



6.0 TRAINING

6.1 Overview

The Sarnia Fire Rescue Services Training Division operates out of Station 1 East Street and is staffed by two Training Safety Officers.

The Division's primary responsibility is to provide training programs that meet the legislative requirements of the Ontario Fire Prevention and Protection Act (FPPA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario. The trainers also act as Incident Safety Officers during emergencies.

To perform its responsibilities the division undertakes the following:

- Development of training schedules for the fire suppression division;
- Delivery of training and development in specialized program areas;
- Management of exercises and live fire training;
- Response to emergencies as Incident Safety Officers;
- Records management;
- Participation in the recruitment and promotion processes;
- Preparation of standard operating guidelines and procedures; and
- Management of medical training and related equipment.

6.2 Training

The Ontario Fire Marshals (OFM) Firefighters Curriculum is used as a base for core training, with the cycle repeated every two years. While the certification process under this program is voluntary, it provides a consistent and current level of training. The training is delivered by the company officers through the OFM trainer-facilitator process. The department also uses training materials from the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), NFPA, the Delmar Firefighters Handbook, OFM, and other recognized standards as a basis for their training.

A gap was identified with respect to training for succession planning within the Sarnia Fire Rescue Services. At this time, the organization does not send firefighters or officers to the Ontario Fire College to complete the Company Officer Training Program. However, an initiative has been developed to deliver specific components of the officer training curriculum in Sarnia by approved facilitators. This is being accomplished through the OFM Associate Instructor program and computer-based distance learning. As part of a succession planning approach it is vital that this program be pursued in order to develop staff with required leadership skills.

This in-house program will not lead to a Company Officer Diploma because it does not include all components of the curriculum. However, it will ensure that firefighters receive adequate company officer training in order to progress within the department with the required leadership skills. Given that time and staff resources are limited it is essential that a process of seconding instructors from the firefighting division be pursued in order for delivery of the officer training program to be successful.



There is a need for in-depth Incident Management System (IMS) training because of the local CVECO partnerships. Additional funds should be allocated for self-development training for officers requiring IMS training because they do not attend the Ontario Fire College. Opportunities for on-line training should be explored.

6.3 Administrative Duties

Interviews with training staff revealed that a substantial portion of time is consumed by paperwork and records management. This takes away from the number of hours training staff can devote to their main function of developing and conducting fire crew training. It has been identified that the FDM Software Ltd. program in place for records management is capable of tracking training-related data, however, this module of the software may not currently be configured.

The fact that FDM's program is not operating to its full capacity results in additional efforts to track data through a largely paper-based system. Officers who deliver crew training have not been able to systematically enter materials and records into a consolidated records management system. While the current system works, a more efficient electronic solution exists through expanding the role FDM's software plays. This would involve staff training and potentially software customization costs. Confidential information would have to be protected (e.g. interview performance, promotion testing).

Developing a process by which officers could input information and training records into a central database, available to Platoon Chiefs, would significantly reduce the administrative workload of the training officers and allow them to devote more time to other tasks and specialty areas such as incident management and officer training. Additional administrative assistance would allow personnel in the training division and all divisions to devote more time to their assigned duties. This was discussed within **Section 3.0** - Administration.

6.4 Policies and Procedures

The training division has no formal process to develop and ensure that standard operating guidelines, training procedures or policies are up to date. This is a serious risk management issue that has been identified in other divisions. It is vital that a process be initiated as soon as practical that categorizes which guidelines and procedures are priorities and sets a schedule for completion. A regular review of guidelines, policies and procedures should be planned once most are brought up to date.

Staff noted that the current training aid equipment is sufficient with the one notable exception being the computer lab facilities. A recent project is being completed that makes use of space in the training room of the East Street Station (Station 1) for distance learning and other on-line training opportunities. Given the requirements for further training, computer assisted distance learning may prove to be a cost effective approach to facilitate firefighter and officer training. It will also have the capability to be used at other stations as long as computers are made available.

Currently there is no DVD or CD library to complete the project. Funding should be allocated on an annual basis to develop and maintain a current training video/DVD library. The development of a useful training library could also aid the current situation of officers not attending the OFC.



