

Running head: FUTURE CHIEF OFFICER PREPARATION NEEDS

Future Chief Officer Preparation Needs for
the Santa Clara County Fire Department

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

The Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) will face significant turnover in the chief officer ranks in the next 5 years due to anticipated retirements. No specific plan exists to prepare personnel to enter the chief officer ranks. The purpose of this research was to identify ways in which the SCCFD could prepare future chief officers to fill those key leadership vacancies. Descriptive research, including a literature review and survey, was used to answer research questions. The results showed the importance of and need for a formal career development plan for chief officers. Recommendations were made to assist the SCCFD in creating a formal career development plan.

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Introduction

The chief officer is one of the most influential and important positions within the fire service chain of command. Chief officers perform the leadership, management, and administrative duties that allow firefighters to carry out the goals and objectives of the organization that they serve and the communities that they protect. In the past, when fire departments promoted personnel to the chief officer ranks, they could be reasonably certain that the newly promoted chief officers brought extensive fire ground experience to the position, as well as life experience and experience from the construction or mechanical trades. This is no longer the case today; many newly promoted chief officers may have minimal or limited life experience, fire ground experience, or mechanical or construction trades experience.

How important is the position of chief officer within a fire department? The International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA, 2004) discussed the importance of the position of chief officer within a fire department:

It is the chief (or manager) of the department (or organization) as well as the other chief officers of the administrative, operational, and management teams who are responsible for ensuring that the organization stays ahead of the changes faced by the fire and emergency services. It is essential that members who hold positions as chief officers have the experience, knowledge, skills, and leadership ability to effectively manage their fire and emergency service organizations. (p. 1)

Fire activity is decreasing nationwide. From 1977 to 2000 in the United States the total number of fires reported decreased from 3.2 million to 1.7 million per year (Compton & Granito, 2002). Because of this decreasing fire activity, fire ground experience is becoming more rare, not

just for line firefighters but for chief officers to command all firefighting personnel on the emergency scene.

Progressive and proactive fire service professionals recognize their lack of fire ground experience and compensate for the lack by increasing their levels of training and education through undergraduate or graduate degrees offered by colleges and universities or through certification programs offered within their state or region. Proper preparation for personnel seeking promotion to the chief officer ranks is critical.

The lack of preparation for officers eligible for promotion to the chief officer ranks is an issue that the Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) must face in the near future. The SCCFD is facing significant turnover in the chief officer ranks in the next 5 years due to anticipated retirements, and no specific plan exists to prepare personnel to enter the chief officer ranks.

The purpose of the research is to identify ways in which the SCCFD could prepare future chief officers to fill those key leadership vacancies. Descriptive research, including a literature review and a survey distributed to all Captains (the rank immediately below the entry-level chief officer rank, Battalion Chief), was used to answer the following research questions:

1. Would a career development plan benefit the SCCFD?
2. What is the level of interest within the SCCFD to participate in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?
3. Are the SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements appropriate to ensure that personnel are adequately prepared for their future positions?
4. Are the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief appropriate for the position and similar to what other departments are using as criteria for similar positions?

Background and Significance

Santa Clara County is situated in northern California, on the south end of the San Francisco Bay area. The county contains one of the largest cities in the United States: San Jose. Santa Clara County, known as the Silicon Valley, is home to many major players in the computer and “high tech” industry, such as Apple Computers, Sun Microsystems, Hewlett Packard, and Yahoo.

The SCCFD is a full-service fire department, providing fire protection and life safety services to the communities of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Saratoga, and adjacent county areas. The SCCFD provides the following primary life safety services to its customers: emergency medical service (including Advanced Life Support first responder companies), hazardous materials response, fire prevention, public education, fire investigation, technical rescue, fire protection/suppression, emergency management and disaster preparedness, and other services relating to the protection of life, property, and the environment.

The SCCFD provides these services through 279 personnel, including a minimum of 65 fire station personnel on duty per day supported by up to 40 volunteer firefighters. These personnel are responsible for staffing 19 fire companies and three command vehicles operating out of 16 fire stations and four administrative facilities strategically located within the department’s sphere of influence. The SCCFD services approximately 226,000 people within 100 square miles, with personnel working under one of five major divisions: fire prevention, operations, training, support services, or administrative services.

The SCCFD Business Plan (SCCFD, 2004a) addresses the mission statement of the SCCFD, which expresses the purpose of the SCCFD:

The Santa Clara County Fire Department exists to protect the lives, property, and environment within the communities served from fires, disasters, and emergency incidents through education, prevention, and emergency response. The Department promotes a regional approach to fire protection services. (p. i).

The SCCFD, having evolved through fire consolidations and contracts, is a Special Fire Protection District formed under the California Health and Safety Code. The department is governed by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, who also serve in the role of the Fire Protection District Board of Directors. SCCFD funding comes primarily from property taxes and contracts with communities for fire protection services.

The SCCFD, legally known as the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District, was established in 1947 with the consolidation of the Oakmead Farms Fire District and the Cottage Grove Fire District. In 1970 the SCCFD consolidated with the Alma and Burbank Fire Districts and contracted with the Town of Los Gatos for fire protection. In 1977 the department contracted with the cities of Campbell, Milpitas, San Jose, and Santa Clara to provide service to unincorporated portions of the county within those cities, and ultimately transferred five fire stations and personnel to the City of San Jose. In 1993 the City of Campbell contracted with the SCCFD for fire protection services. In 1995 the City of Morgan Hill contracted with the SCCFD for fire protection services. In 1996 the City of Los Altos and the Los Altos Hills County Fire District contracted for fire protection services. With the addition of these last two fire agencies, the SCCFD became the second largest fire department in Santa Clara County (the San Jose Fire Department is the largest fire department in Santa Clara County). In 1997 the name current name, SCCFD, was adopted to reflect the area served and to reduce confusion with departments that had similar names in adjacent counties (SCCFD, 2004a).

There are currently 14 chief officers employed by the SCCFD: one Fire Chief, one Assistant Chief, four Deputy Chiefs, and eight Battalion Chiefs. Of these 14 chief officers, 11 are either expected or eligible to retire in the next 5 years and the other three are expected or eligible to retire in the next 10 years (SCCFD, 2004b). Employee development, including education and training as well as mentoring and succession planning, is probably the most important and most challenging issue facing the SCCFD. There are four levels of chief officers within the SCCFD in ascending rank order: Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, and Fire Chief.

One of the challenges faced by the SCCFD is the low number of Battalion Chief promotional candidates who achieve the final promotional eligibility list. For example, for the fall 2004/spring 2005 Battalion Chief promotional examination process, 12 personnel began the process but only 5 made the final eligibility list. For the fall 2006/spring 2007 Battalion Chief promotional examination process, 12 personnel began the process but only 3 made the final eligibility list. Two of the three were immediately promoted to Battalion Chief, leaving one person on the eligibility list and resulting in the need to establish another eligibility list. For the fall 2007 Battalion Chief promotional examination process, only 11 personnel submitted applications to participate and 5 passed the written examination and were expected to proceed to the final step, the assessment center. How many of those five candidates make the final promotional eligibility list will not be known until the end of 2007, when the testing process is complete and the promotional list is established.

To gain experience as a Battalion Chief at the SCCFD, one must either score high enough on the eligibility list to be promoted or must become an “acting Battalion Chief” and cover open Battalion Chief vacancies caused by vacation, personal leave, sick leave, retirement, or other forms of department leave time. Only persons on the Battalion Chief promotional eligibility list

may become acting Battalion Chiefs. The only Battalion Chiefs who are eligible to work overtime to fill an open Battalion Chief vacancy are those Battalion Chiefs who are in their first year, still on probation. A Battalion Chief who is removed from probation is considered to be management and is no longer eligible for overtime duty or pay.

The challenging aspect of the method currently used to select acting Battalion Chiefs is that the process does not guarantee a plentiful pool of experienced eligible personnel to fill all vacancies. For example, a person may be an acting Battalion Chief by virtue of being on the current Battalion Chief eligibility list. However, should that person fail a portion of the next promotional examination (assuming the person was not promoted and had to retake the next test after the promotional list had expired), he or she is no longer eligible to work as an acting Battalion Chief until having passed the next promotional examination, which may not be offered for another year or more.

The current situation is made even more challenging and critical because one of the current eight SCCFD Battalion Chiefs is on medical leave and may not return. The acting Battalion Chief who was filling that vacant position on a temporary basis was also placed on medical leave, resulting in one long-term Battalion Chief vacancy with no current qualified applicants to fill the position. The temporary solution to this immediate problem was to assign a Captain who had failed the fall 2006/spring 2007 Battalion Chief examination but had passed the previous examination and had worked a significant number of hours as an acting Battalion Chief. The Fire Chief and his staff determined that this was the best solution to cover the Battalion Chief vacancy until a new promotional list could be established and a new round of acting Battalion Chiefs could become qualified.

While this action did not solve the long-term problem of having a sufficient number of candidates able and willing to serve as Battalion Chief, it filled a void temporarily. If nothing else, it should provide the person who was made acting Battalion Chief the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful in the current promotional process. However, this one-time opportunity for one person does not address the ongoing problem of insufficient numbers of interested and qualified firefighters to step into the chief officer ranks of the SCCFD. “Grooming those within the department to manage effectively not only addresses the obligation at the particular time but also provides an investment in future leadership” (Compton & Granito, 2002, p. 276).

This problem relates to one of the course goals of the Executive Development course: “Develop and integrate change management and leadership techniques necessary in complex organizations” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. O-3). The SCCFD is a very complex organization in that eight cities and one county are served, requiring the Fire Chief of the SCCFD to interact and report to nine separate elected or appointed governmental bodies. Also, the revenue sources of the SCCFD are atypical for most municipal fire departments; property taxes and contracts for services constitute the majority of the SCCFD budget. Thus, it is challenging to acquire additional funding because those forms of revenue do not leave room for expansion. Property taxes are realized according to the fluctuations of the real estate market; fortunately, the Santa Clara County real estate market has been increasing annually. However, should the real estate market decline (which is very likely, considering the subprime real estate mortgage crisis), alternative sources of funding or doing more with less will need to be evaluated. Contracts for services are typically 5 to 10 or more years in length, with set increases typically based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and not leaving much room for renegotiation.

This research relates to United States Fire Administration Operational Objective number 5: “To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2005, p. II-2. If succession planning and/or career development planning is not adequately considered and accomplished, the SCCFD runs the risk of either not having enough qualified candidates to promote to the chief officer ranks or being required to open future chief officer recruitment processes to the outside to ensure a sufficient number of qualified and interested candidates.

Literature Review

The purposes of the literature review for this Applied Research Project (ARP) were (a) to review relevant information on succession planning, including how fire departments in the United States face succession planning and career development within their chief officer ranks; (b) to determine whether a career development plan would benefit the SCCFD; (c) to identify national standards for chief officer positions; (d) to identify what other fire departments use as requirements for promotion to the chief officer ranks; and (e) to determine whether the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief are appropriate for the position and are similar to what other fire departments use as criteria for similar positions.

The literature review began at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) of the National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in June 2007. The LRC staff assisted with collecting books, journals, and articles relating to the following topics: succession planning, career development, training and education, personnel, management, chief officer and mentoring. The literature review continued in California via collection of journals, job flyers, books, and articles from the author’s personal library, as well as the SCCFD Training Division library and the City of San Jose public library.

Would a Career Development Plan Benefit the SCCFD?

Who benefits from a career development plan? The answer is simple: Everyone benefits—the employee, the organization, and most important, the customers served by that employee and organization.

The *Phoenix Fire Department Career Handbook* (Phoenix Fire Department, 1997) stresses the importance of career development.

Employees have the opportunity to earn comfortable salaries, increase their responsibility and authority, and ultimately achieve their potential. As this occurs, the department is provided with knowledgeable, effective and productive members striving to improve themselves and the organization. (p. 9)

Career development is a two-way street: There must be participation and commitment not only from the fire department but also from the employee. The *Phoenix Fire Department Career Handbook* (Phoenix Fire Department, 1997) defines career development as a “shared responsibility” (p. 10): An employee has the responsibility to be motivated and prepared, and the fire department has the responsibility to provide the opportunity and the environment for growth and improvement.

