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TRAINING PACKET:

2014 Erie County Firefighter 1 Pilot Delivery Model Initiative

BACKGROUND:

A collaborative effort between the Erie County Department of Emergency Services and our county's volunteer fire departments has created huge successes in volunteer firefighter recruitment as well as challenges in training the more than 1,300 new recruits who have joined the Erie County Volunteer Fire Service since January-2012.

While these numbers certainly buck the national trend of a decline in volunteerism and speak highly of the good people of Erie County, this sheer volume of new volunteers exceeds our ability to provide them with their basic Firefighter 1 training in a timely manner; creating a situation that is counter-productive to our ongoing recruitment and retention efforts.

For several years, the NYS Office of Fire Prevention & Control has struggled to satisfy the total demand for training that our fire service seeks. Our volunteer firefighters already wait extended lead times for the opportunity to attend basic and advanced level training courses, despite Erie County having the highest number of State Fire Instructors assigned to any county in the state.

While having so many new volunteers requiring training is a good problem to face, this creates a huge challenge in that they must be trained before they can participate in firefighting operations. If they can't participate, they're likely to lose interest and quit the fire service, and/or fail to meet their volunteer fire department's training requirements, possibly resulting in termination from membership. Nobody wins when this happens.

This situation has a direct and potentially negative impact on the operations of our volunteer fire departments. Investing all of our state fire instructor hours in teaching basic Firefighter 1 courses in turn cripples our ability to train our more experienced firefighters in advanced techniques. This "vicious cycle" of trading off continuing education for basic training frustrates our fire service leadership, creates conflict and eventually could possibly put our firefighters at risk, jeopardizing their safety and that of those they serve and serve with.

HISTORICAL INEFFICIENCIES:

We traditionally deliver (10-12) Firefighter 1 courses per year in Erie County. Based on recruitment statistics, we know that we need to be delivering 15-20 of these classes each year to keep up with current demand.

However, before we can look to add more offerings of the Firefighter 1 program we must first look to create a solution to make our current deliveries more efficient.

History has shown us that there is an average dropout rate in each Firefighter 1 course of 20-25%, which usually occurs as a result of a student's inability to successfully complete the air consumption test. This equates to 4-6 students per 24 person class.

When multiplied by the traditional number of Firefighter 1 courses delivered in Erie County each year, this equates to a loss of 40-72 students each year, which is the equivalent of 2-3 full courses. This is an inefficiency that none of us can afford.

PILOT PLAN:

We recently developed and proposed a new Firefighter 1 training delivery model that has been approved for piloting by NYS OFPC.

Instead of delivering a 91-hour traditional Firefighter 1 course straight through from start to finish; the same curriculum will be delivered in three separate but cohesive pieces:

1. Starting with a new 14-hour Orientation;
2. Followed by a traditional 16-hour HazMat First Responder Operations Course (HMFRO);
3. Concluding with the remaining 61-hours of traditional Firefighter 1 classroom and hands-on skills – as appropriate to the demonstrated capabilities of the student.

We are not changing the length of the course (91-hours), but are simply reorganizing it into three more-manageable and flexible blocks of time. Furthermore, a more efficient Scene Support Operations tract will be provided for those who are not best suited to achieve all of the skills necessary to receive a Firefighter 1 certificate.

Here's how we plan for it to work:

Instead of the traditional 2-hour Orientation that is held one or more weeks prior to the start of the course, we will start with a modified 14-hour Orientation that includes the following course units:

- Orientation (Attended by student and chief/training officer)
- Fire Department Organization and History; Firefighter Safety
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)
- SCBA Skills (Air Consumption Test)
- Fire Behavior and Building Construction

Regardless of whether or not the student passes all the hands-on components of the 14-hour orientation, they will progress to the next step (HMFRO), but not before the lead instructor determines and conveys the appropriate training path for them, shared with them as part of the class that reviews fire behavior and building construction.

Those who successfully complete all of the skills required in the 14-hour Orientation will be put on a training path to complete the Firefighter 1 course. Those who are unable to successfully complete all of the required skills will be put on a path to achieve a Scene Support Operations (SSO) and HazMat certificates.

