California Fire Chiefs Association

Operations Section

A Succession Manual for Chiefs Officers

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Dedication

The chapters in this guide will cover a wide range of pertinent topics that were identified through a survey by the CalChiefs Operations Section workshop group about the functions and responsibilities of a Chief Officer within a fire organization. This is a succession guide for Chief Officers undertaking the role of managers for the future of their organizations. As mentioned, this guide is designed with the help of a statewide survey of ninety-three fire departments that responded, on the topics, chief officers felt needed more training, coaching, and mentoring in performing their duties. It is a resource guide to help Chief Officers meet the challenges of directing a department toward the vision set by the Fire Chief /Chief Executive Officer. It is dedicated to all current and future Chief Officers whose leadership, service to the community and professionalism continue to provide for the health and safety of the citizens throughout the State.

Preface

The California Fire Chiefs Association commissioned this project to create a way to ‘download’ information from senior chief officers, with years of experience and knowledge – to pass on to those who are accepting the responsibilities of leading the future of the California Fire Service. No one expects to have all the answers, but collectively, each person who contributed to this guide has given their honest experience of successes, near misses, and ‘wish I could have done it differently,’ so that you will know – we have been there, done that, and we are with you every step of the way. Each of the workshop Chief Officers are committed to enhancing this guide with a perspective that they wish someone would have mentored them, in their journey as newly promoted Chief Officers. This guide was also created for the fire service professional carrying out the transitional role of middle management to support the vision of its executive staff. The workshop Chiefs generally agree that more times than not, success is a combination of determination, persistence, and experimentation, along with – yes, a little luck. The succession guide contents were produced with the highly successful exchange of views on the approaches and techniques needed for a Chief Officer of today’s fire service. In conclusion, it was evident that we needed a guide like this to ‘download’ what we Chiefs have learned over the years and pass on wisdom, knowledge, and experience for your consideration. We ask that you keep it relevant and fresh as new topics impact you as a leader of the fire service in your communities.

Ray Navarro
Special Project Coordinator
California Fire Chiefs Operations Section

Chapter 1

Relationship Building - Coach, Mentor, and Develop

Contributing Author

Deputy Fire Chief Woody Enos, Santa Barbara County Fire

Description:

The evidence of successful Relationship Building is often described as a person with the ability to develop personal and relevant relationships that transcend the normal lines of "just knowing" other chiefs, both internally and externally, but meeting face to face to exchange ideas and gain understanding. It is the action of fulfilling the needs of others, professionally and personally. Successful relationship building is the product of a great many factors according to experts in organizational studies, certain skills, such as verbal and written communique have emerged from their research that appears to be at the top of their list as it relates to chief officers being followed. Some of these significant skills will be downloaded for you in this chapter of the manual.

Purpose:

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a reference for skills and traits in which persons may evaluate their leadership strengths and weakness toward building relationships. Using the descriptions provided, one can pinpoint areas in need of refinement to enhance his or her relationship-building effectiveness. Chiefs need to develop their communication skills and in turn, help others to develop theirs. Communication is a very powerful strategy when you are working to accomplish a goal. Making sure that you and your expectations are understood will benefit the building of relationships. This chapter will help you focus on teamwork and the prioritization of goals—which is especially important since it takes a team to attain those goals. The information provided by the skill and trait review can then be used as a starting point for creating a development plan to bring leadership and management skills to desired levels.

<u>Download:</u>

The key to building relationships as a Chief Officer differs from being a supervisor. Discussions in communication practices and techniques require that you must always remember that people are at the center of all leadership efforts, thus leaders cannot lead unless they are understood by those they lead. Building relationships with open and honest discussion among staff members, administrative support personnel and those who interact with them internally and externally is to concentrate on maintaining truth and trust. Sometimes this takes a one-on-one session to build trust that promotes confidential and healthy discussions. Another way is in a group setting that allows for questions and answers that transparently open lines of communication. A way to look at relationship building is to ensure organizational values are exemplified by you, their leader. It includes those aspects of behavior that motivate organizational members to exemplify actions necessary for productivity and effectiveness. With honesty, integrity, and the ability to be supportive, a Chief Officer, will create a more collaborative environment and builds trust, to accomplish the vision and goals set forward by the Fire Chief. It is that aspect of building relationships that enables a Chief Officer to motivate department personnel to "encourage them to do what you need them to do" to accomplish the mission.

Included in this category of skills are:

- ✓ <u>Build depth in relationships</u> – Your success as a Chief Officer will be judged by your relationship results –those results can often be seen as a reflection of your relationships with the people you lead and how you relate to them and those outside the organization in which you interact. It has an impact and influence on your team's success in your results. A good example of building depth in relationships is best viewed with those individuals who participate in Incident Management Teams (IMT) (local, county or state) or the Office of Emergency Management planning group or State Organizations. These IMT members (qualified for their positions) work on a focused objective to produce effective results. These team members are built on a relationship of trust, truth, and tenacity. It is highly encouraged that managers work with their personnel to become qualified for an Incident Management Teams (IMT) locally, county, and statewide which in turn builds relationships across jurisdictional boundaries. Relationship-oriented leaders are primarily focused on supporting, motivating, and developing individuals and teams. They seek to establish meaningful relationships with their staff and aim to develop this promotional connection with other members to improve performance.

- ✓ Trust and Communication – Creating an environment that emphasizes an interpersonal style of communication is a critical ingredient for Chief Officers in providing a culture of openness and interpersonal relationships. This openness will create an environment of trust and the ability to rid the organization of a dysfunctional culture, thus providing a true ability to communicate and relate with others at every level of the organization. Today's Chief Officer must be a good listener. He or She must know that the key to understanding what people are thinking and feeling is to listen to them. A good leader creates an atmosphere conducive to effective communications and opens as many channels as possible to encourage the exchange of information throughout the organization. Finally, an effective Chief Officer knows how to ask appropriate questions and listens carefully to the response. And when someone's idea brings value to the organization, please give them the credit, or acknowledge their efforts.

- ✓ <u>Coach and develop others</u> – An important area of relationship-building by Chiefs is the passing of knowledge and wisdom through teaching others. We call this “downloading” your hard drive (brain’s information) to those who are identified by the organization leadership as “up and coming leaders” inside your organization. Some would consider this as “unfair” because it is a selective process and not open to all, however, it is a succession element that promotes organizational resilience, Relationship-building allows a leader not only to learn the desire of each of their individual but provides an environment of potential growth to its fullest, as well as passing on knowledge and wisdom through teaching their members.
- ✓ <u>Inspire and motivate</u> – the ability to communicate vision, concepts, and ideas is a unique skill for an effective Operation Chief. The first lesson that one must learn is to be real with your word, and that words matter. Remember there are members within the organization who would like to put their “spin” or “fake news” on what a gold-badged person said or is saying. When technology moves words and thoughts at nano speed, as well as the use of video clips and recordings, one’s character is but a moment in time that can be researched with neck brake speed to either confirm or condemn one’s position. Without the skill to effectively inspire and motivate an organization with written or spoken words will have issues. Chiefs Officers are the closest to hearing directly from the Fire Chief. They must be able to impart the vision, concepts, and ideas, clearly to all

levels of the organization. Because an organization unable to understand and transform ideas into effective action is doomed to fail.

- ✓ Foster teamwork and collaboration – Relationship-building is an essential skillset to foster teamwork. Teamwork is the joint action of people working toward the same end goal. The strength of a team comes from supporting each other's efforts, communicating clearly, and being understood, and everyone pulling their fair share of effort. Other characteristics that describe teamwork include defined roles, defined leadership, and the resources to meet the goals of a vision. A team includes a designated authority figure (leader) who resolves their differences and makes decisions. Regardless of enmity between members, with a good leader, a team can accomplish its goals.

  A collaborative team is a slightly different version of a traditional team because its members have different skill sets. Although the members have varying areas of expertise, they still share similar goals, resources, and leadership. With their diverse set of specialized skills, they should be able to problem-solve as a group. This group may be comprised of different ranks or positions, safety, and non-safety personnel, using their roles and using their expertise to solve a problem or make important decisions that affect an organization. Even the best-structured teams can suffer if you have two or more team members who do not get along. You can mitigate this problem by limiting their interaction and designing group standards for meetings and communication. Some people will never get along - this is fine if everyone can comport themselves like professionals. If they cannot behave appropriately, perhaps they have no place on your team. In a collaborative setting, the keyword is: *compromise*. Not everyone should get their way,

> but everyone should get their say. It is about consensus-building and using the teams' decisions to develop an implementation plan.

A caution note here, Operations Chiefs must not try to unilaterally change what the team was asked to decide. Monitoring the progress of collaboration is making sure you have a finger on the team's pulse. Once a decision is made, then comes a commitment to meet the goal or objective in which the collaboration was formed.

Chapter 2

Problem Solving and Decision Making

Contributing Author

Deputy Fire Chief Dan Munsey, San Bernardino County Fire

Description:

Problem-solving and decision-making are critical areas of management that can determine the success or failure of an organization. Problem-solving involves decision-making, and decision-making is especially important for management and leadership. There are processes and techniques to improve decision-making and the quality of decisions. Decision-making is more natural to certain personalities, so these people should focus more on improving the quality of their decisions. Problem-solving and decision-making are closely linked, and each requires creativity in identifying and developing options, for which the brainstorming technique is particularly useful.

Purpose:

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information about the different styles of problem-solving and decision-making processes and how to apply them to department issues. Besides, it provides some guidelines for making more effective decisions. Problem-solving and decision-making are critical areas of management that can determine the success or failure of an organization. Some studies have shown that the approach to decision-making and the individual or collective style and capability to make decisions are important determinants of organizational effectiveness. Therefore, today's environment demands that the operation chief understand the different styles and approaches to problem-solving and decision-making – and be able to manage the process in pursuit of department goals. Here is a motto for all organizations to become like-minded and vision-oriented: ***SOS – 'See it, Own it, Solve it.'*** Empowering your organizational leaders to encourage everyone to be in this mindset will be the preventative side of problem-solving and decision-making at all levels within the organization.

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Problem-solving is an analytical process used to identify the possible solutions to the situation at hand. Making decisions is a part of problem-solving. It is a complex process and judgment calls – or decisions – that will have to be made by the chief in charge. Decision-making is a choice made by using one's judgment and authority, to execute the mission or task at hand. This is a daily part of a Chief Officer's job skillset. Knowing that every day presents a unique opportunity to demonstrate character and leadership toward finding a solution or bringing others to assist in the decision-making process, helps to mentor and develop your leaders. There are reasons why we see an issue or situation as a problem, mainly because they come with conflict. A situation that has to be solved with the best solution possible might be beyond the scope of authority you have. Yet, it stills requires decision-making processes. The conflict has three elements that invoke human feelings; 1 – fear or uncomfortable sensation, 2 – desiring the problem would go away and 3 – you must come up with an answer, and it has to be the right answer. We have to remind ourselves that problems and conflicts happen all the time and they are opportunities to improve our system of relationships (see chapter 1). These qualities explained, herein, become necessary for a every Chief Officer to consider and put into practice as best practice methods to build success for problem-solving:

- ✓ Identifying and Structuring Problems - The first stage in solving any problem is to identify it, and then break it down into its parts. Even the biggest, most intractable-seeming problems, can become much more manageable if they are broken down into smaller parts.
- ✓ Good problem solvers use a combination of intuition and logic to come up with their solutions. Intuition has more to do with the emotional and instinctive side of us and logic is more related to our cognition and thinking. Problem-solvers use both of these forces to get as much information as they can to come up with the best possible solution.