6.5 Training Facilities

The training division recently moved to the space previously used by the Fire Prevention Division at the East Street station (Station 1) and it appears to be adequate for their immediate needs.

The fire service uses the Lambton College Fire and Emergency Response Training Centre training facility to provide live fire training. The facility sees approximately 1800 trainees annually, in areas such as confined spaces, entry rescue, dangerous goods transportation and incident command system training. The fire department budgets \$1600 per day to use the facility, according to a sixteen day schedule (i.e. 16 days available for department use).

The structure is located on DOW Chemical land (17 acres) and was built in the mid 1970's as a co-operative partnership which included the municipality, industry and Lambton College, which is designated as the entity responsible for the management of the facility. The site is thirty years old but is reported to be structurally sound. At the present time Lambton College is developing a strategic plan for the future of the facility. A CVECO committee, which includes fire service representation, is reviewing the requirements.

The fire service has a number of concerns with their ability to conduct suitable live fire training at the present location:

- The live fire structure is not an actual dwelling or commercial building, which would be required for realistic fire service training experiences to take place;
- The live fire building uses substances such as wood and straw to produce heat and smoke that simulate fire situations. Most new facilities use clean burning fuels such as propane to create fire conditions. This process can be controlled and is safer for the users. It is also more environmentally friendly and less disruptive to the community;
- The facility is located at the southern end of the Sarnia outside City boundaries and because the training crew is still in service while attending, there is a concern with the distance and the increased response times which could result; and
- The site is booked extensively by college fire training programs during the school year.

This leads to a scheduling problem for the fire service, which finds its user time relegated to hot summer months and the freezing temperatures of winter.

Offering live fire training is vitally importance to ensure firefighter safety preparation and high levels of service to the community. The Fire Service should complete an in-depth review of its requirements for live fire training and examine its options through the CVECO and the Mutual Aid process. It may be worthwhile to explore a public private partnerships (P3) process to address training needs.

Items for consideration:

1. Upgrades to the current facility to meet more real life simulation needs;
2. Negotiation of more favorable scheduling and addressing funding requirements;
3. Planning budgets for backfilling when response times are affected by training;



4. Upgrading to a facility which would use clean burning fuels; and
5. Including an independent training facility in future fire hall construction project. This would have land acquisition implications and should be factored into any long range planning.

6.6 Specialty Training Programs

The Training Division monitors best practices, health and safety guidelines, OFM direction and local risk identification in order to develop specialized programs for its fire suppression crews.

In addition to structural fires, the City of Sarnia and its adjacent areas have the potential for a variety of emergency disasters such as hazardous material spills, border crossing terrorist incidents and highway related accidents. The cross border railroad tunnel and yard is another significant area of concern.

Because of the serious potential for industrial incidents and the high level of hazardous material transportation in the area, the fire service needs a policy which prioritizes specialized training programs and focuses on an inventory of most probable events.

With a climate of uncertainty surrounding responsibility for first response to incidents within Chemical Valley, the Sarnia Fire Rescue Services would be prudent to provide as much training as possible to all fire suppression staff potentially involved (e.g. Sarnia Fire Rescue Services staff and private fire brigades).

The delivery of additional “industrial” firefighter training through joint public-private resources would be a cost-effective solution to address concerns related to industrial risks. One additional full time training officer could be dedicated to this aspect of training alone. Responsibilities would include coordinating training space (e.g. at the various industrial plants, the college or other), equipment, staff and schedules as well as conducting industrial suppression and fire prevention training.

It was also identified that exercises and training that relate to the border situation were not conducted on a regular scheduled basis. To co-ordinate responses to these potential incidents there are cross border meetings with the numerous emergency agencies. Because of the border situation there should be an initiative to stay involved with these meetings and actively promote training sessions and exercises.

Staff indicated that training co-operation with CVECO partners and industry is good. There are regular familiarization and training opportunities for fire crews at the various sites. Stemming from this however, it should be noted that the need for specialty programs is likely to increase as industry reviews its programs and downsizes its first responder capabilities.

