Thomasville fire rescue

As part of our overall mission, the fire department continually strives to improve structural fire protection to reduce fire-related property losses, injuries, and fatalities. Measuring effectiveness, maximizing resources, and obtaining additional resources all play an important role in attaining an effective response force and meeting the demands for service.

Firefighter qualification and certification

As a Fire Rescue agency our goal is to operate an adequate, effective, and efficient fire suppression program directed toward controlling and/or extinguishing fires for the purposes of protecting people from injury or death, and reducing property loss. This includes the need to embrace and implement a culture of safety.

The requirements of a firefighter in the City of Thomasville include that all Firefighters must meet and maintain the training requirements and educational qualifications set forth by the Fire Rescue Chief and the City of Thomasville.

When it comes to firefighter professional job qualifications and certification in the fire service, it’s important to generate discussion and ask questions:

- Are qualification and certification levels up to date?
- Does certification meet industry standards?
- Are qualification and certification levels comprehensive enough to ensure operational readiness?
- Is the delivery of fire and rescue training sufficient and/or accurate for all personnel?
- Does training result in meeting qualifications and certification?
- Do we have a system in place that ensures our emergency responders’ qualification and certification is commensurate with the duties they’re expected to perform?
Training and education self-assessment

Thomasville firefighters are not meeting firefighter national minimum standards and industry best practices. Thomasville Fire Rescue firefighters at a minimum should be in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications 2013 Edition. This is the foundational training and certification for all fire service professionals. It is the first step in achieving all other National Standards qualifications and certifications.

This 2013 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications provides a basis of training for firefighter from entry level to Firefighter 2. The NFPA 1001 (Firefighter I and II) standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career firefighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature and the purpose of this standard is to ensure that persons meeting the requirements of this standard, who are engaged in firefighting, are qualified.

Thomasville firefighters do not meet the minimum training requirements of ISO. In 2012, Insurance Services Offices (ISO), the agency which determines fire insurance ratings through overall community preparedness, issued new guidelines for fire departments nationwide.

These guidelines state that firefighters training should be in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications 2013 Edition. ISO gives credit for the completion of Firefighter I and Firefighter II training/certification (in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1001).

Thomasville firefighters do not meet the certification requirements of the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council (GFSTC). The GFSTC provides certification standards for all firefighters, fire inspectors, fire investigators and fire & life safety educators in the state of Georgia.
Thomasville Fire Rescue is an agency member and holds a Certificate of Compliance as a Fire Rescue department with the GFSTC. GFSTC is accredited by the Pro Board Fire Service Professional Qualifications System (Pro Board) and makes certification available to its members.

Accreditation is the stamp of approval from a third party (Pro Board) review of an agency’s certification system. The review includes all aspects of certification testing including; completeness, fairness, security, validity and correlation to the national standards.

Certification is the verification that a candidate has successfully completed an evaluation of his/her knowledge, skills and abilities against the national standard. Individuals that successfully pass a certification exam and practical skills test are certified.

The primary goal of all training, education, and professional development programs is the reduction of occupational injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. As members progress through various job duties and responsibilities, the department should ensure the introduction of the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to members who are new in their job titles, as well as ongoing development of existing skills and updated job performance requirements.

These programs should include information to ensure that members are trained prior to performing individual duties, as well as ongoing professional development to ensure competency.

Training programs should include but not be limited to the following:

1. Community risk reduction (fire prevention, public education, investigation, etc.)
2. Health and safety
3. Fire suppression
4. Emergency medical
5. Human resources (leadership, supervision, interpersonal dynamics, equal employment opportunity, etc.)
6. Incident management system
7. Hazardous materials
8. Technical rescue
9. Information systems and computer technology
10. Position-specific development and certification (fire fighter, company officer, chief officer, investigator, inspector, driver/operator, etc.) Thomasville Fire rescue has a process in place to identify training needs, which identifies the tasks, activities, knowledge, skills, and abilities required to deal with anticipated emergency conditions. (See Appendix A)

The intent is to develop clear and concise job performance requirements (JPRs) that can be used to determine that an individual, when measured to the standard, possesses the skills and knowledge to perform as a fire fighter.

Through a process of evaluation TFR has identified minimum levels of training required for all positions in the organization. This includes minimum requirements for member qualifications through the National Pro Board (NPQ) Firefighter 1, Firefighter 2, Driver Engineer, and Company Officer training programs and certification.

The fire department shall provide training, education, and professional development for all department members commensurate with the duties and functions that they are expected to perform.

The fire department shall establish training and education programs that provide new members initial training, proficiency opportunities, and a method of skill and knowledge evaluation for duties assigned to the member prior to engaging in emergency operations.

**Firefighter.** All members who engage in structural firefighting shall meet the requirements of NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications.

**Engineer.** All driver/operators shall meet the requirements of NFPA 1002, Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications. (Statistics presented by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the United States Fire Administration (USFA))
indicate an alarming trend in the increased number of fire fighter fatalities and injuries associated with vehicle operations.) Fire departments respond with a variety of apparatus, and the members operating this apparatus must have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate this apparatus.

The first step in this process is to properly train and educate members on the various types of apparatus they could be required to operate.

NFPA 1451, Standard for a Fire Service Vehicle Operations Training Program, provides the curriculum for members to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the requirements of a fire service apparatus pumper and aerial operator.

The second step is to ensure that the fire department performs an annual proficiency evaluation of all drivers/operators as required.