To be eligible to test for the position of Battalion Chief with the Phoenix Fire Department, a prospective candidate must have at least 1 year of experience as a Captain and must have completed at least 30 semester college units, although a 2-year degree is recommended. The department also strongly encourages prospective Battalion Chiefs to have gained a variety of experiences not only working in field assignments but also in staff assignments to ensure a smooth transition from the position of Captain to that of Battalion Chief.

The Fresno (California) Fire Department's Career Development Program (Fresno, 2003) was established as a collaborative arrangement between labor and management to provide a program that allows a firefighter to further his/her career from the entry level to the command level. To be eligible to test for the position of Battalion Chief, the prospective candidate must possess the following qualifications:

Prior to promotion:

- Two years of experience as a Captain
- Minimum of a 2-year degree

Recommended prior to promotion:

- Four-year degree
- California State Fire Marshal's Office Chief Officer Certification
- Administrative staff (40-hour) position experience

After promotion to Battalion Chief:

- Completion of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program

The *Novato (California) Fire District Career Development Guide* (Novato Fire Department, 2001) suggests that a career development plan should include the following steps: "investigate the organization, set goals, prepare, contribute, compete, and measure your success" (p. 7). Promotion in the fire service is not an easy task, and it is critical for fire service personnel to prepare for promotion early in their careers rather than wait until the last minute. Employees desiring to be promoted in the fire service should have an action plan to be successful in the promotional process as well as in their careers. The Novato Fire District states that an employee action plan is very important to success:

A successful career is the result of careful planning and hard work. District members who are interested in advancement should begin planning a course of action early in their careers. Developing a personal action plan can save time and wasted effort in reaching career goals. (p. 7)

A Novato Fire District employee who is interested in becoming a Battalion Chief must possess the following qualifications prior to taking the Battalion Chief promotional examination:

- Two years experience at the rank of Captain
- California State Fire Marshal Fire Officer Certification
- Minimum of a 2-year degree
- Completion of 5 of the 11 California State Fire Marshal Chief Officer Certification courses
- Completion of the following courses: I-100 (Introduction to ICS), I-200 (Basic ICS), I-300 (Intermediate ICS), I-400 (Advanced ICS), Rescue Systems 1, S-205 (Fire Operations in the Urban Interface), S-270 (Basic Air Operations), S-234 (Firing Operations), and S-290 (Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior).
- Strike Team Leader Certification. (Novato Fire Department, 2001, p. 27)

The Watsonville (California) Fire Department's professional qualifications and required standards of training program (Watsonville Fire Department, 2006) was created to provide their employees with a road map for promotional success. It is based on NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 2003). A Watsonville Captain desiring to be promoted to Battalion Chief must demonstrate certain mandatory and recommended certifications, education, and training:

Recommended:

- All 10 California State Fire Marshall Fire Officer Courses
- All 11 California State Fire Marshall Chief Officer Courses
- Various city-specific training courses in correcting workplace wrongdoing, discipline, budgeting, communications and performance evaluations
- Various wildland specific certification courses: S-234 (Firing Operations), S-330 (Strike Team Leader), S-401 (Safety Officer), S-270 (Basic Air Operations), and S-190 (Introduction to Fire Behavior)
- Various Incident Command System courses, such as I-100 (Introduction to ICS), I-200 (Basic ICS), I-300 (Intermediate ICS), and I-400 (Advanced ICS)

Mandatory:

- Minimum of a 2-year degree
- Various city-specific training courses in sexual harassment, diversity, wellness, violence in the workplace, city orientation, and customer service
- Various wildland specific certification courses: S-130 (Basic Wildland Fire-fighting), S-205 (Fire Operations in the Urban Interface), and S-290 (Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior)

The Vancouver, Washington, Fire Department recently created a five-step officer development program based on NFPA 1021 and created through an extensive labor/management review and evaluation process. This program consists of educational requirements, experience in rank requirements, tuition reimbursement, and additional compensation incentives. The five steps begin at the company officer level and end at the highest rank, Fire Chief. Sott (2007) credited his rise to Battalion Chief to this program, which was begun because the “administration

felt that little was being done to foster succession planning at the middle-management level” (p. 68). To ensure that Captains are ready to step into the role of Battalion Chief, the Captain is expected to perform a minimum of 48 hours of ride-along time with a Battalion Chief, during which the prospect is tutored, mentored, and observed regarding the regular duties and responsibilities of a typical Battalion Chief. It is required that the prospect receive positive evaluations and feedback from the evaluating Battalion Chief and complete various related college coursework. Sott stressed that feedback from Vancouver personnel concerning this program has been positive: “In an informal survey, all program participants mentioned that additional education improves their overall abilities as an officer” (p. 70).

How important is it for a fire department to prepare officers properly for the positions that they will fill in the future? Ludwig (2007) is an advocate of steps to ensure that newly promoted officers, particularly chief officers, are prepared for their new responsibilities:

If you assume the newly promoted person has all the skills necessary to make the right decisions, handle any event that comes their way or manage people properly, you’re making a terrible mistake. Just because someone scores better on a test doesn’t mean they’re fully prepared to serve in the management world. It’s your responsibility as a manager to mentor your subordinates so they’re prepared for their new leadership roles. (p. 30)

The State of Ohio Fire Marshal’s Office determined that newly promoted chief officers were in desperate need of career development, especially considering that they were moving from a task-oriented environment to a more strategic environment. Wagner (2002) discussed the reality of going from the position of Captain to that of Battalion Chief:

You've been on the front line battling blazes. You've taken control of hazmat scenes, directed a dramatic rescue from a bridge, or perhaps saved a life through CPR. Now you're faced with a new hill to climb—a mountain of paperwork that includes employment files, legal issues, hiring and firing, codes and inspections, and the dependent's fund. While these tasks may not be as exciting or dramatic as a rescue, they are a critical part of effectively operating a fire department. (p. 10)

As a result, the state's Fire Marshal's Office created an annual academy, The New Fire Chiefs Symposium, for newly promoted chief officers in Ohio to present an overview of what they could expect in their new position:

The transition from line officer to chief officer can be a difficult one. The chief officer must not only be a planner and organizer, but must take a leadership role in directing and controlling. Chief officers must work with and through others in order to accomplish goals. (p. 10)

Robbins (2001) noted that the primary reason for creating a career development plan was to provide essential support to employees in order to ensure that their knowledge, skills, and abilities are kept up to date. He identified four components that should be in place in every career development plan: "(a) clearly communicating the organization's goals and future strategies, (b) creating growth opportunities, (c) offering financial assistance, [and] (d) providing the time for employees to learn" (p. 484). Career development programs are not just limited to the public sector; the private sector is also challenged to ensure that the knowledge, skills and abilities of their current and future employees are up to date.

DeBare (2007) discussed the trials and tribulations of an auto repair shop owner who struggled with the challenges of recruitment and retention and ensuring that his employees had

the latest knowledge, skills, and abilities. The challenges faced by the owner were shared by other auto repair shop owners nationwide: keeping up with technology, hiring and retaining good employees from a dwindling pool of skilled mechanics, and competing for customers (p. F1). DeBare reported that the auto repair shop owner spent \$5,000 on training last year, including 100 hours of continuing education for his primary technician. The owner felt that expert technicians are not called “mechanics” anymore and are increasingly challenging to find, given that the business of repairing cars is requiring “higher and higher levels of skill” (p. F4).

Nigro (2003) noted that career development is a very personal situation and advised that it is the job of a supervisor to assist personnel by providing “a vibrant work atmosphere with opportunities for growth and development in jobs” (p. 107).

In summary, career development plans are being used by numerous private and public organizations, and they have been shown to assist personnel to gain necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to assume new positions within the organization.

Succession Planning

NFPA1021: Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (NFPA, 2003) describes succession planning as focusing on the efficient placement of people in jobs in response to current needs and anticipated future needs. Through this process, a career development path can be created for specific personnel to prepare them for growth within the organization.

Cochran (2007) described how the fire service is changing its leadership guard, noting that approximately half of the current fire service chief officers are currently eligible for retirement and that the top one third of all fire service chief officers expect to retire in the next 6 years (p. 38). Knowing that such large numbers of chief officers will retire soon calls for a plan to replace them; a succession plan is such a plan.

IFSTA (2004) encouraged fire departments to relate promotional processes to succession planning, described as a “proactive approach that ensures that personnel hired, trained, and promoted today will have the skills to meet the challenges of tomorrow” (p. 198). Further discussion on succession planning suggested that fire departments should link the requirements of positions to the skills of the individuals applying for a promotional position.

While fire departments nationwide are experiencing succession planning issues, it is important to note that succession planning is not limited to the public sector and specifically fire departments. The federal government and the private sector are also experiencing succession planning issues. Much can be learned from success stories in those sectors.

Krames (2005) wrote about Jack Welch, former Chief Executive Officer of General Electric and recognized leader in the business world, noting that, long after he retired, he continued to be a champion of succession planning to ensure continued success of General Electric. Even though Welch was not scheduled to retire until 2001, he started to identify possible successors years in advance. He selected three persons to be his possible successor and informed them that they would also have to train their successors, should they get his position. Besides having them face reality, he was safeguarding the future of General Electric by ensuring that succession planning occurred at various levels. He stressed the importance of not delegating succession planning or, even worse, leaving it to the last minute or to chance. Other top managers are actively performing succession planning long in advance of their departure, not just for their positions but for other key management positions within the organization.

Gebelein et al. (2004) discussed the importance of developing successors and talent pools to ensure the success of an organization. Doing so increases the health and long-term success of the organization and each of its divisions. No one can guarantee that key personnel will stay with

the organization forever, and it is necessary to plan for their replacement in unexpected circumstances as well as routine turnover. The failure of a manager to perform succession planning for his or her position is considered poor leadership as well as a potential danger to his or her own career.

Why is succession planning so critical? Succession planning ensures that highly qualified persons are placed in all positions of the organization long term, not just currently. Such planning helps to create a program for recruitment and future promotional opportunities and encourages development of knowledge, skills, and abilities in employees. If it is done properly, succession planning ensures that personnel are prepared for future leadership positions; it can also assist with diversity by ensuring that current leaders look at the future make-up of an organization (U.S. Office of Personnel Management [USOPM], 2007).

The terms and concepts *succession planning* and *career development planning* are sometimes used interchangeably and in many ways complement each other. Regardless of the term used, having a plan in place to prepare future leaders is not a luxury; it is a necessity for long-term survival and success of an organization.

Mentoring Programs

One component often found in a career development plan or a succession plan is mentoring. Whether the mentoring program is formal or informal, it generally occurs in any of various forms or fashions. Successful people make long-term efforts to network with persons in higher-ranking positions, inside and outside their organization, to prepare themselves for future positions.

Why is important to have a mentoring program in place? Buchanan (2007) discussed the need in depth.

The answer is pretty simple: because it is vital for your safety and survival that you pass on what you have learned to the next generation of firefighter. The information that is so critical to your organizational success is not in your policies or procedures. It is not in your apparatus you ride on or the Self Contained Breathing Apparatus on your back. The real value is in your people and the experiences they have gained during their careers. It's in the lessons they have learned on that fire where they almost didn't make it out. It's in the fire service history and culture that tenure helps to develop. Without mining this information, it will walk out the door when that firefighter retires and, most likely, will be lost forever. (p. 32)

Buchanan added, "By taking control and learning from the wealth of experience in your firehouses, you are empowered to learn and be prepared for when it's your turn" (p. 33).

Private industry has also found the benefits of a mentoring program. Nigro (2003) noted that mentoring is an accepted business practice because it has been shown to be highly effective in preparing employees for promotion. He described mentoring as being all about sharing experiences and lessons learned with less experienced employees so they can learn from the successes and failures of the more experienced personnel, allowing the less experienced personnel to be better prepared for the future.

What does it take for someone to be a successful mentor? Holliday (2001) discussed the top 10 tips for mentors:

1. Know your work.
2. Know your organization.
3. Get to know your associates.
4. Learn to teach.

5. Learn to learn.
6. Be patient.
7. Be tactful.
8. Take risks.
9. Celebrate successes.
10. Encourage your associates to be a mentor. (p. 132)

Holliday maintained that the result of effective mentoring is that personnel will not only grow but they will also mature and increase their confidence and ultimately possess an awareness of the organization's culture and politics, an appreciation of networking, a proactive approach to their tasks, an eagerness to learn, a movement toward expert status, and an attitude of advocacy.

