DEVELOPING A JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OFFICER
POSITION WITHIN THE DELTONA FIRE DEPARTMENT

LEADING COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

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Abstract

The problem was the Deltona Fire Department (DFD) did not have a job description for the public education officer (PEO). The purpose of this applied research paper was to develop a job description for the PEO. This was an action based applied research project. The research questions were:

What State of Florida certifications or national standards affect the public education officer position?

What training and education was needed to be an effective public education officer?

What are the responsibilities of an effective public education officer?

The procedures were to conduct a literature review and telephone interviews with fire department public education officers from around the nation.

The results were that the National Fire Protection Association’s national standard 1035 pertained to the PEO. The training and education that was needed to be effective as a PEO included the fire and life safety courses taught by the Florida State Fire College, and an average of a two-year college degree in education or related field. The responsibilities of the PEO included educating the public in fire and life safety issues, analyzing information to determine high risk areas and groups, training other educators and department personnel in the area of public education, develop, modify, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and materials, develop and administer budgets, develop cost projections, analyze and project current and future trends, and create and maintain partnerships with other groups concerned with fire and life safety issues.
A job description was developed as a result of this research (see appendix A). The recommendations based on this research were for the DFD to adopt the attached job description and to plan and budget for the hiring of a full-time PEO for the department.
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Introduction

Even with improved technology and increasingly progressive fire codes, the civilian death rate due to fire in the United States is the worst of all industrialized nations. This is due to the indifference that most Americans feel toward fire. Most Americans feel they will be affected by crime but not by an unfriendly fire. Better engineering of equipment in regards to fire safety will only work if people purchase and maintain the equipment. Quality and aggressive enforcement procedures only help while the inspectors are present or if people are willing to maintain compliance with the codes once the inspector leaves. The key to saving lives for the fire service is to change the public’s behavior regarding this indifference through fire prevention education (D’Amore & Kanterman, 2001).

The Deltona Fire Department (DFD) was planning to budget a full-time public education officer position in the 2004/2005 budget year. The problem was the DFD does not have a job description for the public education officer (PEO) position. The purpose of this applied research paper was to develop a job description for the PEO. This was an action based applied research project. The research questions were:

What State of Florida certifications or national standards affect the public education officer position?

What training and education is needed to be an effective public education officer?

What are the responsibilities of an effective public education officer?

Background and Significance

The DFD provides public education to the community that it serves. The primary focus of the department has always been elementary school age children within the community. However, the department also provides fire and medical education to other parts of the
community as well. In the past, the department scheduled and conducted fire education classes to all elementary school age children within the community. Developing courses, scheduling classes, and other responsibilities as related to public education was conducted by a division chief whose primary responsibilities are that of a Battalion Chief in the operations division. Public education duties are performed as time allows. The population of the City of Deltona has increased tremendously since these responsibilities were assigned to this officer. The population has increased from 15,710 in 1980, to 52,000 in 1992, to 70,500 in 2001, an increase of 353%. Suppression personnel conduct most public education programs, especially those in schools. Emergency calls for service have also increased from 3,804 in 1992 to 6,983 in 2001. Due to increased calls for service and the increased population, public education programs are now being scheduled by request only (City of Deltona Fire Department, 2001).

Presently, the fire department continues to conduct fire and life safety programs for the community it serves. Fire safety talks and tours at the fire station, and fire safety programs at the schools continue to be the majority of the programs provided. Other programs the department provides are fire safety programs for community clubs and organizations, fire extinguisher classes at the high schools and local businesses, first aid and CPR classes at fire stations and local businesses, annual open houses, and fire related ceremonies throughout the community.

The fire department currently has eight fire prevention programs scheduled for the month of January 2004. The department also has first aid and CPR courses scheduled for the first and third Saturday of each month throughout 2004. Fire prevention programs are scheduled throughout the year, as well as two parades and our 19th annual open house during fire prevention week.
In the future, the DFD has every intention of continuing to provide fire and life safety programs to the community. The fire chief understands the importance of fire and life safety education and hopes to increase the number of programs the fire department provides by hiring a full-time PEO. Increasing the programs delivered by the department will increase the awareness of fire and life safety skills throughout the community. This will impact the fire department’s effectiveness by allowing it to be proactive in preventing fires instead of having to be reactive to fires caused by preventable hazards. This makes the United States Fire Administration’s operational objective of reducing the loss of life from fire by 15% more obtainable. It will further work towards the United States Fire Administration’s operational objectives of reducing the loss of life of the age groups 14 years and younger and 65 years and older, and the loss of lives of firefighters by 25% more obtainable (United States Fire Administration, 2000).

This research project becomes significant by developing criteria for hiring a qualified PEO. It is also significant by providing a structured set of responsibilities for the PEO to follow based on information gathered through current standards and literature, and from other public education officers currently working in the field. Conformance with standards will improve the service quality of the organization and improve the department’s reputation as a high quality service provider. This project is directly related to Unit 4, the Intervention Strategies section of the manual for the National Fire Academy's Leading Community Risk Reduction course that reads "The purpose of fire prevention education is to raise public awareness, provide information and knowledge, and ultimately produce desired low-risk behavior (National Fire Academy, 2003, p. SM 4-22)."
Literature Review

What State of Florida Certifications or National Standards Affect the Public Education Officer Position?

A review of the certifications offered by the Florida State Fire College found that the State of Florida offers a program to certify personnel as a state certified fire and life safety educator. This program requires completion of Fire and Life Safety courses One and Two and then passing of a state exam. Each course consists of 40 contact hours and is worth three college credits. Each class covers the knowledge and skills necessary to perform as a fire and life safety educator in accordance with the criteria set forth in the National Fire Protection Association’s standard 1035 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educators. Once a student satisfactorily completes the courses and passes the state exam, they can apply for national certification (Florida State Fire College [FSFC], 2004).

