

# FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

## STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

LEADING FIREFIGHTERS EXAMINATION

PAPER

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

ITEM

OPERATIONAL TRAINING

STUDY NOTE No.

1307

### *INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY NOTE*

*This study note has been prepared as the basis of study in connection with the qualifying examinations for promotion.*

*Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the information contained in the study note and understand how it should be applied*

*The 'References' made at the end of the Study Note are included for information only and candidates will not be expected to study these as part of the bibliography.*

## OPERATIONAL TRAINING

### 1. Introduction

There will be occasions when firefighters may be exposed to risks to their personal safety by virtue of the nature of their role. It is vital therefore, that firefighters are properly trained and equipped in order that they can perform to the highest possible standard in as safe a way as is reasonably practicable.

This study note introduces aspects of operational training and how they affect a Crew Commander's role in assisting to train personnel either as a crew or as individuals.

### 2. Obligation to Provide Training

The obligation to provide training to employees to enable them to undertake their job role safely is one of the general duties imposed on employers by the Health and Safety at Work etc Act. This duty was extended by The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which in effect requires that:

- (a) In entrusting tasks to employees, the employer shall take into account the employees capabilities;
- (b) The employer shall ensure that employees are provided with adequate health and safety training:
  - (i) On being recruited; and
  - (ii) On being exposed to new or increased risks because of:
    - (1) Being transferred or given a change of responsibilities;
    - (2) The introduction of new work equipment into or a change respecting work equipment already in use within the employer's undertaking;
    - (3) The introduction of new technology into the employer's undertaking; or
    - (4) The introduction of a new system of work into or a change respecting a system of work already in use within the employer's undertaking.

When allocating work to employees, employers should ensure that the demands of the job do not exceed the employees' ability to carry out the **work without risk to themselves or others**. Employers should take account of the employees' capabilities and the level of their training, knowledge and experience. Additional training should be provided in accordance with the training needs analysis.

### 3. Safe Training

The law requires that the training given to firefighters is sufficient in terms of the hazards and risks to which they may be exposed. For most firefighters this will mean practical training in the skills and techniques they need to protect their health and safety. This will include training, in:

- (a) Safe systems of work;
- (b) Safe handling techniques;
- (c) How to use personal protective equipment properly; and
- (d) Emergency first-aid.

### 4. Purpose of Operational Training

Operational Training is an essential component of practical training, used to develop and maintain competent firefighters who are capable of meeting the demands of the role, whilst ensuring as far as is reasonably practicable, their own health and safety and that of others.

The main purpose of Operational Training is to:

- (a) practice the application of knowledge and skills required at incidents;
- (b) enable firefighters to learn about the behaviour of fire and its physiological effects; and
- (c) understand the tactics, techniques and procedures required to control and extinguish them safely and effectively.

Operational Training is conducted under controlled conditions at an appropriate tempo and is generally based on three progressive levels:

- (a) Drills.
- (b) Techniques.
- (c) Scenarios.

#### (a) Drills

Drills are safe systems of work which enable crews to acquire knowledge and develop the core skills necessary to use fire service equipment safely and effectively.

Drills are a fundamental learning activity which should be conducted at a pace and frequency to suit the level of performance of the individual and/or crew. This allows individuals and/or crews to become competent with handling equipment or performing tasks which require a co-ordinated approach.

When personnel are competent in these core skills, the drills will have served their primary purpose. The acquired knowledge, skills and understanding should be applied, and further developed with more advanced or specialist training.

The learning objectives associated with drills include the:

- (i) acquisition of knowledge and specific core skills;
- (ii) safe operation of equipment; and
- (iii) development of effective teamwork.

(b) Techniques

Techniques are safe systems of work, which enable crews to apply their core skills to achieve defined objectives using specific equipment.

As with drills, techniques should be conducted at a pace and frequency to suit the level of performance of the individual and/or crew. This allows crews to practice their core skills in specific situations and different environments.

Techniques should be developed and practiced sufficiently to ensure that competency in performance of both individuals and crews is acquired and maintained.

The learning objectives associated with techniques include the:

- (i) practical knowledge in the operation of equipment;
- (ii) safe and effective use of equipment;
- (iii) awareness of equipment limitations; and
- (iv) achievement of specific, operational objectives.

(c) Scenario Based Training

Scenario based training is more meaningful and helps to reinforce the learning experience and enhance the awareness and confidence of the firefighter at an operational incident.

The main purpose of such training is to practice and implement the skills and knowledge required at incidents. The scenarios should provide realistic training events, based on knowledge of operational incidents. It allows firefighters to apply the tactics, procedures and equipment used at an incident.

Scenario based training will develop and maintain the competence of firefighters whilst ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, their health and safety and that of others.

Scenario based training may include the planned and controlled exposure of personnel to risk for a clearly understood and valid purpose. Wherever possible this type of training should be carried out at the site of any potential incident.

The learning objectives associated with scenario based training include the:

- (i) experience of the hazards and risks associated with the scenario;
- (ii) application of dynamic risk assessment;
- (iii) selection and application of appropriate safe systems of work;
- (iv) application of a combination of core skills and techniques; and
- (v) selection of equipment.