In summary, mentoring, whether formal or informal, occurs in virtually every organization. Whether it is called networking or mentoring, the key is that future leaders must have a way to learn from the successes and the failures of their predecessors so they can be successful.

Promotional Requirements

Are the SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements appropriate to ensure that personnel are adequately prepared for their future positions? Basically, a member of the SCCFD must fit into one of three categories to be considered eligible to take the Battalion Chief promotional examination. This three-tiered system is based on education and experience. Below are the basic education and experience requirements necessary to take the SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional examination. (The full SCCFD Battalion Chief job description and promotional requirements are included as appendix A).

- Four years of Fire Captain experience, a 4-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification, OR

- Five years of Fire Captain experience, a 2-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification, OR
- Six years of Fire Captain experience, 30 college credits, and 5 of the 11 Chief Officer courses completed.
- All of the above require completion of the following training classes: I-400 (Advanced ICS), S-339 (Division/Group Supervisor), and S-330 (Strike Team Leader).

It should be noted that the above promotional requirements were scheduled to go into effect in 2006; however, due to the extremely limited number of candidates, the previous promotional requirements were extended until December 2008 to allow more candidates to have adequate time to complete the necessary requirements. Those requirements were much simpler, and termed simply “desirable”: 3 years of Fire Captain experience and 60 college credits.

In addition to the requirements set forth by SCCFD, 32 job flyers for the rank of Battalion Chief or an equivalent rank (such as Division Chief or Assistant Chief) were reviewed to determine what other fire departments required in education and experience to take the first-level chief officer promotional examination. While there was variety in the promotional requirements, every fire department seeking to promote to a Battalion Chief position expected the applicant to have held the rank of company officer.

The minimum and most commonly noted length of time required to have worked as a company officer prior to applying for a chief officer position was 2 years, with a maximum of 7 years required by one of the reviewed departments. Some departments did not state a required time frame. Educational requirements also varied, including a specific number of college credits or a 2- or 4-year college degree. The most commonly required certifications were State Fire Marshal’s Office Chief Officer or Company Officer certification. Other certifications required or

recommended included classes such as Strike Team Leader, Division/Group Supervisor, Incident Safety Officer, Hazardous Materials Incident Commander, S-290 (Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior), I-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System), I-400 (Advanced Incident Command System), the Executive Fire Officer Program of the NFA, emergency medical technician, and various classes and/or certifications related to fire investigation, fire prevention, and fire instructional methodology. The trend was that education and training were more valued than experience alone, reflected by the amounts of each required, as opposed to just time on the job.

In summary, the SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements appeared to be very similar to those described in the majority of job flyers reviewed. Based on these similarities, it can be concluded that the SCCFD requirements would adequately prepare personnel for the future position of Battalion Chief.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Requirements

Are the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief appropriate for the position and similar to what other departments used as criteria for similar positions?

It is important to look first at the current knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief before examining the requirements set forth by other fire departments. The SCCFD Battalion Chief job description, including knowledge, skills, and abilities, is located in appendix A.

The overall knowledge, skills, and abilities requirements for the current SCCFD Battalion Chief position can be classified into 16 broad categories that can be compared to the requirements of other fire departments:

1. Leadership
2. Budgeting

3. Personnel management
4. Firefighting and fire service knowledge
5. Written communications
6. Oral communications
7. Training and mentoring
8. Remaining calm/Ability to handle stress
9. Incident management/Incident command
10. Progressive firefighting techniques
11. Management
12. Decision making/Problem-solving ability
13. Interpersonal relations/Team work/Team player ability
14. Physical fitness
15. Knowledge of laws, codes, and ordinances
16. Planning ability

A comparison of the expected knowledge, skills, and abilities of an SCCFD Battalion Chief as categorized above shows that they are very similar to those of the 32 fire departments across the country reviewed for this study (see appendix B). Very few differences were noted among these 32 departments.

The California State Fire Marshal's Office created the Chief Officer Certification track to assist current or future chief officers to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for chief officer positions. To become a Certified Chief Officer in the state of California, one must complete prerequisites and educational requirements and have reached certain benchmarks in experience. The 11 courses currently comprising the educational requirements are the following:

1. Fire Command 2A–Command Tactics at Major Fires
2. Fire Command 2B–Management of Major Hazardous Materials Incidents
3. Fire Command 2C–High Rise Fire Tactics
4. Fire Command 2D–Planning for Large Scale Disasters
5. Fire Command 2E–Wildland Fire Tactics
6. Fire Management 2A–Organizational Development and Human Relations
7. Fire Management 2B–Fire Service Financial Management
8. Fire Management 2C–Personnel and Labor Relations
9. Fire Management 2D–Master Planning
10. Fire Management 2E–Contemporary Issues and Concepts
11. I-400–Advanced Incident Command System

In addition to completing the 11 required courses, candidates aspiring to become a California Certified Chief Officer must be currently certified as a Fire Officer by the California State Fire Marshal’s Office or be currently appointed to a chief officer rank. To meet the experience requirement to become a Certified Chief Officer, candidates must have a minimum of 5 years experience as a full-time paid firefighter, with at least 2 years of experience at the level of lieutenant or higher (California State Fire Training, 2007).

The SCCFD requires that the candidate for the Battalion Chief promotional examination complete at least five of the chief officer courses certified by the California Fire Marshal’s Office. With the latest Battalion Chief job description, the SCCFD has made the commitment to support the California State Fire Training system, knowing that the Chief Officer Certification process will help future Battalion Chiefs to obtain necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Sargent (2002) contended that the responsibilities and job functions of a Battalion Chief are significantly different from those of an executive-level Fire Chief, such as an Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, or Fire Chief. He stated that the leadership development curve actually starts when the firefighter walks onto the job, years before becoming a chief officer.

Cochran (2006) identified the primary knowledge, skills and abilities required of a Battalion Chief, including but not limited to management of personnel, facilities, and vehicles; incident management; risk management; monitoring competence, climate, and controls; and preserving good aspects of department culture while eliminating bad ones (p. 88).

The IFSTA (2004) identified seven essential skills of chief officer:

1. Interacting interpersonally
2. Writing
3. Speaking
4. Researching
5. Analyzing
6. Evaluating
7. Organization (p. 3)

The national standards for chief officer positions are listed in NFPA 1021—Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. While these are considered nationwide standards, fire departments are not required to follow them, and varying degrees of conformity can be found in the chief officer job announcements from departments in the United States, including the west coast.

A review of the 32 Battalion Chief (or equivalent chief officer rank) job flyers from fire departments across the United States showed numerous commonalities. Virtually every

jurisdiction announcing the position of Battalion Chief expected the applicant to have knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following areas: leadership; management; supervision; regular meeting attendance; budgeting; program management; personnel management; administration; incident management; interpersonal relationships; oral and written communications; customer service; laws, codes, ordinances, standards, and regulations affecting the fire service; and (the item usually listed last) other duties as required.

Compton and Granito (2002) discussed NFPA 1021—Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications (NFPA, 2003):

NFPA 1021 was first published in the mid-1970s and describes, in the terminology of job-performance requirements, four different levels of fire officer qualification: first-line supervisor, midlevel supervisor, manager, and executive officer (Levels I through IV).

These qualifications, or performance requirements, are common to most career and volunteer organizations. The standard acknowledges that not all departments require personnel certified at each level, but many of the performance items it discusses are required for an effective organization. (p. 157)

NFPA 1021 was designed and intended to provide a nationwide standard on knowledge, skills, and abilities of a fire officer, from the lowest rank of company officer to the top rank of Fire Chief. These ranks are classified as (a) Fire Officer I (supervising fire officer), (b) Fire Officer II (managing fire officer), (c) Fire Officer III (administrative fire officer), and (d) Fire Officer IV (executive fire officer).

In 2003 the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) created the *Officer Development Handbook* as a road map for success for persons aspiring to firefighter positions from company officer to Fire Chief. Nine specific categories of knowledge, skills, and abilities were

identified as expectations for an aspiring officer (a) general, (b) general knowledge, (c) general skills, (d) human resource management, (e) community and governmental relations, (f) administration, (g) inspection and investigation, (h) emergency service delivery, and (i) health and safety (p. 12). Logically, as the firefighter moves up the chain of command, the requirements of knowledge, skills, and abilities focus less on technical aspects and more on administrative aspects.

One of the challenges facing all fire departments is to provide opportunities for candidates to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for chief officer, particularly those related to administration functions. While administration functions may not be as glamorous as fighting fires and saving lives, the role of the Battalion Chief is critical within the fire department. This management position entails numerous administrative duties.

Organizationally, our report-writing abilities, program participation and leadership skills have grown exponentially. Leadership duties and program direction and oversight have been moved to lower levels of the organization and this has allowed chief officers to focus on the larger organizational picture. (Sott, 2007, pp. 71-72)

In summary, preparing future leaders is vital for any organization, public or private. Having a plan in place, whether it is called a succession plan, a mentoring program, or a career development plan, is important. Virtually all of the departments and organizations reviewed confirmed the need for an increased level of education and training in future Battalion Chiefs, as well as a need for some form of program to prepare future leaders for various leadership ranks within the organization. Proper succession planning and career development planning start at the top of the organization and do not end with the promotion of the firefighter. It is critical that Executive Chief Officers embrace and assist their newly promoted Battalion Chiefs and “provide

them with information and resources to be successful leaders and managers” (Cochran, 2006, p. 90).

Procedures

The purpose of this research was to identify ways by which the SCCFD could better prepare future chief officers to fill key leadership vacancies in preparation for large numbers of retiring chief officers.

This ARP began at the NFA’s LRC in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in June 2007. The LRC staff assisted the researcher with collecting books, journals, and articles related to the following topics: succession planning, leadership, career development, training and education, personnel, management, chief officer, and mentoring. The literature review continued in California with an extensive online search, via the World Wide Web, of journals, books, job flyers, and articles from the researcher’s personal library, the SCCFD Training Division library, and the City of San Jose public library.

Descriptive research was used to answer the following research questions:

1. Would a career development plan benefit the SCCFD?
2. What is the level of interest within the SCCFD to participate in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?
3. Are the SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements appropriate to ensure that personnel are adequately prepared for their future positions?
4. Are the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief appropriate for the position and similar to what other departments use as criteria for similar positions?

The first part of the research process was the review of literature related to chief officer development. The literature review was intended to answer research questions 1, 3, and 4. The second part of the process included a survey designed to elicit objective responses from study participants to facilitate accurate and consistent data collection and analysis. This survey design produced consistent data for answering the research questions and helped to delineate criteria that could be used in the creation of chief officer development plans at the SCCFD. The survey was intended to provide answers to research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4.

At the time of the research there were 66 full-time equivalent Captain positions (only 63 of those positions were currently filled, awaiting pending contract negotiations) within the SCCFD. The survey sample was limited to the rank of Captain, since those who aspire to become chief officers within the SCCFD must come from the Captain ranks. Persons serving as Captain should have an understanding of the position of Battalion Chief because of their close working relationship with current Battalion Chiefs and their opportunities to act occasionally as Battalion Chief while awaiting the arrival of an on-duty Battalion Chief (sometimes as long as 30 minutes per incident).

An 11-item survey instrument (appendix C) was developed by the researcher to sample persons currently holding the rank of Captain in the SCCFD. The items were forced-choice design (*yes, no, not applicable*), with clarification permitted for certain questions. Specifically, respondents were asked to report their perceptions on the current promotional requirements for Battalion Chief, their perceptions of the negative and positive aspects of being a chief officer with the SCCFD, and whether they agreed that the SCCFD was doing an adequate job in preparing future chief officers for promotion. It was expected that the time to complete the survey would be less than 10 minutes.

The survey was administered to 5 persons as a pilot study prior to its distribution to the SCCFD Captains. All 5 were of ranks different from the Captain rank to be surveyed (a Fire Chief, a Deputy Chief, a Battalion Chief, and 2 firefighter/engineers) to elicit a variety of viewpoints, attitudes, and opinions. All pilot test participants completed the survey without difficulty, and their comments were incorporated into the final version of the survey, which was subsequently distributed to the active Captains in the SCCFD.

The survey was mailed to the 63 fire Captains in the SCCFD on July 19, 2007. The plan was to allow respondents no more than 27 days to complete the survey. Prior to receiving returned surveys, a template was created to tabulate responses as they were received. Each question and possible answer was put into a table format, with space below each question for comments. As each survey arrived, the raw data were transferred into the table. After the data from each of the completed surveys were transferred to the results section, the survey was placed in a folder in a locked cabinet for archival purposes. A total of 40 of a possible 63 surveys were returned, for a return rate of 63%.