A review of national standards found that the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) does have a standard that pertains to the public education officer. NFPA 1035 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educators outlines the general requirements, requisite skills, planning and development, and education requirements of the Fire and Life Safety Educator One, Two, and Three positions (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 2000).

What Training and Education is Needed to be an Effective Public Education Officer?

A review of the Florida State Statutes does not reveal any laws that require a certain education level or state certification to work as a fire education officer in the State of Florida. The training and education required to perform this function is generally left up to the authority having jurisdiction. However, the Florida State Fire College does offer several classes and a
state certification in the field of public education. Fire and Life Safety Educator One and Fire and Life Safety Educator Two are two courses developed to educate the PEO. These courses are also required if a student wishes to sit for the state exam to obtain the Florida State Fire and Life Safety Educator certification. These courses address the skills and knowledge outlined in NFPA standard 1035. Fire and Life Safety Educator One covers topics such as fire behavior, community assessment, fire prevention, and juvenile fire setting. Other topics include lecture and presentation skills, and techniques for developing public education programs. The Fire and Life Safety Educator Two course is a continuation of the first course. In this course the student will learn lesson plan development utilizing learning, performance, and behavioral objectives. The student will learn evaluation strategies, budget preparation and resource management. Two other courses offered by the Florida State Fire College pertaining to public education are the Public Education through Basic Characterization and Public Education through Advanced Characterization. This is a two part series of courses dealing with public education through clowning techniques. The students learn how to create costumes, perform skits, and make professional puppets. The course teaches communication techniques for special need students including sign language ([FSFC], 2004).

The National Fire Academy also offers several courses for the PEO. These courses are taught under the fire prevention section of the curriculum. Leading Community Risk Reduction is a management course and is part of the Executive Fire Officer program. This course is designed to teach fire service managers the importance of community risk reduction. Other courses offered under the public education section of the fire prevention curriculum include Community Education Leadership, Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies, Discovering the Road to High-Risk Audiences, Methods of Enhancing Safety Education, and Presenting
Effective Public Education Programs (United States Fire Administration, 2000). These courses will better prepare the PEO to meet the challenges of providing effective fire and life safety education to the community they serve.

Other skills needed by the public education officer that would require training and education is outlined in NFPA 1035. NFPA 1035 has three positions for the fire and life safety educator. They are the Fire and Life Safety Educator One, Two, and Three. The Fire and Life Safety Educator One should have the training and education to be able to understand and educate the public in areas including fire behavior and human behavior during fire, injury prevention, basic fire prevention devices, systems and emergency reporting, escape planning, and hazard identification and correction. The Fire and Life Safety Educator One should have an understanding of organizational structure, time management, and the special needs of those with disabilities. The Fire and Life Safety Educator One shall have a high school diploma or GED and the minimum qualifications of an entry-level firefighter. Beyond the education needed for the Fire and Life Safety Educator One, the Fire and Life Safety Educator Two must have additional training and education in learning theory, evaluation techniques, statistical analysis methods, and resources needed to perform effectively. They should have a working knowledge of education methodology, an understanding of the fire service, its policies and procedures, and its role in the community. They should also possess some formal knowledge of educational methodology and learning behaviors, and have a two-year degree in fire science or other related field. Beyond the education of the first two positions, the Fire and Life Safety Educator Three should have a comprehensive understanding of the fire service role in the community. They need to have management and supervision capabilities (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 2000).
What are the Responsibilities of an Effective Public Education Officer?

Educating the public to be aware of potential hazards and then how to act appropriately to correct those situations is the responsibility of the fire department and the fire educator. The first step is to develop a presentation to grab the attention of the audience. Then the educator needs to transfer this information to the audience. The next step is to have the audience apply this information to insure that it has been received correctly (International Fire Service Training Association [IFSTA], 1998). The modern day educator is responsible to educate the public in areas other than fire prevention. Other areas of public education include electrical safety, CPR and first aid, water safety, baby-sitter training, and pedestrian safety. They are also responsible to partner with other community agencies, work within the legislative process, find alternative funding sources, and analyze data to determine the needs of their community. Lastly, the PEO is responsible to work with public information officers to deliver the fire and life safety message (International Fire Service Training Association [IFSTA], 2002).

NFPA 1035 outlines the responsibilities of each of the three Fire and Life Safety Educator positions. Responsibilities of the Fire and Life Safety Educator One include teaching and arranging appropriate programs of instruction on fire and life safety subject matter using appropriate materials with identified objectives. Further responsibilities also include answering questions from the public as it pertains to fire and life safety with proper facts, recommended practices and administering exams and surveys to assess the effectiveness of specific programs. Another responsibility is to prepare reports and documentation of individual activities and maintain appropriate files. The Fire and Life Safety Educator Two has the responsibility to schedule, coordinate, and supervise the activities of public fire and life safety educators and to prepare budget proposals and expenditure projections for the public education division. Other
Responsibilities are to determine the priorities of specific programs, evaluate the effectiveness of programs by analyzing data and statistics, prepare reports and document specific activities and maintain files, and to design and develop original and modify existing lesson plans. They must further participate in collaborative partnerships and coalitions of professionals involved in fire and life safety issues. NFPA 1035 outlines the responsibilities of the Fire and Life Safety Educator Three as one that determines fire and life safety priorities, goals, and objectives as they relate to the area in which they work. They further prepare and administer budget proposals, prepare cost projections, and design and modify lesson plans. Additional responsibilities include assuring proper training of other educators, the establishment of policies and procedures, and the evaluation of the employees and the programs in the fire and life safety division. Other responsibilities include analyzing current and future trends and adapting programs to meet these challenges, and to create or lead collaborative partnerships and coalitions of professionals involved in fire and life safety issues ([NFPA], 2000).