- ✓ (see figure below on the awareness of problem s within an organization)

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- ✓ There are some general characteristics of good problem-solvers which are:

  They do not need to be right all the time. Problem-solvers focus on finding the right solution rather than wanting to prove they are right at all costs. They go beyond a fixated mindset and open up to new ways of thinking that allow exploring options. This includes inviting others to join in and help think of alternatives to each set of problems being solved.

  - They look for opportunities within the problem and see them as challenges and try to learn from them. Here is where command and control techniques, like ICS, which we learned to handle emergencies, can be used to breakdown an issue or situation into components that need addressing toward a solution.
  - Another key characteristic is that problem-solvers know the difference between complex and simple thinking; when to do systematic and complex thinking and when to go through short cuts and find an easy solution. This is a reminder, that not all problems are life and death decisions. It also helps to bear in mind, that using prioritizing techniques as well as a calendar to map out trigger points for solutions, will keep it simple in most cases.
- ✓ To be a problem-solvers you need to know how to connect with people and use the power of words to take on the challenge of the problem you are solving.
- ✓ To be an effective problem-solver you don't create problems for others. You must understand that to have your problem solved you can't create problems for others. You must look to create fair solutions to make a conscious effort not to harm others for a self-

interest intention knowing such acts will have long-term consequences even if the problem is temporarily solved.

Problem-solvers do prevention more than intervention: Remember the motto we expressed in the purpose statement: SOS – See it, Own it, Solve it; these are skills to prevent problems from happening in the first place. This creates more positive thinkers who usually experience less drama, conflict, and stressful situations with clear boundaries.

Here is where we explore the decision-making process. Both problem-solving and decision-making go hand in hand, but success in one does not automatically lead to success in the other. Those who are in leadership and management roles need to understand the difference between the two to make lifelong improvements in both skillsets. Decisions are made when multiple opportunities for action present themselves. It is wise to consider, that you can make decisions, yet never solve the problem. You can be adept at problem-solving or finding the root of an issue, and still lack the decision-making skills to choose and action viable next steps to bring about a successful outcome. Quick decisions do not always lead to best-case solutions. A perfectionist approach to problem-solving does not take into account that sometimes an organization needs to make the best decision under prevailing circumstances (where budget, time, and resource constraints might play a factor). A key role in management positions is deciding which problem to treat as a priority. A decision-making action, such as deciding to hold meetings with stakeholders or assigning team members to tackle particular areas of a problem, is probably the first and most important decision one will make within their authority. Critical thinking, in decision-making, is one area by which you question your assumptions – as well as those of others – to decide on the next steps to solve a problem. Critical thinking often results in using a mix of research, analysis, questioning, and exploration of new ideas to gain powerful insight into a situation, becoming informed in a way that is not restricted by the subjective perspectives of peers or the status quo. Making good decisions is a method that can be learned. It is not something with which we are innately born, but merely a step-by-step process that is usually ascertained from life and job experiences. Most Chief Officers know that experience can be costly, and because decisions can vary so obviously from one situation to the next, the experience gained from decision-making is oftentimes a building block when another decision-making problem arises. When decision making, many steps can be taken; but when making good decisions there are only five steps that need to be considered. These steps are as follows (*Kescia, Gray, 2014*)**:**

- ✓ Identify Your Goal - One of the most effective decision-making strategies is to keep an eye on your goal. It simply means identifying the purpose of your decision by asking yourself what exactly the problem needs to be solved. And why does this problem need to be solved? Figuring out what is most important to you will help you make good decisions. When you know the reason why you have made a particular decision; it will better serve you in stating the process used to arrive at the decision and defending it.
- ✓ Gather Information for Weighing Your Options - When making decisions it is best to gather as much information that is directly related to the problem. Doing this will help you to better understand what needs to be done to solve the problem and will also help to generate ideas for a possible solution. When gathering information, it is best to make a list of every possible alternative; even ones that may initially sound meaningless or seem

unrealistic. Always seek the opinions of people that you trust or speak to experts and professionals because it will help you to come up with a variety of solutions when weighing all your options for a final decision. You will want to gather as many resources as possible to make the best decision.

- ✓ Consider the Consequences – This step can be just as important as identifying your goal, because it will help you determine how your final decision will impact yourself, and/or others involved. In considering your consequences, you will be asking yourself what is likely to be the result of your decision. How will it affect you now? And how will it affect your future? This is an essential process because it allows you to review the pros and cons of the different options that you listed in the previous step. It is also important because you want to feel comfortable with all your options and the possible outcome of whichever one you choose.
- ✓ Make Your Decision – Now that you have identified your goal, had all the necessary information, and weighed the consequences, it is time to make a choice and make your final decision. Understanding that this step can cause some leaders a lot of anxiety but is important because this is where you must trust your instincts. Although you may still be slightly indecisive about your final decision, you must consider how this makes you feel. Ask yourself, does it feel right? And does this decision work best for the organization now, and in the future? When you answer those questions back, you should feel good about the decision-making process, thus far.
- ✓ Evaluate Your Decision – Once you have made your final decision and put it into action, it is essential to evaluate the decision and the steps you have taken to ensure that it will

work. This process is probably just as important as your goal setting, if not more important because it will help you to further develop your decision-making skills for future problems. This part of the process requires some patience and perseverance. It may take some time to see the outcome. Recognizing that if the first decision is not working, you may have to go back to gathering more information and choose another option. Looking for and anticipating unexpected problems will help alleviate undue stress, if and when a problem occurs.

The decision-making process has some common drawbacks that you must also take into consideration:

- ✓ Misidentifying The Problem – Many times the problem will be obvious, but there may come a time when identifying the main problem is not that easy. When this issue arises, figuring out exactly what it is, and where you need to focus your efforts will save you a lot of time and energy in the long run.
- ✓ Having a Single Source – When considering the consequences, you must be open to a broad choice of alternatives to find the best solution. This can become a problem if you rely solely on a single source of information because that one source may not be reliable or may not be completely in line with the problem: thus, altering your chances of making the best decision.
- ✓ Having Too Many Sources – Having a variety of sources is usually not a bad thing, but not in every situation. Collecting as much information as possible can be very helpful in arriving at a decision, but an overload of information can leave you confused and

misguided and prevents you from following your intuition. Remember, trusting your gut instincts is a major key to making good decisions.

- ✓ Overestimating the Outcome - When deciding and putting your plan into action you should take care to weigh all your valid options and evaluate; did it meet the goal. Making a decision based on an outcome that may not be plausible will not help you solve a problem.
- ✓ Poor Timing – When making decisions, it is beneficial to take your time to make the best choice from your options. But understanding the timing process is crucial because sometimes it is best to delay a decision, and other times delaying a response can cause more problems. There are also times when making a quick decision is advantageous because it allows you more time to make necessary changes should problems arise.

In summary, we all have to make many decisions throughout our daily lives. Some of these decisions require little effort, while others require more time and deeper thought before coming to a final solution. Keep in mind, that when there are more steps in the decision-making process than we can count on one hand, most people will tend to gravitate to the ‘easiest’ solution, instead of asking for help or gathering more facts. Also, remember the common pitfalls previously addressed, and you will be well on your way to making good decisions for yourself and the fire organization you serve.

Chapter 3

Behavioral Wellness – Cancer Awareness

Contributing Author

Division Chief Kristen Thomspon, Newport Beach Fire

Description:

This chapter provides Chief Officers information on behavioral health issues and the impacts of prevention, implementing policies and procedures to overcome barriers that increase the wellness of fire personnel, and how to develop a behavioral health and cancer awareness program within fire departments. The information on the science of cancer, the budgetary and policy impacts when implementing policies and procedures to help mitigate and minimize toxic exposure, and how to develop a cancer-prevention program will be part of this document.

Purpose:

There needs to be an effective pursuit of behavioral health and cancer programs in fire organizations. To address the increasing understanding of how to create a tiered behavioral health program with these four components: leadership, funding, peer support, and clinical support. There exists a guide, developed in 2017 by the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (NFFF) and recently the California State Fire Training on Behavioral Wellness and Cancer Awareness program. The guide is not meant to be a standard, but a model, to help support the overarching need for all firefighters to become knowledgeable about self-care and how to recognize and act on symptoms of behavioral health issues. Each of these programs has sections that include a detailed description of the role of the component and a list of available resources.

Maintaining a tough exterior while hiding pain or weakness comes at a high cost. We know the firefighter's job is to deal with putting out the fires, tend to the ill and wounded, and clean up the messes left behind by others taking its physical and psychological toll over time.

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Today, there are discussions related to fire service and behavioral health acknowledging the people who have committed their lives to help others have themselves felt the consequences of accumulative stress and trauma. The behavioral health needs of the first responders are an ever-growing issue, and at the current writing of this manual, the coronavirus represents not only a clear health concern for our front-line personnel but also a mental health concern. This is one of the many challenges to a fire department's response capability keeping their communities healthy as well as their workforce. A wellness program helps to maintain a high level of job performance; helps uniformed personnel to cope effectively and balance the emotional, physical, and mental stresses of work and personal life. If the ability to cope becomes compromised, these stresses may act to unbalance his or her mental and emotional health. There are many reasons that firefighters and first responders are committing suicide, dissolving relationships, financial crises, and alcohol/drug issues. Let's be very clear: it happens over time mainly because fire agencies are not dealing with identifying those who need assistance. Firefighters are a unique breed of people. We may not be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress or depression, but we know when things are not right. The fire service is good in "fire prevention matters," but we may not be so good in preventative maintenance for ourselves. Firefighters perform daily equipment checks, continuing education training, mandatory fire training, and right-to-know laws; the list can go on and on. The question becomes; when do we consider performing preventative maintenance for ourselves? This is the area where Chief Officers have the highest calling – taking care of their people.

Florida State University (FSU) conducted a national study of 1,027 firefighters in 2017 and reported the following: 46.8% of respondents reported suicide ideation (thoughts of death by suicide) – 19.2% of respondents reported having had plans of death by suicide. 15.5% of respondents reported having attempted death by suicide; 16.4% of respondents reported having inflicted non-suicidal self-injury. A rising concern, reported by Behavioral Wellness Alliance, is that suicide among firefighters in 2019 has overtaken Line of Duty Deaths in the same year. A recent International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) survey on firefighter physicals found some limited improvement in the delivery of behavioral health care through annual physicals. We now have the advantage of newly developed guidelines and certification programs by State Fire Training in creating individual programs for the California Fire Service. Chiefs Officers should see that behavioral health should be on par with physical health in caring for your workforce. If left untreated, conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress, and anxiety which are no less debilitating than diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease can extend the lifetime of firefighters. Many fire departments have described within their labor contracts mandatory physical fitness training. It is time to consider negotiating behavioral health fitness training as well.