Limitations

After reviewing the completed surveys and discussing succession planning with a couple of members of the Fire Prevention Division of the SCCFD, it was determined that certain Fire Prevention Division personnel (equivalent to the Captain ranks in the Operations Division that had received surveys) should have also been offered an opportunity to complete the survey. (It should be noted that the Deputy Chief responsible for the Fire Prevention Division had been promoted from within the Fire Prevention ranks, not the Operations ranks.)

This Deputy Chief was anticipated to retire in 2009 and whether his successor comes from within the Fire Prevention ranks or the Operations ranks is yet to be seen. If his

replacement comes from the Fire Prevention ranks, there are currently three positions (equivalent in rank to a Captain in the Operations Division) as well as one Assistant Fire Marshal within the Fire Prevention ranks eligible to compete for that Deputy Chief position.

Another limitation of this survey was that the surveys were not numbered. This eliminated the option of following up with respondents who had not returned the survey.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to clarify their meanings in the context of this research.

Chief Officer: A management position within the fire department, typically in charge of supervising multiple company officers and fire companies and/or major divisions within a fire department. This position may also be called Battalion Chief, Division Chief, District Chief, Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, or Fire Chief.

Company Officer: The first-line supervisory position within a fire department, more commonly known as Lieutenant or Captain, typically responsible for (a) supervising a crew of one to five firefighters, depending on the size of the fire department and the area protected; and (b) coordinating and managing the activities of a fire company on an assigned piece of equipment during a specific work period. A company officer may also be known as a Captain or Lieutenant.

Executive Fire Officer Program: A prestigious 4-year program offered through the NFA in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in which a student is required to attend 2 weeks a year and then complete an ARP after each year's classes.

Fire Chief: The Chief Executive Officer of a fire department, in charge of the overall operations and typically reporting directly to a city manager, county executive, board of directors, or mayor, depending on the type of government.

Fire ground: A generic term used to describe the emergency scene on which firefighters typically operate on during firefighting operations.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA): An international nonprofit association with the mission of reducing the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards affecting the quality of life by offering and advocating scientifically based consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

NFPA 1021—Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications: Standards created by the NFPA, originally produced in 1976 and typically updated every 5 years; the document sets the national standards through job performance requirements (JPRs) for fire officers, from company officer through the chief officer ranks to Fire Chief.

Results

The purpose of this research was to identify ways in which the SCCFD could better prepare future chief officers to fill those key leadership vacancies, in preparation for large numbers of retiring chief officers. This section reports the results of the data collected for the study.

Through descriptive research, which included reviews of numerous written sources as well as feedback received via a survey distributed to all current SCCFD Captains who had the potential to participate in future chief officer promotional examinations, the research questions were addressed based on collected data.

The survey instrument contained 11 items. Some items required a *yes/no* response, some required a forced choice of one of five responses, and some allowed the respondent to provide open-end responses (see appendix D).

The analysis and interpretation of the survey included a review of (a) demographics of the respondent, (b) the respondent's perceptions of what the job of an SCCFD Battalion Chief

entails, (c) the respondent's perceptions of how well the SCCFD was preparing future Battalion Chief candidates, (d) the respondent's level in taking Battalion Chief promotional examinations, and (e) the respondent's assessment of whether the promotional requirements to take the Battalion Chief examination were appropriate.

Item 1 of the survey asked how many years the respondent had been in the fire service. Twelve (30%) of the respondents who answered the question reported 5 to 9 years of fire service experience, 5 (16%) reported 10 to 14 years, 4 (13%) reported 15 to 19 years, 9 (29%) reported 20 to 24 years, and 12 (39%) reported 25 or more years of fire service experience (Table 1).

Item 2 of the survey asked how many years the respondent had been a Captain. Nine (29%) of the respondents who answered this question reported less than 5 years of Captain experience, 9 (29%) reported 5 to 9 years, 4 (13%) reported 10 to 14 years, 6 (19%) reported 15 to 19 years, and 4 (13%) reported 20 or more years of Captain experience (Table 1).

Item 3 of the survey asked the respondent to estimate his/her number of years before retirement. Twelve (39%) of the respondents who answered the question reported less than 5 years before retirement, 8 (26%) reported 5 to 9 years, 4 (13%) reported 10 to 14 years, 6 (19%) reported 15 to 19 years, and 1 (3%) reported 20 or more years before retirement (Table 1).

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, *Would a career development plan benefit the SCCFD?* This question was addressed via the survey responses and the literature review.

Item 6 of the survey asked whether the respondent agreed that the SCCFD could do something to prepare the respondent for an upcoming Battalion Chief examination (whether or not the respondent planned to take the examination). Thirty (75%) of the respondents answered

Table 1

Summary of Responses to Survey Items 1-3 ($N = 40$)

| Item | <i>f</i> | % |
|---|----------|------|
| 1 Years of fire service experience | | |
| 5 to 9 | 1 | 2.5 |
| 10 to 14 | 7 | 17.5 |
| 15 to 19 | 6 | 15.0 |
| 20 to 24 | 10 | 25.0 |
| 25 or greater | 16 | 40.0 |
| 2 Years of fire Captain experience | | |
| Less than 5 | 12 | 30.0 |
| 5 to 9 | 11 | 27.5 |
| 10 to 14 | 5 | 12.5 |
| 15 to 19 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 20 or greater | 4 | 10.0 |
| 3 Estimated number of years before retirement | | |
| Less than 5 | 15 | 37.5 |
| 5 to 9 | 11 | 27.5 |
| 10 to 14 | 5 | 12.5 |
| 15 to 19 | 8 | 19.0 |
| 20 or greater | 1 | 2.5 |

yes to that question and 10 (25%) answered *no*. Appendix D contains the detailed results. The most common responses were as follows.

Fifteen respondents stated that the SCCFD could do a better job in providing promotional preparation in the form of education and training, including promotional workshops, officer development academies, state certified course offerings or support. Seven respondents state that the SCCFD could provide more mentoring, more acting time, and more hands-on experience in working with a regular Battalion Chief. Five respondents stated that the entire testing process could be improved, including not being so subjective. Three respondents stated that the SCCFD

could offer more emotional support or encouragement to persons aspiring to become Battalion Chief.

Item 8 of the survey asked whether the respondent had taken a Battalion Chief examination but had not been promoted and whether the respondent felt that he/she could better prepare for the examination in the future. Twenty-eight (70%) of the respondents answered *N/A*, indicating that they had not taken a Battalion Chief promotional examination; 8 (20%) answered *yes*, and 4 (10%) answered *no*. Appendix D contains the detailed results. Four (10%) respondents stated that the SCCFD could have done more for them in the way of career development prior to their Battalion Chief examination.

The literature review strongly confirmed that some form of career development plan would benefit an organization, whether public or private. Career development plans were typically found to be associated with succession planning and mentoring programs. Career development plans have been created and successfully implemented by numerous fire departments, including those in Phoenix, Arizona, and Fresno, Novato, and Watsonville, California. Each of those fire departments developed an encompassing program to prepare a motivated department member to understand what is required to be promoted from the entry-level rank (firefighter) to the highest rank (Fire Chief).

None the career development plans reviewed for the study focused on a single component that would best prepare a person for promotion; all of them focused on providing minimum or recommended levels of experience, education, and training. All of the literature reviewed made mention or inference that the Battalion Chief of today, and especially tomorrow, must be better educated and better trained than the Battalion Chief of yesterday.

Succession planning is a necessary tool in every type of organization, private or public. Successful governmental agencies, including fire departments, as well as successful businesses, have made succession planning an integral part of how they operate. Providing a succession plan allows an organization to prepare for the future and ensure that leadership remains solid and committed to the long-term health and success of the organization.

Succession planning can best be described as a “proactive approach that ensures that personnel hired, trained, and promoted today will have the skills to meet the challenges of tomorrow” (IFSTA, 2004, p. 198).

The research relating to succession planning revealed a consistency in the definitions or examples provided by the various authors. Most of the cited references stressed the need to have the succession plan be an ongoing process that is constantly evaluated supported by upper management. “Whether you call it mentoring or professional coaching, this on-the-job training is a necessary component of developing the talent within your organization” (Ludwig, 2007, p. 30).

In summary, based on the feedback received from the survey and the information found within the literature review, some form of career development plan would indeed benefit the SCCFD.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked, *What is the level of interest within the SCCFD to participate in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?* This question was answered responses to the survey.

Item 4 asked how many times the respondent had taken the Battalion Chief promotional examination. Twenty (65%) respondents who answered the question reported that they had never taken a Battalion Chief examination, 6 (19%) reported that they had taken one such examination,

3 (10%) had taken two such examinations, 1 (3%) had taken three such examinations, and 1 (3%) had taken four or more Battalion Chief promotional examinations (Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of Responses to Survey Items 4 and 5 ($N = 40$)

| Item | <i>f</i> | % |
|---|----------|------|
| 4 Number of times respondent has taken a Battalion Chief promotional examination | | |
| 0 | 26 | 65.0 |
| 1 | 7 | 17.5 |
| 2 | 5 | 12.5 |
| 3 | 1 | 2.5 |
| 4 or more | 1 | 2.5 |
| 5 Desire to participate in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations | | |
| Yes | 7 | 17.0 |
| No | 27 | 68.0 |
| Unsure | 1 | 2.5 |
| Undecided | 4 | 10.0 |
| Maybe | 1 | 2.5 |

Item 5 asked whether the respondent planned to take future Battalion Chief promotional examinations. Twenty-seven (68%) respondents answered *no*, 7 (17%) answered *yes*, and 6 (15%) chose an option that was not one of the original choices: 4 chose *undecided*, 1 chose *maybe*, and 1 chose *unsure* (Table 2).

Item 7 asked participants what the Santa Clara County Fire Department could do to entice more qualified personnel to participate and be successful in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations. Appendix D contains the detailed results. Eleven respondents stated that the position of Battalion Chief should be more attractive through fewer administrative duties, the ability

to work overtime and remain in the union, or the ability to spend more time with crews. Ten respondents stated that additional department-sponsored career development, mentoring, and/or encouragement from senior staff would be an enticement. Six respondents stated that the SCCFD should not have to entice personnel to take the Battalion Chief examination and that personnel should be motivated to do so on their own.

Item 10 asked participants to identify the positive aspects of being a chief officer in the Santa Clara County Fire Department. This was an open-ended item. Appendix D contains the detailed results. Fifteen respondents chose an answer along the lines of being able to make positive change and be more a part of the big picture as a positive aspect of being a chief officer in the SCCFD. Six respondents stated that the salary, benefits, and work schedule were positive aspects of being a chief officer in the SCCFD. Four respondents were unsure or did not identify any positive aspects of being a chief officer in the SCCFD.

Item 11 asked participants to identify the negative aspects of being a chief officer in the SCCFD. This was an open-ended item. Appendix D contains the detailed results. Eleven respondents stated that the increased workload (including paperwork and administrative duties) were negative aspects of being a chief officer in the SCCFD. Seven respondents stated that being “stuck in the middle” between line personnel and the administration was a negative aspect of being a chief officer in the SCCFD. Three respondents stated that lack of overtime, lack of union representation, and increased responsibility, liability, and span of control were negative aspects of being a chief officer in the SCCFD.

In summary, it can be concluded that there was a low level of interest on the part of current SCCFD Captains to take future Battalion Chief promotional examinations.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked, Are the current SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements appropriate to ensure that personnel are adequately prepared for their future positions?

This question was addressed by the survey responses and the literature review.

The department's *Job Specifications Manual* (SCCFD, 2006) lists primary experience, education, and training/certification requirements for the Battalion Chief examination:

- Four years of Fire Captain experience, a 4-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification, OR
- Five years of Fire Captain experience, a 2-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification, OR
- Six years of Fire Captain experience, 30 college credits, and 5 of the 11 Chief Officer courses completed.
- All of the above require completion of the following training classes: I-400 (Advanced ICS), S-339 (Division/Group Supervisor), and S-330 (Strike Team Leader).