Along with delivering education programs, the PEO is responsible for speaking to community organizations about fire and life safety topics requested by these organizations. This requires the PEO to develop a presentation that may be customized for each group. This requires planning and organization in order to present a quality presentation. The PEO must focus on the subject, create a basic outline that includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should catch the audience’s attention, the body should include relevant facts about your message, and the conclusion should tie everything together and drive the message home (Johnson, 2003).

The PEO is also responsible for developing and maintaining fire and life safety programs. Some examples of these programs include the KITSAP County Kids’ Day developed by the
Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue department in Washington State. The goals of this event are to teach fire and life safety skills to all ages cost free, allow all local agencies the opportunity to present their message at a minimal cost, involve both kids and adults, and create an event that people look forward to attending each year (Ingram & Olesn, 1991). A second example of an innovative program is the fire prevention week poster contest conducted by the Arvada Fire Protection District in Colorado. This program is designed to develop fire safety awareness with the students in local schools (Stanley, 1995). A third example of an innovative program in the S.E.L.F. program that incorporates information from Assistant Chief Robert Yaiser of Merck Emergency Services and the U. S. Fire Administration. S.E.L.F stands for Student Emergencies in Life and Fire and was created as a result of the 2000 Seton Hall University dormitory fire. This program is designed to educate college students in fire safe practices and operation of fire detection and suppression equipment within their surroundings (D’Amore & Kanterman, 2001). A fourth example of an innovative program was developed by the Miami-Dade Fire Department at the request of the Miami Youth Museum. The fire department constructed a scaled down version of an actual fire station as an exhibit in the museum. It was designed to teach kids ages 4-10 fire prevention and burn awareness. Kids watch fire safety videos through the windshield of a scaled down fire engine, take blood pressures on a 4 foot doll in the back of a rescue truck, watch Learn Not to Burn video on a television monitor in the den, and learn fire safety and burn awareness in the kitchen area. When the kids leave the exhibit area they are given fire education material to take home to their parents (Guillen, 1991). These are just four of the numerous programs developed by professional educators from around the nation as part of their responsibilities.
Telephone interviews were conducted with Jamie Fry, Public Education Specialist with the Seattle Fire Department, Seattle, Washington; Lori Smith, Fire Marshal / Public Education Supervisor with the Santa Ana Fire Department, Santa Ana, California; John Long, Battalion Chief of Public Education, Oklahoma City Fire Department, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Fundador Morales Jr, Firefighter / Inspector assigned to the public education division, Boston Fire Department, Boston, Massachusetts; Lois “Puddin” Race, Public Education Specialist with the St. Lucie County Fire District, Fort Pierce, Florida and adjunct instructor with the Florida State Fire College. These personnel were selected for interview due to their expertise and knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of the public education officer in their departments. They were also selected due to the location of the department they work for and the large population of their communities. The intent was to speak with personnel from different parts of the nation to determine if job skills and requirements were different as it pertains to the public education officer position. The representation included departments in the northeast, southeast, central, and western regions of the United States. A telephone interview was conducted rather than a survey or other means of gathering information to ensure that the information was obtained from the PEOs themselves and not passed off to an assistant to complete. These interviews were important to the project to gain personal insight into the public education officer position that would not be achieved through a literature review alone. These interviews influenced this applied research project by providing information to help answer the research questions and in developing a job description for the PEO position in the DFD.

A summary of all interviews concluded that the only national standard that was known to pertain to the PEO position was NFPA 1035 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educators. Most of the PEOs interviewed did not know of any national
certifications for the PEO. However, Battalion Chief John Long from the Oklahoma City Fire Department advised that national certifications were available through the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. The training all interviewees felt was necessary was similar in some respects in that some training was necessary in public speaking and development of presentations and courses. All felt that the public education and instructor courses available through their local and state institutions were also necessary. They differed in the areas of formal education. Where all felt that some formal education was necessary, it varied from some core courses related to public education and speaking to a bachelor’s degree in a related field. Inspector Morales from the Boston Fire Department also felt that classes in early childhood development and child behavior were beneficial courses. All the PEOs felt that their main responsibility was to deliver the fire and life safety message to their communities in order to reduce injury and the loss of life and property. Other similar responsibilities were the developing, modifying, scheduling, and delivering of safety programs. Fire Education Specialist Fry in the Seattle Fire Department is also responsible for analyzing data to determine and target high risk groups and areas, assist with the juvenile firesetter program, and to develop partnerships with others entities in the area concerned with fire and life safety. Public Education Specialist Race in the St. Lucie County Fire District is responsible for conducting radio and television interviews, introduce and gain support to teach fire and life safety curriculum from teachers and others responsible for educating the public, and to talk to fire department orientation classes on the importance of public education. Responsibilities to some degree differ in accordance to the needs and concerns of the individual communities the PEOs serve. In Santa Ana, California they are concerned about public relations and a positive fire department image, whereas in Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma, educators are trained to instruct Red Cross disaster relief workers in disaster management. All of the PEOs agreed that to be effective and teach well the educator needs to instruct at the level of the audience, whether it be elementary school aged children or business professionals. About half of the PEOs interviewed stated that there was information on their departments web sites related to public education. All those interviewed felt that the positive aspects of a public education officer was that their communities had an enhanced awareness for fire and life safety issues, and the public educators had increased the public’s appreciation for the fire department. The only negative aspect of the PEO position was that all departments needed more personnel to meet the entire needs of their community.

