

Running head: SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT SELF-INSPECTION

The Santa Clara County Fire Department Fire Prevention
Self-Inspection Program: Is It Meeting Expectations?

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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 so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

The Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) fire prevention self-inspection program has had a reputation of being more laborious and time consuming than a regular in-person fire prevention inspection. The purpose of this research was to determine whether the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program is meeting the needs and expectations of the personnel and the SCCFD and to determine what changes might be recommended to improve the program to ensure that the community risk reduction needs of the citizens and communities served by the SCCFD are met. Descriptive research, including a literature review, a personal interview, an external survey, and an internal survey, was used to determine the importance of fire prevention inspections, to define self-inspection program, to identify how the SCCFD is currently utilizing the self-inspection program, to determine the advantages and disadvantages of a self-inspection program, and to determine whether other fire departments were using such a program. The results showed that a self-inspection program may be an effective option in place of a standard engine company inspection and may have potential benefits not only to a fire department but also to a business owner. However, there are potential drawbacks if the program is not properly implemented or evaluated. Recommendations are made to assist the SCCFD in updating its current fire prevention self-inspection program, including a complete evaluation, to determine whether it is ready to be expanded to the other cities served by the SCCFD.

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Introduction

The phrase “doing more with less” is heard daily across the nation by personnel working for many governmental agencies, including fire departments. In this case, doing more with less means that the typical fire department and fire service employee are being asked to take on more duties and responsibilities, without eliminating any services. This situation is forcing fire service supervisors and managers to be creative and to emphasize impeccable time management and organizational skills.

Every business within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) receives an annual fire and life safety inspection. The majority of these inspections are performed by the personnel who staff the fire apparatus and work out of the fire stations; they perform these inspections along with a myriad of other duties and responsibilities, not to mention responding to emergency calls for service. These inspections are commonly known as “company inspections,” since a company of firefighters performs the work.

Recognizing the costs and hours required to complete a typical annual business fire and life safety inspection, in 1999 the SCCFD established a fire prevention self-inspection program. This pilot program began in the City of Cupertino, expanding to the City of Campbell in 2003 and then to the City of Morgan Hill in 2005, with the intention of having the program eventually adopted in the other five cities served by the SCCFD. While the self-inspection program was well intended, the question still exists whether the self-inspection program actually saves time and money for the business owner and the fire department. Perhaps more important, does the self-inspection program allow firefighters to focus on other necessary duties and responsibilities? In fact, the program has a reputation among firefighters of being more laborious and time consuming than a regular in-person fire prevention inspection.

The purpose of this research was to determine whether the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program is meeting the needs of the personnel and the SCCFD, and to determine what changes might be recommended to improve the program to ensure that community risk reduction needs are met. Descriptive research, including a literature review, a personal interview, an external survey, and an internal survey, was used to answer the following research questions:

1. Why are fire prevention inspections necessary?
2. What is a self-inspection program?
3. How is the current fire prevention self-inspection program utilized in the SCCFD?
4. What are the advantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?
5. What are the disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?
6. Are other fire departments utilizing a fire prevention self-inspection program?

Background and Significance

The County of Santa Clara is the sixth largest county in the state of California. The county is located in the northern part of the state, in the San Francisco Bay Area, specifically the area known as Silicon Valley. Within the county there are 15 incorporated cities, 8 of which receive fire protection services from the SCCFD.

The SCCFD is a dependent fire district formed under the California Health and Safety Code. The SCCFD has been in existence since 1947; it was created when the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (now known as Cal Fire) terminated their contract on the valley floor, creating a void for fire protection services. The department has evolved from consolidations and contracts for service. The majority of its revenue is derived from property taxes, and the remaining revenue is primarily from contracts with cities for fire protection

services. The Fire Chief of the SCCFD reports directly to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, which acts as the Fire Protection Board of Direction and is responsible for oversight and direction.

The SCCFD is legally known as the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District. In 1997 the name SCCFD was adopted to better reflect the area being served, to provide a more regional-sounding name that matched the vision of the SCCFD, and to eliminate any confusion with fire departments that had a similar name in neighboring counties (SCCFD, 2004).

The SCCFD is a full service provider, providing fire suppression, fire prevention inspection and education, fire investigation, public education, hazardous materials response, disaster preparedness and emergency response, basic and advanced life support emergency medical service, and technical and nontechnical rescue services to eight communities and to unincorporated areas within Santa Clara County, California.

The eight cities served by the SCCFD are Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, and Saratoga. All of these cities are considered to be part of the Silicon Valley, home to some of the world's leading computer and high-technology manufacturers and companies, such as Apple Computer, Intel, Netflix, Symantec, and Yahoo.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department Business Plan (SCCFD, 2004) addresses the mission statement and vision 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)

Operating out of 17 fire stations and six administrative and support facilities, the SCCFD provides these life safety and fire protection services through over 300 personnel, including a minimum of 71 fire station personnel on duty per day, supported by up to 50 volunteer firefighters. These personnel are responsible for staffing 23 primary fire companies and three command vehicles strategically located within the department's jurisdictional boundaries.

In addition to the fire station personnel, 22 of those personnel are specifically assigned to the fire prevention division: 1 Deputy Chief, 1 Assistant Fire Marshal, 3 Senior Deputy Fire Marshals, 11 Deputy Fire Marshals, 2 Fire Protection Engineers, 1 Senior Hazardous Materials Specialist, 2 Hazardous Materials Specialists, and 1 Weed Abatement Inspector. One of the three Senior Deputy Fire Marshals is assigned as the "Engine company liaison," serving as the conduit between the station personnel and the fire prevention division. This person also manages the SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program.

The SCCFD provides services to approximately 232,000 people within 140 square miles, with personnel working under one of five major department divisions: fire prevention, operations, training, support services, or administrative services.

The fire prevention division is responsible for providing fire inspection services and code enforcement, as well as hazardous materials inspection and regulation. The operations division is responsible for coordinating resources for emergency response and fire investigation. The training division is responsible for coordinating and delivering training to department personnel, as well as public education and emergency preparedness training to the public. The support services division is responsible for facility maintenance, supply needs, and apparatus maintenance. The administrative services division is responsible for general management and administrative support duties, as well as information technology.

Each of the 23 SCCFD fire station companies is staffed with a Fire Captain, who acts as the supervisor of either two or three assigned personnel at the Firefighter/Engineer rank, one of whom is a licensed paramedic. The Fire Captain is responsible for managing the daily activities of the fire company to ensure that the needs of the department and the expectations of the SCCFD administration are met.

A SCCFD fire station typically houses one or more crews of three or four personnel who staff a specific piece of fire apparatus; this group is known as a company. The four most common types of fire companies within the SCCFD are the engine company, the truck company, the hazardous materials company, and the rescue company. A common fire prevention activity performed by fire departments across the nation is the company inspection; the SCCFD has been performing this activity for several years. A company inspection consists of the companies at the fire stations inspecting each commercial building within the response area on an annual basis, performing fire and life safety inspections that include enforcing the fire code, and educating the business owners on keeping the workplace free from fires and other hazards.

However, due to the increased workloads of the average fire company and budgets that are frequently decreased, fire departments such as the SCCFD are forced to reevaluate how they do business. The great majority of a fire department's budget typically goes to personnel costs, primarily wages and benefits. The majority of fire department personnel work in the fire stations to staff the companies that are dispatched in emergency situations and services are requested. Because of the inability to fund additional positions dedicated primarily to fire prevention activities, the SCCFD, like other fire departments, is forced to have fire station personnel assist with the workload of the prevention division.

In 1999 the SCCFD implemented a fire department self-inspection program to assist the fire companies to reduce their increasing workload, with the intent also to enhance relationships with business owners. This pilot program was established in one of the eight cities served by the SCCFD: Cupertino. In 2003, the City of Campbell and in 2005 the City of Morgan Hill became the second and third cities served by the SCCFD to participate in the fire prevention self-inspection program.

This research project was chosen because of its direct relation to the second-year course of the Executive Fire Officer Program, Strategies for Leading Community Risk Reduction, specifically Unit 1: The executive fire officer: a community risk reduction strategist, and Unit 3: Intervention, program design, and evaluation.

This problem relates to one of the course goals of the Strategies for Community Risk Reduction course: “Develop and integrate change management and leadership techniques necessary in complex organizations” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008b, p. O-3). The SCCFD is a very complex organization in that eight cities and several county unincorporated areas 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, in that property taxes and contracts for services constitute the majority of the revenue in the SCCFD budget.

Thus, it is challenging for the SCCFD to acquire additional funding because those two 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. SCCFD contracts for fire protection services are typically 5 to 10 years in duration, with contract cost increases typically based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and not leaving much room for renegotiation. Once a city agrees to a contract for fire protection services, the city is reluctant to consider requests from the department for more money.

This research relates to all five of the U.S. Fire Administration Operational Objectives: 1—“Reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 14 years old and below”; 2—“Reduce the loss of life from fire in the age group 65 years old and above”; 3—“Reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters”; 4—“Promote within communities a comprehensive, multihazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service organization”; and 5—“Respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008a, p. II-2).

The business occupancies affected by a fire department self-inspection program typically involve people of all ages, including those 14 years and below as well as those 65 years and older, within their walls at any given time. Aggressive fire prevention activities targeted at reducing fires will no doubt have an impact on the reduction of firefighter fatalities. Partnering with business owners to educate them on the benefits of a fire prevention self-inspection program, as well as how to properly perform such an inspection, will help fire departments do more with less, while also involving key stakeholders: the business owners.

Fire prevention self-inspections can be seen as an emerging issue because the concept is still evolving and is not completely embraced by every fire department across the nation. Within the communities served by the SCCFD, the fire prevention self-inspection program is an emerging issue that has the potential to be a department-wide venture with significant success for all key stakeholders.

Literature Review

The purposes of the literature review for this Applied Research Project (ARP) were (a) to review relevant information on fire prevention activities performed to reduce community risks; (b) to review relevant information on self-inspection programs, including how fire departments in the United States are performing such activities; (c) to determine whether the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program is ready to be expanded to other communities; and (d) to determine whether other industries are using self-inspection programs.

The literature review began at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) of the National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg, Maryland, in August 2008. The LRC staff assisted with collecting books, journals, and articles related to fire prevention, self-inspection programs, and community risk reduction. The literature review continued in California with an extensive online search of journals, books, and articles via the World Wide Web, the researcher's personal library, the SCCFD Training Division library, and the City of San Jose public library.

Community Risk Reduction

What is community risk reduction? Barr and Eversole (2006) stated that risk reduction is a necessity for a fire department that wants to provide the highest level of service to its community and that prevention activities should not be limited to fire prevention but should include public fire safety education and fire investigation. They contended that having fire station personnel perform these services increases productivity in the down time awaiting calls for service (p. 941).

When determining how to address the level of risk within a community, Barr and Eversole (2006) stated that the fire chief of today must identify the greatest risks to the community, the community expectations of the fire department, and the level of service that the

fire department should provide to the community. The chief should also determine whether the current level of service is acceptable, the cost associated with necessary improvements to the fire service delivery system, and, most important, the level of service that the community can ultimately afford (p. 1014).

Successful risk reduction prevention interventions should incorporate the five E's: (a) education, (b) engineering, (c) enforcement, (d) economic incentives, and (e) emergency response (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008b, p. I-13).

America Burning (United States Fire Administration, 1973) stressed the importance of fire departments at the local level being responsible for fire prevention and risk reduction. "Local governments—through codes and fire safety laws, and through heavy investments in fire department personnel and equipment—have shouldered the major burden of protecting citizens from fire and should continue to do so" (p. x).

The Fire and Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual (Center for Public Safety Excellence, 2006) emphasized the need for a fire department to have a comprehensive risk reduction program in place in order to achieve the status of an accredited fire department. The SCCFD is one of four fire departments in California, and one of about 120 in the United States, to achieve "Accredited" status through the Center for Public Safety Excellence. The basic criterion for this accreditation is as follows:

There is an adequate, effective, and efficient program directed toward fire prevention, life safety, risk reduction of hazards, the detection, reporting, and control of fires and other emergencies, the provision of occupant safety and exiting, and the provisions for first aid fire fighting equipment. (p. 83)

Coleman (2007) stressed the need for the modern fire service to match fire department resources with specific community problems so that given resources can appropriately resolve the problems and issues as they arise. Every community has its own problems relating to fire prevention in general and risk reduction activities in particular.

Customer Service and Fire Prevention Activities

Customer service is a relatively new term for the fire service. Before the publication of *Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service* by Phoenix Fire Department Chief (retired) Alan V. Brunacini in 1996, there was very limited literature to customer service and the fire service. Many administration, leadership and management textbooks and articles related to fire service contain the words *customer service* and mention the need for governmental employees, including fire service personnel, to be aware of the term and to put the term into practice every day.