The above requirements of the SCCFD were compared with information found in the literature review from fire departments who had created a formal career development plan, such as Fresno, Novato, and Watsonville, California, and Phoenix, Arizona. Based on this review, it was concluded that the SCCFD requirements will assist their personnel in preparing adequately for their future positions.

Item 9 of the survey asked participants whether the promotional requirements for the position of Battalion Chief (scheduled to go into effect December 2008) were realistic and reasonable. Thirty (75%) respondents answered *yes* and 10 (25%) answered *no*. While the majority of

responding Captains in the SCCFD agreed that the current SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements were appropriate, some expressed a need to focus on certain items. (Appendix D contains the detailed results.) Five respondents stressed the need to increase the number of years of experience required to become a Battalion Chief. Three respondents stated that the educational requirements were too high and could be a hindrance to finding qualified candidates. However, three respondents stated that training and educational requirements were appropriate and that a Battalion Chief at the SCCFD should possess at least a 2-year degree.

The information contained in the 32 job flyers for Battalion Chief (or equivalent) that were reviewed led to the conclusion that the SCCFD is headed in the right direction with its promotional requirements for the position of Battalion Chief. Whether these requirements will ensure that personnel are adequately prepared for their future positions remains to be seen; however, based on the agreement expressed by the majority of SCCFD Captains who responded to the survey, the requirements were deemed by the researcher to be appropriate.

The literature review included a review of the requirements for promotion to Battalion Chief (or equivalent) announced 32 fire departments in the United States. What were those fire departments looking for in the way of experience, education, and training/certifications?

Regarding the level of *experience* at the company officer rank necessary to take the Battalion Chief examination, 11 departments (35%) required at least 2 years experience, 7 (22%) required at least 3 years experience, 6 (19%) required at least 4 years experience, 1 (3%) required at least 5 years experience, 2 (6%) required at least 6 years experience, 1 (3%) required at least 7 years experience, and 4 (13%) did not list a specific time in at the company officer rank required to participate in the Battalion Chief promotional process.

Regarding the level of *education* required for Battalion Chief promotional candidates, 14 departments (44%) required at least a 2-year college degree, 16 (50%) required at least a 4-year college degree, and 5 (16%) required completion of the Executive Fire Officer Program through the NFA.

Regarding the level of *training and certification* necessary to take the Battalion Chief examination, 17 of the departments (53%) required Chief Officer certification, 11 (34%) required Emergency Medical Technician certification, and 9 (28%) required Company Officer certification. Other required training certifications included Strike Team Leader, Incident Safety Officer, Hazardous Materials Incident Commander, Division/Group Supervisor, Incident Command System (ICS) 300 and 400, S-290 (Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior, and coursework in Fire Investigation, Fire Prevention, and Fire Instructional Methodology. Table 3 summarizes the training and certification requirements stated in the announcements from the 32 departments reviewed.

In summary, while it may not be possible to identify whether the SCCFD requirements for their personnel to participate in a Battalion Chief promotional examination are adequately preparing personnel for their future position, it can reasonably be concluded that the majority of SCCFD Captains surveyed agreed that the requirements were appropriate and the literature review showed the requirements to be very similar to what other fire departments required for examination for promotion to Battalion Chief or an equivalent position.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked, *Are the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief appropriate for the position and similar to what other departments use as criteria for similar positions?* This question was addressed by the literature review.

Table 3

Training and Certification Requirements Announced by 32 Fire Departments Reviewed for the Study

| Requirement | <i>f</i> | % |
|---|----------|----|
| Chief Officer certification | 17 | 53 |
| Emergency Medical Technician certification | 11 | 34 |
| Company Officer certification | 9 | 28 |
| Fire Prevention certification and/or classes | 7 | 22 |
| Fire Instructor Methodology certification and/or classes | 6 | 19 |
| Hazardous Materials Incident Commander certification | 6 | 19 |
| Strike Team Leader certification | 6 | 19 |
| Fire Investigation certification and/or classes | 4 | 13 |
| Incident Command System 300 certification | 3 | 9 |
| Incident Safety Officer certification | 2 | 6 |
| Incident Command System 400 certification | 2 | 6 |
| S-290 (Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior) certification | 1 | 3 |
| Division/Group Supervisor certification | 1 | 3 |

Note. Since one fire department may require multiple certifications, the percentages may not total 100%.

It was important to look at the current knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief before examining similar requirements of other fire departments. The full SCCFD Battalion Chief job description, including knowledge, skills, and abilities, is located in appendix A. According to the current SCCFD Battalion Chief job description, the overall

required knowledge, skills and abilities could be classified in 16 broad categories for comparison with other fire departments.

1. Leadership
2. Budgeting
3. Personnel management
4. Firefighting and fire service knowledge
5. Written communications
6. Oral communications
7. Training and mentoring
8. Remaining calm/Ability to handle stress
9. Incident management/Incident command
10. Progressive firefighting techniques
11. Management
12. Decision making/Problem-solving ability
13. Interpersonal relations/Team work/Team player ability
14. Physical fitness
15. Knowledge of laws, codes, and ordinances
16. Planning ability

Table 4 summarizes the 16 SCCFD categories of knowledge, skills, and abilities as stated requirements for Battalion Chief appointment by the 32 comparison fire departments.

A comparison of the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of an SCCFD Battalion Chief as listed on the current job description with the Battalion Chief job flyers of the 32 departments reviewed (see appendix B for the entire list) led to the conclusion that a Battalion

Table 4

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Expected of Battalion Chiefs in 32 Other Fire Departments

| Requirement | <i>f</i> | % |
|---|----------|------|
| Management | 31 | 97.0 |
| Planning | 31 | 97.0 |
| Incident management / Incident command | 30 | 94.0 |
| Budgeting | 29 | 91.0 |
| Decision making / Problem solving | 28 | 87.5 |
| Personnel management | 28 | 87.5 |
| Firefighting and fire service knowledge | 28 | 87.5 |
| Interpersonal relations / Team player ability | 27 | 84.0 |
| Training and mentoring | 25 | 78.0 |
| Written communications | 23 | 72.0 |
| Knowledge of laws, codes, ordinances | 22 | 69.0 |
| Oral communications | 21 | 66.0 |
| Leadership | 21 | 66.0 |
| Remaining calm / Ability to handle stress | 12 | 37.5 |
| Progressive thinker | 11 | 34.0 |
| Physically fit | 9 | 28.0 |

Note. Since one fire department may require multiple knowledge, skills, and abilities, the percentages may total 100%.

Chief in the SCCFD has virtually the same duties and responsibilities as a Battalion Chief in comparable departments might have. Many commonalities were noted. Virtually every jurisdiction looking for a Battalion Chief expects that person to have knowledge, skills, and abilities in the following areas: leadership; management; supervision; attend meetings; budgeting; program management; personnel management; administration; ability to use computers and various software programs; incident management; interpersonal relationships; oral and written communications; customer service; laws, codes, ordinances, standards and regulations affecting the fire service; and (usually listed last) other duties as required. A Battalion Chief in any organization is a middle manager who is the conduit between the fire station personnel and the administrative staff and the one whom administration expects to carry out the intended goals and objectives of the organization through their assigned personnel.

In summary, the information obtained from the literature indicated that the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the SCCFD expects in a Battalion Chief are very similar to what other fire departments expect in a Battalion Chief, with minimal variation. Since knowledge, skills, and abilities for a specific position are typically determined and established through a stringent process to ensure accuracy, reliability, and validity, the SCCFD knowledge, skills, and abilities for the position of Battalion Chief are deemed to be appropriate for the position.

Discussion

This section discusses the relationship between the responses to the survey instrument and the review of the job flyers from the 32 fire departments selected for comparison to the SCCFD requirements. The discussion leads to an analysis and interpretation of the findings and identifies departmental implications of the findings.

The SCCFD, like many other public and private organizations, is faced with a large number of retirements in the near future. This is most obvious at the chief officer rank, where almost 80% of the current chief officers will either retire or be eligible for retirement within the next 5 years (SCCFD, 2004b). To ensure that the SCCFD is prepared to proceed well into the future, the SCCFD will need well-qualified candidates who are qualified and willing to step up to the chief officer ranks. Many fire departments have taken the time and effort to put together comprehensive succession and/or career development plans to ensure that their personnel are ready to step up to these challenges.

One of the challenges of the SCCFD to recruiting personnel to aspire to the position of Battalion Chief was revealed by the survey: Many responding Captains stated that they were not interested in taking the Battalion Chief promotional examination because of their perceptions of the job of a Battalion Chief. Commonly noted negative perceptions included added administrative duties and workload, personnel management, program management, being placed in an awkward position between the fire station personnel and the administration, loss of pay because of the inability to work overtime, loss of union protection, and increased responsibility or liability associated with the position. Although some Captains showed an interest in taking future Battalion Chief promotional examinations, they were clearly in the minority.

Many of the SCCFD Captains who responded to the survey provided suggestions to make the job of Battalion Chief more desirable, such as putting the Battalion Chiefs back into the labor union, providing overtime opportunities, or eliminating administrative duties such as program management. Such suggestions do not provide an “easy fix,” some require conferring with the labor union, and some may not be appropriate for the current situation based on the position of SCCFD administration. The challenge is broadened by the fact that the review of the 32 fire

departments recruiting Battalion Chiefs showed that they considered Battalion Chief to be a management position, eliminating the possibility of union protection and overtime opportunities. Also, virtually every reviewed department expected Battalion Chiefs to have some form of administrative duties, including program management or special assignments, attending meetings, preparing staff reports, or doing extensive research, all duties above and beyond responding to emergency calls and training and/or supervising personnel.

Some of the surveyed SCCFD Captains also expressed frustration regarding the lack of time that the Battalion Chief can spend with crews, in the form of training or just bonding. Unfortunately, the times when a Battalion Chief just responded to calls and trained with personnel have probably passed; no fire department complains of being overstaffed. Reduced and more restrictive budgets are forcing fire departments to do more with less, which sometimes includes having personnel take on extra duties and responsibilities due to the lack of funding for positions dedicated to program management responsibilities.

The question of whether current SCCFD Battalion Chief promotional requirements are appropriate in preparing personnel for their future positions is challenging because several variables have yet to be measured. Short of interviewing or surveying the current and former Battalion Chiefs to obtain their opinions or finding a way to measure the success of current promotional requirements, it is difficult to determine whether the requirements are appropriate and whether they should be modified.

Clearly, there is a challenge to the SCCFD to improve its methods of educating department personnel about the rank of Battalion Chief, including its positive and negative aspects. Improved education methods might open dialogue that could identify potential way of increasing recruitment of future chief officers. The responses of the current Captains noted many positive

and negative aspects of the current position of Battalion Chief in the SCCFD; however, it is possible that not all of the perceptions reported by these Captains accurately reflect the actual situation. It is important that SCCFD senior staff recognize the perceptions held by Captains regarding the position of Battalion Chief in order to correct inaccurate perceptions and change negative assessments of the position to positive assessments.

One method of ensuring that personnel of the SCCFD are ready to step into leadership positions within the organization, specifically at the chief officer rank, is to establish a functional succession and/or career development plan that will assist with adequately preparing future chief officers.

Burdick (2007) advocated that executive level chief officers work very closely with new or future chief officers to ensure a smooth transition into the chief officer ranks. Executive-level chief officers sometimes forget what it is like to be a new chief officer, and they sometimes assume that newly promoted chief officers will automatically succeed in the early days of their new positions. This is critical because the newly promoted chief officer, unfamiliar with the potentially threatening position between fire station personnel and department administration, may feel abandoned and without support.

Information found in the literature review clearly confirmed that some form of career development plan would benefit an organization, whether public or private. Career development plans were typically found to be associated with succession planning and mentoring programs. Career development plans have been created and successfully implemented by numerous fire departments, including those in Phoenix, Arizona, and Fresno, Novato, and Watsonville, California. Each of those fire departments developed an encompassing program to prepare motivated department members to understand what is involved in promotion from the entry-level rank of

firefighter to the highest rank of Fire Chief. None of these career development plans focused on a single component to prepare a person for the promoted ranks; all of them focused on minimum or recommended levels of experience, education, and training. Reliance on seniority alone is no longer adequate.

