



CITY OF WILMINGTON

Fire Training

Internal Audit Review

February 1, 2022

City Auditor's Office

Terence J. Williams
City Auditor
(302) 576-2165

Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

Internal Audit (IA) performed a scheduled audit of the Fire Department's training program. The audit was in accordance with the 2021 Internal Audit Plan.

Methodology

The objectives were met by performing research, interviewing City of Wilmington staff, reviewing existing policies & procedures, City Code sections pertaining to the Fire Department, performing a review of training documents, and other pertinent data in Munis.

Audit Review Committee:

Ronald Pinkett, Chair

Marchelle Basnight
Angelique Dennis
Chris Johnson
James Spadola
Tanya Washington

Objective and Scope

As part of our audit plan, Internal Audit (IA) conducted a Performance Audit of the Fire Department's training program. The objective of this engagement was to determine whether sufficient controls were in place to ensure that firefighters are currently certified, trainers are qualified and training courses are available for firefighters to meet certification requirements. The scope includes all aspects of fire training program and requirements. The period of coverage is July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. Additional information may be needed from prior periods. IA believes the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards ("GAGAS"). These standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis our findings and conclusions are based on our audit objectives.

Background

During the scope of this engagement, the Fire Department was operating six fire stations and one marine unit which consisted of six engine companies, two ladder companies, and one squad company with a work rotation (24-hour shift followed by 72 hours off duty) of four platoons (A, B, C & D) which includes a total of 156 authorized uniformed employees. Each platoon is the responsibility of two assigned Battalion Chiefs and each company has an assigned Company officer. The Company Officer is generally a Captain or Lieutenant. There are several positions that make up the fire department which could consist of a Probationary Fire Fighter, Fire fighter, Senior Fighter, Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief and Deputy Chief. When a new fire fighter is hired, he/she is classified as a Probationary Fire Fighter for the first year, while completing initial training requirements to become a Fighter I & II; all Fire fighters are required to complete and maintain National Registry of Emergency Medical Technician (NREMT) or National Registry of First Responders (NREMR) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification throughout employment. After the completion of six years, Senior Fire Fighter status is achieved, and the employee becomes eligible to partake in the promotional process for Lieutenant that occurs every two years. The same process is followed for a Lieutenant who's eligible for the promotion process for Captain. Battalion Chief and Deputy Chiefs are appointed positions. Each position serves as an essential part of the Fire Suppression Division.

The Wilmington Fire Department mission states “To work in partnership with the citizens of Wilmington in effort to provide an effective and professional response to all man-made or natural hazards with well-trained emergency services personnel to provide a safe environment and enhanced quality of life for all.” To accomplish this goal, it is essential to have a thorough training program. Having a well-rounded training program prepares and improves employee skills and helps the department establish performance standards.

WFD’s mission coincided with the City Ordinance Chapter 3 Sec. 5-300 (d) Maintenance, etc., of firefighters. The department shall train, equip, maintain, supervise, and discipline an adequate number of firefighters. According to the Personnel Procedure section of the Fire Department manual it is the responsibility of the Battalion Chief and Captain of Safety & Training to pre-plan and coordinate training. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1401 5.1.3 states that the “Authority Having Jurisdiction” (AHJ) should decide what objectives and categories of training. Therefore, the AHJ should use NFPA, OSHA and ISO standards to help with establishing a training program. The Fire Departments AHJ Standard Operating Procedure states that the Company Officer will conduct Company level training for a minimum of two hours every tour of duty and the Battalion Chief may also conduct Platoon level training depending upon the needs of the Department.

Evaluation and Observation

For the purposes of testing, we focused particularly on the Fire Suppression Division of the Wilmington Fire Department. We selected a sample of 10 employees to determine if each met the training requirements for their position and rank. In addition, all training and attendance records were reviewed and evaluated from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. Training records were evaluated based on but not limited to NFPA 1401 4.2.2 recommendations and other industry training programs.