The data gathered from the literature review and the interviews influenced this project by providing valuable information that answered the research questions and achieved the purpose of developing a job description for the PEO position in the DFD. The information further demonstrated the need for a full-time PEO in the DFD.

Procedures

This project follows the guidelines for publication as set forth in the Executive Fire Officer Program Operational Policies and Procedures Applied Research Guidelines and the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Fifth Edition. The format for the job description that was developed for the PEO in this applied research project followed the City of Deltona job description format. A two-step procedure was used to develop a job description for the PEO position in the DFD. The applied research project was action based using a literature review and telephone interviews to answer the following research questions:

1. What State of Florida certifications or national standards affect the public education officer position?
2. What training and education is needed to be an effective public education officer?

3. What are the responsibilities of an effective public education officer?

The first step was to select literature relevant to the PEO position for review. This researcher felt this would be a necessary step in order to gain pertinent information to answer the research questions. A review of the 2003 Florida State Statutes was conducted to gain information on Florida’s requirements that pertain to the PEO. Material from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and NFPA was reviewed to gain information on national standards that may pertain to the PEO. A review of two textbooks was conducted to obtain information to answer the research questions. These two books were the International Fire Service Training Association *Fire and Life Safety Educator Second Edition* and the International Fire Service Training Association *Essentials of Fire Fighting Fourth Edition*.

Also a list of journals based on their relevance to the fire service was reviewed. The list of journals included:

*Firehouse*

*Fire Chief*

*Fire Engineering*

*Fire Command*

*Fire-Rescue Magazine*

*Health & Safety*

*9-1-1 Public Education*

*Journal of the National Association for Search and Rescue*

Finally, websites that contained potential information related to the research questions were examined. These sites were as follows:
The second step was to conduct telephone interviews. Fire department PEOs were interviewed from across the nation that served large departments with extensive populations to manage. The following personnel were interviewed:

- Jamie Fry, Public Education Specialist, Seattle (WA) Fire Department
- Lori Smith, Fire Marshal / Public Education Supervisor, Santa Ana (CA) Fire Department
- John Long, Battalion Chief of Public Education, Oklahoma City (OK) Fire Department
- Fundador Morales Jr., Firefighter / Inspector, Boston (MA) Fire Department
- Lois “Puddin” Race, Public Education Specialist, St. Lucie County (FL) Fire District and adjunct instructor with the Florida State Fire College

The purpose of these interviews was to gain information to answer the research questions and to achieve the purpose of developing a job description for the PEO position in the DFD. Each interview averaged approximately 20 minutes in duration. The interviews with Public Education Specialist Jamie Fry, Fire Marshal Lori Smith, Battalion Chief John Long, and Public Education Specialist Lois “Puddin” Race were conducted on February 9, 2004. An interview with Firefighter/Inspector Fundador Morales Jr., was conducted on February 10, 2004. The questions for these interviews are provided as appendix B.
Limitations

The scope of the research was limited to the perspective of personnel in the fire service and literature pertaining or pertinent to the fire service. It was also limited to the education, training, and experience of the personnel interviewed and those that wrote or contributed information in the books, trade journals, web sites, and national standards reviewed. It was additionally limited by the lack of information in fire service literature pertaining to the position of PEO. When conducting the research for this project, an abundance of information on projects developed by PEOs was located, but little information on the position itself.

Definition of Terms

Authority Having Jurisdiction - The organization, office, or individual responsible for approving equipment, materials, an installation, or a procedure.

Create - Design original educational or informational resource materials.

Develop - Modification, expansion, or compilation of existing educational or informational materials or resources.

Educational Methodology - The sum of knowledge and skills, including instructional materials, used by the public fire and life safety educator to create a positive outcome related to the learning objectives.

Firesetting - Any nonsanctioned, noninstructional use of fire involvement, including both intentional and unintentional involvement, whether or not an actual fire occurred.

Intervention - A formal response to firesetting behavior that may include education, evaluation, and referral for assessment for counseling, counseling, medical services, social services, and juvenile justice sanctions.
Juvenile Firesetter - A person, through the age of 21, or as defined by the authority having jurisdiction, who is involved in the act of firesetting.

Lesson - A component of a program in which the educator directly presents fire or life safety information to a group.

Program - A comprehensive strategy that addresses safety issues via educational means.

Public Fire and Life Safety Education - Comprehensive community fire and injury prevention programs designed to eliminate or mitigate situations that endanger lives, health, property, or the environment.

Public Information Officer - The individual who has demonstrated the ability to conduct media interviews and prepare news releases.

Requisite Knowledge - Fundamental knowledge one must have in order to perform a specific task.

Requisite Skills - Essential skills one must have in order to perform a specific task.

Resources - Any personnel, materials, or both, including volunteer educators, educational or promotional materials, and financial resources, required to meet the needs of a program.