Succession planning is a necessary tool in every type of organization, private or public. Successful governmental agencies, including fire departments, as well as successful businesses have made succession planning an integral part of how they operate; providing a succession plan allows an organization to prepare for the future and ensure that leadership remains solid and committed to the long-term health and success of the organization. Succession planning can best be described as a “proactive approach that ensures that personnel hired, trained, and promoted today will have the skills to meet the challenges of tomorrow” (IFSTA, 2004, p. 198). Research relating to succession planning reveals a consistency in definitions or examples. Most stress that an organization continues, even as its people come and go; the succession plan must be an on-going process. The succession plan and/or career development plan cannot be a book on a shelf collecting dust; it must be a living document that is constantly evaluated and modified to meet the needs of an organization.

Barr and Eversole (2006) stressed the importance of training and education, especially at the chief officer level:

If the leaders of the organization have attained an educational level that allows them to supervise and manage the organization effectively, the department’s ability to achieve its complex mission is enhanced. Today’s chief is forced to be both a manager of resources and a leader of people. (p. 304)

Organizations last longer than their personnel. Through the use of appropriate career development planning, which should include succession planning and mentoring, the personnel who are placed in leadership positions will have an understanding of the important organization history, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in future positions.

Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to identify ways in which the SCCFD could better prepare future chief officers to fill those key leadership vacancies, in preparation for large numbers of retiring chief officers.

Based on responses to the survey, the literature review, and analysis of the results of both processes, the following recommendations are offered to serve as a catalyst to develop a succession plan to include a career development plan to ensure that sufficient numbers of personnel are interested in participating in future chief officer promotional examinations and are prepared for future chief officer vacancies in the SCCFD.

First, establishing a formal succession plan and career development plan, based on the recommendations of personnel, would ensure that the SCCFD is in a strong position to continue providing the highest level of service to the citizens within the communities served.

Second, the SCCFD should put together a succession planning committee composed of personnel from as many ranks as possible, to include suppression, management, and administration personnel, as well as executive board members of the Santa Clara County Firefighters International Association of Fire Fighters Local 1165. It is critical that all ranks and divisions be adequately represented as stakeholders in the process to ensure that SCCFD gains participation by all ranks and divisions.

While the focus of the committee should initially be on chief officer preparation needs, primarily at the rank of Battalion Chief, it would benefit the department to take a look at the Executive Level Chief Officer ranks, the rank of Fire Captain, and the numerous specialized ranks and positions within the department, including those found within the Training Division, the Fire Prevention Division, the Support Services Division, and the Administrative Division. This committee would develop and follow the plan through implementation. It is crucial that the Fire Chief and administrative staff members support the final plan, verbally, nonverbally, and financially, to ensure success in the long run.

The SCCFD succession planning committee could use the information contained in this ARP as a starting point. Evaluation of the final plan should occur annually or more often, if necessary, to ensure that the plan is meeting the needs of the SCCFD. Adjustments should be made as needed, since required knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as personnel needs, may change over time.

What seems to set the SCCFD apart from other fire departments is its commitment to ensure that each employee knows that he or she is the department's greatest and most valued asset (SCCFD, 2004a). By proactively creating a succession planning committee and developed a career development program for future chief officers as well as others aspiring to be promoted or to acquire new sets of knowledge, skills, and abilities, the SCCFD will continue to be the well-respected and progressive fire department that its personnel strive to make it.

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APPENDIX A

Santa Clara County Fire Department Battalion Chief Job Specifications, March 6, 2006

DEFINITION

This is the first administrative level in the Classified Service. Battalion Chiefs are primarily responsible for the coordination of activities during an assigned shift. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, managing fire suppression operations and emergency scenarios, planning District-wide activities, functions and programs (e.g., resources allocation, budgets), and coordinating District-wide personnel for the purposes of community service and fire protection activities. In addition, Battalion Chiefs are responsible for the personnel within their battalion. As such, Battalion Chiefs oversee safety and training, resolve conflicts between shifts or stations, and provide for any necessary disciplinary actions.

Work is performed under general direction of the Operations Deputy Chief and incumbents may temporarily assume the functions of higher administrative-level classifications.

At the discretion of the Fire Chief, incumbents may be assigned to 56-hour (Operations) or 40-hour (Administrative) schedules.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Positions in this class are distinguished from those in higher administrative classes in that the latter have policy-making responsibilities and, in addition, have the overall responsibility for at least one primary District-wide division.

Positions in this class are distinguished from the lower classification of Battalion Chief "PR" in that the latter are high-level supervisors and have little or no administrative responsibilities.

EXAMPLE OF DUTIES

Depending on assignment duties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plans, directs, and coordinates the activities of all fire suppression personnel on an assigned shift or personnel assigned to the other fire services. Confers as necessary with subordinate officers regarding the activities of their units.
- Responds to fire and other emergency alarms, allocates appropriate personnel, resources and equipment, supervises fire control work unless relieved by a superior officer, and provides overall coordination, direction and detailed instruction to subordinate personnel.
- Assists in the work of extinguishing fires and in the performance of related lifesaving and property protection work as needed.
- Manages and oversees the safety of fire personnel and citizens.
- Periodically inspects personnel, equipment, and facilities on an assigned shift.

- Maintains discipline, assures that rules are observed, and makes recommendations or takes action on personnel matters, including discipline.
- Assists in the development of assigned responsibility area budget.
- Effectively plans, directs, and coordinates assigned program(s).
- Provides for the training of personnel at both individual and company-wide levels, provides appropriate feedback and guidance to personnel; attends training sessions and conferences.
- Studies and becomes familiar with District streets, intersections, fire hydrants, water mains and sprinkler systems.
- Confers with superior officers on policy and procedural matters.
- Maintains records, prepares reports and makes public and/or committee presentations.
- Undertakes or assists with special projects, reports and studies.
- Maintains liaison with officials of neighboring fire departments and districts.
- Represents District on various inter-agency committees and community interaction.
- May assume on-call duty on a rotating basis.
- May temporarily assume the duties of higher administrative-level classifications.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Education and Experience: Any of the following combinations of education, training, or work experience which would likely provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities is qualifying:

Eight (8) years of broad and increasingly responsible experience in the fire service, of which four (4) years must have been served with the Santa Clara County Fire Department, in the Captain rank performing fire suppression and prevention duties. Up to one (1) year of experience performing in an administrative assignment may substitute for a maximum of one (1) year of experience in a supervisory position performing fire suppression and fire prevention duties. Attainment of a Bachelor of Arts or Science or an advanced degree in any field from an accredited college or university, and attainment of Chief Fire Officer certification (CSFM) is required to qualify. Completion of the following certifications: Advanced ICS 400 (or CICCIS equivalent), Division Group Supervisor S-339 (or CICCIS equivalent) and Strike Team Leader S-330 (or CICCIS equivalent) are required to qualify.

OR

Nine (9) years of broad and increasingly responsible experience in the fire service, of which five (5) years must have been served with the Santa Clara County Fire Department, in the Captain rank performing fire suppression and prevention duties. Up to one (1) year of experience performing in an administrative assignment may substitute for a maximum of one (1) year of experience in a supervisory position performing fire suppression and fire prevention duties. Attainment of an Associate of Arts or Science degree from an accredited college, and attainment of Chief Fire Officer certification (CSFM) is required to qualify. Completion of the following certifications: Advanced ICS 400 (or CICCIS equivalent), Division Group Supervisor S-339 (or CICCIS equivalent) and Strike Team Leader S-330 (or CICCIS equivalent) are required to qualify.

OR

Ten (10) years of broad and increasingly responsible experience in the fire service, of which six (6) years must have been served with the Santa Clara County Fire Department, in the Captain rank performing fire suppression and prevention duties. Up to one (1) year of experience performing in an administrative assignment may substitute for a maximum of one (1) year of experience in a supervisory position performing fire suppression and fire prevention duties. Completion of 30 college credits towards an Associate of Arts or Science degree from an accredited college, and partial completion of 5 of the 10 required classes towards a Chief Fire Officer certification (CSFM) is required to qualify. Completion of the following certifications: Advanced ICS 400 (or CICCIS equivalent), Division Group Supervisor S-339 (or CICCIS equivalent) and Strike Team Leader S-330 (or CICCIS equivalent) are required to qualify.

Knowledge Of:

- Principles, practices and procedures of modern fire suppression, prevention and emergency medical procedures, including water supplies, hazardous materials, and fireground tactics and strategies.
- District and County policies, orders, rules, regulations, communications and operational procedures.
- Applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations.
- Operation and maintenance of fire apparatus and equipment.
- Local geography, including the location of water mains and hydrants, and major fire and traffic hazards of the District.
- Principles of administration and personnel management, including human relations, supervision, and training.
- Departmental resources, budgets and the competitive bid process.

Skill In:

- Keeping and monitoring accurate documents, such as personnel records or department bulletins.
- Managing personnel toward accomplishing specific tasks.
- Setting goals for self and others and making progress toward accomplishing those goals; analyzing performance data and providing feedback to others.
- Persuading others; demonstrating command presence and leadership.
- Training and mentoring others.
- Investigating and preserving articles of evidence.
- Communicating verbally and in writing.
- Acquiring and utilizing District resources for fireground and EMS activities.

Ability To:

- Work within a budget.
- Effectively plan, direct, and coordinate the activities of fire suppression units or other fire service units.
- Effectively manage personnel, including the maintenance of discipline and performance standards.
- Accurately interpret and explain District policies and regulations, and laws and regulations relating to fire suppression and prevention.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.
- Work irregular or protracted hours and respond promptly to call-backs.
- Perform periodic heavy and hazardous physical labor.
- Meet and maintain physical standards.
- Remain calm during stressful situations.
- Make fast and effective decisions.

Required Licenses:

Possession of a valid, appropriate State of California Drivers License.

Source: *Santa Clara County Fire Department Job Specifications Manual*, by Santa Clara County Fire Department, 2006, Los Gatos, CA: Author. Reprinted with permission.

APPENDIX B

Chief Officer Promotional Job Flyers Reviewed

| | |
|--|--|
| Alameda County (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Mountain View (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Arroyo Grande (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Newark (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Brea (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Norco (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Chico (CA) Fire Department Division Chief | Oceanside (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Chula Vista (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Paso Robles (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Coronado (CA) Fire Department Division Chief | Poway (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| El Segundo (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Rancho Cucamonga (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Gilroy (CA) Fire Department Division Chief | Reno (NV) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Half Moon Bay (CA) Fire Department Division Chief | San Bruno (CA) Fire Department Division Chief |
| Hillsboro (OR) Fire Department Battalion Chief | San Marcos (CA) Fire Department Division Chief |
| Livermore-Pleasanton (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Tracy (CA) Fire Department Division Chief |
| Merced (CA) Fire Department Division Chief | Union City (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Milpitas (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Vacaville (CA) Fire Department Division Chief |
| Monroe County (FL) Fire Rescue Department Battalion Chief | Visalia (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Monterey Park (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief | Watsonville (CA) Fire Department Battalion Chief |
| Moraga-Orinda (CA) Fire District Battalion Chief | West Sacramento (CA) Fire Department Division Chief |

APPENDIX C

Internal Fire Department Survey

MEMORANDUM

July 18, 2007

TO: _____, Fire Captain
FROM: Steve Prziborowski, Battalion Chief
SUBJECT: Succession Planning Survey

I am currently a participant in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. One of the requirements of this two-week a year, four-year total program is to complete an Applied Research Project within six months of completing each year's curriculum, applicable to the student's own organization. In order to complete this research, I am asking your assistance by requesting you complete this feedback instrument found on the following pages.

My research problem is "Future Chief Officer Preparation Needs For The Santa Clara County Fire Department." As you are probably aware, the Santa Clara County Fire Department is facing significant turnover at the chief officer ranks in the next five years. To help ensure a smooth transition into the future and assist our Department with succession planning and career development, it is essential to have sufficient numbers of not only aspiring to the chief officer ranks, but also adequately prepared to promote to the chief officer ranks. It appears less personnel are successfully making the final Battalion Chief promotional examination lists, and I would like to determine if there is something that can be done to increase those numbers of successful candidates making future promotional lists and eventually getting promoted to the chief officer ranks.

The results of this feedback instrument will be confidential. While the results will be shared in the final applied research project, the names of the respondents will not be published or related to each answer in the final results. If you would like a copy of the final Applied Research Paper, feel free to contact me and I will be happy to send you one when it is completed.

This by no means commits you to anything in the future; your answers will be used to develop recommendations I will present to A-Staff, to ensure we have sufficient numbers of qualified and interested chief officer candidates in the future.