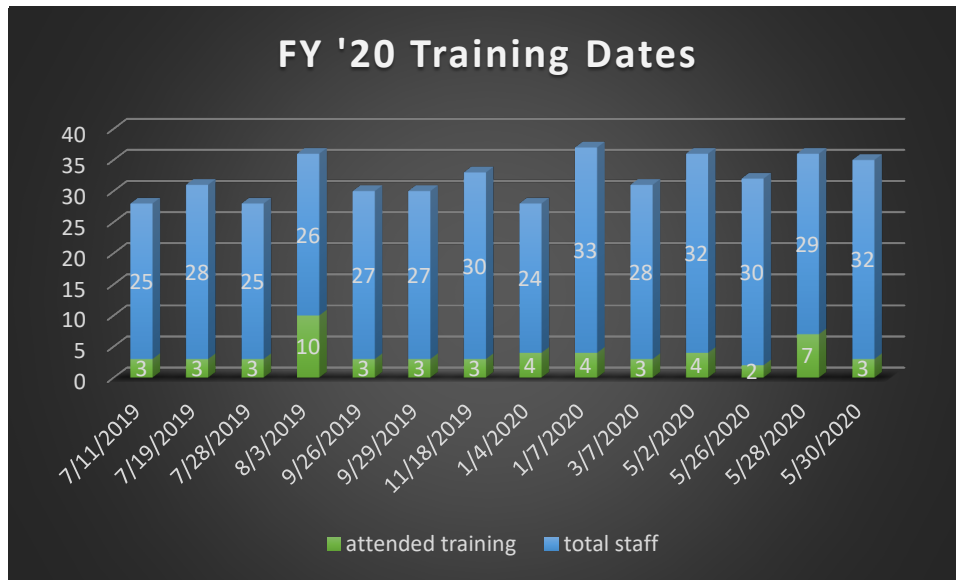
Five Evaluation Elements (NFPA 1401 RECOMMENDATION)

- 1) Who
 - a) Who was the instructor?
 - b) Who participated?
 - c) Who was in attendance?
 - d) Who is affected by the documents?
 - e) Who was included in the training (individuals, company, multi-company, or organization)?
- 2) What
 - a) What was the subject covered?
 - b) What equipment was utilized?
 - c) What operation was evaluated or affected?
 - d) What was the stated objective and was it met?
- 3) When
 - a) When will the training take place? Or
 - b) When did the training take place?
- 4) Where
 - a) Where did the training take place? Or
 - b) Where will the training take place?
- 5) Why
 - a) Why is the training necessary? Or
 - b) Why did the training occur?

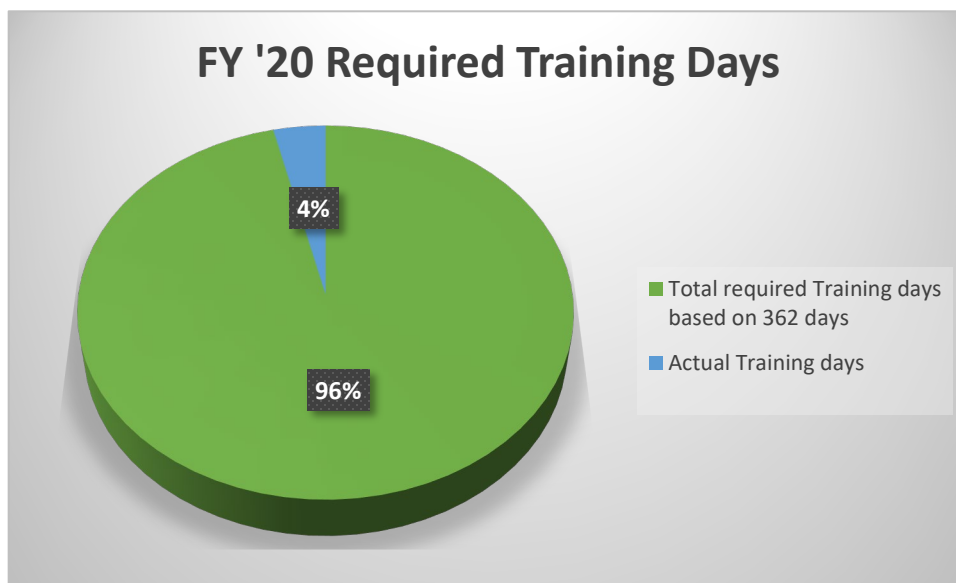
Additional Recommendations

- 1) Source of the information used as a basis for the training
- 2) Method of training used for delivery
- 3) Evaluation of training objectives

Key Statistics



The graph above shows the days training was actually conducted and is a representation of the total number of employees that were on duty for those specific days compared to those that attended training.



The chart above shows the total number of required days for training compared to the actual days training was conducted. There was a total of 362 (724 hours) required training days and of those days training was conducted for only 14 days; of those 14 days only 7 days met the minimum requirements of 2 hours each tour of duty for a total of 21.25.