## 5. Risk Exposure

Operational Training is the simulation of operational incidents, either in part or as a whole, conducted under controlled conditions, at an appropriate tempo and to the extent necessary to meet the training objectives. Training which reproduces or simulates reality will be more meaningful, help to reinforce the learning experience and enhance the awareness and confidence of the firefighter at an operational incident.

Training events, therefore, should give firefighters the opportunity to practice, at appropriate stages in their training, eg real firefighting in heat and smoke in controlled real fire conditions whilst wearing the appropriate level of personal protective clothing and equipment.

The risks to which personnel are exposed during Operational Training, however, must be:

- (a) Based on realistic scenario.
- (b) In proportion to the risks at operational incidents.
- (c) Assessed.

## 6. Training Events

The location, nature and types of fire at operational incidents vary considerably. It is however, possible to identify the main tasks and functions applied when dealing with most incidents. It is training and practice in the skills associated with these tasks and functions that is the essential purpose of operational training and they may be identified as:

- (a) Applying firefighting tactics and techniques.
- (b) Identifying and using protective clothing and equipment.
- (c) Using operational equipment.
- (d) Effecting rescues.
- (e) Locating the fire.

- (f) Providing and applying extinguishing media.
- (g) Recognising and understanding the behaviour of fire and its effects on the environment.
- (h) Carrying out damage control.
- (i) Extinguishing techniques.
- (j) Working to established procedures.
- (k) Closing the incident.

It is to be expected that varying levels of supervision and safety controls will need to be applied which are mainly dependent upon the relative experience of the firefighters under training. Levels of supervision, however, will also depend on the nature of the training scenario and the findings of the risk assessment.

Following completion of any training events comes the opportunity to review the learning objectives, using a debrief.

## **7. Debriefing**

The debrief is a generic tool applicable to most functions and roles and is key to assessing competence in application of skills underpinned by knowledge and understanding. It is necessary, both after training and post incident.

The process of post-incident debrief should be used to gather evidence about firefighter competence and validation of Brigade policy, procedures and equipment. The debrief system is an integral part of the assessment of firefighters within training for competence framework. Opportunities for assessment will occur on the incident ground and should be used whenever practical (but the process of dealing with the incident should not be hampered by the requirements of assessment).

## **8. Benefits of Debrief**

Debriefs will facilitate the learning of firefighters/crews and also the brigade. In applying a debrief process the brigade must learn from both success and failure. Debriefs, therefore, are not only carried out when problems have been identified, but also when a brigade as a whole, may learn from the success of operational events. The debrief process will:

- (a) afford the opportunity to validate good practices and procedures;
- (b) highlight problem areas and flaws within procedures;
- (c) identify the limitations of equipment currently in use within the brigade;
- (d) facilitate the flow of communication and continuity of command;
- (e) allow firefighters to input their perspective on the management of incidents;

- (f) facilitate assessors in determining the competence of firefighters;
- (g) identify improvements in service delivery by feeding forward into decisions on training, policy and equipment; and
- (h) provide support and encouragement for individual and team welfare.

## 9. Types of Debrief

Incident debriefs fall into three broad categories:

- (a) Immediate post incident debriefs.
- (b) Structured debriefs.
- (c) Periodic debriefs.

### (a) Immediate Post Incident Debriefs

This is carried out at the incident ground or immediately on returning to the station. This type of debrief will require little preparation. The process will involve taking a few minutes to allow all the firefighters to reflect on the incident. Each firefighter will therefore be able to see the incident as a whole rather than from the perspective of what they did themselves. The team as a whole will identify evidence from the incident that may validate the competence of both individuals and the team by questioning what they did and why they did it.

This type of debrief will also be an effective tool for formative assessment. For example, when a specific learning or training need is identified for only one or two members of the crew, or for the development of a trainee firefighter.

### (b) Structured Debriefs

The decision to carry out a structured debrief will be based upon the nature or type of incident and the ability to benefit from a more wider range of issues or learning opportunities.

Structured debriefs may be considered useful where it is necessary to review:

- (i) the performance of individuals and crews/teams;
- (ii) risk critical issues and health and safety matters;
- (iii) procedural plans, command decisions and communications; and
- (iv) the operation and use of appliances and equipment.

(c) Periodic Debriefs

When a training for competence system has been operating within a brigade for some time, its operation and effectiveness should be reviewed. Following this review, it may be considered that periodic debriefs will benefit the assessment process. The periodic debrief will take into account a range of incidents over a protracted period highlighting generic improvements. The ratio of structured periodic debriefs will be influenced by the frequency and types of incidents and information gained from the assessments of individuals and teams.

Periodic debriefs can be programmed into the Watch plan where a number of small incidents can be reviewed or a particular incident debriefed.

### References

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

A Guide for Managers - Fire Service Health and Safety Guide Volume 2, issued by HM Fire Service Inspectorate, Publications Section.

Fire Service Manual Volume 4 – Training.

A Competence Framework for the Fire Service.