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) was created in 1992 by the U.S. Congress to lead a nationwide effort to remember America's fallen firefighters. In 2004, together with the representatives of major fire service constituencies, NFFF convened a Firefighter Safety Summit in Tampa, FL. The Summit created the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives (FLSI) that have informed the emerging safety culture in the US fire service. Note this was over twenty years ago. Since then, work had begun to create programs on this subject. They created a tiered behavioral health program with four components: **leadership, firefighters, peer support, and clinical support**. For each component, there is a section in the guide that includes a detailed description of the role of the component and a list of available resources. This succession guide is not meant to be a standard but uses to help support the overarching need for all firefighters to become knowledgeable about self-care and how to recognize and act on symptoms of behavioral health. Here is what the NFFF guide outlines:

- Learn about behavioral health
- Identify training and resources that can be used in your fire department
- Identify the first steps to building a successful behavioral health program in your fire department
- Learn from the experiences of other fire departments
- Build a program that can weather changes in your fire department

Stress First Aid (SFA)

Stress First Aid (SFA) For Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel is a flexible set of tools used to care for stress reactions in firefighters and rescue personnel. Unlike other acute stress management procedures, SFA was designed specifically to support firefighters and rescue personnel. The goal of SFA is to restore health and readiness after a stress reaction. It was adapted from the Combat Operations Stress First Aid program used by the Marine Corps and Navy personnel. It recognizes that not everyone is equally affected by any given event and that not everyone needs the same thing to help them through a potentially traumatic event. SFA is built on a peer-to-peer model that aims to reduce distress, foster adaptive functioning; provide tangible organizational support, and increase the individual's sense of competence and confidence. SFA is available as an online training module on the Fire Hero Learning Network. SFA is a toolkit that emphasizes the importance of continuously monitoring the stress of fire and rescue personnel and quickly recognize and appropriately help individuals who are reacting to stress and require interventions to promote healing.

As Chief Officers, we have two areas that will begin the process of considering the next steps for beginning or improving a behavioral health program:

- ✓ **Awareness** – supported by Executive staff
  - A basic or introductory understanding of behavioral health
  - Articulate why behavioral health is important for members of the department
  - Provide organizational support for comprehensive behavioral health programs
  - Encourage self-care and recognition of symptoms in firefighters
- ✓ **Operations** – especially by those Chief Officers overseeing field personnel
  - Have a working knowledge and understanding of behavioral health
  - Lead or support the development of a behavioral health program
  - Provide care for firefighters as part of a behavioral health program (i.e. a peer health program)
  - Perform self-care and can recognize symptoms in other firefighters

In the first component of leadership using the behavioral health program, it states: "Lead by example. One of the most important things a leader can do to help decrease the stigma related to behavioral health in the fire service is to talk about behavioral health in general conversation.

Behavioral health shouldn't only be discussed after traumatic events or in a yearly training course. Keeping behavioral health on par with physical health is one way to decrease stigma. Build support for the program by being open, honest, and transparent."

Chapter 4

Leadership for Command and Control

Contributing Author

Fire Chief Mario Rueda, San Marino Fire

Description:

The Chief of Operations (Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, or Ops Chief) serves in most fire organizations overseeing emergency operations and organizational command. These Chiefs supports the Fire Chief in providing leadership to the Fire Department executive staff, and Battalion Chiefs Officers, helping define, establish, and attain the overall goals and objectives of the Fire Department mission. The Deputy Chief is responsible for recommending hiring and for supervising the Fire Department staff and is responsible for the management of assigned functions through the Battalion Chiefs, the Fire Marshal, and non-safety administrative staff. The Deputy Chief is responsible for helping the Fire Chief in delivering quality fire prevention, fire suppression, inspections, public education, hazardous materials incident mitigation, rescue, and emergency medical services to citizens. The Department Chief Officers are responsible for helping to assure compliance with all legislative, judicial, and administrative policies, procedures, and laws that manage behavior.

Purpose:

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the characteristics and skillset to be successful. We also know that it takes several years of training, education, and experience that help to shape their decision-making process and mentoring skills to replicate organizational achievements.

There is no other position in the fire service that has the most responsibility for those under their command, like Operations Chiefs.

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A Fire Chief is identified as the appointed head of the department who is responsible for strategic vision, organizational leadership, development of community safety programs, and the ability to motivate and inspire -- the traits that create Leadership from the top. The Operation Chiefs' role has been defined, in most organizations, through job descriptions, types of responsibilities, tasks, education requirements, and physical abilities. Some predecessors have laid the groundwork for future Operation Chiefs, and others followed instinct without the advantage of a guide for those areas that are not so easily described as operations job duties. So, what makes a good Operations Chief?

Just as important as a Fire Chief is for a community, Chiefs Officers are just as important to their fire departments. Their purpose is to implement the department's vision and measure its performance to meet its mission daily. Operation Chief are part of the executive command staff who must be focused on the vision set by the Fire Chief and be responsible to direct and control the field management teams to deliver service for that vision. Operations Chiefs must keep situational awareness at the forefront, with a keen sense of the political ramifications of field decision-making in the heat of the battle (whatever the scenario), and have the skillset to be personable, good listeners, and hold people accountable. So, what is it that makes an effective Operations Chief? It is the ability to take a strategic vision and implement operational meaning. They use leadership skills, and apply self-determination, with the ability to motivate and inspire others, to create a sense of purpose to complete the vision set forth by the Fire Chief. Rather than having a single set of skills that can be easily identified, an Operation Chief has to adapt a chameleon-like role. They need to envision the environment in which they find themselves, coupled with past experiences, training, and relationships, to manage and direct the daily workload of the organization and personnel to meet its objectives. Using respect for individual ideas and interests, the Operations Chief needs to be sensitive to diverse audiences in communicating about the fire department business. Another area that is critical to this position is giving information to the local media and fostering cooperative professional relationships with members of the media to facilitate the accuracy of information regarding matters of importance and interest in their reporting on the department. There are legal communication requirements including those relating to the public access to information and open meetings. At this level of the department, the Operation Chief often sits in for the Fire Chief during the discussion with legal staff, elected officials, and community activists who have an interest in persuading their agenda. They listen to various individuals and groups, with a unique set of skills that bridge the space between the visionary leader at the top and provide for the execution of strategic operations for the department. Some attributes are good examples to follow for anyone interested to be a successful Operation Chief/Chief Officer:

- ✓ They are strategic with a focus on details. Arguably the highest-profile in a fire organization – Operation Chief has an extraordinary ability to dig deep on a wide range of issues. At the same time, they know the bounds of their responsibilities so as not to lose sight of the vision with a keen eye on operations. A successful Operation Chief balances a breadth of experience and knowledge with an ability to manage strategically. They keep their department’s high-level strategy front-and-center while understanding the details of day-to-day execution to ensure what needs to happen does happen. Handling those details can be no small matter.

- ✓ They appreciate talent. A good Operation Chief is a people person. They understand the department depends on talented individuals working as a team. As they maintain the operations, they keep an eye out for ways to improve the organization by deepening the pipeline of talent, constantly raising the level of talent through promotions, and providing opportunities to develop existing team members' skills.
- ✓ They have no ego. The best Operation Chief put the organization first. There is a total lack of ego. These individuals find ways, time, and again to highlight others. They will decline to take credit for organizational success and instead give those opportunities to their chief officer team members to shine. Similarly, when Fire Chief or media outlets request interviews, they will find ways to share the limelight with team members for the experience of exposure before the public. Face recognition is the best form of personal connection the public has with its fire department.
- ✓ They are data-driven. The effective Operation Chief is the one who monitors the expectations of the command staff, by asking for data to guide decision-making. Because Operation Chiefs are responsible to ensure strategic vision translates into achievable operations objectives, they are data-driven for the expected outcome. Sometimes a department can be guided by instincts, internal politics, hunches, or executives' gut feelings, but the successful Operation Chief will insist the department be driven by data. Fire Departments should not underestimate the value of strong data to assist the Ops Chiefs in turning strategy into operational and financial success

Chapter 5

Program/Project Management

Contributing Author

Fire Chief Ray Navarro, Carpinteria/Summerland Fire

Description:

Program/Project Management is a specific management approach used to handle large and complex projects or programs using today's technology, along with capturing data-driven decisions necessary to support conclusions or findings. A program/project is accomplished by following a specified set of actions or steps. It provides the managing chief with a comprehensive framework to successfully manage large projects or programs from start to finish.

Purpose:

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information about the technique called project management. It defines a project, discusses the steps involved in planning the project, and suggests guidelines to enhance the potential for successful project management efforts.

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The degree of complexity and scope of the project will determine the degree of formality the management process takes. Generally, smaller projects can be managed in a somewhat low-key, informal manner while larger, longer-term projects require more formal organization. The process of project management begins with the identification of those efforts which are appropriate sequence. Projects or programs must also take into consideration funding mechanisms e.g., fiscal budget, grants, homeland security funds, or philanthropic gifting, and will the project or program be an on-going cost to your organization's overall operation. However, regardless of the degree of formality or type of task to be performed, all projects or programs are managed following the same basic steps:

- ✓ Set a goal – As you being to think through the project/program, anticipated results desired, and have some idea about how to present the findings. Will these findings be presented to staff, elected officials, community leaders, or organizational committees. This is important to know your audience so that when you have completed your project/program implementation will have considered any challenges for change. With these considerations, it is time to set some goals you desire to achieve. S.M.A.R.T. is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time sensitive. S.M.A.R.T. goals, then, are a way to assess how clear your goals are and subsequently, how likely you are to attain them. It is just like the adage goes: If you fail to plan you plan to fail. Therefore, if you want to predict how successful your outcome will be you must look at the strength of your plan.
- ✓ Set a deadline – Establish a completion date for the project if one has not been established. When setting the date, the need for the project's outcome will be the most critical factor in its determination. The date is an important part of the planning process and serves as a critical point in time for the remainder of the process.
- ✓ Break the project into sub-tasks – In this part of the process, the overall project is defined in terms of the major steps which must be completed to assure successful completion. Today there are technology platforms that allow you to collaborate, manage, and report on work in real-time, automate workflows, and deploy new processes to meet goals.

These productivity tools or task apps are an end-to-end work execution platform with the power to help you achieve more.

- ✓ Organize the project's sub-tasks in appropriate order – After breaking tasks and sub-tasks into measurable and attainable parts, they must be arranged in chronological order, from first to last. Where each step goes depends on its relationship to other steps and/or its duration. Some steps will necessarily have to precede others while some can occur simultaneously.
- ✓ Set target dates and benchmarks – Here is where the use of realistic, and time-sensitive part of S.M.A.R.T goal setting for the program/project needs to be used. Having defined the sequence of actions, completion dates must be established to provide a framework against which to gauge and mark progress. The overall project/program completion date will be the major factor in establishing the sub-task dates. You should also consider additional time to account for inevitable delays or changes when the focus of a program/project changes through executive decisions.
- ✓ Assign sub-task responsibility – Consider the delegation of sub-tasks to appropriate people under your command which becomes a good mentorship opportunity. A person who has delegated responsibility should be authorized to make decisions for the sub-task, within the boundaries of that authority. Other resources are available for the program/project including subordinates, peers, people from other agencies and external consultants should be considered throughout accomplishing sub-tasks.
- ✓ Monitor progress until completion – As mentioned previously, there are unique and innovative computer programs or Apps to assist in the monitoring of the overall progress

of a program/project and each sub-task. The monitoring mechanisms should be capable of tracking all tasks and completion dates. Also, it should identify the person responsible. Once set up, the project should be monitored carefully to identify problems or issues which must be corrected to bring the project in on time and within budget. The benefit of good program/project management is its ability to keep the chiefs focused on essentials. If the program/project deviates from its planned outcome, the chief officer (project manager) must be resourceful enough to find ways to put it back on schedule.

SWOT Analysis

The purpose of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis is the same analysis that you perform on the fire ground; It is about safety for those we rescue and our personnel. SWOT leads to the planning and direction that your organization needs to develop an overall Strategic Plan. SWOT analysis is a process where the management team identifies the internal and external factors that will affect the department's future performance. It helps them to identify what is happening internally and externally so that you can plan and manage your department most effectively and efficiently.

