Las Vegas Fire and Rescue

Recruit Training Academy Evaluation
Evaluators

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- Darryl Martin
Key Stakeholders

- City of Las Vegas Managers Office
- Fire Department Management
- Fire Training Officers
- Floor Firefighters
Background

- Oct 2007 - Retirement of Fire Chief David Washington after 33 years
- City Manager and Deputy City Manager visit all fire stations
  - What qualities do firefighters want in new chief?
  - Unexpected feedback
    - Concerns about rookies and the Recruit Training Academy
- New head of training, Bertral Washington, wants to find out the validity of concerns and address as needed
Original Evaluation Focus

- Recruit Training Academy at Las Vegas Fire and Rescue
- Evaluate validity of floor firefighter complaints
- Identify weaknesses in physical, classroom and field training
- Recommend improvements
Change in Leadership

• New Fire Chief hired January 2008 – promoted from within department
• Bertral Washington moved to another department
• Captain Tom Miramontes promoted from “floor”
  - Has specific ideas about changes needed at the Recruit Training Academy and is implementing them
New Evaluation Focus

- Do firefighters leave the training academy with the skills needed to do the job?
  - Survey firefighters from first Academy of 2007, last Academy of 2006 and Paramedic Academy of 2006 on their experience at Academy
  - Survey all LVF&R Captains on their opinion of rookies
Survey Focus

• Based on concerns raised during City Manager visits to fire stations:
  – Recruits lack basic skills and fitness is poor
  – Fire Academy is too easy
  – LVF&R hires people who have failed other academies
  – Lower washout rate than other academies
  – Fire Training Officers (FTO’s) are “unprofessional”
Rookie Survey Results

- Rookie survey – 30 responses out of 39 surveys (77% response rate)
- 77% applied to other area fire departments
- Of those, 69% were not accepted
- 30% were accepted elsewhere and chose LVFR
Rookie Survey Results

- Overall Rookie Assessment of Academy

Degree of Overall Ability

- **Average**: 59%
- **Below Average**: 17%
- **Poor**: 3%
- **Excellent**: 7%
- **Above Average**: 14%
Rookie Survey Results

- Focused on skills
- Rating system
  - 30-60 = poor
  - 61-90 = below average
  - 91-120 = average
  - 121-150 = above average
  - 151-180 = excellent
Rookie Survey Results

- Personal protective equipment
Rookie Survey Results

- Hose pulls

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hose Pulls</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>120</th>
<th>150</th>
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<td>Poor</td>
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<td>Excellent</td>
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</table>