Results

A literature review was conducted to obtain information for this applied research project. The results of the literature review found that the State of Florida offers a certification for the Fire and Life Safety Educator. This certification requires taking two 40-hour courses and then passing a state exam (FSFC, 2004). There is also a national standard directly related to the PEO from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). NFPA 1035 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educators is dedicated to the PEO. This standard discusses the general requisite knowledge, skills, and responsibilities of the PEO (NFPA, 2000).
The result of literature review also revealed that the PEO must have comprehensive training and education in the field of public education. An effective PEO must have a comprehensive understanding of the fire service, the fire department, and the needs of the community they serve. The literature review found that the Florida State Fire College and the National Fire Academy offer several courses to develop the PEO into an effective public educator. These courses include the Fire and Life Safety Educator One and Fire and Life Safety Educator Two courses as well as Public Education through Basic Characterization and Public Education through Advanced Characterization ([FSFC], 2003). The National Fire Academy also offers several courses for the PEO. One such course is Leading Community Risk Reduction, a management course and part of the Executive Fire Officer program. Other courses offered are Community Education Leadership, Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies, Discovering the Road to High-Risk Audiences, Methods of Enhancing Safety Education, and Presenting Effective Public Education Programs ([USFA], 2000). NFPA 1035 also recommends certain training and education for the PEO. The Fire and Life Safety Educator should have the training and education to be able to understand and educate the public in areas including fire behavior and human behavior during fire, injury prevention, basic fire prevention devices, systems and emergency reporting, escape planning, and hazard identification and correction. The educator should be further trained to have an understanding of organizational structure, time management, the special needs of those with disabilities, learning theory, evaluation techniques, statistical analysis methods, and resources needed to perform effectively. They should have a working knowledge of education methodology, an understanding of the fire service, its policies and procedures, and its role in the community. They should also possess some formal knowledge of educational methodology and learning behaviors, and management and supervision capabilities.
Formal education should include a high school diploma or GED, the minimum qualifications of an entry-level firefighter and have a two-year degree in fire science or other related field ([NFPA], 2000).

The results show that one of the main responsibilities of the PEO is to educate the public to be aware of potential hazards and then to educate them on how to act appropriately to correct those situations. The educator is responsible for developing presentations that will grab the attention of the audience, then transfer this information to the audience, lastly have the audience apply this information to insure that it has been relayed correctly ([IFSTA], 1998). The modern day educator is responsible for educating the public in areas other than fire prevention such as electrical safety, CPR and first aid, water safety, baby-sitter training, and pedestrian safety. They are also responsible for partnering with other community agencies, work within the legislative process, find alternative funding sources, analyze data to determine the needs of their community, and work with public information officers to deliver the fire and life safety message ([IFSTA], 2002).

NFPA 1035 describes the responsibilities of the Fire and Life Safety Educator One, Two, and Three positions. The responsibilities of each position builds from the previous level. Responsibilities of the Fire and Life Safety Educator One include teaching and arranging appropriate programs of instruction on fire and life safety topics, using appropriate resources and objectives, answering questions from the public that pertain to fire and life safety with proper facts and recommended practices, administering exams and surveys to assess the effectiveness of specific programs, and compiling reports and documentation of public education activities and maintaining files. In addition to these responsibilities the Fire and Life Safety Educator Two has the responsibility to schedule, coordinate, and supervise the activities of public fire and life
safety educators and to prepare budget proposals and expenditure projections, determine the priorities of specific programs, evaluate the effectiveness of programs by analyzing data and statistics, design and develop original and modify existing lesson plans, participate in collaborative partnerships and coalitions of professionals involved in fire and life safety issues. In addition to these responsibilities the Fire and Life Safety Educator Three has to determine fire and life safety priorities, goals, and objectives as they relate to the area in which they work, assure proper training of other educators, establish policies and procedures, evaluate employees and programs in the fire and life safety division, analyze current and future trends then adapt programs to meet these challenges, and to create or lead collaborative partnerships and coalitions of professionals involved in fire and life safety issues ([NFPA], 2000).

Along with delivering education programs, the PEO is responsible for speaking to community organizations about fire and life safety topics requested by such organizations. This requires the PEO to develop a presentation that may be customized for each group. This requires planning and organization in order to provide a quality presentation. The PEO must focus on the subject, create a basic outline that includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should catch the audience’s attention, the body should include relevant facts about your message, and the conclusion should tie everything together and drive home your message (Johnson, 2003). The PEO is also responsible for developing and maintaining fire and life safety programs. Some examples of these programs include the KITSAP County Kids’ Day developed by the Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue department in Washington State, the Fire Prevention Week Poster Contest conducted by the Arvada Fire Protection District in Colorado, the S.E.L.F. program that incorporates information from Assistant Chief Robert Yaiser of Merck Emergency Services and the U. S. Fire Administration, and the mini fire station exhibit constructed by
Miami-Dade Fire Department for the Miami Youth Museum. These are just four programs
developed by professional educators from around the nation as part of their responsibilities.

The results of the first procedure of this applied research project, the literature review,
provided information to answer the research questions. It further provided information to
achieve the purpose of this applied research project to develop a job description for a PEO
position in the DFD. It also resulted in the conclusion that recommends that the DFD plan and
budget for the hiring of a full-time PEO for the department.

Telephone interviews were conducted with Jamie Fry, Public Education Specialist with
the Seattle Fire Department, Seattle, Washington; Lori Smith, Fire Marshal / Public Education
Supervisor with the Santa Ana Fire Department, Santa Ana, California; John Long, Battalion
Chief of Public Education, Oklahoma City Fire Department, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma;
Fundador Morales Jr, Firefighter / Inspector, Boston Fire Department, Boston, Massachusetts;
Lois “Puddin” Race, Public Education Specialist with the St. Lucie County Fire District, Fort
Pierce, Florida and adjunct instructor with the Florida State Fire College

The results of the interview with Public Education Specialist Jamie Fry of the Seattle Fire
Department revealed that the NFPA has national standards that pertain to the PEO. Specialist
Fry stated there were national certifications for the PEO that fell in line with NFPA
recommendations for the PEO position. She felt the necessary training should include a
background in education and an understanding in the principles of teaching and theories of
education and the PEO should have a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in a related field.
Specialist Fry felt that the main responsibility of the PEO depended on the community but the
main focus should be on educating the public in fire and life safety issues. Some of her other
responsibilities include determining high-risk groups within the community, speaking to target
audiences, scheduling programs, working with the juvenile firesetter program, writing for publications, and developing and having safety information available for the public information officer to deliver. Further responsibilities include developing education programs, business and community outreach programs, and curriculum for area schools. She also felt that developing partnerships with others concerned with fire and life safety and getting everyone to deliver similar messages throughout the county was an important part of her responsibilities. When asked about tips for teaching she advised to know your audience, speak to their level, and to have a consistent message. She advised that her department has a web site and the public education division has a great deal of information on it that has been extremely helpful in getting safety information in the hands of the community. Specialist Fry believes that her department has benefited from the PEO position by building awareness of fire and life safety issues and educating the community to prevent fire. The only negative of the PEO position has been the realization of the need for more personnel in the division (J. Fry, personal communication, February 9, 2004).