Finally, the ability to produce and complete projects on time directly reflects on the perception of the chief's management team to get things done. Therefore, the more proficient the management team is working together, keeping in mind the department's mission and vision, no goal, task, or objective cannot be met.

Chapter 6

Fire-based Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems and Operations

Contributing Authors

Fire Chief Mark Hartwig, Santa Barbara County Fire

EMS Director Sean Stokes, Beverly Hills Fire

Description:

Fire-based EMS systems and Operations are an essential component of its services provided to local communities in California. As part of a healthcare network system, fire departments are strategically and geographically positioned to deliver this essential care in a time-critical manner. In almost all of California, the fire service is the first-line medical responder for critical care, illnesses, and injuries in their community. Since the conception of paramedic services in the late sixties and early seventies, the fire service met the challenge to evolve its delivery model to meet the needs of the public by providing emergency medical care for its community. That evolution is now providing telemedicine healthcare and directed pathway management of patients they treat in the pre-hospital setting under medical control supervision. Operationally, EMS is now the central part of the response by fire departments, not just in California, but across the nation. The fire service uses three primary models: (1) cross-trained/multi-role firefighters/paramedics for EMS first response and ambulance transport; (2) firefighter/EMTs and Paramedics for EMS first response and civilians who are not cross-trained as firefighters for ambulance transport, and (3) firefighter EMT/Paramedics for EMS first response and non-fire department organizations for ambulance transport. The fire service is now incorporating the professionalism of nurses, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants as part of the delivery of prehospital healthcare in the field as well as quality-assuring/continuing education that meets expected medical care professionals.

Purpose:

This chapter will highlight the past, current, and future healthcare concerns being contemplated by fire-based EMS systems and their operation for the communities they serve. A recent International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) survey of the 200 most populated communities illustrates that ninety-seven percent (97%) of communities have the fire service delivering its pre-hospital emergency medical response. Additionally, the fire service provides critical advanced life support (ALS) response and care in ninety percent (90%) of the 30 most populated United States cities and counties. A Chief Officer who is assigned to manage and support EMS for their agencies must become familiar with the legislative authority and regulatory requirements to be part of the EMS system to be an advocate for patient care issues, without abdicating its authority to deliver EMS for their communities. To that end, all Chief Officers must become familiar with EMS Operations as it will affect your ability to care for your community's health and welfare. Today, in gest EMS stands for *Economic Means of Survival*, both emergent, and non-emergent in the prehospital setting for patient health care as a whole.

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Emergency Medical Service has always been part of the fire service mission to save lives as well as to save property and protect the environment. Some fire departments included ambulance service when they were established, while others used specialized response units, (rescue squads) with specially trained firefighters, that provided emergency rescues with a limited medical evaluation, triage, treatment, and arranged transport to the most appropriate medical facility. There were just a few departments that provided EMS through a county or city public health agency. By the early seventies, almost all fire departments were providing EMS, also known as pre-hospital care with crossed trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) with basic life support training and Mobile Intensive Care Paramedics (MICP), which was later changed to EMT-Paramedic (1980 Pre-hospital Care Act legislation). Since the inception of the California Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Authority in 1980, the delivery of EMS (already established in many fire departments) came under regulatory control and medical direction from an agency that exercised its authority by challenging a provision in legislation known as the California Health and Safety Code - HSC §1797.201. It reads: Upon the request of a city or fire district that contracted for or provided, as of June 1, 1980, prehospital emergency medical services, a county shall enter into a written agreement with the city or fire district regarding the provision of prehospital emergency medical services for that city or fire district. For the past forty (40) years and several court rulings, the legislative intent has been upheld: – Until such time that an agreement is reached, **prehospital emergency medical services shall be continued at not less than the existing level, and the administration of prehospital EMS by cities and fire districts presently providing such services shall be retained by those cities and fire districts**, except the level of prehospital EMS may be reduced where the city council, or the governing body of a fire district, pursuant to a public hearing, determines that the reduction is necessary. Further, the CA Health & Safety Code § 13801 The Legislature finds and declares that the local provision of fire protection services, rescue services, emergency medical services, hazardous material emergency response services, ambulance services, and other services relating to the protection of lives and property is critical to the public peace, health, and safety of the state. These are some of the determining grounds for local rule authorized by the state.

Some standards have advanced the professionalism of fire-based EMS. There are two notable research publications for Chief Officers who are responsible for their department's EMS programs. The National Fire Protection 1710 – *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments* and the Center for Public Safety Excellence – focuses on excellence through the continuous quality improvement process of accreditation, credentialing, and education. There are also individual county protocols that ensure a systematic approach to the delivery of prehospital patient care. Like many of today's scientific findings through research studies, the term evidence-based medicine has changed treatment modalities and sometimes eliminated them under the efficacy rule of science. While some EMS providers are involved in these studies, the cost impact on a fire department's budget often precludes others from taking advantage of participating in finding new treatment modalities. There is also a need to expand the fire service data ecosystem beyond documenting incident responses such as the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). The beginning of understanding fire-based EMS systems and operations is data analysis to further evaluate the diverse capabilities and needs of the fire service in terms of how agencies perform various activities toward their mission. Speaking of mission, the fire service is known as the creator of the unified command concept that brings everyone to the table, at the same time handling emergencies, whether national, state, or local incident disasters. Using the Incident Command System (ICS), the fire service has a superior ability to coordinate incidents of any size with proven results. The fire service provides the best return on investment of public dollars in the delivery of prehospital 9-1-1 emergency medical care.

California Fire Chiefs Association has worked to develop a collaboration with multiple stakeholders to create substantial regulations and standards to support fire-based prehospital patient care. The fire service is expanding its system delivery models working within the legislative mandates and healthcare cooperatives to improve patient outcomes and satisfaction ratings. Federal, state, and local statutes, coupled with progressive community standards of care, are the drivers of this evolution. EMS is synonymous with patient care, and as mentioned before, it's an "**E**conomic **M**eans of **S**urvival." Fire Departments must consider being defined as health care providers in the future to be considered for reimbursement of patient services in the out-of-hospital setting. It also means the fire service will be bound to comply with mandates that govern healthcare providers at the national, state, and local levels, if and when healthcare for all becomes a federal statue.

We know that fire departments are responding to an increasing number of medical calls that drive up the percentage based on the total number of calls they respond to. This often gets misinterpreted to mean there are fewer fire calls, but those calls are not increasing at the same pace as the EMS calls. Some County EMS agencies and/or private ambulance providers will try to paint the picture that fire departments are into EMS because they are trying to justify their existence. Nothing could be further from the truth.

One of the central themes of this discussion is concern over the common misconception that EMS begins with the transport of a patient in an ambulance to a hospital. This misunderstanding resulted in the funding of transport service providers (private ambulance) but not providers of emergency medical care rendered at the scene (public safety). This funding aberrancy occurred in the 1960s as Medicare provided reimbursement for transportation of trauma patients to the hospital, long before the contemporary EMS system developed. At about the same time, the fire service delivery of 9-1-1 emergency medical care was becoming part of the fabric of the fire service mission. Thus, it was funded solely as part of the fire department budget and for the most part, remains this way today. There have been several means to level the payor mix playing field with federal and state funding sources, with Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) reimbursement funding. This has been approved State by State for public agencies in the emergency transportation of pre-hospital care.

The Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) program is an uncompensated cost reimbursement (voluntary program) that allows eligible GEMT providers who provide qualifying emergency ambulance services to the Department of Social Services, to recoup service fees. This program became effective for services rendered to HMO HealthNet participants by eligible GEMT providers on or after July 1, 2017.

One additional California program that is tied to GEMT is the Quality Assurance Fee (QAF) program. The GEMT QAF program is the result of Senate Bill 523, approved on October 13, 2017, that allowed the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to establish the GEMT-QAF program to provide supplemental Medi-Cal payments to GEMT providers. All GEMT providers whether public or private agencies are required to participate in this program. California currently imposes provider fees on Medi-Cal managed care organizations and transportation providers. Revenues from these healthcare-related provider fees and taxes are used to finance quality improvement efforts and to maintain or expand health care coverage. These types of legislation and regulation add to the complexity of managing the operation of Fire-based EMS systems, particularly for those departments that provide ambulance transport.

Intergovernmental transfers (IGT)

IGTs are a transfer of funds from another government entity (e.g., county, city, or another state agency) to the state Medicaid agency. The ability of a state to use IGTs to fund their Medicaid program is recognized in statute (§1903(w)(6) of the Social Security Act) and rule (42 CFR §433.51). To participate in this program a provider must enter into three agreements. One for each, DHCS, CMS, and your designated Medi-Cal Payer. A 25% administration fee is paid to the State. For many fire departments, participation in the IGT program is extremely beneficial.

Public Provider Intergovernmental Transfer Program -AB 1705

The California fire service advocated being separate from the private, for-profit ambulance companies participating in the QAF program. Additionally, due to a lack of head room (funds available per county), not every fire department can participate in the IGT program. The Governor approved AB 1705 on October 7, 2019. This bill was sponsored by the California Fire Chiefs Association and Fire Districts Association of California. The bill requires that by July 1st, 2021, DHCS implement the Public Provider Intergovernmental Transfer Program. The Public Provider IGT (PPIGT) Program will be voluntary for public providers, like the GEMT Supplemental Payment Program. It applies to both Medi-Cal FFS and Medi-Cal managed care transports, like the GEMT QAF. PPIGT would end DHCS' existing voluntary GEMT Supplemental Payment Program. It would also exempt public providers from the mandatory GEMT quality assurance fee (QAF) program.

As a Chief Officer newly assigned or one who has been managing EMS for some time, the issues of today's EMS system and Operation for fire departments in California should begin with asking a few questions:

- ✓ What has changed over the past 10 years in the delivery of fire-based EMS? How are these changes being managed and funded in the department's budget?

- ✓ What are the critical components for an effective delivery model, beyond having personnel and equipment for the responses?
- ✓ What are the needs for an assessment for future growth for fire services EMS?
- ✓ If you could envision the future, what would you encourage your fire chiefs and those who manage EMS systems to pay attention to? Trends? Issues? Reimbursement? Healthcare funding?
- ✓ What are the data ecosystems your department is using to monitor performance? Is your department part of an electronic healthcare information exchange (HIE)?
- ✓ How are other Fire-based systems partnering with their local medical community?
- ✓ What are the educational components that the fire services need to keep well-informed of for its continuing education components?

Any of these questions should be part of your evaluation of your EMS systems and operations. It does break down into two major areas for strategic planning: Service and Support.

- **Services**: the level and type of service must be comprehensive to meet the needs of its community; providing both BLS and ALS services as well as transportation services to local receiving centers (hospitals) as needed. Consideration of comprehensive educational services to be provided include, disease prevention, safe use of prescribed medications, fall prevention, and other types of health-related screenings. It has long been noted that a portion of patients serviced in the field by EMS personnel may not have an emergent chief complaint that requires an emergency department, yet we do not discourage calling 911 to have a professional evaluation. Given the limited scope of practice of both the EMT and EMT-P coupled with the standard pre-hospital care delivery model, many non-acute patients are transported to the hospital solely because there is no mechanism or pathway to manage their non-acute chief complaint in the field. We are beginning to see a change in these responses.
- **Support**: Given the trends; an increase in call volume, an increase in call acuity, an increase in Basic Life Support contacts, and an increase in the number of EMS-related programs requiring continual management, there is a need to allocate additional professional medical labor resources with the inclusion of Registered Nurses to support

the primary mission of patient care for low acuity patients and preventative care. Nurses have notably been used for education, quality improvement/assurance, and patient management of pre-hospital systems. Many of the Southern California fire departments have restructured their respective EMS operations to include these professional positions, to meet the growing needs of services provided to their communities. Fire departments can capitalize on the following:

- Address low acuity chief complaints in the field with closure for the patient
- Refer patients to more appropriate services vs. always transferring the patient to congested Emergency Departments
- Minimize duplication of services between the pre-hospital evaluation and treatment and Emergency Department evaluation and treatment
- High-risk patients may receive follow-up evaluations post-discharge to reduce the incidence of readmission.
- Comprehensive educational services may be provided to include, but not be limited to, disease prevention, safe use of prescribed medications, fall prevention, and other types of health-related screenings.