Please complete the form on the following pages, and using the provided envelope, return the survey (minus this page) to me via Department mail. I would like to receive all completed surveys no later than Wednesday August 15, 2007. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation with this project!

Executive Fire Officer Program – Applied Research Project Survey

(Feel free to write on the back of this form if you require more space)

1. How many years have you been in the fire service? (check one)
 5 to 9 10 to 14 15 to 19 20 to 24 25 or greater
2. How many years have you been a fire Captain?
 Less than 5 5 to 9 10 to 14 15 to 19 20 or greater
3. How many years before you plan (estimated guess) to retire? (check one)
 Less than 5 5 to 9 10 to 14 15 to 19 20 or greater
4. How many times you have taken the Battalion Chief promotional examination?
 0 1 2 3 4 or greater
5. Do you plan to take future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?
 Yes No

If no, would you please explain why? _____

6. Do you feel the Santa Clara County Fire Department could do something to prepare you for an upcoming Battalion Chief promotional examination (whether you plan to take a future examination or not)?
 Yes No

If yes, please explain what you believe the Department could do to help you be successful at a future Battalion Chief examination:

7. In your opinion, what can the Santa Clara County Fire Department do to entice more qualified personnel to participate and be successful in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?

8. If you have taken a Battalion Chief examination, but were not promoted, do you feel there are areas you could better prepare yourself to be successful in the future?

- Yes No N/A

If yes, please explain what you believe you could have done differently that would have helped you successfully make the promotional list:

9. Do you feel the promotional requirements (scheduled to go into effect December 2008) for the position of Battalion Chief are realistic and reasonable? Currently, the primary requirements are three years of fire Captain experience, with 60 college credits (however, those requirements are desirable, not mandatory). The future mandatory requirements are part of a three-tiered system:

- Four years Fire Captain experience, a four-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification.
- Five years Fire Captain experience, a two-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification.
- Six years Fire Captain experience, 30 college credits, and five of the ten Chief Officer courses completed.
- All of the above also require the following training classes: I-400 (Advanced ICS), S-339 (Division/Group Supervisor), and S-330 (Strike Team Leader)

- Yes No

If no, please explain what you feel should be added, modified or deleted in the way of education, training and/or experience for future Battalion Chief promotional examinations.

10. What do you believe are some positive aspects of being a chief officer in the Santa Clara County Fire Department?

11. What do you believe are some negative aspects of being a chief officer in the Santa Clara County Fire Department?

Please return this completed form to Chief Prziborowski at El Toro Station – on or before Wednesday August 15, 2007. Thank you very much for your assistance and cooperation!

APPENDIX D

Internal Fire Department Survey Results

1. How many years have you been in the fire service? (check one)

| | | |
|---------------|------|-------|
| 5 to 9 | (1) | 2.5% |
| 10 to 14 | (7) | 17.5% |
| 15 to 19 | (6) | 15% |
| 20 to 24 | (10) | 25% |
| 25 or greater | (16) | 40% |

2. How many years have you been a fire Captain?

| | | |
|---------------|------|-------|
| Less than 5 | (12) | 30% |
| 5 to 9 | (11) | 27.5% |
| 10 to 14 | (5) | 12.5% |
| 15 to 19 | (8) | 20% |
| 20 or greater | (4) | 10% |

3. How many years before you plan (estimated guess) to retire? (check one)

| | | |
|---------------|------|-------|
| Less than 5 | (15) | 37.5% |
| 5 to 9 | (11) | 27.5% |
| 10 to 14 | (5) | 12.5% |
| 15 to 19 | (8) | 19% |
| 20 or greater | (1) | 2.5% |

4. How many times you have taken the Battalion Chief promotional examination?

| | | |
|--------------|------|-------|
| 0 | (26) | 65% |
| 1 | (7) | 17.5% |
| 2 | (5) | 12.5% |
| 3 | (1) | 2.5% |
| 4 or greater | (1) | 2.5% |

5. Do you plan to take future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?

| | | |
|-----------|------|------|
| Yes | (7) | 17% |
| No | (27) | 68% |
| Unsure | (1) | 2.5% |
| Undecided | (4) | 10% |
| Maybe | (1) | 2.5% |

NOTE: 4 respondents added a new category: “Undecided,” 1 respondent added a new category: “Unsure,” and 1 respondent added a new category: “Maybe.”

If no, would you please explain why?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Planning to retire and am not interested in working a 40-hour week schedule.”
- “There is no upward movement in my area of work.”
- “Too late in career, not enough fire ground experience.”
- “I want to become a competent Captain first.”
- “I’m a new Captain.”
- “Enjoy what I’m doing.”
- “Enjoy my current position.”
- “Deciding whether to retire at 50 or not. I’m currently 47.”
- “The job is not fulfilling to meet personal needs.”
- “In order to be successful, the position requires a high degree of personal commitment to the department in such a manner/degree that I’m not sure that I am prepared to bring.”
- “Low support from upper management, no overtime, testing process is not promoting the best.”
- “Can’t digest the Kool Aid.”
- “Not interested....I feel I would no longer enjoy my job as I do now.”
- “No interest. I feel that I best serve the department/citizens as an emergency response Captain.”
- “I am enjoying the Captain’s rank at this time. I am entertaining the idea of promoting to BC.”
- “Most likely will take the test, leaving my options open.”
- “Poor experience with the Captains promotional process – not trustworthy.”
- “Happy as a Captain.”
- “The BC job is too much administrative and not enough practical application.”
- “Retirement is eminent!”
- “I am not competent at my current position!”
- “Most BC’s are/seem unhappy in their current position.”
- “I’m very happy with my place and position within County Fire.”
- “I don’t have enough actual experience of doing the job and what it entails.”
- “Not interested in job.”
- “The BC of today and tomorrow is much different from yesterday’s. It’s not so much as project management, but so much more in personnel issues.”
- “Too little time remaining in the fire service (2 years).”
- “I don’t feel qualified.”
- “Probably not, the position at County Fire does not seem to foster team building and seems to separate itself from line operations.”
- “I enjoy my position and feel it’s too late in my career to complete classes and requirements.”

6. Do you feel the Santa Clara County Fire Department could do something to prepare you for an upcoming Battalion Chief promotional examination (whether you plan to take a future examination or not)?

| | | |
|-----|------|-----|
| Yes | (30) | 75% |
| No | (10) | 25% |

If yes, please explain what you believe the Department could do to help you be successful at a future Battalion Chief examination:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Officer preparation classes. Set higher minimum standards at Captain and Battalion Chief levels.”
- “Provide same list of study materials examples that is given to Captain candidates, if that is not being done already.”
- “It’s incumbent on the candidate to prepare his or herself. The organization is fine.”
- “A mentor program/ride a long would be good. Also, expectations and a task book.”
- “May be promotional workshops facilitated by existing A & B staff will help provide clear direction of expectations.”
- “If the department wants more educated employees, then support them better. The educational support is sub-standard.”
- “Mandatory Battalion Chief ride alongs. Provide 1 on 1 experience. Seminars.”
- “Make a better test that rules out the subjectivity.”
- “Look at areas where organizational policy and/or culture hamstrings or restricts personnel from performing roles such as command/overhead functions that are sometimes done by younger personnel in other departments (i.e., CDF).”
- “I am currently more qualified than most BC’s.”
- “Encouragement, not punishment.”
- “Continue to provide training that grooms all Captains to successfully perform the position, whether interested or not.”
- “Mentoring, more approachable BC’s (applies to only a few), classes, test preparation lists.”
- “Assist in education, i.e., Cal State Long Beach Four Year degree program.”
- “Speaking from the experience of taking the Captain’s test, the department needs to look at what is happening day to day operationally and gear the test to Santa Clara County Fire Department culture. I know from the Captain’s test that a number of times what “the book” says contradicts accepted practices here at County Fire. It creates confusion for the individual taking the test. “Real world” tells us we need to get the Administration and the BC’s and the Captains all on the same page. Example: the Administration expects it to be done a certain way. A Battalion Chief has decided he/she wants it done another way (their own personal preference). So from example we are teaching future BC’s and Captains

something that contradicts our Administration's expectations. Please "level the playing field" so we can all read from the same playbook."

- "Additional in house officer prep classes in what the department is looking for in a chief officer."
- "Be trustworthy, unbiased, impartial, and fair."
- "Offer chief officer certificate classes "in-house," and pay employees attending these courses."
- "More ride longs – should have an aspiring program in addition to the BC list experience."
- "Promoting to this difficult position is directly incumbent upon the individual's desire to lead, face the challenges of middle management, and create an environment where ideas and solutions will be heard by the top administrators, no matter what rank generates them. Should the top administrators choose to create such an environment, the rewards for pursuing the position will exceed salary and benefits offered?"
- "Provide opportunities for Captains to practice BC assessment center simulations. Provide evaluations to determine strengths and weaknesses early."
- "Host upper level classes like strike team leader, safety officer, crew resource management and communications courses locally to substitute for a slower call volume."
- "Mentoring sessions with those interested in promoting."
- "Continue to provide avenues for personnel that want to promote, such as classes, education, acting opportunities."
- "An in-house Battalion Chief academy for those with four years or more as a Captain. Once they pass a written exam and go through the assessment center, personnel can be an acting BC. They don't have to pass everything, but some (create criteria)."
- "Review test prior to giving it. Many questions and may be legally wrong. Give a clear scope of what the test will include – I do not believe it is the department's role to prep candidates for tests. Support employees yes, but not prep them."
- "I feel the department is on the right track with Captain continuing education."
- "Beyond didactic education there should be a ride along with the Battalion Chief as our department policy already states in order to understand the Battalion Chief's workload."
- "Develop BC's with acting BC and department mentoring for officers."
- "BC mentoring, ride alongs. Also, balance education and experience."
- "Our philosophy of customer service is critical. But to carry it not further, but deeper in to the core of our personnel, consider all things equal and develop greater relational skills."
- "Acting chief program."
- "Implement a program that would allow me to perform as a Battalion Chief under the guidance of a working Battalion Chief."
- "I think acting time is crucial so whatever needs to be done to assist in passing candidates should be addressed."
- "Encourage younger members, assist with in house classes, easier access on to the acting list or possible a separate list for acting."

7. In your opinion, what can the Santa Clara County Fire Department do to entice more qualified personnel to participate and be successful in future Battalion Chief promotional examinations?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “By providing enough prep courses a willingness to “take on” the exam will be higher.”
- “Involve the Battalion Chief positions in administrative meetings and have them involved in the decision making process.”
- “No opinion.”
- “I believe to artificially “entice” is a wrong move. Although at present few aspire. Perhaps this trend will change in the future. A truly successful candidate to chief officer must be internally motivated. Our succession planning goals have been in place and published for quite a while.”
- “Have the process be a positive one. Be mentored. Use task books. Prep people for the expectations of a BC. Don’t let the process be blind or to figure out for yourself.”
- “Could they? Of course. Classes are already available and communicated, and our A-Staff is already willing to answer questions. I think they do help if you ask.”
- “I do not think our personnel need to be enticed. I think we have the right people taking the test, they just need to pass.”
- “Stop promoting “Admin” only type employees. Fireline skills are more important than office work!”
- “Nothing I can think of.”
- “Have the Fire Chief promote the idea of advancing up the ranks at the officer meetings.”
- “There has to be more reasons than wearing gold and being overworked to be a Battalion Chief. BCs need to focus on people, performance, and critical operational needs and not 2-3 programs each.”
- “Look at areas where organizational policy and/or culture hamstrings or restricts personnel from performing roles such as command/overhead functions that are sometimes done by younger personnel in other departments (i.e., CDF).”
- “Totally different testing process to promote; more time in different areas of study; promote the best – get opinions of current Captains as to who would do a good job and why.”
- “Make it a desirable job! Change the culture – get rid of just like me syndrome. Develop leaders, not followers.”
- “Top brass need to show interest in all Captains for future promotions... mentoring from the top needs to occur, even if those people don’t show interest now.”
- “Not sure; more approachable, turn negative events into a positive learning experience.”
- “Unsure.”