The SCCFD is, like many other fire departments today, very focused on customer service. The motto of the department is “courtesy and service,” and this motto is placed strategically on all department patches and stickers. The SCCFD Business Plan (SCCFD, 2004) addresses the need not only for customer service but also for building relationships with business owners during fire prevention activities. The department expects its members to provide value-added service.

Fire prevention personnel serve as “advocates” for the community at large. The regulatory nature of the service often impacts the customer; therefore fire prevention personnel must “sell” the fire code, as adopted by each local jurisdiction, to businesses and developers. (SCCFD, 2004, p. 15)

The International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA, 2004) stressed the importance of not only defining who the customers are but also evaluating their continuously changing attitudes, needs, and desires. The term *customer* as it relates to fire and emergency services can be categorized as follows: (a) internal customers—the employees of the organization, (b) external customers—persons and companies that are directly served by the organization, and (c) stakeholders—those who either govern the organization or have influence on the organization in some fashion. These three types of customers have different needs and opinions regarding how their fire department should serve them and the community.

What is the primary mission of every fire department? Brunacini (1996) is an advocate of fire departments providing the best possible customer service to “Mrs. Smith,” a fictitious character who symbolizes the average, everyday person in the world of fire service: “Our essential mission and number one priority is to deliver the best possible service to our customers” (p. 9). Since most fire departments, including the SCCFD, exist because of taxpayer funding, it is critical that the customer receive the services that the customer requests, based on the money the customer pays in the form of taxes.

For a fire department to survive in today’s economy, it is critical to focus on what the customers need and desire in the form of levels of service. “Basic organizational behavior must become customer centered” (Brunacini, 1996, p. 91). As an example, a self-inspection program can be a benefit to the fire department, to fire department personnel, to the internal customers, and to business owners—the external customers.

The typical fire department does not survive on responding to emergency and nonemergency requests for service. In addition to responding to those calls, it is not uncommon for the fire department of today to perform activities such as public education, training, hose

testing, hydrant testing and maintenance, facility maintenance, apparatus and equipment maintenance, physical fitness, area familiarization, building familiarization, pre-fire planning, weed abatement activities, and fire prevention company inspections. While some may consider some of these activities to be “busy work,” all of them serve their purpose of ensuring that firefighters are prepared to respond and mitigate the majority of emergencies with which they will be faced and that they are ensuring that their community is as safe as it can be from fires, disasters, and other types of emergencies.

Are fire prevention activities necessary? *America Burning* (United States Fire Administration, 1973) focused on the nation’s fire problem and the need for fire prevention activities.

Fire departments, many of which confine their roles to putting out fires and rescuing its victims, need to expand more effort to educate children on fire safety, to educate adults through fire prevention codes, and to see that fire safety is designed into buildings. Such efforts need to be continuously evaluated, so that the Nation can learn what kinds of measures are most effective in reducing the incidence and destructiveness of fire. (p. x)

Since many injuries and fatalities from fires happen prior to the arrival of fire service personnel, IFSTA (2004) noted that it is critical for fire departments to develop fire prevention programs to reduce fire-related injuries and fatalities. A fire prevention program that would be effective in reducing fire-related injuries and fatalities would include the following four elements: (a) engineering—building design as required by an adopted building code, (b) inspections to enforce building and fire codes, (c) investigation to determine causes of fires, and (d) education—fire prevention information and training for the public (p. 353).

What is the most important non-fire suppression activity for a fire department? Barr and Eversole (2006) identified fire prevention as most important because “the focal point of a fire department’s efforts to minimize fire losses in a community is the fire prevention organization” (p. 1037). They noted that the primary goal of a fire department should be to improve levels of safety and the quality of life for the citizens whom they serve.

Historically, most fire and life safety codes were created because of tragic fires that resulted in large loss of lives and that could have been prevented by strong fire and life safety codes and enforcement. IFSTA (2007) identified two primary purposes of fire and life safety inspections: (a) “to ensure that fire and life safety code requirements are adhered to within public accessible facilities,” and (b) “to provide the owner/occupant with safety education materials and information” (p. 664).

A tragic fire occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 18, 2007; nine firefighters died while fighting the fire in a furniture warehouse store. Chiamonte (2008) contended that this fire could have been prevented, had the building been built and maintained in accordance with local and state codes. Numerous code compliance issues were discovered during the investigation into the firefighter fatalities.

Additions constructed without permits; lack of automatic sprinklers; inadequate fire walls; improperly stored flammable liquids, trash and debris outside the loading dock (where the fire began); smoking employees; inadequate number of exits, non-working fire doors and locked or obstructed paths to exits; and a holding room with no ceiling (p. 54).

Unfortunately, the last time the Charleston Fire Department had physically performed a fire prevention inspection on that building was in 1998. While violations were noted at that

inspection, there was no clear follow-up for correction. Making matters worse, when the city adopted the International Building Code, it abandoned its annual fire and life safety inspection program, providing inspections only for new construction.

Is there a requirement to perform annual fire and life safety inspections in business occupancies? “The California Health and Safety Code requires each municipality to enforce the minimum provisions of the California Fire Code, which is adopted triennially by the State” (SCCFD, 2005, p. V-17).

What if fire and life safety inspections were not performed? Crawford (2007b) noted that, if a fire department failed to inspect an existing business for fire code compliance, it is likely that no one would complain. However, should a fire occur and someone be seriously injured or killed, the post-fire investigation would likely reveal the lack of inspections, resulting in blame attribution and lawsuits directed at the fire department for not doing “its job.”

Schaenman (2008) found that the “most comprehensive, intensive fire prevention program with the best sustained bottom line is that of the U.S. Navy” (p. 49). In financial terms, the U.S. Navy’s losses per fire are much lower than those in the civilian world; in health and welfare terms, the U.S. Navy has had no fire fatalities and very minimal injuries when compared to the rest of the United States, due mainly to its aggressive and comprehensive fire prevention activities.

What would be the objectives of performing fire inspections of business facilities in the community? Carter and Rausch (2008) defined five major objectives of a fire prevention occupancy inspection: (a) uncovering code violations and potential fire hazards; (b) using department personnel more efficiently for assigned fire prevention duties; (c) providing information to update pre-fire plans; (d) familiarizing firefighters with contents and construction

hazards, which ultimately makes potential firefighting operations more safer; and (e) acquainting firefighters with fire codes, ordinances, and laws relating to fire prevention and code enforcement.

Crawford (2007a) focused on the fact that the purpose of performing fire prevention occupancy inspections is to not catch people doing inappropriate things as much as it is to assist them in locating hazards and potential violations and, more important, educate them so they can eliminate hazards that could be detrimental to their business and livelihood.

After the tragic 2007 fire in Charleston, South Carolina, the fire department hired a fire prevention supervisor to coordinate fire prevention activities, including having the firefighters resurrect the company inspection program. The department is now taking fire prevention seriously; unfortunately, it took the loss of nine firefighters to spur this change. Chiamonte (2008) clearly stated the importance of fire prevention activities:

I hope that the entire American fire service can learn the real message from the Sofa Super Store: Proactive emergency planning takes the full engagement of a fire department and should be given top priority. This fire is a clear example of how a comprehensive program of fire prevention, engineering, enforcement and education is directly related to saving firefighter lives and preventing firefighter injuries. It is worth a significant investment of time and budget (p. 54).

Fire Department Services and Time Management

Fire departments exist to provide various levels of fire protection and emergency services to the communities that they serve. For example, the SCCFD responds to virtually any type of request for service, including but not limited to incidents involving fires, emergency medical

service requests, hazardous materials mitigation, rescues, fire or medical alarm activations, and motor vehicle crashes.

Buckman (2006) noted that population growth will cause an increase in calls and an increase in service demands by the public. The number of fires will increase, placing a greater demand on existing fire protection services and the need for increased fire prevention and code enforcement.

Time management is a challenge for the typical SCCFD Fire Captain, as well as for the typical business owner in the communities served by the SCCFD. In addition to responding to over 14,000 requests for service in 2007, SCCFD personnel are responsible to carry out a wide variety of duties during each working day. All of these duties are above and beyond the emergency and nonemergency requests for service that are generated by the people living or participating in activities within the jurisdictional boundaries. These additional duties include but are not limited to training, physical fitness, hydrant maintenance, record keeping, weed abatement, pre-fire planning, public education, fire prevention activities such as occupancy inspections, as well as apparatus, facility, and equipment maintenance. In addition, each fire station is responsible for a specific project, such as personal protective clothing maintenance, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) maintenance, SCBA bottle refilling, ladder testing, apparatus pump testing, small tools and equipment storage, and data entry for returned customer survey cards.

The management audit of the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District revealed that the increasing workload challenges faced by each fire company affected the fire prevention activities of the SCCFD. "Because fire station companies must balance their emergency and non-emergency workload, they do not always complete their inspections by the

end of the quarter in which they are scheduled” (Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, Management Audit Division, 2005, p. 181). This audit provided an example from the second quarter of calendar year 2004, in which fire companies only completed 71.5% of their scheduled inspections.

Robbins (2001) emphasized that many people do not properly manage their time. He contended that someone who is highly organized may easily accomplish twice as much as someone who is poorly organized. He offered four basic time management principles that anyone, including fire service personnel, can utilize to help increase efficiency and productivity: (a) List activities to be completed that day, (b) let urgency and importance dictate priority of activities, (c) schedule the day’s activities based on those priorities, (d) know when you get the most productivity and schedule the most demanding activities during those times.

IFSTA (2004) discussed time management as it relates to customer service and the need to balance time management and customer service.

Keeping in touch with the community and making sure its needs are met (at what citizens hopefully perceive as a very reasonable cost) is very important. Spending time with the community, being involved in service clubs, and being visible at community functions allows you to be accessible to the services the department provides. (p. 223)

While response time for fire companies in the United States is a significant issue, some countries do not place the same priority on response times. For example, the SCCFD prides itself in arriving at 90% of all code 3 responses within 7 minutes or less, from the time of the initial 9-1-1 call for service. Ballesteros and Schaenman (2008) reported that Norway and Sweden place more fire personnel on fire prevention activities but are more lenient on response times. Those two countries require fire units to arrive in 10 minutes or less, as opposed to the National

Fire Protection Association goal of 6 minutes in the United States. Apparently, Scandinavian countries care more about fire prevention activities and early fire control by homeowners than about rapid response by fire companies. This increased fire prevention activity has actually resulted in lower call volume per capita, even with the increased response times, but is completely acceptable to government officials.

Self-Inspection Programs

Self-inspection programs are typically voluntary and intended to allow the individual or organization who is performing the self-inspection to evaluate the operation on his/her own time. A self-inspection program is any type of program that allows a person to do an inspection of a process or place of business or residence, typically using a standardized form created by an organization with a vested interest in the outcome, such as a fire department or insurance company. The terms *self-inspection* and *self-assessment* are often used interchangeably. The aim of both is to allow an individual or an organization (public or private) to determine how they are currently doing business in order to improve on weaknesses and build on strengths.

How does a self-assessment program benefit a fire department? *The Fire and Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual* (Center for Public Safety Excellence, 2006) identified the primary benefits of a self-assessment program to fire departments and business owners:

- To promote excellence within your organization
- To allow for your fire department to grow and prosper
- To encourage continuous quality improvement
- To provide internal and external recognition for your agency
- To provide a thorough evaluation of an agency and the services offered to its community

- To provide assurance to the community and to other fire departments that the agency has adopted a specific mission and associated goals and objectives that will offer improvement of organizational performance
- To create a mechanism to allow labor and management to communicate and collaborate leadership philosophies and foster cooperation
- To allow a method for creating organizational documents for long-term success, such as a strategic plan, a standards of cover document, a risk assessment evaluation, an operational plan, and a “desktop manual” of everything the agency is involved in, broken down by rank and position, as well as by program, to assist with succession planning when personnel are placed into positions they have never worked in
- To provide a systematic method of noting agency strengths and weaknesses, while offering a plan to build upon the strengths and improve the weaknesses. (p. 9)

Why would a fire department establish a self-inspection program or a business participate in a self-inspection program? “The purpose of the Self-Inspection Program is to optimize the time available for engine company inspections and to minimize the disruption of businesses due to fire safety inspections” (SCCFD, 1999, n.p.).

