fire officers use a participative form of leadership.
- The officer must have discretion regarding when, how, and by whom assignments are carried out.

Emergency Scene Leadership

- The fire officer must handle emergencies effectively.
 - The fire officer has direct leadership responsibility for his or her company.
 - The first-arriving fire officer has additional incident command responsibilities.

Methods of Assigning Tasks

- The officer's primary responsibility is to the fire fighters under his or her command.
- The fire officer should develop a consistent approach to emergency activities.
- SOPs must be followed.

Methods of Assigning Tasks

- Preassignment: Allows the officer to make fewer decisions during emergency
- Assigning on the scene: Reduces unnecessary efforts

Critical Situations

- Dangerous situations can develop suddenly during incident operations.
 - An autocratic leadership style is necessary when immediate action is required.
- After every incident, the fire officer should review the event.

Dispatch Center

- The first-arriving fire officer at and incident describes the conditions to dispatch.
 - The content of this report must comply with departmental operating procedures.
 - This verbal picture establishes the tone for the incident.

Dispatch Center

- Elements of a radio report:
 - Identification of the arriving company
 - Brief description of the incident
 - Brief description of action to take
 - Declaration of the strategy to be followed
 - Any obvious safety concerns
 - Command identification and location
 - Request or release of resources

Other Responding Units

- The first-arriving officer provides leadership and direction to responding units.
- The fire officer must demonstrate the ability to control the situation.

Leadership Challenges

- The fire officer faces two unique challenges:
 - The fire station as a work location
 - Leading a volunteer fire company

Fire Station as Municipal Work Location

- Fire fighters think of the station as a “home away from home.”
 - This view promotes bonding but can produce various productivity problems.
 - The fire officer must maintain order.

Fire Station as Municipal Work Location

- Two general rules for nonemergency activities:
 - Do not compromise the fire company's ability to respond to emergencies.
 - Do not jeopardize the public's trust in the fire department.

Leadership in the Volunteer Fire Service

- Requires even greater reliance on leadership skills
- The fire officer must:
 - Promote the satisfaction of every member
 - Be alert for issues that could create conflict

Leadership in the Volunteer Fire Service

- Four phases of volunteer participation:
 - Large loss of applicants during training
 - Small loss during the probationary period
 - Moderate to high loss between the third and sixth years of membership
 - Recommitment between the 15th and 18th years of membership

Summary

- Power does not make you a leader—it makes you a supervisor.
- Effective leaders are good followers.
- Three situational leadership styles are typically used: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.

Summary

- Types of power may be categorized using several different methods.
- Most fire officer leadership activity is directed toward routine objectives.
- A core responsibility of a fire officer is to handle emergencies effectively.

Summary

- A fire officer must use autocratic leadership when immediate action is required.
- The first-arriving company needs to describe current conditions to dispatch.
- The fire department environment can produce productivity problems.

Summary

- A fire officer must balance the expectations of the employer with the realities of a fire station work environment.
- Pride, group identity, and personal commitment are factors that keep volunteers active and loyal.