Envisioning the future for fire-based EMS systems and operations, Chief Officers need to identify the following components of their operations:

- Line of Business or Programs
    - ALS Program
    - Quality Improvement (QI) / Quality Assurance (QA) Program
    - EMT Program
    - Continual Education Program
    - Occupational Health Program
    - Infection Control Program
    - HIPAA Program (Privacy & Security of Patient Information)

- AED / PAD Program
- Ambulance Billing Program (transport agency)
- First Responder Fee Program (both transport and non-transport agencies)
- Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) Program
- Mass Casualty / Terrorism / Emergency Preparedness Program
- Data / Record Management Program (consider HIE component)

Community Paramedicine/Mobile Integrated Health

EMS delivery in the future will be a focused approach to providing the right resources to the 911 call. Having a registered nurse (RN) in the 911 dispatch center to provide advanced-level medical assessments and decision-making for fire department response should be standard practice. This will allow for non-emergency calls to be properly triaged and referred to the appropriate response. Examples include referral to a physician for a doctor's appointment, a response by a mental health professional, or a partial or full 911 response model. Community paramedics or Mobile integrated Health will be a vital component of successful EMS models in the future. These advanced practice units will be able to provide on-scene treatment and referral to medical or mental health services. By having an RN in dispatch and advanced practice EMS units available in the streets, patients with non-emergent needs can be properly treated and referred allowing vital ambulance resources available for higher acuity 911 calls. Important patient health information must be readily available for fire department personnel and the ability to share this information with the hospitals will be critical. This effort is known as Health Information Exchange (HIE).

Emergency Triage, Treat, and Transport (ET3) Model

Emergency Triage, Treat, and Transport (ET3) is a voluntary, five-year payment model through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that will provide greater flexibility to ambulance care teams to address emergency health care needs of Medicare Fee-for-Service (FFS) beneficiaries following a 911 call. CMS will continue to pay to transport a Medicare FFS beneficiary to a hospital emergency department or other covered destination. In addition, under the model, CMS will pay participants to 1) transport to an alternative destination partner, such as a primary care office, urgent care clinic, or a community mental health center (CMHC), or 2) initiate and facilitate treatment in place with a qualified health care partner, either at the scene of the 911 emergency response or via telehealth.

The model will allow beneficiaries to access the most appropriate emergency services at the right time and place. The model will also encourage local governments, their designees, or other entities that operate or have authority over one or more 911 dispatches to promote successful model implementation by establishing a medical triage line for low-acuity 911 calls. As a result, the ET3 Model aims to improve quality and lower costs by reducing avoidable transports to the ED and unnecessary hospitalizations following those transports.

Participation in this model is now closed to any new applicants. Regardless, chief officers need to pay attention to this evolving model and understand the potential future impacts on service delivery.

Low Acuity Medical Call Referral Systems

Not every medical call received by the dispatch needs a lights-and-siren response from fire or EMS apparatus. In recognition of this, many organizations are or are considering placing medical staff in the dispatch system to assist callers who may have low-acuity medical needs. The International Academies of Emergency Dispatch's® (IAED™) certified Emergency Communication Nurse System™ (ECNS™) is an example of an accredited system that is being deployed by agencies. This system is a comprehensive nurse triage system comprised of over 200 protocols. It is designed to be implemented within an Emergency Medical Services communication center and used alongside an emergency medical priority dispatch system.

A dispatch nurse system may be initiated after verifying there are no priority symptoms through the emergency medical dispatch process. After initiation, a medical practitioner will gather additional information such as comorbid conditions, medications, and allergies. The medial practitioner will then select an established and further assessment is conducted. Based on the patient's answers, a recommended care level is determined. This determination may include tiered response levels from initiating an ambulance response to providing the patient with self-care instructions. The patient may also be referred to other resources available in the customer's community, e.g., urgent care centers, and primary care physicians. These services are often gathered in a "directory of services", which identifies a specific list of health care resources near the patient.

Data

As the fire service continues to evolve, we must do a better job telling our story. The fire service saves life every day. Response times are no longer the entire story. Respond the right resources to the right call type in the right manner is important. To effectively do so, fire departments must collect and analyze data. As call volume continues to increase, resources are stretched thin daily. A successful Chief Officer must be readily prepared to provide EMS outcome data with minimal notice. A Chief Officer will not be successful without this ability. This data will drive what resources are dispatched to 911 calls, funding for additional resources, and justifications for almost every problem that will arise. A Chief Officer that monitors data will identify trends and implement corrective measures before they ever become a problem. The future of EMS delivery

The fire service is and will continue to be the front-line provider of our communities. A variety of response models need to be available based on the call type. Data will drive decision-making and response. We must be the leaders driving positive changes in the future. Get involved and ensure your voice is heard!

Chapter 7

Performance Standards – Accountability

Contributing Author

Human Resource Director Jennifer Gutierres, City of Simi

Description:

Performance standards serve as an agreement between a manager and an employee that outlines accomplishments to be achieved within a specified period. Performance standards should be provided in writing to employees during their first week of employment (typically in the form of a job description and department policy manual) and annually thereafter as part of a performance appraisal process during the employee's probationary period and annually. The manager performs a written review or performance appraisal of the planned expectations and goals which were or were not accomplished in a specific timeframe, specific accomplishments, and a discussion on areas for improvement. Being able to properly document how an employee does at meeting the identified performance standards is a challenge and this chapter will help you navigate it.

Purpose:

Performance standards are provided to employees in the form of a job description, agency policies and procedures, and additional expectations outlined by the manager. They are established to assure that employees thoroughly understand what is expected in terms of performance and productivity. Most employees want to know what is expected of them so that they can perform satisfactorily. Secondly, it provides a means of accountability by clarifying performance objectives, identifying responsibilities, and defining benchmarks in which tasks are to be accomplished. Employees who are exceeding expectations want to be recognized for their accomplishments and know that performance standards and accountability serve as measurable standards to foster teamwork and commitment to the pursuit of professional excellence.

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In public safety departments, job descriptions are created to describe the main tasks the position is required to perform, the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job, and the minimum qualifications to obtain that job. Agency policies and procedures are determined by management and agreed upon by bargaining groups. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are determined through negotiation and often outline items that turn into policy. The most important skill set chief officers must become proficient in when it comes to holding employees accountable to performance standards is given regular performance feedback and documentation of that feedback. Documentation is a vital part of developing and directing members under your command. Often little effort goes into working with supervisors on proper documentation skills. As persons move from supervisor to management, the importance of accurate documentation is imperative for reviewing job performance. Just as important is when documentation is required to perform investigations of on-the-job injuries, and potential violations of policy or rules and regulations; it is necessary as justification for promotions, for major procurements using taxpayer dollars, and for providing executive staff with written reports. al also, in times of economic uncertainty, the need for honest documentation is imperative to ensuring that the poor performers are the first to be laid off. If all personnel is given satisfactory reviews, then tenure often determines who is laid off first.

Chief Officers (at every rank) need to review a list of documents routinely to be updated and familiar with them. Here are some areas chief officers should review:

- ✓ Job Description Review – When you are promoted to a chief officer position, you should carefully review the job description for each position in terms of its purpose and how they contribute to the functioning of the department under your supervision. In addition, review current organizational charts to understand the full scope of your agency. The information provided by this review will help chief officers to set measurable objectives for those they supervise in job performance.
- ✓ Policy & Procedure Review – Understanding the policies and procedures of your department is paramount to ensuring employees meet performance standards. As a chief officer, you should know your current policies and should be ready, willing, and able to make recommendations for updates to policy and/or create a new policy.
- ✓ Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) Review – Chief Officers must have a copy of the MOUs for all employee groups they supervise. Some Chief Officers will be tasked with overseeing clerical staff, who will likely have a separate bargaining group and associated MOU. Having copies handy and reviewing them often when questions arise is first and foremost.
- ✓ Personnel File Review – Set aside time to review the personnel files of those you supervise. As a supervisor, you are entitled to do so, but will most likely be required to do so with a member of the Human Resources team present. Call to make an appointment, then take a look at the employee's history with the department, career progression, and previous performance reviews. If possible, ask for a copy of the last performance review

for each of your direct reports. Also, look to see if there is any previous discipline in the file. This review may take some time depending on how many direct reports you have, but it will be worth the time to get to know your team.

Now that you have reviewed the groundwork documentation, it's time to work on the individual documentation.

- ✓ Develop an action plan – An effective performance appraisals acts specifies exactly who will do what by when. Remember, the point of developing standards is to assure that the person in the job or position clearly understands what is expected in terms of performance. The performance appraisal provides the specifics in terms of who, what, when, and how things are to be accomplished.
- ✓ Emphasize self-development – One of the most important measures of performance is dependent on a person's capability. If people are to become more effective in their jobs they must continue to develop their capabilities. A critical part of the performance appraisal process should be to assist people in their career development. Development activities should be incorporated into part of the performance standard.
- ✓ Conduct regular reviews – This will assure progress meets expectations and also keep high achievers engaged. A periodic review of performance is vital to maintaining progress toward objectives. They permit the chief officers and their direct reports to assess the effectiveness of the action plan; evaluate progress to date; and, make adjustments or changes to assure the successful attainment of objectives. Also, it provides another opportunity for communication between management and supervisor.

- ✓ Setting measurable objectives – Utilizing past performance reviews as a guide for current direct reports may allow some insight into past objectives. However, the best way to set measurable objectives is to have a conversation with the employee. Ask the employee to come to the meeting prepared to talk about their goals for the next review period. Also, you should go into the meeting already having some ideas of what you think would be some good goals for the employee. Perhaps it is a special project, stretch assignment or something the individual is struggling with and need additional training on. When you meet, ask the employee to share what they would like to have as a goal. It is your job to help them set achievable goals that are important to not only the department but also to the employee. Make sure goals are S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely). A good example of a SMART goal is "Join a gym by May 1st and work out three times a week until the end of this review period". A bad example is "get in shape".

Key points to improve your documentation:

Performance evaluations are a measuring device for both employees and supervisors. The performance appraisal process may be completed once a year but chief officers should be maintaining files on employees throughout the year. These files often called "supervisor files" contain notes regarding performance throughout the year. The information is not secret and should not have anything in them that the employee does not know about. Everything should be brought up to the employee promptly, then later put into an annual review. Notes should be good and bad. Some supervisors keep a little notebook with them at all times to take notes as things happen, then circle back with the employee on what they observed. Employees need to know where they stand — how they're doing. Ensuring your documentation is effective is important because:

- ✓ Decisions about permanent status, promotions, pay raises, and layoffs can hinge on performance appraisals.
- ✓ When employees need help getting back on track, performance appraisals open the doors of communication and clarify expectations. When employees have made great strides, performance appraisals are a great time for pats on the back.
- ✓ Effective appraisals set up future goals, training, career development, and employee growth.
- ✓ Good reviews provide a road map, giving direction, taking you full circle to the next appraisal when the employee wants to know, "How am I doing?" again. How close employees were to hitting the goals will answer the question.
- ✓ Performance appraisals are a key part of the paper trail. Sooner or later, you're going to have to justify your decisions — positive or negative — about an employee. Are you prepared to defend your performance evaluation?
- ✓ Most agency rules and MOUs require that they are done on an annual basis.