The results of the interview with Lori Smith, Fire Marshal with the Santa Ana Fire Department revealed that her department does not use any national standards. The standards used come from the California State training and education system. She did not know of any national certifications however, there were state certifications for Public Educator One and Two. She felt that it was necessary for the PEO to have training in weapons of mass destruction due to world events and also in Community Emergency Response Training (CERT). She stated that her department has had a lot of requests for information in these areas. She also felt that the PEO should receive training through the local fire academy in fire and life safety courses. Although not required by her department, Fire Marshal Smith felt that the PEO should have an associate’s
degree in either public relations or education. She felt the main responsibility of the PEO was in public relations to represent the fire department in a positive light and to network with other fire and life safety officials. Other responsibilities of the PEO include presenting programs to business, residential, and school communities, and to get the fire and life safety message out to the community. The public education division in her department does not have any information on the fire department web site as of now, but it is one of the future goals. The benefits of the PEO in her department have been the ability to coordinate the suppression personnel to get the fire and life safety message out to the community and to manage the requests for education programs. She did not feel there were any negatives to the PEO position (L. Smith, personal communication, February 9, 2004).

The results of the interview with John Long, Battalion Chief with the Oklahoma City Fire Department revealed that NFPA 1035 was a national standard that pertained to the PEO. He also stated that the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications, informally known as ProBoard were two organizations that certified or accredited the fire and life safety educator by testing through state organizations and then applying at the national level. Chief Long felt the PEO should receive training in fire service instructor courses, fire and life safety educator courses, homeland security, threat and risk analysis classes, and become nationally certified as a fire and life safety educator. He also stated that the Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies course through the National Fire Academy was excellent training for the PEO and all of his educators were also trained as disaster instructors to enable them to teach disaster education to potential Red Cross instructors. He stated that although no formal education was required, his department encourages and pays for college level education. The main responsibility of the PEO is
developing, implementing, assisting, and supporting programs and activities to reduce losses related to fire incidents. Other responsibilities include researching recent statistics to determine high-risk areas and groups, and assisting area businesses and industries with their emergency plans and drills and using a five-step process to develop education programs. The five steps are identification of the problem, selection of the type of message and materials, designing the program, implementing the program, and then evaluating the program for effectiveness. As far as teaching techniques, Chief Long advised the most important thing is to be consistent and if possible to use entertainment or other techniques to get the audience to retain the message. His department utilizes two web sites one on the internet and one on the department intranet. The intranet is utilized more for co-workers needing materials for programs. Chief Long has found the benefits of the PEO is that it brings a high level of product to the community by having someone trained and interested in public speaking and has also promoted an increased positive image of the fire department in the business community. The only negative of the PEO is that if public education efforts are not supported by top administration then there becomes a split between the line personnel and the public educators (J. Long, personal communication, February 9, 2004).

The result of the interview with Fundador Morales Jr., Firefighter/Inspector and public educator for the Boston Fire Department revealed that NFPA does have a standard for the PEO. He did not know of any national certifications for the PEO however, the State of Massachusetts does have a state certification. Inspector Morales felt that the PEO should have training in programs by the NPFA such as the Remembering When program designed for the elderly and the Learn not to Burn program designed for children. He also uses a Spanish program for Spanish speaking students called Mis Primero Pasos that translated means My First Steps. He also
stated the Massachusetts State Fire Academy teaches classes that the PEO should take on public education. In addition he stated that the PEO should have some formal education through areas colleges in public speaking and in how to develop presentations and courses. Inspector Morales advised that he had taken classes in early childhood development and child behavior that have been very helpful to him when developing programs and interacting with children. He stated that the main responsibility of the PEO was to get the fire and life safety message out and to make sure that it was understood. Other responsibilities of his position include scheduling and teaching programs in schools and addressing code violations within the buildings that he instructs in. His teaching tips include making sure you talk to the education level of your audience and when dealing with kids to physically get down to their level by either sitting in a small chair or on the floor. He also stated that you should ask questions after the presentations to ensure that audiences have received the correct message. He advised that his division does not have any public education material on their web site. The positives of the PEO position have been that the public is more aware of fire and life safety issues and the receipt of positive remarks from parents and teachers. He did not feel there were any negatives (F. Morales Jr., personal communication, February 10, 2004).

The result of the interview with Lois “Puddin” Race, Public Education Specialist with the St. Lucie County Fire District and adjunct instructor with the Florida State Fire College, revealed that NFPA 1035 is a national standard related to the PEO. She advised that there were national certifications for the Fire Educator One and Two positions. She felt that the PEO should be trained in the Fire and Life Safety Educator One and Two courses and the Fire Instructor Course Delivery and the Course Design courses. She felt that the PEO should have at least a two-year degree in teaching or have been brought up through the fire ranks and then cross trained. The
main responsibility is to educate the public on how to protect itself as it pertains to fire and life safety issues. Other responsibilities include developing and delivering education programs, conducting television and radio interviews and placing newspaper ads, teaching new personnel on public interaction and the importance of public education, attend staff meetings, work with teachers and other community people to get them to assist in getting the safety messages out, and public relation activities. Specialist Race advised that in order to teach with success the PEO must understand learning modalities and teach to a person's learning strengths. She urged the use of visuals and safety songs with children. She stated that their website does have some public safety information on it. Specialist Race stated that the benefits of a PEO have been that the number of fires in the district has decreased despite the fact that the county has the fastest growing population in Florida. The only negative is that they can no longer meet the demands for public education programs (L. Race, personal communication, February 9, 2004).