For all students, the 14-hour Orientation will be followed by the requisite 16-hours of Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations (HMFRO). This is especially important in that historical data shows that most SSO students do not take this training – despite it being required for *all* incident participants (Firefighters, EMS, Fire Police, etc.)

Once a student completes the HazMat portion of the training, they will then follow on their *appropriate* training path towards successful completion.

- Those on the SSO path receive 9-hours credit for their participation in the 14-hour Orientation and will then complete another 18-hours of SSO training – to graduate with both a 27-hour SSO, and a 16-hour HMFRO certificate.
- Those on the Firefighter 1 training path will then complete the balance of 61-hours of training to successfully complete the 91-hour total Firefighter 1 course.

FORCE MULTIPLIER:

By offering two different training paths following completion of the 14-hour Orientation and 16-hour HazMat class, we are able to meet the training needs of each student appropriate to their demonstrated capabilities.

Reality is that interior firefighting is not for everyone, and the option of the Scene Support Operations course offers training to make them a safe, contributing member of the incident response team without preparing – or expecting them to go inside burning buildings.

Having two distinct training paths allows us the flexibility to maximize the efficiency of each program, both in student and instructor hours.

As shown in the example on the attached chart, if we launch five (5) Firefighter 1 courses simultaneously, with 24 students in each, we have the opportunity to train 120 students total.

The final location for hosting four (4) of those courses will already be pre-defined prior to launch. The fifth course will be designated as “Open Enrollment” and the students enrolled in it will not know their final destination for completing the course until after the 14-hour Orientations are completed.

Based on historical data, a total of approximately twenty (20) students will drop out of those five (5) Firefighter 1 courses launched simultaneously, following the (now) 14-hour Orientation, based on 4-dropouts each. These twenty (20) students will be guided towards the more appropriate Scene Support Operations training path, leaving us with one-hundred (100) Firefighter 1 students to train.

The twenty (20) remaining students (who successfully completed the 14-hour Orientation) in the Open Enrollment class offering will then be re-assigned into one of each of the four (4) remaining located Firefighter 1 courses, bringing their starting enrollment numbers to twenty-five (25) students per class.

The open enrollment Firefighter 1 class will be cancelled at that time, its remaining instructor hours saved, and the efficiency of the remaining four (4) classes will be maximized.

These four (4) classes of twenty-five (25) students each are then poised to graduate a total of one-hundred (100) trained Firefighter 1 students, while the Scene Support Operations class will satisfy the other twenty (20) students who started the process at the same time.

The total of 120 students we started with will all have the opportunity to graduate on the training path appropriate to their individual capabilities and, essentially “saving” an entire class’s worth of Firefighter 1 students each time this scenario plays out.

Replicating this scenario over four (4) full semesters could create an equivalent savings of four (4) or more whole Firefighter 1 courses each year, essentially allowing us to deliver the efficient equivalent of sixteen (16) courses for the cost and time to deliver twelve (12) courses inefficiently as we are now.

The attached charts diagram how this plan will play out, better than a written description can necessarily provide.

NOTE: We recognize that future performance may not match this historical data and the math of this scenario may not work according to plan. Thus, we are prepared to adjust the number of Firefighter 1 and/or Scene Support Operations courses delivered to match the abilities and needs of the student population enrolled in each “batch” of courses.

CONSISTENCY AND CONTINUITY:

It’s our intent that each and all of the 14-hour Orientations will be held at the Erie County Emergency Services Training & Operations Center (Fire Academy) in Cheektowaga. This is to maintain consistency and continuity in the set-up, execution and evaluation of the requisite hands-on skills, including the air consumption test.

This also allows us to take advantage of the capabilities our indoor training tower offers during the winter months, allowing us to extend our training season and divide our program into four (4) distinct semesters. However, this also prevents us from overlapping the Orientations on the same days/nights of the week as facilities are limited.

PRIORITIZING APPLICANTS:

Each semester, Firefighter 1 courses are distributed geographically to the appropriate Fire Control (Dispatch Center) area based on demonstrated need (recruitment statistics) and how recently a course was delivered in that area, as directed by the Erie County Fire Advisory Board.

Thus, priority for accepting registrations will be assigned in the following order:

1. To members of fire departments within the Fire Control that the course is assigned to, as indicated on the training schedule;
2. To members of fire departments closest to the Fire Control that the course is assigned to;
3. In order of applications received by date and time.