Effective performance reviews discuss the behavior or performance that you want to maintain or that which must change.

- ✓ Describe the conduct, not the individual. Avoid making broad judgments using words such as "always" and "never," which can be easily disputed by the employee.
- ✓ This should go without saying, but ensure you aren't simply copying the same performance review you did last year or for another employee – trust me, they know!

- ✓ Review performance throughout the entire review period.
- ✓ Focus on specific, observable work-related behavior and performance rather than generalities or personal characteristics. Describe how the worker's behavior impacts others trying to do their jobs.
- ✓ Be honest and direct; do not sugarcoat problem areas or concerns by avoiding open discussion
- ✓ If performance is good or exceptional, be specific about what areas are good and explain why, compliment when appropriate.
- ✓ If the performance is below standard, be specific about what areas need to improve, explain the desired outcome, offer suggestions on how to improve, and create a plan to achieve the desired outcome.
- ✓ Be specific. What did the employee do to deserve the rating? Cite specific incidents or outcomes. The final written evaluation should contain no surprises.

When you have to document an action plan or progressive discipline with a written warning or counseling these should include:

- ✓ The employee's explanation for why expectations aren't being met. Having a two-way conversation shows the manager's attempt to be fair and learn how to help the individual. A rush to judgment can backfire on you.
- ✓ Prepare a detailed action plan that the employee should use to improve performance. This is not a performance improvement plan, but more like coaching the employee to do better. Include specific steps the employee will take to improve and what you will do to help. Be realistic. Focus on a few key areas so that you both can see improvement.

- ✓ Set deadlines for correcting the behavior or performance. Avoid saying, “We expect you to turn things around immediately.” That can mean different things to different people, use words like – “We expect your report will be turned in by 5 p.m. tomorrow.” Follow up at the specified deadline. If you don’t follow up, it shows you don’t care. Keep a written record of what happened, including the employee’s explanation. Perhaps circumstances beyond his or her control prevented the employee from meeting the deadline. Record whether additional training is needed and any discipline that is meted out.
- ✓ Describe the consequences if the behavior or poor performance continues. You do not want to discuss consequences in early coaching sessions. However, after repeated attempts to help the employee meet expectations have been unsuccessful, or in the case of serious policy violations, disciplinary action may be needed. Be able to describe the conversation in detail. When determined, a termination letter should state specific dates of meetings with the employee and should include attempts to provide additional training or coaching. It should recap the reasons for termination as specifically as possible.
- ✓ Avoid vague phrases that could provide grounds for discrimination lawsuits. It is very important to consider legal advice from department counsel. Do not recommend termination for someone for a “bad attitude” or because they are not a good “culture fit.” Those are red flags that could cause the employee to believe the firing is attributable to his or her gender, race, or national origin—or his or her membership in another group protected under federal civil rights laws.

Remember to prepare documentation with the expectation that a third party (internal or external) will review it. Include enough information so others know what happened and what steps were taken to put the employee on notice and offer the individual an opportunity to correct their performance.

Finally:

- ✓ A Chief Officer should work with the person(s) who are direct reports to ensure they understand the importance of documentation at all levels within their responsibility.
- ✓ Nothing is more important than written documentation that is tied to an injury report to OSHA or worker’s compensation-related injury. They need to be accurate, with date, time, location, and determination with the recommendation for improvement, hiding nothing and establishing accountability for the organization.

Chapter 8

Conflict Management

'Going from Buddy to Boss'

Description:

Conflict management is the use of a variety of techniques to avert a dispute or resolve it when it arises. In any situation where groups are working closely together, there is a possibility of conflict, and taking some steps to address it before it happens can reduce stress and keep members of the group more contented. Conflict management can use and may choose from a variety of approaches to preventing, identifying, and handling conflict.

Purpose:

Conflicts can arise in the workplace, and the inability to come to a resolution can oftentimes led to grievances, lawsuits, and worse case, violence in the workplace with devastating results. In recent years our society has become hyper-vigilant concerning national origin, gender, and religious affiliation. Remember that employees have their cultural preferences and may come into conflict with their co-workers as a result. The workplace is not immune to the conflicts that arise from diversity. Managing these conflicts should be handled at the appropriate level (Supervisor), however, all conflicts must be documented and reported to the manager (Chief Officer) for the protection of the employees involved and liability by the department that employs them.

Download:

The first step in conflict management is attempting to identify the controversy before it happens. This can include setting standards for behavior in group settings and asking people to abide by some guidelines for the way they interact with each other. Rules may include mandates for respecting space, workplace environment, keeping shared areas clean, and so forth. These measures prevent low-level conflict. They can also allow for rapidly spotting the early warning signs and heading them off at the pass before a dispute becomes vicious. Numerous laws in the U.S. protect specific classes of people. In some instances, these laws grant rights and privileges to protected classes only. Employees who are within a protected class may feel that they are not given enough opportunities to advance or that the laws are not being followed, which holds them back. Employees who are not within a protected class may feel that they are not treated equally. This can create a feeling of inequality on both sides.

Here are laws that Chief Officers must be familiar with and ensure they are administered:

- ✓ The Civil Rights Act of 1966 prohibits discrimination based on race.
- ✓ The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 prohibits discrimination based on national origin or citizenship.
- ✓ The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination against minorities based on poor credit ratings.
- ✓ The Age Discrimination in Employment Act prohibits discrimination against individuals who are age 40 or older.
- ✓ The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits employers from paying different wages to men and women who perform the same work under similar working conditions.
- ✓ The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities.

- ✓ Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, and sex. It also prohibits sex discrimination based on pregnancy and sexual harassment.

Training employees in identifying the most common causes of conflict within your organization should provide techniques for managing and identifying the negative effects of unresolved conflict. Teaching employees the importance of immediately resolving their problems with co-workers or management can save reputations and improve morale. Here are some suggestions that will help you manage potential conflict:

- ✓ Identify the causes of conflict (disputes) in your organization (every department has a history of issues/conflicts/disputes that increased tensions within the organization)
- ✓ Identify your organization’s common responses to conflict (again, there is history)
- ✓ Discuss different styles and approaches to handling conflicts and their resolution(s)
- ✓ Discuss how to create an environment for open, honest dialogue during conflict resolution (this may require professional assistance from a licensed mediator)
- ✓ Discuss how to respond to anger in the workplace and how to manage one’s anger in response, as a Chief Officer, to bring about a resolution
- ✓ Identify the best practices for effective communication and active listening during conflict resolution (an art in itself). We are given two ears to listen to and one mouth to speak.

Sometimes managing conflict needs to move to mediation, where a neutral third party facilitates communication and discussion. Checking with your human resources (HR) department or HR director will provide a positive way forward in resolution. This is where you need to first, discuss with your supervisor, and get your department's counsel to review the facts, and follow their recommendation. This may be necessary because of higher stakes and potential liability during conflict resolution sessions. Mediators can include coworkers and friends as well as supervisors and other people in positions of power. It is important to work with a mediator who will not favor one party or the other.

Arbitration is another approach to conflict management. This involves a third party who sits as a judge, hearing both sides and issuing an opinion. The opinion can include rules for all parties to follow, such as ordering a coworker who is bothering another to keep contacts purely professional and to only approach the colleague in the presence of witnesses. Arbitration can be necessary when a conflict appears intractable, and the parties are incapable of negotiating or mediating to resolve the situation. This option tends to be less favored, as the parties may emerge from arbitration with feelings of resentment or frustration. Both mediation and arbitration are usually negotiated MOU agreement terms.

A Chief Officer, particularly front-line managers (Battalion Chief) should research past findings on conflicts within their organizations, how they were handled, and what rules were developed or changed to improve the relationship. We began the chapter with a quote from a songwriter. Knowing what conflicts, you are willing to handle or which ones will need professional assistance, (hold 'em or fold "em) will keep you and your organization out of the news. There is no doubt that conflicts bring about change. They always do. Managing them is a skill set that you must learn early in your management career. There is an age-old adage that says, "don't ask a question, you don't know the answer to?" While this may seem like a good strategy, it is not one for managing conflicts. They are often a perception that one's conflict is personal, cultural, and/or principled, but not based on reality. Therefore, back to chapter one of this manual, it is better to create, support, and promote relationship-building to fend off the conflict between employees and managers, before it gets to elected officials, who are the ultimate arbitrators of the outcome.

Chapter 9

Managing budget and fiscal objectives

Contributing Author

County Auditor Bob Gies (ret), Santa Barbara County

Description:

Understanding public financing for fire protection services requires acknowledging that the public put its trust in managers who are fiduciary responsible to see these funds are budgeted and accounted for. This chapter will help to identify the most common terms that fiscal managers, auditors, and elected officials use when discussing at the highest level of decision-making authority, which commit funds for specific purposes according to constraints imposed by formal actions taken, such as an ordinance or resolution. To be confident in the budget process, a chief officer at any level within the organization should have an understanding of the fiscal language, as well as the planning process on how the fire department and the services they provide are funded through tax dollars. The accounting requirements are required by law and are aimed at preventing waste or fraud in government services and establishing a balance between optimal expenditure and services by managing their assets and government sources in the most efficient way.

Purpose:

To assist a fire department plan for future services and provide a budget framework to manage incoming revenue with maximum efficiency and fiscal prudence, while providing short-term and long-term services for the department. A budget is a financial plan. It summarizes, in financial figures, the activities planned for the forthcoming year by setting out the costs [expenses] of these activities, and where the income will come from to pay for the expenses. There are specific terms used in the budgetary process following Federal, State, and Local laws that govern public tax funds which are used by fire departments (a government agency) to provide services to their constituents.

Download:

A major element of financial data activity rests in the act of budgeting. Budgeting is the process of allocating finite resources to the prioritized needs of an organization. In most cases, for a governmental entity, the budget represents the legal authority to spend money. The adoption of a budget in the public sector implies that a set of decisions has been made by the governing board and administrators that culminates in matching a government's resources with the entity's needs. As such, the budget is a product of the planning process. The budget also provides an important tool for the control and evaluation of funding sources and the uses of resources. Using the accounting system to enact the will of the governing body, administrators can execute and control activities that have been authorized by the budget process and evaluate financial performance based on comparisons between budgeted and actual operations. Thus, the budget is entirely linked to financial accountability and relates directly to the financial reporting objectives established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

The link between planning and budget preparation gives the budget document a unique role in fire department organizations. Budgets in the public arena are often considered the definitive policy document because an adopted budget represents the financial plan used by a government entity to achieve its goals and objectives. When a fire department legally adopts a financial plan, the budget has secured the approval of the majority of the governing board and reflects:

- ✓ Public choices about which goods and services a government entity will or will not provide utilizing using surveys, public forums, and executive management recommendations and,
- ✓ The prioritization of activities in which the fire department will include as essential services and those they plan to expand concurrently within their vision and mission statement,
- ✓ The relative influence of various participants and interest groups in the budget, development process, and the fire department's plan for acquiring and using its resources.