The result of the telephone interviews, the second step of this applied research project, provided information to answer the research questions and provided information to develop a job description for a PEO position the DFD. It also provided personal insight and opinions about the education and responsibilities that fire service PEOs felt were essential to the PEO position.

The process by which the data in this applied research project was analyzed was to review all the information obtained in the literature collected through the telephone interviews. The data was then compared to the researcher's knowledge of the DFD. The data that was feasible to use within DFD and relevant to the problem and purpose of this applied research project was used to answer the research questions and to develop a job description for the PEO position in the DFD.
The result of this applied research project was the development of a job description for the PEO position in the DFD. This Job description is contained in appendix A. Two recommendations also resulted from this project. The first was to implement the PEO job description that was developed by this applied research project. The second was that a full-time PEO position be budgeted and hired for the DFD.

Discussion

The position of PEO is an absolute necessity within the fire department in today’s professional fire service. The everyday citizen generally has apathy toward fire as they feel they are more likely to be the victim of a crime than the casualty of a fire. Part of the Deltona Fire Department mission is to be proactive in reducing the injuries and the loss of life due to fire and other emergencies. This can best be accomplished by educating the public to prevent these emergencies before they happen. There is nothing proactive about responding to an emergency that could have been prevented. They key to stopping preventable accidents is through education. As the City of Deltona has grown in population, the part-time position of public educator in the department has been overwhelmed and a full-time position is needed. This researcher felt that in order to hire a qualified candidate for the PEO position a job description needed to be developed. The results of the literature review and interviews revealed that in order for the job description to be a quality document, national standards should be followed, Florida certifications should be required, and the opinions of experienced PEOs currently working in the field should be considered.

The literature review and the interviews demonstrated the significance of the PEO and provided quality information that resulted in a job description for the PEO. First, Florida State Fire College web site revealed that the State of Florida offered a certification for the Fire and
Life Safety Educator. This certification required taking two 40-hour courses and then passing a state exam (FSFC, 2003). The results of a review of national standards revealed that the national standard directly related to the PEO from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). NFPA 1035 *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educators* was dedicated to the PEO and is an industry standard for the fire service (NFPA, 2000). The Florida State Fire and Life Safety Educator certification is based on this standard. This researcher feels that the above Florida certification and national standard sets the benchmark for professional fire and life safety educators in the State of Florida and should become the standard requirements for this position in the DFD.

Next, the results of the literature review revealed three organizations that have certain training and education for the PEO. The first is the Florida State Fire College. This organization recommends the Fire and Life Safety Educator One and Two courses as a minimum for the PEO. They also offer courses in Public Education through Basic Characterization and Public Education through Advanced Characterization (Florida State Fire College [FSFC], 2003). The second organization is the National Fire Academy. This organization offers several courses including Leading Community Risk Reduction, Developing Fire and Life Safety Strategies, Discovering the Road to High-Risk Audiences, Methods of Enhancing Safety Education, and Presenting Effective Public Education Programs ([USFA], 2000). The third organization is the NFPA. NFPA standard 1035 states that Fire and Life Safety Educator should have the training and education to be able to understand and educate the public in areas including fire behavior and human behavior during fire, injury prevention, basic fire prevention devices, systems and emergency reporting, escape planning, and hazard identification and correction. The educator should be further trained to have an understanding of organizational structure, time management,
the special needs of those with disabilities, learning theory, evaluation techniques, statistical analysis methods, and resources needed to perform effectively. They should have a working knowledge of education methodology, an understanding of the fire service to include policies and procedures, and its role in the community. They should also possess some formal knowledge of educational methodology and learning behaviors, and management and supervision capabilities. Formal education should include a high school diploma or GED, the minimum qualifications of an entry-level firefighter and have a two-year degree in fire science or other related field (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 2000). This researcher feels that the courses offered at the Florida State Fire College should be the minimum and a starting point for Florida public educators. It seems that local fire departments usually only look to the state and local levels for training standards. Although there may be some unique characteristics to each individual community, public educators should look to national courses and standards as a basis for training and educational requirements, as the basics of fire and life safety education is the same across the county. This writer feels that fire departments across the nation need to start delivering their safety messages with consistency and with basic guidelines developed on a national level.