As most Firefighter 1 courses fill up quickly and quite often not all local applicants can be accommodated in the same class, the total number of students accepted from any one fire department may have to be limited to accommodate at least one applicant from each of the local fire departments submitting applications. (Ex. – It doesn't make sense that one department gets 20 new firefighters trained, while 19 other departments get 0 new firefighters trained).

Thus, it is imperative that Chiefs and Training Officers submitting applications for multiple recruits for the same class assign a priority number to each applicant. This number (with 1 being the highest priority candidate) can be written in the lower right hand corner of each application before it is sent in.

The Fire Advisory Board also strongly encourages fire chiefs to prioritize registering unrestricted-active firefighters who, with the appropriate training, can have an immediate impact on fire department operations vs. those designated as active firefighter-restricted or -trainee (junior firefighters, cadets, etc.) under the age of 18. Please remember that BSA Fire Explorers, unless also designated and covered under VFBL as active-firefighter members of the fire department, are prohibited from attending NYS OFPC courses.

PREPARING FOR THE STUDENT'S SUCCESS:

The more a fire department can do to prepare their candidate prior to the orientation and class start – the better their chances for successful completion of the course and of enjoying a positive first training experience.

Preparedness starts with the fire chief verifying that each student is medically cleared and physically capable of participating in and completing the skills included in the Firefighter 1 class, as required by both Erie County Fire Safety and NYS OFPC training policies.

The NYS OFPC Training Authorization Letter requires the fire chief to certify that the applicant:

- Has medical clearance to use Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) in accordance with OSHA 1910.134
- Is authorized to use SCBA and participate in interior/exterior firefighting evolutions

The Erie County Emergency Services Standard Training Course Application also includes space for the supervisor's (fire chief) signature "certifying that this applicant meets all pre-requisites and is eligible and authorized to attend this course."

Furthermore, the Erie County Fire Advisory Board has recommended that new recruits have a minimum of 90 days in the fire service before attending a Firefighter 1 course.

Our experience has been that this amount of time is needed for them to be adequately oriented and indoctrinated into the fire service, and for you to give them some basic knowledge and skills practice in PPE and SCBA use.

Too many recruits arrive for the first class not even oriented to their own fire department, and unprepared to be successful, which is counter-productive to our training, recruitment and retention efforts – and their first training experience.

Improving student preparedness for success also positively benefits the overall efficiency of our training program. While “quantity” is currently our biggest visible challenge, we must concentrate on doing everything possible to maintain and improve the quality of training we deliver. All of these efforts are first-and-foremost about the safety and positive training experience of the student.

To assist in preparing them to be successful, we encourage you to watch and review the following “Firefighter 1 Air Consumption Test” video with your candidates on our *Erie County ESU YouTube Channel* at: http://youtu.be/tvt4al_69k.

While students will not be completing a full, standardized CPAT-Candidate Physical Agility Test as required for some career firefighters, many of the skills in the SCBA Air Consumption Test will be similar. You may find this informational guide helpful:

<http://www.iaff.org/library/pdfs/hs/IAFF%20Manuals/CPAT%202nd%20Edition.pdf>

CLOSING:

We appreciate that it’s challenging to understand the big picture and all of the moving parts of a training system charged with meeting the needs of 97 fire departments and more than 5,000 firefighters – so we ask that you trust our efforts to satisfy all of it to everyone’s benefit and to the best of our abilities.

As this is clearly defined as a pilot program, we know that we may not fully realize the efficiencies and improvements that this delivery model could offer, in this first cycle of offerings. The reality is that we know our currently inefficient system is not an adequate solution to meet your demands. Thus, we will make adjustments as necessary and convey those changes to you as best we can.

Furthermore, this pilot delivery is in conjunction with a much larger training initiative that was recently approved by our Fire Advisory Board, the County Executive and the County Legislature. See “*2013 TRAINING RESOLUTION FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions*”

Thanks in advance for your patience and understanding as this new program rolls out. We hope that this document answers many of the questions you may have about this important training delivery model.

Please feel free to contact our office should you have any further questions or require more information.