Objectives for Budgeting

Given the importance of compliance with the approved budget, the financial reporting system must control the use of financial resources and ensure that budgetary appropriations and allocations are not exceeded. The actual financial information captured by the accounting system employed by fire agencies is in the form of an approved budget. Through budgetary integration, the financial accounting system becomes the primary tool to prove financial accountability. The budget is evaluated for its effectiveness in attaining the fire agency's stated goals and objectives. Evaluation typically involves an examination of how funds were spent, and the outcomes that resulted from the expenditure. Fire agencies have used a variety of budget approaches and formats. Various budgeting models continue to be commonly used and fall predominantly into categories of (1) line-item, or "traditional," budgeting; (2) performance budgeting; (3) program and planning ("programming") budgeting (PPB); (4) zero-based budgeting (ZBB); and (5) sitebased budgeting. We will give you a brief description of each of these methods. You should become familiar with the type of budgetary format that your organization is responsible to report. Every Chief Officer in the organization will have some responsibility for the request, and expenditure of funds they received as well as the accountability, particularly in capital purchases. Let's look at the following categories:

- ✓ **Line-Item Budgeting**

  Line-item budgeting is the most widely used approach in many organizations, including fire departments, because of its simplicity and its control orientation. It is referred to as the "historical" approach because administrators and chief executives often base their expenditure requests on historical expenditure and revenue data. One important aspect of line-item budgeting is that it offers flexibility in the amount of control established over the use of resources, depending on the level of expenditure detail (e.g., fund, function, object) incorporated into the document. The line-item budget approach has several advantages that account for its wide use. It offers simplicity and ease of preparation. It is a familiar approach to those involved in the budget development process. This method budgets by organizational unit and object and is consistent with the lines of authority and responsibility in organizational units. As a result, this approach enhances organizational control and allows the accumulation of expenditure data at each functional level.

- ✓ **Performance Budgeting**

  In performance budgeting models budgeted expenditures are based on a standard cost of inputs multiplied by the number of units of an activity to be provided in a specific period. Although this strict approach may be useful for certain types of operations, many fire agencies require a more flexible performance approach. For example, expenditures may be based simply on the activities or levels of service to be provided and a comparison of budgeted and historical expenditure levels. The performance approach is generally considered superior to the line-item approach because it provides more useful information for governmental consideration and evaluation by administrators. Additionally, performance budgeting includes narrative descriptions of each program or activity. It organizes the budget into quantitative estimates of costs and accomplishments and focuses on measuring and evaluating outcomes. The performance approach eases governmental budget revisions because program activities and levels of service may be budgeted based on standard cost inputs.

- ✓ **Program and Planning (Programming) Budgeting (PPB)**

Program budgeting refers to a variety of different budgeting systems that base expenditures primarily on programs of work and secondarily on objects. It is considered a transitional form between line-item and performance approaches. In contrast to other approaches, a full program budget bases expenditures solely on programs of work regardless of objects or organizational units. As these two variations attest, program budgeting is flexible enough to be applied in a variety of ways, depending on organizational needs and administrative capabilities.

- ✓ **Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB)**

The basic tenet of zero-based budgeting is that program activities and services must be justified annually during the budget development process. The budget is prepared by dividing all of the fire operations into decision units at relatively low levels of the organization. Individual decision units are then aggregated into decision packages based on program activities, program goals, organizational units, and so forth. Costs of goods or services are attached to each decision package based on the level of production or service to be provided to produce defined outputs or outcomes. Decision units are then ranked by their importance in reaching organizational goals and objectives. Therefore, when the proposed budget is presented, it contains a series of budget decisions that are tied to the attainment of the entity's goals and objectives.

- ✓ **Outcome-Focused Budgeting**

  Outcome-focused budgeting is the practice of linking the allocation of resources to the production of outcomes. The objective is to allocate the fire agency's resources to those service providers or programs that use them most effectively. Outcome-focused budgeting is closely linked to the planning process. For a fire department entity to focus on outcomes, goals, and objectives must be identified and tied to budget allocations for the achievement of those objectives. This premise argues that mission-driven fire agencies are superior to those that are rule-driven agencies because they are more efficient, are more effective in producing desired results; are more innovative, are more flexible, and have higher employee morale (Osborne and Gaebler 1993).

Know that the development of an annual budget is part of a continuing planning process for fire agencies. Most are tied to the fiscal year beginning in July through June. The introduction of decision-making, integration of planning, and budgeting at the department level; however, state laws require the approval of a budget using a public forum by its governing board. Beyond the requirements for federal and state programs, the budget preparation process and related responsibilities will largely be determined by the city, county, or district financial accounting principles approved through a resolution. We encourage every Chief Officer to identify which type of budget is used for accounting and insist on being part of its process in planning.

In summary, the budgeting process is an integral part of the sound financial management of any fire department. Adequately planning and managing the entity's resources play important roles as the movement for greater accountability expands in importance. Sound budgeting techniques are being emphasized as fire administrators and their program managers require a heightened level of justification for annual expenditures and decentralized decision-making. Resource management and cost depreciation on capital purchases are areas Chief Officers need to be familiar with to assist fiscal managers, who are often non-safety, to understand the needs and necessities of our mission. However, regardless of which budgeting technique is adopted, some benefits of preparing and managing a budget remain the same: greater control and accountability over financial resources as well as the demonstration that administrators are actively planning for future needs.

Chapter 10

Communications – up and down the organization

Description:

The art of communications will be described in this chapter and provide guidelines for achieving an effective flow of information throughout the department. When people are skilled in communications and communication channels are properly maintained, then all levels of the organization will have the information needed to keep operations and support functions on track. Communication skills – whether verbal or written – are core competencies expected in virtually any position within the fire department. The ability to communicate with employees at every level in the organization and the elected officials are especially important for managers who want to improve the department's mission, the performance, and the productivity of the employees under their supervision.

Purpose:

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information regarding the basic elements of effective communication. Also, it is intended as a reference for Chief Officers who want to assess and improve their organizational communications skill set. One note to be made, as technology is opening up new methods of verbal and visual content, there is much more of a need to ensure proper grammar is used and avoid slang and pneumonic for the sake of ease.

Download:

It is best to say, effective communication is an art form and skill set that is used daily in our work environment on both a professional and informal basis. The use of technology in today's information sharing, such as electronic, multimedia, and person-to-person, invites several challenges to the distribution of information to your personnel. Remember that all forms of communications are public records, and as such, can be requested under the Public Records Act, for emails, cellphones, text messages, and written documents. Be that as it may, our desire for this chapter is to support chief officers to improve their communication skills. One other caveat to point out when a chief officer (gold badge) says something, it is taken as ‘golden.’ Try your best not to hold ‘hallway’ discussions that ask for an opinion or question the direction of the organization or policies and procedures. Below are some guidelines to improve how to keep your personnel involved at all levels of the organization and to develop healthy communication pathways:

- ✓ Meet weekly

  Getting together as a team regularly is one of the best ways to create a professional environment in which all team members feel comfortable communicating with each other. Weekly team meetings, in particular, can help break down any communication barriers between managers and employees by allowing each team member to talk openly about some of the following topics:

  - Projects they’re working on
  - Challenges they’re facing
  - Questions they might have

One way to improve communication in meetings like these is to keep them relatively informal. Managers should keep the conversation moving naturally, but also make sure everyone is given adequate space to speak and feels safe doing so.

- ✓ Regular One on One meeting

  Because communicating in groups can be difficult for some people, a good manager should create additional avenues of communication for their employees. The regularly held one-on-one meeting offers the perfect space for more direct conversation between managers and employees, and it's also a great way to learn about each other's preferred communication styles. Depending on your department, one on one meetings can take the form of a quick informal conversation about projects and ideas, or they can be more structured and formal. Whichever form you take, keep in mind that this is your opportunity to connect and collaborate with your employees. It's a chance to figure out solutions, have a frank conversation about work, and safer venting process to improve understanding.

- ✓ Managers – keep employees in the loop

  Good communication relies upon everybody being in the loop, and one of the best things you can do is communicate what is happening at the department level. Many employees feel like they are disconnected from decisions made by management. One study shows that up to 25% of employees who file complaints about their jobs did so because they felt like they were kept in the dark. Here are some more troubling findings:

  - Only 10% of employees surveyed were aware of their department's progress in real-time.
  - 4 out of 5 employees surveyed wanted to hear more frequently from their bosses about how their department was doing.

- More than 90% of employees surveyed said they would rather hear bad news than no news.

Keeping your employees informed not only improves communication, but it’s also a simple way to build trust and cultivate a shared cause or purpose.

- ✓ Employees – get to know your manager

  This is pretty straightforward. Some people tend to think of their managers as unapproachable, infallible, scary people. But as a manager, you need to allow your employees to know you as a person, not just a boss. And if you seem to be unapproachable, find a way to open up with informal talks. Maybe at the dining table.

- ✓ Take advantage of tools that improve communication

In today’s technology, several tools are designed to improve workplace communication. Whether it’s a chat app, intranet, or something else entirely, taking advantage of the right tool can go a long way toward improving how you communicate with your manager or employees.

Some people prefer informal written communication (chat discussions, etc.) in the workplace, others prefer direct face-to-face discussions, and still, others prefer a combination of the two depending on the situation. A communication tool like a news stream, for instance, provides one additional option for communicating project objectives, and expectations, voicing concerns or giving props about the best types of communication tools.

- ✓ Ask for and give feedback

  The majority of employees (and managers) are unsure about how they’re performing in their roles. This can have a tremendous impact on self-confidence, and subsequently how open and direct they are in their communication. One potential solution to this problem is to regularly ask for (and give) feedback on performance. Give them a shout out in your next weekly meeting. The same goes for negative feedback. Is an employee not performing up to expectations? Explain how they might overcome that challenge. Is a manager neglecting the team? They should be open to hearing if that's the case. And if this isn't already a common practice at your workplace, you can always introduce it to your leadership team.

Conclusion

Improving communication between you and employees is one of the most important steps your department can take toward creating a more cohesive and collaborative workplace. Break down those barriers, clear out the blockages, and start communicating openly and freely or something else entirely, taking advantage of the right tool can go a long way towards improving how you communicate with your employees. Some people prefer informal written communication in the workplace, others prefer direct face-to-face discussions, and still, others prefer a combination of the two depending on the situation. How you communicate says a lot about your openness and willingness to have an honest discussion about them and the department.

Chapter 11

Priorities and Schedule Management

"Efficiency is doing things right; Effectiveness is doing the right things."
Peter Drucker

Contributing Author

Battalion Chief Zacary Wells, Kern County Fire

Description:

One of the biggest challenges for Chief Officers is accurately prioritizing the work that matters daily. In this chapter, you will learn how to prioritize and schedule which means getting more out of the limited time you have each day. It's one of the cornerstones of productivity and once you know how to properly prioritize and schedule, it can help with everything from your time management to work-life balance.

Purpose:

Making prioritization choices seems like one of the biggest challenges for Chief Officers, particularly newly promoted Chiefs, who have not been mentored about the daily administrative tasks of their job. Prioritization choices on a day-to-day basis in our professional lives as well in our personal lives can cause stress leading to paralysis in decision making. Which task should I do first? Is this task relevant to my goals? Is it worth spending so much time on this task? Unfortunately, not enough people ask these questions daily. Largely because prioritization and scheduling are complex tasks, but also because they aren't aware of how to do them effectively.