Next, there are three publications that offer responsibilities for the PEO. The International Fire Service Training Association offers two publications that address the responsibilities of the PEO. The first is the *Essentials of Fire Fighting* which informs us that the main responsibilities of the PEO is to educate the public to be aware of potential hazards and then to educate them how to act appropriately to correct those situations ([IFSTA], 1998). The second is the *Fire and Life Safety Educator*. This publication advises the public educator is responsible to educate the public in areas other than fire prevention such as electrical safety, CPR
and first aid, water safety, baby-sitter training, and pedestrian safety. They are also responsible
to partner with other community agencies, work within the legislative process, find alternative
funding sources, analyze data to determine the needs of their community, and work with public
information officers to deliver the fire and life safety message ([IFSTA], 2002). The third
publication is a national standard published by the NFPA. NFPA 1035 describes the
responsibilities of the Fire and Life Safety Educator as teaching and arranging appropriate
programs of instruction on fire and life safety topics, using appropriate resources and objectives,
answering questions from the public that pertain to fire and life safety with proper facts and
recommended practices, administering exams and surveys to assess the effectiveness of specific
programs, and create reports and documentation of public education activities and maintain files.
Additional responsibilities include to schedule, coordinate, and supervise the activities of public
fire and life safety educators and to prepare budget proposals and expenditure projections,
determine the priorities of specific programs, evaluate the effectiveness of programs by
analyzing data and statistics, design and develop original and modify existing lesson plans.
Other responsibilities include determining fire and life safety priorities, goals, and objectives as
they relate to the area in which they work, assuring proper training of other educators,
establishing policies and procedures, evaluating employees and programs in the fire and life
safety division, analyzing current and future trends then adapt programs to meet these
challenges, and to create or lead collaborative partnerships and coalitions of professionals
involved in fire and life safety issues ([NFPA], 2000). This researcher feels that using these
publications as a standard for training is essential as they are national publications and standards
that if adopted by all departments would result in a consistent message across the country.
Lastly, fire service trade journals also provided information that contributed to the results of this research project. Richard Johnson in his article Fire Prevention Bureau: The Art of Public Speaking offers some extremely useful information about public speaking. This researcher agrees with Mr. Johnson when he advises that the PEO is responsible for speaking to community organizations about fire and life safety topics requested by such organizations that requires the PEO to develop a presentation that may be customized for each group. When planning these programs the PEO must focus on the subject, create a basic outline that includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction should catch the audience’s attention, the body should include relevant facts about your message, and the conclusion should tie everything together and drive home your message. However, I disagree with Mr. Johnson when he states that the PEO fears public speaking more than anything (Johnson, 2003). When conducting interviews for this project, most of those interviewed did not fear public speaking. The PEO is also responsible to develop and maintain innovative fire and life safety programs. Cheri Stanley in her article Planning a Successful Fire Prevention Week Poster Contest in Fire Engineering spoke about the Fire Prevention Week Poster Contest conducted by the Arvada Fire Protection District in Colorado (Stanley, 1995) and Laverne Guillan in her article Metro-Dade Uses Fun Approach to Fire Safety in Firehouse tell us about the mini fire station exhibit constructed by Miami-Dade Fire Department for the Miami Youth Museum (Guillen, 1991). This researcher felt that these were quality examples of the innovativeness PEOs must have to be successful.

This researcher’s interpretation of the results of this study is that information was obtained to develop a job description for the PEO in the DFD. The results of this applied research project was essential in developing a quality PEO job description for the DFD. It is also this researcher’s interpretation from the results of this research that there is the need to hire a
full-time PEO for the DFD. The results conclude that the PEO is crucial to a department being proactive in regards to reducing injuries and loss of life by providing fire and life safety education to high-risk groups in the community. This will also result in a positive image and reputation as a high quality service provider for the City of Deltona.

The implication of this research to the DFD organization is clear. Developing a job description for the PEO position will increase the likelihood that the DFD will find a quality person for the PEO position when filled. It has the potential of producing a positive image and reputation of the fire department with the citizens in which is serves. It also will increase the awareness and participation in public education programs offered by the DFD. This will make the City of Deltona a safer place to live and work.

Recommendations

The problem is that the DFD does not have a job description for PEO operations. To achieve the purpose of developing a job description for PEO operations for the DFD, data was collected and a job description for PEO operations was created. The data that was collected also supports two recommendations. The first recommendation is that the DFD adopt the job description that was developed in the results section of this project. The second recommendation is that the department plans and budget for the hiring of a full-time PEO for the fire department in the upcoming budget process. Implementing the PEO job description and providing a full-time PEO will improve the organization by insuring that a quality person is selected for the position and thereby improving fire and life safety to the community of Deltona.

These recommendations are provided for the DFD. They are also provided for any future readers of this applied research project who wish to develop a job description for the PEO position in their organization.
References


Stillwater OK: Author.


Stillwater OK: Author.


Emmitsburg, MD: Author.


Appendix A

Public Education Officer Job Description

City of Deltona Job Description

Department:
Fire Department

Division:
Fire Loss Division

Position:
Public Education Officer / Lieutenant

Pay Range:
$32,198 – $42,685

Education:
Associates degree in fire, EMS, education or other related field. Bachelor or higher degree preferred.

Certifications and Licenses:
Florida Fire and Life Safety Educator Certification. Florida Firefighter Certification. Florida state drivers license. Florida State Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic License preferred.

Purpose:
This position is responsible for managing all operations related to fire and life safety education within the City of Deltona and other duties as directed by the Fire Chief.

Responsibilities:

1. Set goals, priorities and methods for fire and life safety education within the city.
2. Propose, develop, and maintain budgets for fire and life safety issues.
3. Ensure necessary training for department personnel and educators.
4. Analyze present and future trends as related to fire and life safety education and evaluate current public education programs offered to the community of Deltona by the DFD.
5. Document all actions, efforts, and progress of public education activity.
6. Develop original or adapt existing programs to meet the fire and life safety needs of the citizens of Deltona.
7. Schedule and teach appropriate public education programs for the citizens of Deltona.
8. Respond to the questions and fire and life safety needs of the citizens of Deltona.
9. Create, lead, or participate in collaborative partnership and coalitions of professionals involved in fire and life safety issues.
Appendix B

Interview Questions for Public Education Officers

1. Do you know of any national standards that pertain to the public education officer?
2. Do you know of any national certifications for the public education officer?
3. What training do you feel is necessary for the public education officer?
4. What formal education do you feel is necessary for the public education officer?
5. What is the main responsibility of the public education officer?
6. What are other responsibilities of the public education officer?
7. What tips can you give about teaching techniques?
8. Does the department have a department web site? If So, What information does the public education division have on it?
9. What benefits has having a public education officer brought to your department?
10. Have there been any negatives aspects to having a public information officer?