As of: 1/29/14

NYS OFPC FIREFIGHTER 1 (FF1) & SCENE SUPPORT OPERATIONS (SSO) NEW DELIVERY MODEL PILOT – ERIE COUNTY – 2014

SECTION/ LESSON	FIREFIGHTER 1 (FF1)					SCENE SUPPORT OPERATIONS (SSO)					NOTES
	UNIT	CURRENT MODEL		NEW MODEL		UNIT	CURRENT MODEL		NEW MODEL		
		STUDENT HOURS	SFI HOURS	STUDENT HOURS	SFI HOURS		STUDENT HOURS	SFI HOURS	STUDENT HOURS	SFI HOURS	
<u>ORIENTATION</u>											
ORIENTATION	00	2	2	2	2	N/A	0	0	0	0	INCLUDED: SSO UNIT 1
FD ORG, FF SAFETY	1	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	0	
FIRE BEHAVIOR, BLDG CONST.	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	0	
PPE, SCBA	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	
SCBA SKILLS (AIR CONSUMPTION)	4	3	9	3	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
ORIENTATION SUB-TOTAL		14	20	14	20		9	9	9	0	INCLUDED: FF1 ORIENTATION
<u>HAZMAT FIRST RESPONDER OPS</u>											
HAZMAT FIRST RESPONDER OPS	21	4	4	4	4	N/A	4	4	4	0	
HAZMAT FIRST RESPONDER OPS	22	4	4	4	4	N/A	4	4	4	0	
HAZMAT FIRST RESPONDER OPS	23	4	4	4	4	N/A	4	4	4	0	
HAZMAT FIRST RESPONDER OPS	24	4	4	4	4	N/A	4	4	4	0	
HMFRO SUB-TOTAL		16	16	16	16		16	16	16	0	INCLUDED: FF1
<u>SCENE SUPPORT OPERATIONS</u>											
FD COM, FIRE PREVENTION & ED	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	3	3	3	
PORT. FIRE EXT., TOOLS, HOSE	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	12	3	12	
WATER SUPPLY	-	-	-	-	-	6	3	9	3	9	
ROPES/KNOTS, RESCUE, FINAL WRITTEN EXAM	-	-	-	-	-	7	3	3	3	3	
GROUND LADDERS	-	-	-	-	-	8	3	9	3	9	
FINAL SKILLS REVIEW	-	-	-	-	-	9	3	9	3	9	
SSO SUB-TOTAL							18	45	18	45	
<u>FIREFIGHTER 1 & ADMIN</u>											
FF1 LESSONS & SKILLS	5-20 25-28	61	165	61	165		-	-	-	-	
ADMIN HOURS		N/A	9	N/A	9		N/A	3	N/A	3	
TOTAL		91	210	91	210		27+16 HMFRO	73	27+16 HMFRO	48	SFI SAVINGS=25 HRS.

NYS OFPC FIREFIGHTER 1 (FF1) & SCENE SUPPORT OPERATIONS (SSO) NEW DELIVERY MODEL PILOT – ERIE COUNTY – 2014

LOCATION	NORTH	SOUTH	CENTRAL	WEST	OPEN ENROLLMENT	TOC	
	FIREFIGHTER 1	FIREFIGHTER 1	FIREFIGHTER 1	FIREFIGHTER 1	FIREFIGHTER 1		SCENE SUPPORT OPERATIONS
ORIENTATION START (14 HOURS)	24 STUDENTS	24 STUDENTS	24 STUDENTS	24 STUDENTS	24 STUDENTS	0	
-DROP	-4	-4	-4	-4	-4	-	
						+20 STUDENTS	
SUB-TOTAL	20	20	20	20	20	-	
RE-DISTRIBUTE OPEN ENROLLMENT STUDENTS						-20	
+ADD O/E STUDENTS	+5	+5	+5	+5	-	-	
ACTUAL START	25 STUDENTS	25 STUDENTS	25 STUDENTS	25 STUDENTS	CANCEL	20 STUDENTS	
HAZMAT FIRST RESPONDER OPS (16 HOURS)	[30]	[30]	[30]	[30]			
FF1 BALANCE (61 HOURS)	25 GRADUATES	25 GRADUATES	25 GRADUATES	25 GRADUATES			
SSO BALANCE (18 HOURS)						20 GRADUATES	
SFI HOURS SAVINGS					190 HRS.	TOTAL = 215 HRS	25 HRS.