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The Urgent-Important Matrix also referred to as Eisenhower Matrix, helps you decide on and prioritize tasks by urgency and importance, sorting out less urgent and important tasks which you should either delegate or not do at all. Learn to focus on priorities – this is the most important quality that requires the patience and discipline a chief officer must use if they want to succeed in the daily tasks and concentrate on the priorities of the Fire Chief and the organization. Here are some common areas to consider:

- ✓ Avoid getting swamped in details – One needs to maintain a global picture of the results for the organization, to carry out the meaningful and measured outcome of goals to accomplish the vision for the department. Some of the near-miss experiences pitfalls and traps include isolation that easily Boggs down chiefs with too many emails or guiding others in their tasks through email. They fail to get out to walk and talk with the troops.
- ✓ Know how to select individuals to fit the task – a Fire Chief of a metropolitan department in Southern California said at the workshop, that "in the next five to seven years (circa 2019) their organization will lose the whole executive team due to retirement." He went on to say that the strategy for the fire service in the future is to select the person(s) for their skill set that serves the needs of the department for the greater good of its citizens.
- ✓ While public safety employment encourages a competitive process for advancement, Operation Chiefs have a huge responsibility to assist the organization in selecting skilled Chief Officers through mentoring and coaching toward advancement. Thereby allowing the Fire Chief to use his/her authoritative discernment to pick the right candidate when the time comes.

- ✓ Trust others to do a job without the leader's meddling – it has been pointed out that mentoring is the top priority of Ops Chiefs to ensure the success of their organization in the future. When we fail to trust those, we have selected to perform the task, then it is necessary to re-evaluate our process of selection and mentorship. Your success is seeing that your Chief Officer team has been supported, counseled, and trained to be successful.

There are prioritization and scheduling processes that we think can help answer some of the details listed above. It is called the *Eisenhower Matrix*. Using a 4-quadrants matrix below, you can categorize your priorities or tasks based on four possibilities of the urgency and importance of a task.

Knowing how to prioritize tasks and the art of scheduling them, will be the success of you, your team, and your role as a leader. All projects—especially large, complex projects—need clear priorities. Easier said than done. You can count on technical projects, no matter how well-planned, to involve change orders, re-prioritization, and the regular appearance of surprises. It's just the natural order of things. One of the biggest challenges for Chief Officers and their Supervisors is accurately prioritizing the work that matters daily. Even if you have the best project management software on the planet, you're the one who enters information into the tool. Just as you have to be diligent and have the right kind of project insight to ensure that nobody's working on yesterday's priorities. It takes a lot of practice to get this right.

Finally, in this modern world, a lot of things can distract us from doing our work. These include camera phones, mobile devices, gadgets, the World Wide Web (especially Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), and many more. Put away the things that distract you. Don't check your inbox every minute; you can do this during your breaks from work or schedule time slots in your day to check. Once you learn to pay less attention to these things, getting the job done will be much easier. The key to productivity is good time management (scheduling). Prioritizing is difficult but it is also essential if you want to get things done. Aside from being more efficient and productive, it will also help you alleviate stress in your life. Learning how to prioritize is not an impossible task; you just have to determine what needs to be done and how much time you need to do it.

Chapter 12

Data Analytics – Supporting Fire Operations

Contributing Author

Deputy Chief Mike Cox, ESRI - Director of Fire & EMS Solutions

Description:

As the fire service continues to evolve, we must do a better job telling our story. The fire service saves lives every day. Response times are no longer the entire story. A Chief Officer will not be successful without this ability to demonstrate and authenticate its measured results. Data will drive decision-making, what resources are dispatched to 911 calls, funding for additional resources, and justifications for almost every problem that will arise. A Chief Officer that monitors and can interpret data, identify trends, and implement corrective measures before they ever become a problem will be an effective team member of the management staff.

Purpose:

A growing number of public safety agencies are turning to data analytics to drive strategic decision-making processes. A data-driven decision is a norm for elected officials, stakeholders, and community leaders. It is not just anecdotal information to determine how their fire departments were performing. It is tied to decisions on a wide range of critical issues such as funding, apparatus purchases, station placement, and staffing are backed and validated using data obtained from a wide variety of sources. Data analytics is the task of extracting meaning from raw data using customized computer storage systems. These systems segregate, organize, and model the data to draw conclusions and identify patterns. While data analytics is generally used when referring to large data criteria, it can be used with any type of historical data. There are many programs and professional organizations that can produce real-time data for operational decision-making, of which for this writing ESRI and Intterra – are two products that are used by fire agencies in California according to our survey. Our focus is to explore how to improve situational awareness from streaming data whether tracking moving assets or stationary sensors using location-powered analytic tools. In addition, exploring the needs of fire agencies who are considering such endeavors as accreditation which require data analytics to tell their story.

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Data analytics is the task of extracting meaning from raw data using customized computer systems. These systems segregate, organize, and model the data to draw conclusions and identify patterns. Data is powerful factual or statistical information that fire departments can analyze to measure performance in the areas of response times, on-scene time, service calls, drawdown, training, injury and fire prevention, or any other area for reporting performance purposes. Identifying areas of performance or improvements, that benefits management and labor in seeking improved situation awareness and firefighter safety is the goal. Data can also support departments with the recruitment and retention of personnel. According to Pew Research, more than a third of the American workforce are millennials, making them the largest generation in the U.S. labor force. Social impact is key for this generation. The right vision allowing millennials to use their skillset in these environments can be an asset for fire organizations. Data is also vital to assessing the community needs and the impact of public safety being provided, as well as trending analysis for future deployment and planning needs.

Fire organizations are collecting large amounts of information that are typically siloed (isolated) either by design by Information Technology (IT) encryption or servers that are shared with law enforcement that typically lockout information from being shared.

The term, *interoperability* is key for the design of data collection systems. It applies to the use of technologies that can bridge disparities between the data format, software, and hardware that constitute various computer-aided systems in various jurisdictions to work with each other.

Location Intelligence

Fire and emergency medical service (EMS) agencies of every size use spatial data to improve their preparedness, response, and risk reduction programs. Agencies gather reliable, actionable information that every fire and EMS service professional can use anytime, anywhere. Esri technologies can be used to improve your planning, communication, and collaboration to realize better outcomes.

Predictive Intelligence

Let employees visualize more focused work by integrating workflows with machine learning. This leads to new connections difficult for Firefighters to understand across shifts or time. Predictive intelligence potential for automation of tasks or the performance of tasks that are nearly impossible for humans to complete in a timely fashion. Examples of predictive intelligence include using predictive modeling tools that utilize historical CAD data, GIS map data, and designer algorithms to project the impact of deployment changes on response times and availability. These deployment changes include new stations or closed stations, changes to apparatus locations, or changes to transportation infrastructure.

Community Risk Reduction

The first step in making a data-driven decision is to understand the risks to the communities we serve. These risks can be man-made, or naturally occurring. These can include preventable injuries, controllable health risks (obesity/diabetes), severe weather, flooding, and less common risks including terrorism, mass casualty incidents (active shooter), hurricanes, earthquakes, and major hazardous material releases.

This Community Risk Reduction (CRR) cycle identifies risks in the given community and allows public safety agencies to prioritize those risks. This initial step in CRR allows for mitigation efforts, planning, and the ability to make data-driven decisions to deploy resources. This is accomplished by gathering and analyzing data—in other words, acquiring information about what is occurring within your community. The data will be used to identify both current risks and trends based on historical information.

GIS provides the ability to present this data in a visual perspective that easily communicates the risk within a community. It also allows public safety officials to analyze multiple data sets to determine how these risks will impact citizens, infrastructure, and the environment.

Accreditation

Responders make critical decisions based on limited information every day. Agencies should strive to generate verified data for emergency and nonemergency needs to provide that responder with the right data at the right time. Fire and EMS departments generate a large amount of data that can be used to identify emerging threats, monitor performance measures, and develop resource deployment models based on verifiable intelligence.

GIS is used to analyze, measure, and share data with command staff to allow for decisions based on verified data. This data can come from computer-aided dispatch software (CAD), records management systems (RMS), community risk reduction activities, or nearly any data source deemed appropriate by the agency.

Appropriate data analysis and the communication of that analysis to our personnel, elected officials, and the public can impact the long-term health of an organization. The ability to tell the organization's story will affect staffing, fleet, station construction, and fiscal decisions.

The accreditation process is a perfect example of the appropriate use of data. As defined by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE), accreditation is "An all-hazard, quality improvement model based on risk analysis and self-assessment that promotes the establishment of community-adopted performance targets for fire and emergency service agencies". This model of continuous improvement is heavily dependent on the collection and analysis of data. Esri provides this data in a geospatial context that allows for a more effective analysis.

Public safety is continuously analyzing data. Every response generates data for after-action reporting, performance measures, and the identification of successful outcomes. These analyses can be supported through the use of location intelligence. The benefit of using the appropriate GIS data to measure performance and focus resources can be wide-reaching.

Identify and protect populations at risk – a community risk assessment, performed for the accreditation process and community risk reduction programs, can identify high-risk occupancies (target hazards), at-risk populations, and areas of the community where prevention and public education programs should occur.

Increase responder safety – by identifying risk through a community risk assessment, pre-planning efforts can be focused on the highest risk occupancies. Responders can identify these hazards before the response. GIS allows agencies to share these assessments efficiently through a visual product to anyone deemed appropriate. These plans can be communicated in near real-time as they are generated or updated.

Budgetary Process – Gone are the days of anecdotal presentations to justify expenditures. Elected officials and the community want decisions based on verified data. GIS data can be presented in a way that easily identifies gaps in service delivery, at-risk areas of the community, and the impact of growth on a community. These stories can be communicated to elected leaders to justify the investment of public funding in the agency.

Drive time analysis, 90th percentile data visualization, and the presentation of high-risk areas can all be performed with GIS. Esri's solutions support the agency's accreditation process. These solutions provide direction on how to analyze the data and focus efforts on continuous improvement to reduce the risk for responders and the communities we serve.

Incident Management

GIS can help fire and EMS agencies' people, technology, and processes work together in a coordinated and collaborative way. These methodologies foster collaboration to enhance safety, manage risk and increase overall engagement during daily operations and complex incidents. Fire and EMS agencies can use GIS to make the most of existing resources and domain expertise to ensure tactical and strategic success in their missions.

This approach empowers organizations to achieve shared situational awareness by connecting multiple agencies with overlapping missions. Responders with shared interests communicate and better understand risks, community hazards, and threats. These responders collaboratively prepare to deal with known and potential issues. When incidents do occur, organizations are better able to work together to assess an unfolding situation, mitigate the risk, and ensure public safety.

GIS software is designed to capture, manage, analyze, and display all forms of geographically referenced information. GIS allows fire and EMS personnel to view, understand, and interpret incident data in ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends. It can weave data from multiple sources into one comprehensive view for effective decision-making. GIS software helps fire and EMS professionals answer questions and solve problems by looking at data in a way that is quickly understood and easily shared with any agency.

Modern public safety agencies need to do the following:

- Identify vulnerabilities and mitigate potential impacts through risk assessment and planning
- Collaborate seamlessly with other agencies to unify efforts during a crisis (before, during, after)
- Intelligently deploy responders and resources to quickly respond to and recover from complex emergencies
- Communicate with all stakeholders including residents, elected officials, public and private entities, and public agency members.
- Institutionalize data-driven decision-making and take advantage of big data as well as other disparate sources of information

For further references on data and technology, the reader should consider resources provided by the FIRESCOPE Emerging Information Technologies or the International Fire Chiefs Association (IAFC) Technology Council.