- Bank-Down Method
- Rain-Down Method
- Roll-On Method
- Foam Application
- Bumper Handline
- Freeway Pull
- Booster Handline
- 2-Persons Hose Pull
- Preconnected Hose Lines
- 1-Person Hose Pull
```
Rookie Survey Results

- **Hose lay evolutions**

![Hose Lay Evolutions Chart]

- Sharing a Supply Line
- 2.5 inch Single Reverse Feeder
- 2.5 Inch Handjack Feeder
- 2.5 inch Evolutions
- Hydrant Bag Attachment
- 2.5 inch Double Reverse
- 2.5 inch Double Staggered Reverse
- 5 inch Reverse Feeder
- 5 inch Handjack Feeder
- 5 inch Evolutions
- 5 inch Forward Feeder

**Score Categories**
- Poor
- Below Avg
- Average
- Above Avg
- Excellent
Rookie Survey Results

- Fireground Tasks

[Bar chart showing performance across various tasks]

- Hydrant Testing and Servicing
- Flammable Gas Cylinder
- Assisting Rescue Teams
- Protecting Evidence
- Ignitable Liquids
- RIT / Firefighter Safety
- Vehicle Extrication
- Fire Extinguisher
- Radio Communications
- Coordinated Fire Attack
- Ropes & Knots
- Tools Hoist
- Hydrant Connection

Performance Levels:
- Poor
- Below Average
- Average
- Above Average
- Excellent
Rookie Survey Results

- Power Tools

![Power Tools Chart]

- Power Tools Maintenance
- Rotary Saw
- Amkus
- Generator
- Chain Saw
- Blower

30 60 90 120 150 180
Poor Below Average Average Above Average Excellent
Rookie Survey Results

- Engine Company

![Bar chart showing survey results for Engine Company with categories: Hose Service Testing, Ground Monitor, Deluge Deck Gun, High-rise Evolution, and Standpipe / Sprinkler. The chart uses a color gradient from Poor to Excellent, with corresponding score ranges.]
**Rookie Survey Results**

- **Truck Company**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Below Avg</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above Avg</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forcible Entry - Overhead Door</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forcible Entry - Door</td>
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<tr>
<td>35' Ladder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louvering / Ventilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Search Victim Drag</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPV</td>
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<tr>
<td>24' Ladder</td>
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<tr>
<td>14' Ladder</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Rookie Survey Results

- Driver’s Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CEVO / Driver’s Performance Development</th>
<th>Rescue Bag</th>
<th>Rescue Rodeo - Road Course</th>
<th>Airbrake Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Below Avg</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above Avg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score Range: 30-180

- Poor
- Below Average
- Average
- Above Average
- Excellent
Captain Survey Results

- Captain survey – 34 responses out of 93 surveys (37% response rate)
  - 97% think Academy is too easy
  - 84% think recruits entering the academy are not prepared
  - 60% rated Clark County’s academy as the most difficult but -
  - 38% rated Henderson and 28% rated Las Vegas as best preparing recruits
Captain Survey Results

- Expectation of Academy graduate preparedness level

What level of preparedness should the Academy be reaching with recruits?

- Make trainees able to pass certification standards: 11%
- Prepares recruits for "real world fire training": 34%
- Prepares recruits to perform most techniques in a real world: 55%
Captain Survey Results

- What areas of Academy should be tougher?

Which area should be tougher?

- Skills development (use of tools, hose lays, etc.): 60.0%
- Physical fitness training: 40.0%
- Curriculum/Academic (theory, knowledge, etc.): 20.0%
- Other: 0.0%
Captain Survey Results

- What skill components do recruits typically need most work on when assigned to the floor for the first time

![Bar chart showing skill components and their percentage needs for rookies.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver's Performance</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Company</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Tools</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hose Lay Evolutions</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hose Pulls</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire-ground Tasks</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Skills</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

n=28
Captain Survey Results

- Captain Survey highly critical of Fire Training Officers (FTOs)
- Nearly 78% of Captains stated that FTOs do not understand the needs of the floor
- 27 out of 31 of Captains surveyed felt communication between the floor and the academy is lacking with regard to recruit performance
- 98% of captains indicated that the academy would improve if floor firefighters were more involved
- Make Academy benchmarks mean something again
Rookie Recommendations

- We need “real combat experience”/live fire training
- Have floor firefighters do the training
- Assign recruit to their probationary Captain early in rookie school
- Keep as many hands-on activities as possible
Captain Recommendations

- Move training officer positions out to the floor to improve communication
- Right after the Academy, training officer should be returned to the floor to work as firefighter until the next Academy begins
- There should be a section added in the Academy that covers Emergency Vehicle Operations.