The management audit of the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District (Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, Management Audit Division, 2005) recorded that the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program started as a pilot program in the City of Cupertino. The SCCFD had performed research on self-inspection programs and determined that some business owners preferred a self-inspection over a company inspection for various reasons:

(a) A self-inspection would be less disruptive to a business because the business owner would

actually complete the inspection at a time that was convenient to him/her; (b) a business owner would learn first-hand how to create a safe workplace—knowledge that could also be used at home; and (c) a business owner with questions about the self-inspection could contact a department liaison during regular business hours (currently, the business would have to contact the fire station, where a company might not be in quarters or the specific personnel who performed the initial inspection might be off duty).

What types of business occupancies are typically eligible to participate in a fire prevention self-inspection program? When the SCCFD established the self-inspection pilot program in 1999, only occupancies meeting certain criteria were eligible to participate: (a) “B” (business) occupancies, (b) “M” (mercantile) occupancies, (c) “S-2” (low hazard storage) occupancies, (d) hazardous materials permits were not required, (e) the fire code did not require any specific operational permits, and (f) a documented record of minimal violations had been noted during inspections over the previous 5 years. The above occupancies were chosen because of the anticipated limited level of fire and life safety hazards that would typically be present in such businesses, based on a favorable inspection history and occupancy type.

The California Fire Code (2007) defines a “B” occupancy as a business occupancy within “a building or structure, or portion thereof, used for office, professional, or service-type transactions, including storage of records and accounts” (p. 20). Examples of “B” occupancies that the SCCFD and most fire departments would encounter within their jurisdiction include banks, barber and beauty shops, civic administration offices, dry cleaning and laundries (pick-up and delivery stations and self-service facilities), electronic data processing offices, motor vehicle showrooms, print shops, offices for professional services (architects, attorneys, dentists,

physicians, engineers, etc.), and facilities for training and skill development programs not within a school or academic program.

The California Fire Code (2007) defines an “M” occupancy as a mercantile occupancy that includes “buildings or structures, or portion thereof, for the display and sale of merchandise incidental to such purposes and accessible to the public” (p. 24). Examples of “M” occupancies that the SCCFD and most fire departments would encounter within their jurisdiction include department stores, drug stores, markets, retail or wholesale stores, and sales rooms.

The California Fire Code (2007) defines an “S-2” occupancy as “buildings used for the storage of noncombustible materials such as products on wood pallets or in paper cartons with or without single thickness divisions, or in paper wrappings” (p. 26). Examples of items stored within “S-2” occupancies that the SCCFD and most fire departments would encounter within their jurisdiction include frozen foods, metals, parking garage spaces (open or enclosed), stoves, and washers and dryers.

Crawford (2008) noted that identifying fire hazards and abating those hazards does not have to be exclusively the job of a fire department. He stated that a self-inspection program can be attractive for the business owner, who, if educated about simple fire and life safety hazards, can perform self-inspections and abate hazards, ultimately saving time while reducing the hazards. Unfortunately, he reported that many fire departments have abandoned self-inspection programs and that some business owners, although concerned about potential liability, tended to ignore self-inspection letters from the fire department.

How much does a self-inspection cost a fire department? While it is difficult to calculate an exact cost, especially relating to personnel costs, it is possible to estimate administrative costs such as postage, printing, and related computer software enhancements. In the SCCFD Fiscal

Year 2008/2009 budget, the overall budget for the self-inspection program was \$11,800: \$5,000 was allocated for postage to mail self-inspection forms, \$5,000 was allocated for development of a Web-based self-inspection program, \$300 was allocated for Web-based remote server fee, and \$1,500 was allocated for printing letters to business owners (SCCFD, 2008).

How much does a self-inspection cost a business owner? Traditionally, the SCCFD did not charge business owners for inspection activity performed by fire station personnel. However, this situation changed on September 26, 2005, when the City of Morgan Hill City Council passed an ordinance that established three separate fire inspection fees: \$210.00 for an engine company inspection, \$53.00 for a re-inspection, and \$17.00 for a self-inspection (City of Morgan Hill, 2005).

Like most other municipalities, the City of Morgan Hill was looking for creative ways to provide revenue to offset rising expenditures. A challenge for the SCCFD emerged when the City of Morgan Hill anticipated a 100% collection rate at the full engine company inspection rate of \$210, not taking into account various issues, such as business owners unwilling to pay a fee in addition to other business operation fees, the number of businesses that were vacant, and the number of businesses that would opt for the self-inspection program. City officials anticipated over \$200,000 in revenue for the first full year of the program (calendar year 2006). Unfortunately, the city received only a little over \$100,000 in revenue that could be attributed to billing for fire inspections (personal information obtained at a meeting of the City Council, April 27, 2007).

The cost to business owners to return self-inspection paperwork via the mail is more than to do so via the Internet, which does not require return envelopes. A software program

specifically established to process self-inspection paperwork would make data processing and collection much easier.

The management audit of the Santa Clara County Central Fire Protection District (Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, Management Audit Division, 2005) estimated that, in 2004, SCCFD companies spent 4,230 hours on inspections at a cost of at least \$736,000.

How does a self-inspection actually work? While there does not appear to be a one-size-fits-all approach, the SCCFD has determined that the following steps comprise the current self-inspection program:

1. To be considered for the program, a company officer (after discussing the program with the business owner) recommends to the Senior Deputy Fire Marshal assigned to oversee the Self-Inspection Program a business based on the predetermined eligibility criteria. If the Marshal concurs with the recommendation, the “inspection responsibility” box in the database record is changed to “SI” for self-inspection.

2. Once an occupancy is approved for the program, the SCCFD mails a self-inspection form (appendix A) and cover letter prior to the start of the assigned inspection quarter. This cover letter advises the business owner of entrance into the program because of positive performance over previous years and includes information about the program and instructions on how to complete the form.

3. When the business owner completes the self-inspection form, the form is returned to the SCCFD Fire Prevention Division; clerical staff record date of receipt and sends a copy of the form to the fire station that has the business within its fire management zone. It is then the responsibility of station personnel to track forms not returned and follow-up with the business owner to determine why the form was not completed.

4. During the 4th year of participation in the self-inspection program, fire station personnel are expected to visit the business for quality control purposes. During that visit, the company officer determines whether to keep the occupancy in the self-inspection program or have it return to an annual inspection by a fire company.

The literature review evaluated fire prevention self-inspection program information from 45 fire departments in the United States (appendix B). Very few differences were noted among these 45 programs when compared to the current SCCFD program regarding what a business owner should be looking for in terms of fire and life safety code violations. Of the few programs that had specific detail on their Web site, virtually the same types of occupancies were allowed entry into the program as in the SCCFD self-inspection program: “B” (business), “M” (mercantile), and “S” (storage). Also, the time of being in the program before an engine company inspection was typically 3 years; in the 4th year, the fire department physically performed the inspection, as in the SCCFD.

Self-inspection programs are not limited to the fire service or specifically fire prevention inspections. An initial search on the World Wide Web using the term *self-inspection* identified hundreds of self-inspection programs from a wide variety of businesses, not just the fire service.

Self-inspection programs can be found in a large variety of businesses, including but not limited to automobile repair shops, hair or nail salons, dry cleaners, restaurants, food stores, fireworks, security/loss prevention offices, asbestos abatement offices, confined spaces, and even body art establishments. A total of 108 separate self-inspection program information sheets were reviewed from these various types of industries and determined to be very similar to fire prevention self-inspection programs. All allowed the business owner to be proactive in ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of customers, employees, and the business; to perform risk and

hazard assessment; and to prepare for an actual inspection by an official who has the authority to cite for violations or close the business for noncompliance. Many of these self-inspection checklists are produced by insurance companies or a state Occupational Safety and Health Administration office to assist clients with ensuring that their workplace is free from hazards that may be detrimental to their success.

Many fire departments, including the SCCFD, offer home self-inspection checklists for residents to ensure that they are doing all they can to keep themselves and their family free of fire and life safety hazards. Fire department personnel typically do not have the legal authority to go into a private residence to provide code enforcement. However, that does not mean that fire departments cannot proactively advertise that they will provide free fire home safety inspections by trained fire department personnel or even offer home fire safety self-inspection checklists for residents to use on their own. For many years, the SCCFD has provided these services to ensure that residents are doing all that they can to keep their homes relatively safe (SCCFD, n.d.).

Community risk reduction activities are not limited to fire prevention activities. For a fire department to survive in today's economy, it is critical that the department focus on what the customers need and desire in levels of service. "Basic organizational behavior must become customer centered" (Brunacini, 1996, p. 91). As an example, a self-inspection program can be a benefit not only to the fire department, fire department personnel, and internal customers but also to business owners—the external customers. By aggressively utilizing the five E's when creating community risk reduction programs, the level of fire and life safety in a community should increase.

Procedures

The purpose of this research was to determine whether the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program is meeting the needs of the personnel and the SCCFD and to determine what changes might be recommended to improve the program to ensure that community risk reduction needs are met.

This ARP began at the NFA's LRC in Emmitsburg, Maryland in August 2008. The LRC staff assisted the researcher with collecting books, journals, and articles related to fire prevention, self-inspection programs, and community risk reduction. The literature review continued in California with an extensive online search, via the World Wide Web, of journals, books, and articles, as well as materials from the researcher's personal library, the SCCFD Training Division library, and the City of San Jose public library. Key words used for searching purposes were *self-inspection*, *risk reduction*, *customer service*, *fire prevention*, and *public education*.

Descriptive research was used to address the following research questions:

1. Why are fire prevention inspections necessary?
2. What is a self-inspection program?
3. How is the current fire prevention self-inspection program utilized in the SCCFD?
4. What are the advantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?
5. What are the disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?
6. Are other fire departments utilizing a fire prevention self-inspection program?

The first part of the research process was the review of literature related to fire prevention activities, including self-inspection programs. The literature review was designed to address the research questions. The second part of the process involved an internal survey designed to elicit

objective responses from study participants to facilitate accurate and consistent data collection and analysis. This survey design produced data for addressing the research questions and helped to delineate criteria that could be used to evaluate the current self-inspection program and provide feedback for improvement, and to determine whether the current program was ready to be expanded into other communities. The internal survey was intended to provide answers to research questions 1, 3, 4, and 5.

At the time of the research there were 72 full-time equivalent Fire Captain positions within the SCCFD. The survey sample was limited to the rank of Fire Captain because those people were most likely going to have had experience with the self-inspection program, since the Fire Captain is expected to manage and schedule fire prevention activities within the response area.

A 13-item survey instrument (appendix C) was developed by the researcher to sample persons currently holding the rank of Fire Captain in the SCCFD. The items were a combination of forced-choice design (*yes, no, not applicable, unsure, etc.*) and open-ended design, with clarification permitted for certain questions. Specifically, respondents were asked to report their perceptions of the current fire prevention self-inspection program, including advantages and disadvantages; whether the program was meeting the expectations of the business owners, the personnel, and the department; and whether they had suggestions for improving the efficiency and format of the program. It was expected that the time to complete the survey would be less than 20 minutes.

The internal survey was administered to 5 persons as a pilot study prior to its distribution to the SCCFD Fire Captains. All 5 were not of the rank of Captain: a Firefighter/Engineer, a Firefighter/Engineer-Paramedic, a Senior Hazardous Materials Specialist, a Senior Deputy Fire

Marshal, and a Hazardous Materials Specialist. This was done 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 SCCFD Fire Captains.

The internal survey was mailed to the 72 Fire Captains in the SCCFD on October 21, 2008 (detailed results are shown in appendix D). The plan was to allow the respondents no more than 25 days to complete the survey. Prior to receiving returned surveys, a template was created to tabulate responses. 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 to the table. After the data from each of the completed surveys were transferred to the results section, the surveys were placed in a folder in a locked cabinet for archival purposes. A total of 39 out of a possible 72 surveys were returned, for a return rate of 54%.

The third part of the process included an external survey (appendix E) 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 to evaluate perceptions of other fire service personnel across the country. The external survey was intended to provide answers to research questions 4, 5, and 6. Detailed results are presented in appendix F.

The external survey was administered to 5 persons as a pilot study prior to its distribution. The 5 personnel were of various ranks within the fire service, and came from inside and outside the SCCFD. One was an Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal, 2 were Fire Captains, and 2 were Firefighters. These personnel from a variety of ranks completed the survey without difficulty but offered valuable feedback on how to best ask some of the questions and ensure the

information would be objective, specific, and reasonable. Their comments were incorporated into the final version of the survey, which was subsequently distributed to fire service personnel outside the SCCFD.

The external survey was electronically mailed on October 25, 2008, to two primary distribution mechanisms intended to provide the greatest distribution across the United States and in California: (a) members of the Northern California Fire Prevention Officers Association membership, an association representing every fire department in California, with hundreds of members of various ranks of fire prevention personnel; and (b) the subscribers to TRADENET newsletter, a weekly electronically mailed newsletter published and distributed by the United States Fire Administration and containing an exchange of ideas among over 24,000 fire service personnel.