Sarnia Fire Service should identify the crucial programs which may be required and develop a long range plan to deliver these programs. Such a plan would include components such as training levels, staffing requirements, records management and budget projections.



Currently, the Chris Hadfield airport falls within the jurisdiction of the City of Sarnia. The Sarnia Fire Service provides emergency response to the airport. While the fire suppression crews are familiar with structural firefighting there is no specialized training program for fires which may occur if there is an aircraft incident. The airport is experiencing regular changes to aircraft size and passenger loads as the number of flights increase. Federal regulations require different levels of first response based on the type of aircraft using the facility. The Sarnia Fire Rescue Services need to develop a specialized training program for aircraft firefighting based on federal requirements and NFPA standards. If fire protection service to the airport is to be provided additional equipment and training will be needed, given the unique risks associated with airports.

To ensure that firefighters obtain the most valuable live fire training experiences based on the probable risks in the community, the fire service should review the best options to provide realistic training such as decontamination procedures and flashover simulations. This may be through cost sharing partnerships with other fire departments, CVECO, Lambton College or training funding from an outside source.

Sarnia Fire Rescue Services currently provide shore-based water rescue. Given the significant waterways within the City, response to emergencies on the water is important. The Canadian Coast Guard launched a new search and rescue vessel from Sarnia's Bayshore Park in June, 2006. A full crew of four is assigned to this vessel to provide 24 hour coverage, seven days per week during the period from April to December. They are charged with responding to incidents for waterway throughout Lake Huron and the upper St. Clair River.

The City should continue to monitor response to emergencies on the water. If the service received by the Canadian Coast Guard does not meet the City's expectations because of the time it takes to respond, it could consider expanding the Fire Rescue Services role. Increasing it from strictly shore based would have implications that include additional specialized training as well as appropriate equipment (e.g. trailer, boat, wetsuits). The current department staffing and workload may not currently be sufficient to undertake additional services.

Sarnia's role as a border municipality presents distinct challenges to emergency response. Fire Rescue Services should conduct a critical assessment of their capabilities versus potential risks to determine whether gaps exist in the area of goods movement. Federal funding is available for eligible projects through the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP). If significant gaps are found, the City should consider whether a project could be submitted for cost sharing to address current shortfalls.

The training division has identified the specialty programs required for the Sarnia Fire Service, but it has been noted that delivery and documentation of the training is hampered by the time required for administrative responsibilities and the current limitations due to the absence of an acceptable records management system. The Occupational Health and Safety Act and OFM Public Safety Guidelines require that all training programs be fully documented. Records management deficiencies can become a source of liability in cases where it is abnormally difficult to determine levels of certification and future requirement schedules. A thorough review of administration needs and upgrades to the FDM computer system should greatly improve the requirements for improve training documentation.



Summary of Recommendations

1. Include records management and documentation support for the Training Division as part of the overall requirements for additional administrative support.
2. Analysis of the Fire Department's records management software (FDM software) to identify the additional functionality which is needed and the funding required for programming fees and related staff training.
3. Development of a process which enables fire officers to directly input training records into a records management program.
4. Allocate sufficient funding to ensure that succession goals of the Sarnia Fire Rescue Service are pursued through officer training courses.
5. Immediate development of a process to ensure that necessary standard operational guidelines, procedures and policies are identified, prioritized and completed.
6. Making arrangements for or setting aside an adequate budget for a computer distance learning centre and a training resource library.
7. Participate in the joint examination of the live fire training options available to address the issues with the current arrangements and facilities. As part of this process, give consideration to a new facility, perhaps in conjunction with a future station location. This would have implications for the acquisition of sufficient land to accommodate a future training facility.
8. Provide an additional training officer to coordinate joint public-private industrial fire protection, suppression and prevention training.
9. Monitor the service provided by the Canadian Coast Guard with respect to the City's shorelines and water-based emergencies. If a better level of service is required the City could consider expanding the type of water rescue response that SFRS provides.
10. Clarify the role and any specialty training requirements and funding sources for service within border areas (e.g. tunnels, bridges) and at the Sarnia airport.