- Upgrade training facility. Support with working apparatus and equipment
Captain Recommendations

- Recruit should spend time performing on-the-job training while still in the academy
- Have captains, battalion chiefs and firefighters from the floor train the recruits
- Spend time as fifth rider on units
  - Will give captains opportunity to evaluate recruits prior to them being on probation
  - Opportunity to supervise and train on the floor like an apprenticeship
  - Do this periodically throughout the Academy
The Final Analysis

Address disconnect between academy and floor
Why be an FTO?

- Lower pay due to no or low overtime
- Work 40 hour 5-day work week
- Stigma – “just not good enough for the floor”
Long Beach Model

- Six categories of instructors deliver the recruit academy training
  1. Training Captains permanently assigned to the Training Center
  2. Specially detailed operations instructors assigned full time to the Training Center for the duration of the Academy
  3. Specially detailed firefighter-paramedics assigned to conduct the EMT course
Long Beach Model

- Six categories of instructors deliver the recruit academy training
  4. Nurse Educators (RN’s) assigned to oversee and teach the EMT course
  5. Peer instructors participate on a voluntary and as needed basis
  6. Specialty instructors teach subject matter requiring significant depth of knowledge and experience
Long Beach Model

- EMT course taught during the first three weeks of the Academy
  - Taught by two paramedics and the Nurse Educators
- Operations instructors teach basic fire and rescue skills during the final 11 weeks
  - One training Captain is selected for every four recruits
  - Academy of 24 recruits, there will be six operations instructors
  - Seventh Training Captain serves as the Academy Coordinator
Long Beach Model

- Specialty instructors used during the 14 week Academy
- Peer instructors also used
  - May include as many as 25 volunteers
    - Some providing a few hours of time, while others give several hours over the course of several days
    - Excellent source of future training officers for the Academy
Clark County Model

- **Fire Department Training Instructors**
  - Hired from outside the department
  - Responsible for day to day operation of Academy
  - Teach all classroom training
  - Report to Fire Department Training Officer

- **Fire Department Training Officer**
  - Promotional position for floor firefighter
  - Under supervision of deputy fire chief
  - Five years minimum experience as a Fire Training Instructor II
Clark County Model

- Three levels of firefighters volunteer to come off floor for duration of Academy
  - Captain is assigned to oversee the school
  - Engineers assigned to teach Apparatus sections of training
  - Firefighters teach hands-on skills and live fire exercises
  - Academies generally 20 weeks
  - Number of floor personnel assigned to academy depends on size of class (40 rookies will require 8-10 firefighters from the floor)
Phoenix Model

- Once recruit is placed on the floor:
  - Probationary Management Officer assigned to monitor recruit and provide assistance when recruit is having problems
  - 3 stations, 3 months each, 3 evaluations (2 engines & 1 ladder at least)
  - Recruits evaluated on a physical component, not just a paper evaluation
  - Must pass the evaluation/testing
  - Final Evaluation to remove from probationary status with physical motor skill component must be passed
Los Angeles Model

- Multi agency committee called the LAFD Quality Assurance Unit
  - Objective oversight of recruits throughout probationary period
  - Objective to provide independent, essential component for assurance and maintenance of consistent, objective training instruction and performance
  - Interview academy staff and graduates to identify policies and procedures that affect recruit training
  - Preceptor – train the trainer
  - QAU Officers attend the 4, 7 and 10-month probationary firefighter field evaluations
Evaluation Team

Recommendations

- FTO training
  - Consistency
    - FTOs need to discuss and coordinate manipulative skills training
  - Ongoing professional FTO training
  - Improve communication between FTOs and floor
    - Academy Orientation for Captains
Evaluation Team

Recommendations

- Involve floor firefighters in recruit training
  - Various options for implementation
  - Potential obstacles pulling firefighters from floor to provide training
    - Pay - provide premium and opportunities for overtime
    - Union - negotiate premium
    - Coverage – may require additional personnel
    - Consistency - train the trainer
Evaluation Team
Recommendations

Additional options

- Create pre-academy class
- Do floor orientation
- Schedule ride along for recruits
- On-the-job training
Evaluation Team
Recommendations

- Assign recruit to probationary Captain early in the Academy
- Discuss strengths and weaknesses with recruits and Captains throughout training
- FTOs and Captains should meet toward end of training to discuss strengths and weaknesses of recruits
Evaluation Team
Recommendations

- Probationary Period
  - Upon assignment to station assign a floor firefighter as mentor
  - Establish three evaluations during the probationary period to be completed by all of the officers recruits interact with on the floor
  - Firefighter 1 Test – Captains develop test, written portion administered by HR, physical skills test

- Establish and use benchmark to determine if Academy changes are effective