The fourth part of the process was a personal interview with Julie Linney, Senior Deputy Fire Marshal responsible for managing the SCCFD self-inspection program. Twelve questions were formulated to elicit objective responses regarding the SCCFD self-inspection program. The person interview was intended to address research questions 3, 4, and 5. The transcript of the interview is in appendix G.

Limitations

After reviewing the completed surveys and discussing the self-inspection program with various SCCFD personnel during the course of the research, it was determined that business owners who were currently or formerly in the SCCFD self-inspection program should have been contacted and surveyed for their feedback to gain data from their viewpoint.

A limitation of the internal survey was that the surveys were not numbered, which precluded following up with Captains who had not returned the survey. Another limitation was

the expectation that the respondent had actually thought about or had experienced the self-inspection program. The perception of the researcher was that, even if a respondent had not participated in the self-inspection program, he/she would still be able to offer valuable advice and feedback based on experience. Unfortunately, this perception was incorrect; some respondents who had not participated in the program did not make an attempt to answer all of the questions, particularly the ones regarding advantages and disadvantages of a self-inspection program.

A limitation of the external survey was the mechanism by which they were distributed and the inability to determine an acceptable sample size. Another limitation of the external survey was failure to ask for contact information from the respondent, in case an answer needed clarification or follow-up. Some respondents did not appear to understand what a self-inspection program was, based on their responses to the questions.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context of this research.

Company inspection: An example of a fire prevention activity that is typically performed by a fire company, which is typically a crew of two to five personnel assigned to a specific fire apparatus, also known as a company.

Risk reduction: A term typically used as a catch-all phrase to cover programs offered by a fire department that are intended to reduce the loss of life and property and reduce injuries from fire; typical risk reduction activities include fire prevention, fire investigation, and public education.

Results

The purpose of the research was to determine whether the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program is meeting the needs of the personnel and the SCCFD and to determine what changes might be recommended to improve the program to ensure that community risk reduction needs are met.

Through descriptive research, which included (a) reviews of numerous written sources, (b) feedback received via an internal survey distributed to all current SCCFD Fire Captains who may or may not have experienced the current self-inspection program, (c) feedback received via an external survey distributed to fire service professionals in California and the United States, the research questions were addressed based on collected data, and (d) feedback received in a personal interview with the Senior Deputy Fire Marshal responsible for managing the SCCFD self-inspection program.

The internal survey instrument contained 13 items. Some items required a *yes/no/unsure* response, some required a forced choice of one of five responses, and some allowed the respondent to provide open-end responses (appendix C).

The analysis and interpretation of the internal survey included a review of (a) demographics of the respondent; (b) the respondent's perceptions of whether the current self-inspection program is meeting the expectations of the personnel, the department, and the business owners; (c) the respondent's perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program; (d) the respondent's perception of whether the current self-inspection program was ready to be expanded into other communities; (e) the respondent's perception of what suggestions could be made to improve the program, including any measurable

objectives to determine the success or failure of the program; and (f) the respondent’s assessment of whether the self-inspection program has made the job of Fire Captain easier or harder.

Item 1 of the internal survey asked how many years the respondent had been in the fire service. Two (5%) of the respondents who answered the question reported 5 to 9 years of fire service experience, 3 (8%) reported 10 to 14 years, 7 (18%) reported 15 to 19 years, 9 (23%) reported 20 to 24 years, and 18 (46%) reported 25 or more years (Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Responses to Survey Items 1-3 (N = 39)

Item	<i>f</i>	%
1. Years of fire service experience		
5 to 9	2	5.0
10 to 14	3	8.0
15 to 19	7	18.0
20 to 24	9	23.0
25 or greater	17	46.0
2. Years of Fire Captain experience		
Less than 5	8	20.0
5 to 9	12	31.0
10 to 14	6	15.0
15 to 19	8	21.0
20 or greater	5	13.0
3. Usage of SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program		
Yes	19	49.0
No	20	51.0

Note. SCCFD = Santa Clara County Fire Department.

Item 2 of the internal survey asked how many years the respondent had been a Captain. Eight (20%) of the respondents who answered this question reported less than 5 years of Captain experience, 12 (31%) reported 5 to 9 years, 6 (15%) reported 10 to 14 years, 8 (21%) reported 15 to 19 years, and 5 (13%) reported 20 or more years (Table 1).

Item 3 of the internal survey asked whether the respondent had had the opportunity to utilize the SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program. Nineteen (49%) respondents who answered the question reported *yes* and 20 (51%) reported *no* (Table 1).

The external survey instrument (appendix E) contained 19 items. Some items required a *yes/no/unsure* response, some required a forced choice, and some allowed the respondent to provide an open-ended response.

The analysis and interpretation of the external survey included (a) demographics of the respondent; (b) whether or not the respondent's fire department utilized a self-inspection program and, if so, for how long; (c) the respondent's perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program; (d) what types of occupancies were included in their self-inspection program; (e) administrative items, such as the percentage of forms returned and average turnaround time to return forms; and (f) the respondent's perception of whether their self-inspection program was meeting the expectations of their personnel, their department, and their business owners.

Item 1 of the external survey asked how many years the respondent had been in the fire service. Four (5.2%) of the respondents who answered the question reported 9 or fewer years of fire service experience, 8 (10.4%) reported 10 to 14 years, 17 (22.1%) reported 15 to 19 years, 16 (20.8%) reported 20 to 24 years, and 32 (41.6%) reported 25 or more years. Responses to items 2, 3, and 4 of the external survey are listed in appendix F.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, *Why are fire prevention programs necessary?* This question was addressed via the literature review and the internal and external surveys.

Virtually every item in the literature review stressed the importance and necessity for fire prevention programs to ensure that the public is kept free of fire and life safety hazards. Carter and Rausch (2008), Chiaramonte (2008), Schaenman (2008), Crawford (2007a), IFSTA (2007), Barr and Eversole (2006), SCCFD (2005), IFSTA (2004), and United States Fire Administration (1973) all agreed that fire prevention activities are necessary and critical programs that all fire departments should offer to their citizens.

The five major objectives of a fire prevention occupancy inspection can were noted by Carter and Rausch (2008): (a) uncovering code violations and potential fire hazards; (b) using department personnel more efficiently for assigned fire prevention duties; (c) providing information to update pre-fire plans; (d) familiarizing firefighters with contents and construction hazards, which ultimately makes potential firefighting operations safer; and (e) acquainting firefighters with fire codes, ordinances, and laws relating to fire prevention and code enforcement.

While fire prevention programs are meant to be proactive by spotting fire code violations before they cause a fire, the development of the programs has actually been reactive, after a number of historical fires that resulted in large losses of life and property. IFSTA (2007) noted the two primary purposes of fire and life safety inspections, a vital component of fire prevention programs: (a) “to ensure that fire and life safety code requirements are adhered to within public accessible facilities,” and (b) “to provide the owner/occupant with safety education materials and information” (p. 664).

The United States Fire Administration attempted to address the fire prevention problem facing the United States when it published *America Burning* in 1973. The book stated that local fire departments should be responsible for fire prevention and risk reduction. Unfortunately, 35 years later, there does not seem to be much improvement in fire prevention activities.

Chiaromonte (2008) emphasized that the fire at a furniture warehouse store in Charleston, South Carolina, that killed nine firefighters might not have occurred had the building been built and maintained following local and state codes and had the Charleston Fire Department performed annual fire prevention activities.

The SCCFD is faced with having to perform fire prevention programs, not just as a courtesy to its businesses but to meet requirements of the California Health and Safety Code to perform inspections (SCCFD, 2005).

While there was no specific question within the internal or external surveys that posed the specific question, “Why are fire prevention programs necessary?” some respondents noted that it was important for fire department personnel to visit a business on a regular basis to look for fire code violations, to familiarize themselves with the layout and contents of the building, and to educate and inform the business owners of how they could provide a safe workplace, free of dangers from fire and similar hazards.

In summary, based on the feedback received from the survey and the information found via the literature review, fire prevention programs are necessary to ensure that the public is reasonably safe from fire and life safety hazards. Such programs may also be required by state laws.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked, *What is a self-inspection program?* This question was answered via the literature review.

A self-inspection program is any type of program that allows a person to do an inspection of a process or place of business or residence, typically using a standardized form created by an organization with a vested interest in the outcome, such as a fire department, or insurance company.

Why would a fire department establish a self-inspection program or a business participate in a self-inspection program? The SCCFD provides a definition: “The purpose of the Self-Inspection Program is to optimize the time available for engine company inspections and to minimize the disruption of businesses due to fire safety inspections” (SCCFD, 1999, n.p.).

After extensive research, the SCCFD decided that business owners would be willing to participate in a self-inspection program, as opposed to a standard company inspection, for three primary reasons: (a) The business owner could perform the self-inspection within the business time frame rather than wait for the fire department to arrive at a time that might not be conducive to the business schedule; (b) the business owner could learn first-hand how to create a safe workplace—knowledge that could be used at home as well as in the business; and (c) the business owner could have access to a fire department representative for questions—access that is typically not available because the company that performed an inspection might not be on duty when the business owner has a question.

Businesses that are allowed to participate in a self-inspection program are those that have a good track record of not having any or having had minimal fire code violations over a specific time frame, usually a few years. The most common businesses allowed to enter a self-inspection

program are “B” (business), “M” (mercantile), and “S” (storage) occupancies, as defined by the California Fire Code and as determined by the SCCFD, according to the 7 departments that reported types of qualified occupancies of the 45 fire departments that had published self-inspection program information on the Internet.

In summary, it can be concluded that a self-inspection program allows a business owner to conduct his/her own inspection, at his/her convenience, assuming that certain criteria to participate are met and that the business complies with requirements set forth in the program.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked, *How is the current fire prevention self-inspection program utilized in the SCCFD?* This question was addressed by the literature review and the personal interview.

In her interview SCCFD Senior Deputy Fire Marshal Linney reported that she had inherited the current self-inspection program a couple of years earlier and had been doing her best to keep it on track. She stated that the program was currently utilized in three cities—Campbell, Cupertino, and Morgan Hill—and that the fire station personnel determine whether a business is a candidate for the program based on minimal or no violations over several years. Each quarter she sends a form letter and checklist to each qualified business that is expected to conduct a self-inspection in the following quarter. The package is mailed by a contracting company. The number of quarter letters may reach 700 or more, which makes this a time-consuming process.

Once the letter/checklist package is mailed, business owners have 30 days to conduct the inspection and return the complete checklist to the SCCFD for internal processing. Properly completed forms are processed quickly and smoothly by SCCFD clerical staff. Businesses that

do not return properly completed forms within 30 days are identified by the staff and a notice of each noncompliant business is sent to the fire station that is responsible for that portion of the city. That station is responsible to follow up on the failure to complete the self-inspection.

Because the SCCFD is currently adopting a new software package for recording fire prevention inspections (Firehouse Software), retraining is required for clerical staff. In the meantime, the Senior Deputy Fire Marshal assumes the responsibility to enter the data. Because she has duties other than managing the self-inspection program (such as functioning as the fire station liaison for all fire prevention inspections, not just self-inspections), the self-inspection program can become time consuming. The duties become heaviest at the end of each quarter, when the mailings and records for the following quarter must be prepared. Also, it is not uncommon to handle questions via email or telephone from fire station personnel or business owners about the self-inspection program.

The Senior Deputy Fire Marshal reported that she would like to see a higher return rate of completed self-inspection paper work. She suggested that conducting the program online might result in a higher completion rate. She recommended that an internal evaluation be conducted to determine what can be done to ensure a higher return rate and to improve the overall quality of the program. She has been frustrated by the lack of documentation from her predecessor. However, is dedicated to making the program work and welcomed the opportunity to perform an evaluation of the program.

Item 3 of the internal survey asked whether the respondent had participated in the SCCFD self-inspection program. Nineteen (49%) of the respondents answered *yes*; 20 (51%) of the respondents answered *no*.

Item 4 of the internal survey asked the respondent whether the self-inspection program was meeting the needs of SCCFD personnel. Eleven (28%) of the respondents answered *yes*, 12 (31%) answered *no*, and 15 (38%) answered *unsure*. One respondent added a new category, *N/A*. Eight respondents stated that the additional administrative challenges that the program creates do not make it user friendly. Seven respondents stated that the program helps to provide more time for fire station personnel to perform other necessary duties.

Item 5 of the internal survey asked the respondent whether the self-inspection program was meeting the needs of the SCCFD. Thirteen (33.5%) of the respondents answered *yes*, 6 (15.5%) answered *no*, and 20 (51%) answered *unsure*. Seven respondents stated that, because of administrative reasons, the program has not been user friendly.