What we found

Key Findings

Following are key issues that resulted in a process/area to be risk rated a three or four. See **Attachment A** for the detail of these and all comments identified during the review.

| Risk Ranking: | | (See Attachment B for full rating definitions) | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Process / Area | Process / Area Owner | 1 Strong Controls | 2 Controlled Effectively | 3 Controlled - Improvement Required | 4 Significant Improvement Required |
| Compliance | | | | | ✓ |
| Errors & Omissions | | | | ✓ | |
| Policies & Procedures | | | | ✓ | |

Compliance

1. Noncompliance of City Code Ordinance, Article V, Chapter 3 Sec. 5-300 (d) “Maintenance, etc., of firefighters. The department shall train, equip, maintain, supervise, and discipline an adequate number of firefighters.” The Fire department did not properly maintain the firefighters’ training and certifications, as stated in the new employment packet. For instance, six out of 10 (60%) samples selected for testing had expired CPR certifications and three of 15 (20%) Fire Fighters that conducted training did not have Fire instructor credentials.
2. Noncompliance exists surrounding the Fire Department’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) regarding training requirements. SOPs state that Officers will conduct Company level training for a minimum of two hours every tour of duty. Unfortunately, records indicate that training was only conducted on 14 out of 362 days which excludes the following holidays Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Errors & Omissions

3. Inconsistent filing was noted, due to five training records F-33 forms being incorrectly placed in the wrong platoon file and one form not stating the amount of training hours.

Policies & Procedures

4. A lack of a comprehensive or systematic training program or manual to guide the training process exists. Based on this information, controls need strengthening to ensure that fire fighters are properly trained as stated in Article V, City Ordinance Chapter 3 Sec. 5-300 (d).

Management Responses to Audit Recommendations

Summary of Management Responses

Recommendation #1:

Management should establish a schedule (i.e., monthly, quarterly, or annually) to perform individual evaluations to ensure personnel are meeting standards. They should also review National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) practice 1401 for recommendations and standards to incorporate into their training process.

Management response & action plan:

The fire department has established a new record keeping system to better track required and proficiency training. Approximately 50% of the fire department has been trained and certified as a Fire Instructor and additional certification classes are planned within the next year to expand the credentials.

Completion Date: Completed

Recommendation #2:

Management should establish a schedule (i.e., monthly, quarterly, or annually) to perform departmental and company-level evaluations to ensure that officers are meeting their training requirements as stated in the departments SOP. Management should also ensure that training is properly recorded and monitored by conducting audits, periodic reviews, and assessments on training documents for effectiveness and accuracy. They should also review NFPA practice 1401 for recommendations and standards. Although, the NFPA 1401 practices are not mandatory, it presents a systematic approach to providing essential information for training records, reports and managing the training function of the fire service organization.

In addition, Management should ensure that training documents are computerized so that reports can be created and analyzed in a timely manner.

Management response & action plan:

The fire department has instituted a new record keeping program that better allows the tracking of the required company schooling. We have internally learned that possibly hundreds of hours of company training sessions were conducted under the review period, but not properly documented at the company level. Training has been conducted with all personnel on how to properly document company training session hours. A monthly training topic list has been created and recommended company training topics have been provided to all company officers and battalion chiefs.

Effective September 1, 2021, the fire department has eliminated the F-33 Training Form and now is exclusively using the Aegis Fire Records data system to track all company continuing education and department training. The fire department is also currently restructuring the Training Division to allow for more supervisory staff to administer the training. The use of the electronic data management system and the additional training staff will allow the fire department management to conduct audits and reviews and ensure adequate training is being conducted and documented properly.

Completion Date: Completed

Recommendation #3:

Management should consider using the New World Aegis Fire Data Management System located on the departments PC to computerize training documents, in an effort to lessen human error.

Management response & action plan:

The F-33 Training Form has been eliminated and all company schooling, and training is now entered into the New World Aegis Fire Data Management System, effective September 1, 2021.

Completion Date: Completed

Recommendation #4:

Management should develop a comprehensive training program considering areas of improvement, new skills and technologies, any mandated training, and needs of the community etc.

They should also build an annual training plan that details monthly training objectives. The training schedule should be distributed to personnel and posted in clear view.

In addition, Management should create a comprehensive training template and revise the F-33 form to include pertinent information such as time and signatures. Overall, they should seek industry standard examples and review NFPA 1401 for additional recommendations

Management response & action plan:

The Training Division for the fire department has been understaffed and underfunded for many years. The lack of a comprehensive or systematic training program is a direct result of the lack of supervisory and overall staffing of the Training Division. The fire department is currently restructuring portions of the administration to allow for more staff in the Training Division. The goals of the fire department are to use the additional staff in the Training Division to create a more comprehensive and robust annual training program to meet Chapter 3 Sec. 5-300 (d) of the City Ordinance. The F-33 form has now been eliminated and Aegis Fire Data system is now more accurately recording training times and entries.

Completion Date: Completed

Audit Team

MaDonna Woodson, Senior Auditor
Tamara Thompson, Audit Manager