- “Get back to the basics. BC’s need to be more involved with training their crews. A prevalent thought about the Battalion Chief’s position is “they deliver the mail.” They are overloaded with paperwork and projects that there is no time left to be a “line” BC. The positions focus appears to be administrative issues and being a manager, as opposed to being the leader of a battalion.”
- “Additional in house officer prep classes in what the department is looking for in a chief officer.”
- “Be trustworthy, unbiased, impartial, and fair.”
- “Pay employees certification tuition, not using education reimbursement credit. Pay employees to attend chief officer certification classes.”
- “Make the position more desirable – should not be a stepping stone to A staff. The position should be more of a Battalion Chief, not a HQ chief. BC’s should be in the union. Need more time to interact with crews.”
- “Help the less experienced personnel gain access to programs and operations that will provide for them more experience. Instead of focusing on experienced personnel for key operational experience (i.e., positions) and training.”
- “Make written evaluations of all personnel mandatory from a 360 degree perspective. Use clear objective standards and training to do so.”
- “Battalion Chiefs need to be an integral part of daily operations and planning. Improve standardization for daily operations from shift to shift, such as report writing, ICS terminology, apparatus response to reduce workload.”
- “Current A-Staff seems more supportive of BC’s. Former chief was not. It may take time to get past the memory. Also, evaluate attitudes and people skills of current A-Staff. Some appear so negative that the idea of working with them on a more regular basis is a deterrent to those thinking of promoting.”
- “Did not state.”
- “1. Make the job more appealing by not taking away overtime for extra hours worked, such as for staff meetings and strike team deployments. 2. Allow BC’s to manage shift without operations micromanaging from HQ.”
- “Provide an environment for learning. Shouldn’t be back stabbed when making mistakes (appropriate criticism – yes).”
- “Have the BC’s in the union. From the outside, the job itself may not look very appealing.”
- “Did not state.”
- “Have a class on decision making geared towards what our department wants – total discipline, leniency, total customer satisfaction no matter how it affects employees, etc. Promote people who have the experience of actually doing the job – give more credit to that person if they are doing the job right, rather than a person with a higher score on a list and less experience.”
- “Make the BC position more of a teammate to A Staff.”
- “BA degree is a big hurdle for some people with families. BA degree does not determine if a person can do the job. Anyone with set determined years of service should be able to take the test.”
- “This is a tough one. Finding the candy is difficult for me. I can better describe the sour. The 2 tests I took revealed to me a need to make a personality change. I

did not want to do that. The current tool of incident reports seems to be used too often.”

- “A change in past management philosophy of limiting the role of the BC position.”
- “Implement a program that would allow me to perform as a Battalion Chief under the guidance of a working Battalion Chief. This kind of program would enhance the skills, knowledge and attitude of any company officer by showing them exactly what a Battalion Chief does, is responsible for, and the challenges they face. The officer may find out the position is not for them but it would still offer them a unique perspective on how the duties of a chief officer differ from their own.”
- “I believe that if they rejoin the union with the rest of the line personnel, it would change everyone’s outlook on the job to a more positive one.”
- “Active solicitation from staff on an individual basis to show they are wanted and welcome.”

8. If you have taken a Battalion Chief examination, but were not promoted, do you feel there are areas you could better prepare yourself to be successful in the future?

| | | |
|-----|------|-----|
| Yes | (8) | 20% |
| No | (4) | 10% |
| N/A | (28) | 70% |

If yes, please explain what you believe you could have done differently that would have helped you successfully make the promotional list:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Greater self-motivation is number 1. More practice at scenarios, seek more help with the big picture concepts, and find an internal mentor.”
- “First two tests, no openings. Third test over committed and did not prep enough.”
- “More practical experience preparing for the exam.”
- “Study topics that would allow successful passage of the written exam.”
- “Mandatory personnel development to help with interpersonal problems.”
- “Nothing to pass the written – all subjective (customer service oriented). You can always prepare more.”
- “Speak to more Battalion Chiefs, ride along for a day.”
- “Just explain REVAS or RECEO!”
- “Yes, but I did not like the journey to get there.”

9. Do you feel the promotional requirements (scheduled to go into effect December 2008) for the position of Battalion Chief are realistic and reasonable? Currently, the primary requirements are three years of fire Captain experience, with 60 college credits (however, those requirements are desirable, not mandatory). The future mandatory requirements are part of a three-tiered system:

- Four years Fire Captain experience, a four-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification.
- Five years Fire Captain experience, a two-year college degree, and Chief Officer certification.
- Six years Fire Captain experience, 30 college credits, and five of the ten Chief Officer courses completed.
- All of the above also require the following training classes: I-400 (Advanced ICS), S-339 (Division/Group Supervisor), and S-330 (Strike Team Leader)

| | | |
|-----|------|-----|
| Yes | (30) | 75% |
| No | (10) | 25% |

If no, please explain what you feel should be added, modified or deleted in the way of education, training and/or experience for future Battalion Chief promotional examinations.

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Experience on the line as a Captain, minimum 6 years. All else is fine.”
- “I do feel experience is valid. I’ve been here 17 years and just promoted. I feel I have much more experience than Captains with 6 to 8 years on the job and 4 years as a Captain.”
- “I would not be opposed to some sort of peer group review and input along with the Fire Chief having final say.”
- “We have Deputy Chiefs without degrees and chief officer certification. This is wrong. You will not have enough qualified people to take the test. You may be forced to hire from the outside.”
- “Time in grade (Captain) should be at least 7 years, period, no exceptions. This time has to be on the line. The educational requirements are good and could be more.”
- “How can future BC candidates work hand in hand with current BC’s? A Captain candidate can mirror his/her Captain to learn.”
- “Experience can’t be rated in years – 5 years at El Toro or 5 years at Quito – way different. Should have a task book. Should have chief officer certificate and a minimum of a 2 year degree.”
- “Captains should have 8 to 10 years experience with a variety of experiences on the line (engine, truck, staff assignments) with lots of positive documentation.”
- “Minimum should be 5 years as a Captain regardless of education/coursework. Be careful. Too many hoops and you won’t have a qualified applicant pool. There is no replacement for experience.”
- “Years of Captain’s experience should be changed 8, 9 and 10 above respectively, due to reduced number of significant calls and lack of practical experience.”
- “Testing process should determine if person is qualified.”
- “Unqualified yes, not having full familiarity of the current chief officer certification.”

- Acting time as a Battalion Chief acquired through a program as I previously described.”
- “This is a slow fire department. All BC candidates should have a minimum of 8 to 10 years LINE Captain experience – only an opinion of course.”

10. What do you believe are some positive aspects of being a chief officer in the Santa Clara County Fire Department?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “Opportunity to input your ideas and actually have them considered.”
- “Being able to influence and guide Captains and firefighters is the biggest benefit/aspect for a BC.”
- “No opinion.”
- “Job satisfaction by being able to face challenges and make a difference. Lack of boredom. Opportunity to make improvements. Knowledgeable A and B staff.”
- “Taking leadership to the next level. Passing on knowledge and leadership to the next generation of Captains and future chiefs.”
- “Emergency scene management will always be the best aspect. Platoon schedule, camaraderie of the firehouse, without vomit on your boots.”
- “It is another level of being part of a solution/positive change. Personnel challenging.”
- “Affecting change for improved department performance.”
- “Have a greater role in effecting positive change in the department.”
- “Work schedule, still being part of the firehouse, career growth.”
- “Flexible vacation, personal leave, and educational leave.”
- “Opportunity to create a positive and enjoyable work environment across a broader section of department personnel. More autonomy (i.e., in department programs).”
- “None that I can think of.”
- “Retirement package (sick leave buyout).”
- “Taking vacations one day/hour at a time, instead of by the tour. Pay/salary is good.”
- “Being able to continue as a leader in this organization and make changes or assist in changes as the fire service changes.”
- “You are in a position to affect change for the Department as a whole and also at the company level.”
- “It’s challenging and respected. The chance to help make positive changes and be progressive.”
- “Not sure.”
- “Positive impact can be made on department.”
- “Directly responsible for organizational direction.”
- “Salary, benefits, work schedule.”
- “Less of a physical liability on your body.”
- “Calm, professional, depth of experience, confidence, breadth of experience, knowledgeable, consistent, honest and trustworthy.”

- “There exists the possibility of improving how we do business. You have more ownership and influence on the department.”
 - “Unsure.”
 - “Able to make change at a global level within department.”
 - “Pride and desire of working at this level for a department like County Fire.”
 - “I am not sure yet; just keep trying to learn the job of a Captain.”
 - “Vacation cash out, sick leave cash out, flexible time off.”
 - “Ability to be directly involved in change / operations.”
 - “Recognition of accomplishments, better pay and benefits, you can make decisions and control your battalion as well as your past and personality will allow.”
 - “Can effect positive progressive change on a department.”
 - “Mentoring, setting example.”
 - “Within the department it is the cross road to field personnel and administration. It can make or break that connection or relationship.”
 - “High morale department, respect from line personnel.”
 - “Ability to mentor many people and effect positive change to a large group.”
 - “The ability to affect change and lead.”
 - “Highly respected in area, good working relationships, little need for discipline and babysitting as compared with other areas.”
11. What do you believe are some negative aspects of being a chief officer in the Santa Clara County Fire Department?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- “People in these positions tend to forget the way the line people think. Chief Sporleder did not. That is why he was so successful and respected. You seem to have that trait too. Keep it! It is a good thing.”
- “1st, you really are not a chief officer, there is no indication from staff that a BC is involved in decisions and appears not be trusted with the closeness to the line people. Hard to take vacation or other time off, etc.”
- “No opinion.”
- “Large span of control. Litigious society. Large geographic area of responsibility.”
- “Many small fires to put out every day with staffing, etc. BC’s are very busy with other stuff. You don’t see them unless there is a call or an issue. Too much busy work.”
- “Logistics will always be one of the most negative. BC’s hear from above and below. It’s got to be tough in the middle. BC projects are necessary but difficult. BC’s should not deliver mail.”
- “The fact that you are a manager with several personnel under you, it is reasonable to expect that at some point you will be personally held legally, criminally, and civilly responsible for your actions in support of the department policies.”

- “Paperwork, doing more “basic” level skills is what we should be doing instead of more clerical work.”
- “Workload, having to enforce rules and regulations you don’t believe in, or that you don’t believe is fair.”
- “Middle man between labor and management, mail runs, lack of time to do training for crews, but mostly self.”
- “No overtime, overworked, minimum support of management, more focus on staff work, not enough focus on emergency scene operations.”
- “Enforcing unpopular policy decisions. More paperwork. A sense of less autonomy. Not being in the union. A negative perception. Doing the bidding of the office.”
- “BC’s are not held accountable for mistakes. This is and has been an on-going problem.”
- “No union representation. I don’t agree with administration (hard line attitude); i.e. personnel counseling.”
- “Middleman between management and service providers, mail man, not able to spend positive time with crews.”
- “Lack of calls (not sure how to change that).”
- “It appears to me that the BC position is just as frustrating as Captain and firefighter in regards to trying to make positive changes in the department and not being listened to or given the support to try something new or think outside the box.”
- “Do not like the image of a glorified mail carrier.”
- “Not sure.”
- “Unrepresented by union.”
- “Move away from administrative duties and direct towards crews, training of Captains and fireground operations.”
- “Dealing with unmotivated, non-committed employees.”
- “Having to spend a lot of time on administration of a battalion instead of participating in hands-on training.”
- “Four years as a Captain and one good day at the assessment center and you are in for life.”
- “You can be in charge of a large scale incidents without ever having commanded one even briefly as a Captain.”
- “Undecided.”
- “The disconnect with the troops.”
- “Lack of overtime, Captains making more than BC’s once BC is off promotion.”
- “Everything changes again (like when promoted to Captain). And then wall comes between you and lower level personnel (Captain on down).Not in the union, not enough relief BC’s, no overtime, being sued.”
- “Would be nice to change assignments, battalions, shifts.”
- “Having to work in Morgan Hill on a 40 hour work week. Having so much bureaucracy as to not being able to implement safety procedures or very good ideas that employees have submitted.”
- “Sometimes chiefs forget what it’s like to be the end user of policies, equipment, etc.”

- “None!”
- “Within the department it is the cross road to field personnel and administration. It can make or break that connection or relationship. Also, there appears too much use of incident reports as a result of how one makes decisions and for what reasons.”
- “Too many management responsibilities (projects). Should add Captains as assistants.”
- “Not having union representation, dealing with chief officers that do not promote an open minded approach to improving or solving the problems of the fire department.”
- “Possibly a disconnect from line personnel, an us versus them mentality.”
- “Lack of overtime, large workload.”