Item 6 of the internal survey asked the respondent whether the self-inspection program was meeting the needs of the business owners. Ten (25.5%) of the respondents answered *yes*, 3 (7.5%) answered *no*, and 26 (67%) answered *unsure*. Six respondents questioned the level of quality of the self-inspections, and 6 stated that business owners probably enjoyed being able to do the inspections on their own time schedule and gained greater awareness of fire safety.

Item 9 of the internal survey asked whether the respondent thought the self-inspection program was ready to be expanded into other cities served by the SCCFD. Nineteen (49%) of the respondents answered *yes*, 9 (23%) answered *no*, and 8 (20.5%) did not respond. Two persons added *unsure* and one added *unknown*. Eight respondents stated that the program administration should be evaluated and made more efficient for not only the fire station personnel but also the business owners, before it is expanded. Three respondents stated that the program would allow more time for fire station personnel to apply to other duties.

Item 10 of the internal survey asked the respondent whether the self-inspection program had made the job of Fire Captain easier or harder. Thirteen (29%) of the respondents answered *easier*, 10 (23%) answered *harder*, 6 (14%) answered *unsure*, 13 (29%) answered *N/A*, and 2 (5%) did not respond. Four respondents responded *easier* and *harder*, and 1 respondent chose *unsure* and *N/A*. Eleven stated that the necessary administrative details were causing them to spend more time in completing a self-inspection, as opposed to a regular in-person inspection. Five respondents stated that the self-inspection program had increased the amount of time available to perform other duties.

In summary, it can be concluded that the SCCFD self-inspection program is being utilized in three of the eight cities served by the SCCFD; that the typical occupancies that are eligible to participate are classified as “B” (business), “M” (mercantile), and “S-2” (storage) occupancies; that the businesses perform self-inspections once a year for 3 years and in the 4th year a fire department crew visits the business to ensure that the business owner is keeping the business relatively safe from fire and life safety hazards that may result in fires; and that in two of the three cities served by the SCCFD, there is no fee to participate (the City of Morgan Hill charges a \$17.00 annual fee to participate).

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked, *What are the advantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?* This question was addressed by the literature review, the personal interview, and the survey responses.

Crawford (2008) stated that identifying fire hazards and abating those hazards does not have to be exclusively the job of a fire department. He noted that a self-inspection program can be attractive for the business owner, who, if educated about simple fire and life safety hazards,

can perform a self-inspection and abate hazards, ultimately saving time while also reducing the hazards.

In a personal interview, SCCFD Senior Deputy Fire Marshal Linney stated that the major advantage of the self-inspection program was for the fire personnel, who did not have to go out to the same low-hazard businesses every year, thus freeing time for other important activities. She stated that the program would be more efficient and easier if conducted online, predicting a higher rate of response from business owners. Appendix G provides detailed responses to each of the questions.

Item 7 of the internal survey asked the respondent to identify advantages of a self-inspection program. Appendix D contains the detailed results. Twenty-one respondents stated that a fire department self-inspection program would benefit the business owner and the fire department in the form of better time management, including freeing fire department personnel to perform other duties that might be delayed or not accomplished at all. Seven respondents stated that a fire department self-inspection program would be beneficial to a business owner because it would offer a higher level of “ownership” toward fire and life safety and risk reduction in general.

Item 7 of the external survey asked the respondent to identify advantages of a self-inspection program. Appendix F contains the detailed results. Thirty respondents stated the primary advantages were increased time available to fire station personnel to perform other tasks, such as training, physical fitness, and station and apparatus maintenance. Fourteen respondents noted increased time for fire personnel to interact with business owners, resulting in more opportunities for public relations and public education, eventually building a positive relationship with business owners. Eight respondents identified cost savings in areas such as

personnel, postage, and fuel. Five respondents stated that there was no advantage to such a program.

In summary, it can reasonably be concluded that the primary advantages of a self-inspection program for a business owner are the ability to perform the inspection on the business schedule and an opportunity to be proactive and have more ownership in ensuring a reasonable amount of fire prevention and assurance that the business is free of fire and life safety violations. It can also reasonably be concluded that the primary advantages of a self-inspection program for a fire department are the decreased workload of fire prevention inspections, which can lead to more time for other responsibilities, such as training, physical fitness, and station or apparatus maintenance, as well as potential cost saving in areas such as personnel, fuel, or administration.

Research Question 5

Research question 5 asked, *What are the disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?* This question was addressed by the literature review, the personal interview, and the survey responses.

Crawford (2008) reported that many fire departments have abandoned self-inspection programs and that some business owners, fear potential liability without fire department follow-up, tend to ignore self-inspection letters.

In a personal interview, SCCFD Deputy Fire Marshal Linney noted that the primary disadvantage to the SCCFD is that one of the three cities participating in the self-inspection program charges a fee for the inspection. The fee charged by the City of Morgan Hill was apparently adopted by the City Council with minimal input from the SCCFD and the business community. The fee has led to a high level of emotions among business owners, many of whom refuse to pay the fee and vent their emotions on the fire personnel, either by not performing the

self-inspection or requesting that SCCFD waive the fee. Appendix G provides detailed responses to each of the questions in the interview.

Item 8 of the internal survey asked the respondent to identify advantages of a self-inspection program. Appendix F contains the detailed results. Fourteen respondents stated that the quality of a self-inspection performed by a business owner is not equal to that performed by fire department personnel, for reasons such as lack of education, lack of time, or lack of desire or interest. Twelve respondents stated that a self-inspection program was a disadvantage to fire personnel because they do not have a chance to visit the business during normal conditions, and are thus unfamiliar with the layout and hazards at the time of a fire. Eight respondents identified reduced public contact time, resulting in less time for public relations and public education, as a disadvantage. Five respondents noted disadvantages arising from the internal SCCFD administrative process of the self-inspection program.

Item 8 of the external survey asked the respondent to identify disadvantages of a self-inspection program. Appendix F contains the detailed results. Forty-one respondents gave the opinion that the quality of a fire inspection performed by a business owner would be much lower than one performed by fire department personnel for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to lack of time, lack of education, lack of experience, and fear of being cited for violations. Eighteen respondents stated disadvantages to include increased administrative time to manage the program, including follow-up work and costs related to postage and staff time. Twelve respondents cited as a disadvantage the lack of quality time for fire personnel to get inside each building for pre-fire planning and familiarization. Ten respondents cited as a disadvantage decreased public relations and public education time.

In summary, it can be reasonably concluded that the primary disadvantages of a self-inspection program for a business owner are the risk of not performing the same quality of fire prevention inspection as that provided by fire department personnel, depending on a variety of factors such as time available, understanding of the program, and the ability to make the self-inspection program a priority and actually police themselves and correct violations, as opposed to overlooking them for fear of getting in trouble with the fire department. It can also reasonably be concluded that the primary disadvantage of a self-inspection program for a fire department is the perceived difference in the quality of the fire prevention inspection. The business owners, even with sufficient training, are perceived to be not as qualified as the fire service personnel to perform inspections. Another disadvantage for the fire department is the reduced number of opportunities to get inside each building on a regular basis to perform pre-fire planning and to familiarize themselves with the layout in normal conditions, as opposed to three o'clock in the morning when the building is on fire and there is minimal visibility inside.

Research Question 6

Research question 6 asked, *Are other fire departments utilizing a fire prevention self-inspection program?* This question was addressed by the external survey responses and the literature review.

The literature review evaluated self-inspection documents from 45 fire departments across the United States. Appendix B lists the fire departments that reported offering self-inspection programs to business owners. Virtually every fire department offering a self-inspection program provided a checklist for the business owner to assist in performing the self-inspection. Unfortunately, very few Web sites provided detail regarding requirements to participate in the program, how long a business could be in the self-inspection program before

fire department personnel physically visited the site, or whether there was a fee for participation in the self-inspection program.

Seven fire departments listed the types of occupancies eligible to participate in a self-inspection program, the most common being “B” (business occupancy), “M” (mercantile occupancy), and “S” (storage occupancy). Two fire departments had similar requirements for the duration of self-inspections before an engine company conducts a physical inspection: 3 years, with a physical visit by the fire department during the 4th year. Two fire departments stated fees for participating in the self-inspection program, \$74 and \$55.

Item 5 of the external survey asked whether the respondent’s department was currently using a self-inspection program. Fifteen (19.5%) of the respondents answered *yes* and 62 (80.5%) answered *no*.

Item 6 of the external survey asked whether the respondent’s fire department was currently using a self-inspection program, and if not, whether there were plans to implement a program. Four (6.6%) of the respondents answered *yes*, 43 (70.5%) answered *no*, and 14 (23%) answered *unsure*. Appendix F contains the detailed results. Seven respondents who answered *no* stated answers such as “we have to do the inspections because we generate revenue and may lose revenue if we do not do the inspections” and “because it is our responsibility by some statute, policy, or regulation.” Six respondents answered *no*, citing past experiences with such programs in their department or other departments that were determined to be unsuccessful. Six respondents who answered *no* stated that, due to limited personnel, they could not implement such a program. Five respondents who answered *no* cited the potential for reduced time for public education and public relations. Six respondents who answered *yes* stated that a self-inspection program was in their future for a variety of reasons, such as decreased staffing,

decreased funding, available time, and the type of low-hazard businesses that might be candidates for entering such a program.

In summary, the information obtained from the literature review and the surveys indicated that other fire departments across the United States are using or have used self-inspection programs.

Discussion

This section discusses the relationship between the responses to the survey instruments, the literature review, the personal interview, and the review of the self-inspection documents from the 45 fire departments selected for comparison to the SCCFD self-inspection program. The discussion leads to an analysis and interpretation of the findings and identifies departmental implications of the findings.

Fire prevention programs are necessary to ensure that a community is safe from fire and life safety hazards. Fire prevention programs, like public education and post-fire investigation activities, are components of a comprehensive risk reduction program. Fire prevention activities typically consist of fire department personnel visiting a business occupancy on a regular basis (typically once a year) and looking for and correcting fire code violations that could lead to the loss of life or property due to a fire.

What has been learned over the years about fire prevention? While it is easy to determine that fire prevention programs were created after some fires had resulted in large losses of life or property, the challenging part is to determine whether the fire service is actually doing the best job it can at fire prevention. Even with *America Burning* (United States Fire Administration, 1973) noting the critical need at the national level for local fire departments to be responsible for

fire prevention and risk reduction, fires are still occurring, lives are still being lost, people are still being injured, and property is still damaged and/or destroyed.

The SCCFD, like most other fire departments, is faced with providing a variety of fire and life safety services to its residents, including fire prevention inspection services. How to best accomplish these inspections can be quite challenging, especially with the numerous other daily duties and responsibilities facing the average fire station. Utilizing a self-inspection program is definitely one option to reduce the workload of fire station personnel, assuming that the program is correctly administered and evaluated on a regular basis. Unfortunately, that has been the challenging part for the SCCFD, as the self-inspection program began as a pilot program and just became a standard program in a few of the cities served, having expanded without much thought or evaluation of whether it was actually meeting the needs of the personnel, the department, and the business owners.

Is the SCCFD self-inspection program meeting the expectations of the personnel? The respondents were almost equally split on this question, with more respondents unsure of whether it was meeting the expectations of the personnel. Is the SCCFD self-inspection program meeting the expectations of the department? Almost twice as many respondents responded affirmatively than those who responded negatively. However, more respondents were unsure of whether it was meeting the expectations of the department, in many cases because the personnel answering the question were not sure what the department expected. Is the SCCFD self-inspection program meeting the expectations of the business owners? Three times as many respondents stated *yes* than those who responded *no*. However, more respondents were unsure of whether it was meeting the expectations of the business owners. Many SCCFD Captains questioned the quality

of the overall inspection performed by the business owner but agreed that the average business owner probably benefited by being able to do the inspection at a time of choice.

Whether the SCCFD self-inspection program is ready to be expanded into other cities is open for discussion. Some SCCFD Captains provided feedback on how much administrative work was required for this program, and some Captains stated that the program definitely saved them time and provided time for other duties.

When the SCCFD established the self-inspection program, it was meant to be applied to low-hazard occupancies that would most likely be able to conduct a self-inspection with minimal effort and in minimal time. The SCCFD appears to be on the right track regarding the types of occupancies that are allowed into the program. Seven fire departments listed the types of occupancies eligible to participate in a self-inspection program, the most common being “B” (business occupancy), “M” (mercantile occupancy), and “S” (storage occupancy); this is consistent with the three primary types of occupancies that the SCCFD allows to participate in the self-inspection program. Two fire departments had similar requirements for the duration of self-inspection before an engine company visit: 3 years. Two fire departments reported charging fees for participating in the self-inspection program (\$74 and \$55) that are much higher than the \$17 fee charged by Morgan Hill, one of the three cities participating in the SCCFD self-inspection program. Self-inspection programs have been utilized by a variety of industries, and have not been limited to the fire service.