Also, the training and education should address the standard operating procedures associated with vehicle operations, especially emergency response.

Officers. All fire officers shall meet the requirements of NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. It is vital that all fire officers have the necessary knowledge to safely and efficiently lead firefighters in the mitigation of emergency situations.

These are necessary components of the department’s plan to reduce the risks associated with firefighter, driver engineer, and fire officer professional responsibilities.

Each member should have the minimum qualifications and certifications for their assigned role(s). Training, job performance requirements, and certifications greatly reduce the likelihood of injury or death.

This provides a systems approach to ensure the safety and health of members and the citizens they serve.
Recommendations

- Identify training opportunities for department members.
- Adopt the following minimum standards:
  NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications;
- Comply with ISO Training Requirements for Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 by meeting the needed certifications of NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications.
- Meet the certification requirements of NPQ-Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council (GFSTC). Utilize these certification standards for all firefighters, driver operators, fire officers, fire inspectors, fire investigators, and fire & life safety educators.
- Ensure safety and professionalism by meeting the 2013 Edition of the NFPA Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications.
- Require personnel to participate in the necessary training, testing, and certifications to meet the requirements of NFPA 1001, 472 (Awareness/Operations-level), 1002, and 1021.
- Set a timeline for completion and certification. All TFR firefighters shall meet the certification to Firefighter 1, Firefighter 2, and Apparatus Operator (Pumper) by a set date. (example: Albany, GA Fire Department).
- Identify funding sources to supplement training funds when necessary (NPQ - Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training Council).
- Establish and maintain training, education, job performance requirements, performance evaluations, and a professional development program with a goal of preventing occupational deaths, injuries, and illnesses (TFR Annual Training Program).
Action Items

- **The Training Division has identified training opportunities for all department members.** The majority of the needed training has been offered on duty. Personnel needing training at the Georgia fire academy have been given the opportunity to attend.

- **The Training Division has completed the classroom hours needed towards the completion of Firefighter I and Firefighter II National Pro-Board Qualifications training** (in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1001) for all personnel involved in front line firefighting responsibilities.

- **The Training Division has completed the scheduling of classroom hours needed towards the completion of Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations-level National Pro-Board Qualifications training** in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 472 for all personnel involved in front line firefighting responsibilities (This includes Hazardous Materials Technician-level training for personnel who desire to meet this certification).

- In November and December the practical skills will be tested and all personnel will have had the opportunity to complete their certification. As of 4 November 2014, 13 personnel need their NPQ Firefighter 1 and 27 personnel need to meet NPQ Firefighter 2 requirements.

- **The Training Division has completed the classroom hours needed towards the completion of Driver Operator Pumper National Pro-Board Qualifications training** (in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1002) for all Engineer Driver personnel involved in front line firefighting responsibilities.

- As of 4 November 2014, all 14 Engineer personnel need their NPQ Driver Operator Pumper Certifications and 10 personnel have passed the written portion of the NPQ Driver Operator Pumper requirements.

- **Funding sources to supplement training funds when necessary for NPQ** - Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training Council and/or through the Georgia Fire Academy have been identified. The funding does not go outside the annual budget for training.

- **Establish and maintain a training,** education, job performance requirements, performance evaluations, and professional development program with a goal of preventing occupational deaths, injuries, and illnesses (TFR Annual Training Program).
Action items needing completion


- **Comply with ISO Training Requirements for Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 by meeting the needed certifications of NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications.**

- **Require personnel** to participate in the necessary training, testing, and certifications to meet the requirements of NPQ-Firefighter 1, Firefighter 2, and Driver Operator.

- **Provide a written and oral communications that informs all personnel** that in an effort to ensure safety and professionalism; to meet the 2013 Edition of the NFPA Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications; to comply with the 2012 ISO Training Requirements; and to verify through the GFSTC that TFR firefighters shall have successfully completed an evaluation of his/her knowledge, skills and abilities against the national standard and be NPQ certified.

- **Set a timeline for successful completion and certification.**
In conclusion

Many departments face serious challenges when trying to implement standards. Though often daunting, it is important to remember that standards are an essential component contributing to firefighter safety.

Thomasville Fire Rescue currently does not meet the national minimum standards and industry best practices, and is not in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1001, Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications 2013 Edition. Because the Department lacks these certifications it does not comply with the 2012 ISO training requirements.

As we evaluate each section within the standards that drive our profession and determine what is feasible with current resources, our goal is to continue to develop plans to implement other components in the future.

Although standards can be overwhelming when examined in their entirety. Breaking them down into more manageable pieces allows us as a department to take small initial steps that can ultimately make a big impact over time.

As we focus on what is attainable and achievable and work to adopt those changes, the timeline will vary based on available resources and capabilities, but the overall goal of bravely preparing firefighters remains the same. And one thing is for certain, it is never too late to embrace and implement a culture of safety and professionalism.

Sincerely,

Chris Bowman
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The Power of Community. The Power of Service.
Appendix A

Preface

An accreditation report submitted to the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, Inc. enables the commission to award accreditation status to your agency. Part of the requirements to retain accredited agency status is your commitment to fire service excellence and the model of continuous self-improvement.

1. Is your agency in compliance with all legal requirements in Federal, State and Local Government standards applicable to the agency?

2. Is your agency in compliance with all community/agency standards?

3. Is your agency in compliance with all self-assessment core competencies?

Training and Education Core Competencies Within the Self-Assessment Process Include:

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