Fire prevention activities are a necessary part of SCCFD service to its community and to its citizens. The current self-inspection program has the potential to be a department-wide program that could assist fire station personnel to meet their workload expectations, assuming

that the program is properly administered and evaluated and that fire station personnel are able to provide valuable input to improve the program.

Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to determine whether the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program is meeting the needs of the personnel and the SCCFD and to determine what changes might be recommended to improve the program to ensure that community risk reduction needs are met.

Based on responses to the surveys, the literature review, and the personal interview and analysis of the results of those processes, the following recommendations are offered to serve as a catalyst to improve the current SCCFD fire prevention self-inspection program to ensure that community risk reduction needs are met.

1. An extensive internal evaluation should be performed on the entire self-inspection program to determine what needs to be done to the program. Should it remain as it is? Should it be eliminated? Should it be altered? The fire station personnel who responded to the internal survey provided some excellent feedback as a starting point.

2. Depending on the results of the evaluation, the Senior Deputy Fire Marshal in charge of the self-inspection program should have sufficient information to make an educated decision regarding recommendations to the Deputy Chief of Fire Prevention and the Fire Chief as to how the program could be modified to meet the needs of the personnel, the department, and the business owners.

3. It is entirely possible that an internal evaluation would show that the program should be discontinued, at which point it might be in the best interest of the greatest number of

stakeholders to end the program immediately and return to the practice of engine company onsite inspections.

4. If it is determined that the self-inspection program should be expanded to the other five cities and unincorporated areas served by the SCCFD, it would be in the best interest of everyone involved to develop an Internet-based software program to be used by business owners to complete their forms online, significantly reducing mailing costs and staff time.

5. Once all eight cities and the unincorporated areas of the SCCFD are online and participating in the self-inspection program, it would be critical to perform annual evaluations to ensure that participating business owners are completing forms correctly and on time.

6. To assist with succession planning and to provide institutional knowledge for future SCCFD members who may be managing or participating in the self-inspection program, it would be in everyone's interest to have the key components of the program documented and archived in order to ensure that no key components or documents relating to the program are lost when one person retires or moves to another position within the department.

The SCCFD self-inspection program has the potential to meet the expectations of the SCCFD, its personnel, and the business owners. Utilizing the recommendations above will assist the SCCFD to realize the potential of the current self-inspection program.

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APPENDIX A

SCCFD Self-Inspection Form

Dear business owner:

Due to your continued excellent fire safety record, your business is eligible to participate in the Santa Clara County Fire Department Self-Inspection Program.

This program enables owners/ operators of businesses to conduct their own fire safety inspection, at a time convenient to them, thereby eliminating the usual disruption associated with inspections conducted by the Fire Department during the business day. Please note this is a voluntary program. If you would prefer to receive annual fire safety inspections from the Fire Department personnel, please contact the Fire Prevention Division at (408)-378-4010.

The self-inspection must be conducted by the business owner (or responsible designee) utilizing the enclosed Self-Inspection Checklist. Please complete the Checklist within 30 days from the "issued date", as per the instructions provided. If the Checklist is returned late or not at all, the business may no longer be eligible for the Self-Inspection Program.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department greatly appreciates your cooperation in helping to create and maintain a fire-safe community. We hope you will find the Self-Inspection Program convenient and we welcome any comments. If you have any questions or prefer annual inspections performed by Fire Department personnel, please contact the Fire Prevention Division at (408)-378-4010.

Sincerely,

Dirk Mattern
Deputy Chief
Fire Prevention Division

HOW TO PERFORM YOUR SELF-INSPECTION

1. The person who is responsible for the business must conduct the inspection, such as the business owner or manager.
2. Review the entire report before starting the inspection. This way you will know what to look for in advance.
3. Verify the “occupancy information” at the top of the “Self-Inspection Checklist” and make corrections as needed.
4. The self-inspection form is designed to assist you in performing a fire safety inspection. Complete the form by checking the appropriate box “Yes”, “No”, or “N/A” (not applicable).
5. With your report in hand, walk around and through your business until all statements on the report have been marked “Yes”, “No”, or “N/A”.
6. If an item is non-compliant, either correct the problem before submitting the form or check “No”. For any “No” answers indicate in the comment section at the bottom of the form what actions will be taken to correct the condition and estimate the date of completion.
7. If you do not have any responsibility to maintain any of the items listed in the report, such as a fire sprinkler system, list the responsible party and contact information under the comments section located at the bottom of the form.
8. Please note that the self-inspection form must be completed and returned to the Fire Department within **30 days** from the date issued, listed at the upper right corner of the checklist.
9. The Fire Department may make a random re-inspection of your business for the purpose of quality control.
10. Return the completed Self-Inspection Checklist, in the envelope provided, to:

**Santa Clara County Fire Department
Fire Prevention Division
14700 Winchester Blvd
Los Gatos, CA 95032-1818**

Once again, if you have any questions, please contact the Fire Prevention Division at (408) 378-4010 or (800) 800-1793. Thank you for doing your part to maintain a fire-safe community!



**FIRE DEPARTMENT
SANTA CLARA COUNTY**

14700 Winchester Blvd., Los Gatos, CA 95032-1818
(408) 378-4010 • (800) 800-1793 • (408) 378-9342 (fax) • www.sccfd.org

Issued Date: November 25, 2008
OCC ID# 2 STA 3 QTR 1 ZN 2

SELF-INSPECTION CHECKLIST

KFOX RADIO TRANSMITTER SITE
6137 BLACKBERRY HILL RD
COUNTY, CA 95032

Please provide and/or correct the following information:

Business Phone:

#1: 408-257-3333

Business Emergency Contact Name(s) & Phone Number(s):

#1: _____

#2: _____

YES NO N/A

ACCESS

1. Address is located on the exterior of the building, visible from the street, and numbers are on a contrasting background.
2. All sides of the building are free from weeds, trash, and combustible storage.
3. Driveway(s) around the building is free of obstructions.

YES NO N/A

EXITS

4. Exit doors, aisles, corridors and stairways are clear of combustible storage.
5. Exit doors open easily and latch without difficulty.
6. Exit door hardware is operable from the inside without the use of a key or special knowledge of the latching devices that may interfere with someone getting out.
7. No other locking mechanism is used on any exit door with panic-style hardware.
8. No dead bolt mechanisms of any type are installed on any exit door other than the main entrance door that has a sign above the door that states "THIS DOOR MUST REMAIN UNLOCKED DURING BUSINESS HOURS."
9. Front door remains unlocked during business hours.
10. If exit signs are lighted, all bulbs are working.
11. Fire rated doors are not blocked open or otherwise prevented from closing.

YES NO N/A

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

12. An all-purpose fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 2:A-10:B-C is located for every 75 feet of travel.
13. Extinguishers are wall mounted in plain sight and access is clear of obstructions.
14. Each extinguisher is mounted with the top of the unit not more than 5 feet above floor level.
15. Each extinguisher is tagged and serviced every 12 months by a State Licensee.
16. Extinguisher gauges register in the green.

OVER →

- | | YES | NO | N/A | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS: If provided | | | | |
| 17. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sprinkler system has been inspected every 3 months and service records are maintained on-site. |
| 18. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A five-year hydrostatic test has been performed by a licensed contractor within the last 5 years. |
| 19. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No ceiling tiles are missing in buildings protected by fire sprinkler or smoke detection systems. |

- | | YES | NO | N/A | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ELECTRICAL | | | | |
| 20. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All electrical cords and extension cords are in good condition. |
| 21. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Extension cords are plugged directly into a wall outlet and serve only one portable appliance unless the extension cord is plugged into an approved fused type multi-plug power strip. |
| 22. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Electrical cords are not placed under rugs, or where subject to damage. |
| 23. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A minimum of 30 inches is maintained clear in front of all electrical panels. |

- | | YES | NO | N/A | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| HOUSEKEEPING | | | | |
| 24. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Storage height in buildings with sprinkler systems is eighteen or more inches below fire sprinkler heads. |
| 25. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Storage height in buildings without sprinkler systems is two feet or more below the ceiling. |
| 26. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Minimum distance between heat-producing appliances and combustible materials is 30 inches. |
| 27. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is no combustible storage in mechanical, boiler, or electrical rooms. |
| 28. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Storage is arranged in an orderly manner and allows for prompt exiting and fire department access. |
| 29. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dumpsters are located 5 feet or more from the building.
(Exception: when fire sprinkler system is installed above dumpsters.) |
| 30. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Recycling containers, over 5-1/3 cubic feet (40 gallons) are provided with lids and not located within corridors or hallways |

- | | YES | NO | N/A | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| COOKING OPERATIONS | | | | |
| 31. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grease filters, hood & duct system(s) over cooking appliances are cleaned regularly. |
| 32. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Automatic hood & duct fire extinguishing system is serviced every 6 months. |

- | | YES | NO | N/A | |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| OTHER | | | | |
| 33. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All breaches, missing ceiling tiles, holes in walls or ceiling that could allow fire into the hidden spaces have been repaired or replaced. |
| 34. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no flammable liquids stored, except in approved cabinets. |

COMMENTS: _____

Signature of Responsible Party Title

Print Name Date of Self-Inspection

APPENDIX B

Fire Department Self-Inspection Programs Reviewed

Arcadia (CA) Fire Department
Atascadero (CA) Fire Department
Beechgrove (IN) Fire Department
Bend (OR) Fire Department
Butte County (CA) Fire Rescue Department
Carlsbad (CA) Fire Department
Chula Vista (CA) Fire Department
Citrus County (FL) Fire Department
Colorado Springs (CO) Fire Department
El Centro (CA) Fire Department
El Cerrito (CA) Fire Department
Elmhurst (IL) Fire Department
Enumclaw (WA) Fire Department
Eules (TX) Fire Department
Eureka (CA) Fire Department
Fairfax County (VA) Fire Rescue Department
Fremont (CA) Fire Department
Grand Rapids (MI) Fire Department
Grants Pass (OR) Fire Department
Kalispell (MT) Fire Department
Leadville Lake County (CO) Fire Rescue Department
Lompoc (CA) Fire Department
Madison (AL) Fire and Rescue Department
Marathon (FL) Fire Rescue Department
Marin County (CA) Fire Department
Medford (OR) Fire Department
Milpitas (CA) Fire Department

Nixa (MO) Fire Protection District
Oakland (TN) Fire Department
Olympia (WA) Fire Department
Orange (CA) Fire Department
Pacific County (WA) Fire District 1
Palm Bay (FL) Fire Rescue Department
Pleasant Grove (UT) Fire Department
Sandusky (OH) Fire Department
Santa Clara County (CA) Fire Department
Santa Maria (CA) Fire Department
Sedgwick County (KS) Fire District #1
Springfield (MO) Fire Department
Surprise (AZ) Fire Department
Thurston County (WA) Fire Department
Tulsa (OK) Fire Department
Vacaville (CA) Fire Department
Walla Walla (WA) Fire Department
Westminister (CO) Fire Department

APPENDIX C

Internal Fire Department Survey

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2008

TO: Santa Clara County Fire Captain

FROM: Steve Prziborowski, Battalion Chief

SUBJECT: Executive Fire Officer Program Survey

As a participant in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, one of the requirements is to complete an Applied Research Project applicable to our Department. I am asking your assistance by requesting you complete the feedback instrument found on the following pages.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department has implemented a fire prevention self inspection program in the cities of Campbell, Cupertino and Morgan Hill. The purpose of this research is to determine if the current program meets the needs of our personnel and our Department, and to determine what changes may be recommended to improve the program to ensure community risk reduction needs are met.

The results of this feedback instrument will be confidential and the results will be shared in the final applied research project. 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.

Please complete the following pages. Using the provided envelope, return the survey (minus this page) to me via Department pony mail. I would like to receive all completed surveys no later than Friday November 14, 2008. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

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

Approved for Distribution:
Ken Waldvogel, Fire Chief

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. Have you had the opportunity to utilize the Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) fire prevention self inspection program?
 Yes No
If yes, in which communities? _____

4. Do you feel the self inspection program is meeting the expectations of our personnel?
 Yes No Unsure *Please explain:*

5. Do you feel the self inspection program is meeting the expectations of our Department?
 Yes No Unsure *Please explain:*

6. Do you feel the self inspection program is meeting the expectations of our business owners?
 Yes No Unsure *Please explain:*

7. What do you believe are the advantages of a self inspection program?

8. What do you believe are the disadvantages of a self inspection program?

9. Do you feel the self inspection program is ready to be expanded to and implemented in other cities served by the SCCFD?

Yes No *Please explain:*

10. Has the self inspection program made your job as a Fire Captain easier or harder?

Easier Harder Unsure N/A *Please explain:*

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest score, how would you rate the SCCFD self inspection program? _____. *Please explain:*

12. What suggestions do you have to improve the SCCFD self inspection program process at various levels of the department, if any?

Administrative level: _____

Engine company level: _____

Company officer level: _____

Customer service level: _____

Billing, finance level: _____

13. In your opinion, what measurable objectives should the SCCFD use in assessing the success or failure of this self-inspection program?

Please return this completed form to Steve Prziborowski at El Toro Station – on or before Friday November 14, 2008. 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	(2)	5%
10 to 14	(3)	8%
15 to 19	(7)	18%
20 to 24	(9)	23%
25 or greater	(18)	46%

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

Less than 5	(8)	20%
5 to 9	(12)	31%
10 to 14	(6)	15%
15 to 19	(8)	21%
20 or greater	(5)	13%

3. Have you had the opportunity to utilize the Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) fire prevention self inspection program?

Yes	(19)	49%
No	(20)	51%

If yes, in which communities?

Campbell	(5)
Cupertino	(10)
Morgan Hill	(6)

4. Do you feel the self-inspection program is meeting the needs of our personnel?

Yes	(11)	28%
No	(12)	31%
Unsure	(15)	38%
N/A	(1)	3%

NOTE: 1 respondent added a new category: "N/A."

Please explain:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- The program creates a new level of bureaucracy at all levels.
- My understanding is this type of inspection works well on a limited basis.
- Reduces time needs by lowering the number of inspections to be completed in the field by engine companies.
- Because the whole idea of an inspection is: 1. For fire safety and 2. Building familiarization for fire personnel.
- Have little or no experience with program.
- No exposure to the program.
- We don't spend time inspecting businesses that are consistently safe.
- Greater implementation needed so that all are familiar and comfortable with the program. Integration into NFIRS so that as the business owner updates their inspection, NFIRS is automatically updated.
The amount of work if the self inspection is not returned and the amount of time to keep track is not advantageous.
- Non systematic – meaning the original project was to reduce inspection load on companies. With multiple occupants in some buildings, one or more of the suites may need to be inspected every year – no real time savings. Also additional staff time is needed to manage at the fire prevention level and the company level.
- It lessens the workload. I feel we do not need to inspect annually these small, unchanging occupancies.
- Have not participated.
- Decreasing an all ready unrealistic workload – for those who are conscientious enough to rise to the challenge.
- I don't hear about any progress or results of a program that has been around for several years.
- When inspections are not completed, line personnel are requested to follow-up which adds 2 to 3 times more work to our day.
- I have not seen it used.
- It really helps with time management.
- It has decreased the workload on inspecting occupancies like Apple Computer and Hewlett Packard.
- The program has not been explained well enough. The execution of the program is for the convenience of the office, not the engine companies. Feedback to the betterment of the program is not accepted or requested.
- The system takes as long to enter the data as it would if we did the inspection.
- I have not had the opportunity to use the self-inspection program.
- It is the perception among some personnel that the program is creating more paperwork than it alleviates since returned self inspection paperwork must be properly filed at the station. Have also noted that several SI entries have not been made since 2006 (when Angela Morbo last did them) or 10/2005 when I last did the normal inspection. Why is this? My observation as a line person is that more clarification was needed at the implementation of the program (i.e. who enters the SI's appears hit and miss- should it be FP and/or should the line check/enter them

when they are returned to the station files?). As there are extensive business changes every year I must also say that the data entry on this side is still quite time consuming (although I don't know that this would change under a non SI program). A lot of my time is wasted entering information for new businesses that come into the inspection zone(s). Question: if businesses must file with the city and/or the fire department when they open or move, why isn't the information transferred to the Fire Prevention database? If this information is not accurately and efficiently collected (either at the city/department office level or amongst all fire shifts) I would submit that the whole program falls flat on its face. By comparison to standard inspection practices, there is more detail to pay attention to when collecting data (i.e. SI criteria) and thus more chances for error. I would not suggest taking on more of the self inspection program unless adequate database technology / support is in place. The program we are using now does not meet that standard and is too labor intensive.

5. Do you feel the self-inspection program is meeting the needs of our Department?

Yes	(13)	33%
No	(6)	15.5%
Unsure	(20)	51.5%

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- The program creates a new level of bureaucracy at all levels.
- Have yet to complete “reinspection” time allowed (three years then reinspection).
- Because we are able to use this at the political level.
- Have little or no experience with program.
- It educates the public with a checklist on how to remain safe.
- Administrative and logistical time it takes to mail out, receive, review and file needs to be decreased. Need to explore automated/online options. Increased participation to whole jurisdiction. Increased compliance, decreased delinquency.
- I really don't know but assume it has been positive for the staff.
- Too much additional staff time being used to manage program – no real savings in productivity.
- Unsure.
- Really don't know what the expectation is for anything above station level.
- I don't hear about any progress or results of a program that has been around for several years.
- No communication from headquarters.
- What about liability?
- It provides compliance, accountability, and education (in a limited form) for those who are qualified. Allows us to focus on the more needed inspections.
- I do not know the vision of this program, nor its goal. I also question the results of the inspections.
- I expected less time during the day spent doing data entry/reinspections.

- I believe the majority of business owners are competent enough to comply with the program where applicable. Businesses can be taken off when no longer compliant. Full line personnel compliance is not being achieved from my standpoint (i.e. documentation is just being thrown in the files. Shouldn't it be documented on the blue sheet and then 'clipped' into the files?)

6. Do you feel the self-inspection program is meeting the needs of our business owners?

Yes	(10)	25.5%
No	(3)	7.5%
Unsure	(26)	67%

Please explain:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Yes for those who get to participate in the program. Very unfair as to the “participant level” (who gets in). This program falls short of providing a complete and fair participation level for all qualified businesses. Some have it, some don't, many are very mad!
- Yes because we are not in their hair. No because their expectations are that we have them “covered when we really do not.
- Have little or no experience with program.
- Cost.
- They are not inconvenienced or charged unnecessarily.
- I'm sure the business owners would like a better understanding of the program, as well a more seamless method of delivery.
- Most businesses might think that it is just junk mail or something that could get done at another time.
- Especially in Morgan Hill – not the right people and businesses are benefiting from the process. Fees being charged are inequitable.
- If they do it completely and truthfully.
- Unsure.
- For competent business owners and large facilities – yes. For some it is a way to not be truthful with the true conditions of their occupancy.
- They probably don't give it a thought and just return the forms.
- What about community needs? Provide a fire safe community to conduct commerce in.
- It allows them to maximize their time. Less intimidating, and increase their annual awareness of fire and life safety.
- It probably is easier for them because we are not “dropping” in to inspect their occupancies and causing a minor disruption.
- With the number of returns, I question if the businesses understand the process; possible language barriers?

- It provides them less financial impact and it entrusts them with their own safety. They are still going to be able to sue if someone gets hurt because of their failure to truly inspect their occupancy.
- I've had one building (51 E. Campbell Avenue) which by order of management does not participate. There are several inspection units in the building (per 2K4 Linney).

7. What do you believe are the advantages of a self inspection program?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Better use of fire prevention staff hours. Small offices and businesses present a low fire risk.
- Meets needs of inspection requirements; allows us to be efficient with staff time.
- To increase the efficiency of the fire prevention program by giving businesses the responsibility of fire safety it deems already have a good track record.
- Relieved need to visit all occupancies weighed against the necessity of the need to have a complete new file to manage and carry.
- Frees up fire crews to perform other important tests.
- Lower fees for businesses, as opposed to the higher fees for us to do the inspection. Frees up time at the engine company level.
- It allows the department to streamline their fire prevention program.
- Business owners are educated in improving their own safety. Improves time management issues where hazards are minimal in given occupancies.
- I believe it was designed to reduce the inspection workload on stations with a high volume of company inspections.
- Lightens inspection load of fire personnel allowing them to focus on other needs (calls, training, pre-plans, walk throughs, etc.). Business owners can do the inspection on their time table, not ours.
- Business owner has more involvement with the program.
- Public education and trust keeps our relationships with our customers positive.
- Fewer engine company inspections, more revenue for the department.
- N/A, looking forward to participating!
- Decreased administrative, logistical, and direct inspection time.
- In theory, it would be less of a burden on company's (engine or truck) workload.
- It could reduce time in the field doing inspections, but with business turn over, it seems we have to check current occupant with database anyway.
- Makes the business owner look and measure all aspects of life safety in their occupancy.
- Without having any knowledge of the program, I feel it is beneficial because it lessens the amount of time spent on inspections and gives us more time for training.
- Frees up more time for the engine company.

- Large occupancies such as Apple Computer taking fire department personnel around their facility equates to a loss in productivity for their facilities people. Decreases our workload (see number 4 above).
- Gives engine/truck/rescue companies more time for training, maintenance and other prevention duties.
- Reduced staff time, gives the store owner a sense of accomplishment.
- 1. For businesses to have more responsibility and be more aware of fire hazards.
2. Less fire service hours per month put towards inspections; in turn, more hours put towards other areas.
- Yes, for certain small or specific businesses.
- Cost savings to customer, time savings to fire department line employees.
- Perceived less busy work.
- In addition to the previously mentioned, allows more time for training, pre-planning, personnel development, and the like.
- 1. Frees up companies for other work projects. 2. Complexes like Apple, Hewlett Packard and Tandem usually found more items they wanted corrected internally than the ones we would write up. They still have excellent housekeeping (except Tandem) as we don't have problems in these buildings. They can do these inspections on their own time frame.
- If implemented, there should be a reduction of workload on the system. Engine companies should have more time. Now much time is spent trying to work around self inspections and eventually still have to inspect. Seeing the business prior to an event for preplanning.
- The advantages are available but it's difficult to recognize them if the engine company is responsible for all the follow-up. The only advantage is to the business owner.
- Less wasted time on behalf of business owners and engine companies.
- Saves on personnel time and cost.
- I believe it does reduce the number of required engine company inspections performed by firefighters. Once a baseline compliant level is established, businesses can be placed on the program or taken off as needed.
- Frees up time for personnel to do other activities and gets the business owner more involved and aware of potential hazards.

8. What do you believe are the disadvantages of a self inspection program?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Accountability for every business in our district.
- Do not make contact with public.
- A change in the safety attitudes of the business. Diminished occupancy familiarization of crews.
- Necessity of back tracking to locations you were at a month ago; i.e., making special trips to individual occupancies, wasting time following up on non-response. The tactics do not meet the strategy, or goal. Is the goal to bring

occupancies into compliance or to generate revenue for cities? Expecting 100% completion and compliance is absurd.

- Code violations could be left un-detected.
- Follow-up for when self-inspection is not returned to headquarters in a timely manner. Engine company must then go back into the field and most of the time will end up “arguing with business” that “yes I did send it in” – solution is to send certified mail – mandate it.
- Facilities not getting properly inspected by fire personnel.
- Fire crew may lose the opportunity to become familiar with all occupancies.
- Business owners not knowing what to look for. Fire companies not taking the opportunity to survey occupancies prior to an emergency.
- Cheating by the occupant – either intentionally or by ignorance.
- Possible inspections not as complete as when done by fire crews.
- There will always be a few businesses that don’t take it seriously and just fill out the form.
- Businesses may not be able or capable of inspecting themselves; more room to “pencil whip” inspections.
- N/A.
- Non-compliance with program. Less engine company familiarity with the occupancy and its layout.
- Paperwork delays. A fire company could get the lack of returns in one quarter after you have already switched shifts.
- We don’t see our buildings. We don’t interact with our business owners and inspections are when a lot of preplanning occurs.
- None.
- Not being out there seeing the potential fire situations and less public relations.
- Less than truthful business owners – creating potentially very complex or dangerous situations if we have to respond to their business on an emergency. The less than truthful business owners not meeting our department expectations of the program.
- Yes, less time in the businesses, less time interacting with the public.
- Violations not being attended to.
- 1. Businesses not fully aware of violations. 2. Fire service employees not becoming familiar with their buildings.
- There are no real inspections getting done.
- Allow for better use of fire department time.
- I believe calling it an inspection is incorrect. Self evaluation may be more appropriate. I believe you need a second party to complete a “real” or valid inspection. After all, wasn’t Wall Street policing themselves?
- Less contact with the public. I think the worse is when Morgan Hill implemented the inspection fees.
- We are not as familiar with the interior of buildings as we used to be, such as Apple Computer. Also new people are not as exposed to these buildings as I was in the earlier years. Some captains have also done this program for units in strip malls. These are units I think should still be inspected.

- Lack of input from engine companies; inspection system archaic, not user friendly.
- It really did not relieve any impact at the company level. Just switched it around, less time in the field, more in the office.
- None.
- Less familiarization of businesses in first due area. Fewer opportunities to make a positive impression to the community. Greater chance of the public not understanding what is fire safe.
- Businesses can misrepresent compliance undetected for up to 3 years.
- Personnel do not get the opportunity to see the interior of occupancies as often for pre-planning purposes.

9. Do you feel the self inspection program is ready to be expanded to and implemented in other cities served by the SCCFD?

Yes	(19)	49%
No	(9)	23%
No answer	(8)	20.5%
Unsure	(2)	5%
Unknown	(1)	2.5%

NOTE: 2 respondents added a new category: “Unsure,” 1 respondent added a new category: “Unknown.”

Please explain:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Per my response in question 7, we shouldn’t be spending valuable staff hours on low risk occupancies.
- Necessity of back tracking to locations you were at a month ago; i.e., making special trips to individual occupancies, wasting time following up on non-response. The tactics do not meet the strategy, or goal. Is the goal to bring occupancies into compliance or to generate revenue for cities? Expecting 100% completion and compliance is absurd.
- Not until a “discussion meeting” with the line personnel is held to resolve the ongoing issues.
- Because of my previous answers, comments.
- Workload at other stations warrant program. Slower stations with less inspection don’t need the work relief.
- I have no knowledge of the success or problems with the program. I feel it could be successful.
- Cuts down time for both engine companies and the business owner. It allows more time to devote to those occupancies that really need our attention.
- More time to develop a better way of handling to way to track and keep paperwork and reinspections to a minimum.

- Duplication of effort between fire prevention and engine companies seem to be counterproductive.
- It's efficient and allows us to spend more time on training and other essential aspects of the fire service.
- The program definitely has benefits and with any program involving human nature it has problems. With this program, the benefits to line personnel outweigh the detractors.
- If it's working in Morgan Hill and Cupertino, it's time to expand the program.
- In Saratoga, a high percentage of businesses comply to the violations and/or have no violations.
- Don't know? Is this program even working?
- There is no plan with depth or contingencies.
- Already mentioned.
- Decrease workload for other companies.
- Due to comments above, engine company feedback, user feedback, new program.
- We need to revamp how we enter/collect the data.
- Not until the database in fire prevention has been updated.
- We have numerous occupancies that have no hazards year after year and would be good candidates for the program.

10. Has the self inspection program made your job as a Fire Captain easier or harder?

Easier	(13)	29%
Harder	(10)	23%
Unsure	(6)	14%
N/A	(13)	29%
No answer	(2)	5%

NOTE: 4 respondents chose two answers: "Easier" and "Harder," 1 respondent chose two answers "Unsure" and "N/A."

Please explain:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- See above.
- Both easier and harder. On one hand it frees up time – on the other hand, we have to deal with "hostile" business owners after an application is said to be "not received."
- By not going to a facility every year, that puts us behind the curve when business owners make changes within their building.
- Improve time management for low risk occupancies.
- Have no experience with the program.
- If it works, I assume that it would make the captain's job a little easier.
- Inspections are a very timely program.

- Easier when the occupant is compliant with the program. Harder when you have to track down the occupant and make the inspection.
- Paperwork flow.
- Has created a 2 tiered inspection system. I spend more staff time managing my end then if I had just done the inspection.
- Less inspection load.
- More time for training.
- Both to be honest – easier because of less workload, harder when we identify businesses that go back on our inspection list. It usually takes several trips to get back into compliance.
- Not involved.
- When inspections are not completed, line personnel are requested to follow-up, which adds 2 to 3 times more work to our day.
- Easier for the most part. However, the small time allotted for filing and review of returns.
- It's still work!
- More behind the scene time spent utilizing an old system.
- Both easier and harder. I spend less time in the field and more time in the office. There is value in going into the business and looking around.
- I believe when the database is transferred / updated, I will be able to honestly say that it is easier.

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest score, how would you rate the SCCFD self inspection program?

1	(0)	0%
2	(2)	5%
3	(1)	3%
4	(3)	8%
5	(4)	10%
6	(2)	5%
7	(4)	10%
8	(5)	13%
9	(1)	3%
10	(2)	5%
No number	(15)	38%

Please explain:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- I don't have any direct experience with it.
- Need more work with the fire department, the city and the engine company all working together.
- See previous comments.

- Based on talking to captains currently using this program.
- No knowledge of results/problems.
- Unknown.
- Saves time.
- It works well but nothing is perfect. WE don't see the businesses so we don't know if they truly are safe or just say they are.
- Our program has room to improve.
- It has great potential.
- Too much duplication. Too much going to the same address to check for occupant changes and we are usually there anyway to inspect someone.
- Meets needs of all.
- From what I know, it's extremely useful.
- Decreased workload for the engine companies.
- I have not been involved in it.
- Can't evaluate, no data.
- There is no plan with depth or contingencies.
- It's a decent program. Once it goes on-line, it'll rate 8 to 9. While on-line, there could be a contact or question box, or reminder section for public education.
- It seems to be well run, we don't encounter many problems.
- Need more input, need better system, need more staff to assist line.
- It's a general concept that could work well if someone was dedicated to do the job, manage all the self inspections in a given area / city. Can't trust be added at the company level of even to the DFM/s? It's new, get new people to do it.
- The weakest part of the program is the database at this time!

12. What suggestions do you have to improve the SCCFD self inspection program process at various levels of the department, if any?

Administrative level:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Send self inspection forms to all "B" occupancies. Make certified or registered return mail a must.
- I think we should not do it!
- Elimination of paper and becoming computer database 100%.
- I have no background in this program to make suggestions at any level.
- Unknown.
- None.
- No suggestions.
- Sorry, not exposure to the program yet.
- Online program implementation. Decrease the amount of hands they pass through and filing/review time.
- Computer based (real-time) inspection process.

- Get rid of fees; not equitable to business owners. Evaluate effectiveness of program.
- Unsure.
- N/A.
- Tell us what's going on with it!
- Admin needs to bring all parties to the table before.
- Commitment to the line, provide a quality system that allows easy input and output of information.
- I think more of the data entry can be done here, but I don't have a lot of info on this.
- Continue progress updating database.

Engine company level:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- N/A
- I think we should not do it!
- Eliminate files and becoming 100% database.
- I have no background in this program to make suggestions at any level.
- Unknown.
- Inspections should still be done every 5 or so years by the engine company.
- No suggestions.
- Sorry, not exposure to the program yet.
- Better access to, and marketing of the program to eligible occupants.
- Computer based (real-time) inspection process.
- Unsure.
- Get the mobile data computers in the rigs now! Decrease paperwork = improved efficiency and helps the environment killing less trees.
- Tell us what's going on with it!
- Bring it on!
- A system that can be understood and implemented; common goal that is achievable.
- Still need to be in the field doing inspections on some of the self inspections, may be a random group.
- Be sure to document changes in business names to maintain accuracy of database.

Company officer level:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- N/A
- I think we should not do it!
- I have no background in this program to make suggestions at any level.
- Unknown.

- No suggestions.
- Sorry, not exposure to the program yet.
- Better knowledge and understanding of the program so as to be a better educator to both subordinates and customers.
- Computer based (real-time) inspection process.
- Unsure.
- Streamline, streamline, streamline – the less I have to do in regards to this subject the better. More focus on training on our job of firefighting.
- Tell us what's going on with it!
- Bring it on!
- Never utilized self inspection program.
- Commitment to excellence.
- Data entry needs to be at another level, perhaps secretarial to enter and sort.
- Talking more to business owners.
- Have relief captains place businesses as an S.I. where indicated.

Customer service level:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- N/A
- I think we should not do it!
- I have no background in this program to make suggestions at any level.
- Unknown.
- No suggestions.
- Sorry, not exposure to the program yet.
- Improve access via department website, improve site content, this makes direct phone calls less frequent and for non-routine issues.
- Computer based (real-time) inspection process.
- Unsure.
- Speaking for my crew and I, we go above and beyond as it is all ready.
- Tell us what's going on with it!
- Saves money.
- Gain feedback, what can change on an on-going basis.
- I think this is good; we trust they want to be safe, that's the risk.

Billing, finance level:

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- N/A
- I think we should not do it!
- I have no background in this program to make suggestions at any level.
- Unknown.

- No suggestions.
- Sorry, not exposure to the program yet.
- Secure online billing and notification.
- Computer based (real-time) inspection process.
- Unsure.
- N/A.
- Tell us what's going on with it!
- Unknown.
- Avoid the fee. "No more taxes!"
- In Morgan Hill, the way I understand it, we don't get any money, it goes to the city.

13. In your opinion, what measurable objectives should the SCCFD use in assessing the success or failure of this self-inspection program?

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Customer satisfaction and spot checks for compliance.
- Monitor the increase, if any of fires or related incidents in commercial occupancies.
- How many businesses are mandated "off" the program after 3 years of self inspections? The goal should be zero.
- Improvement in fire prevention inspection completion rate. For example 100% is the expectation, but is it always met? By all engine companies?
- How safe or in compliance the business is when it is inspected by fire department personnel.
- I think it would take a few years with spot / follow-up inspections to check on the success of the program.
- If we generate money and save time with a program, it must be a success.
- Compliance percentage at 5 year inspection noted above.
- Inquire with businesses; assess impact to SCCFD versus revenue.
- Compliance. 2. Delinquent / undeliverable notices. 3. Customer satisfaction. 4. Vendor / Administrator satisfaction (us).
- Feedback from fire companies.
- Actual staff time used to manage (fire prevention and engine company) and actual gain in productivity of engine companies.
- The completion rate / return by participating businesses.
- Not sure.
- N/A.
- Conduct spot inspections. Conduct an inspection every other year to assist the business with their inspection.
- No opinion yet.
- I do not have the background to answer this question.
- Send a survey with the self-inspection form asking the business owners opinion(s).

- Will we or are we having an increase of fires or hazards within these buildings? Are fires occurring in various occupancies or small (mom and pop) stores, such as 7-11's?
- Are quality inspections being performed by all inspectors? Spot checks?
- We need to look and see why we have to keep going out and reinspecting occupancies. Higher fines on the business for failure of compliance or advertise more about it.
- In checking the self inspection program businesses after three years, measurement of the percent of compliance versus non compliant occupancies against a predetermined goal (i.e. 90%).
- Mandate physical inspections by engine companies every 3 to 5 years to ensure compliance.

APPENDIX E

External Fire Department Survey

I am currently a participant in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. One of the requirements is to complete an Applied Research Project applicable to my fire department. I am asking your assistance in answering some questions on the following pages relating to fire prevention self-inspection programs.

It DOES NOT matter if your department uses a self-inspection program.

The results of this feedback instrument will be confidential and the results will be shared in the final paper. Feel free to contact me if you would like a copy of the final paper.

Please complete the feedback instrument by Monday, November 24, 2008.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 408-205-9006 or steve.prziborowski@cnt.sccgov.org

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

Respectfully,

Steve Prziborowski
Battalion Chief
Santa Clara County Fire Department
14700 Winchester Boulevard
Los Gatos, CA 95032-1818

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

- 9 or less 10 to 14 15 to 19 20 to 24 25 or greater

2. What is your current rank / title?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighter | <input type="checkbox"/> Battalion Chief | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Chief |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Division Chief | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Inspector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lieutenant | <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Chief | <input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Fire Marshal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Captain | <input type="checkbox"/> Deputy Chief | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Marshal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ | | |

3. Please provide some information about your fire department:

Name: _____
City: _____ State: _____

4. What is the population served by your fire department?

- 49,999 or under
 50,000 to 99,999
 100,000 to 249,999
 250,000 to 499,999
 500,000 to 999,999
 1,000,000 or more

5. Does your fire department currently utilize a fire prevention self-inspection program?

- Yes No

6. If you answered “no” to number 5 above, are there any plans to implement a self-inspection program?

- Yes No Unsure

Why or why not? _____

7. What do you believe are the advantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?

8. What do you believe are the disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?

NOTE: If your department DOES NOT use a self-inspection program, you are complete. Thank you!

If your department DOES use a self-inspection program, please continue answering the following questions.

Questions for Fire Departments currently using a Self-Inspection Program:

9. How long has your fire department been using a self-inspection program?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 4 years
- 5 to 6 years
- 7 to 8 years
- 9 years or more

10. What specific types of occupancies qualify for your self-inspection program?

- A (Assembly)
- B (Business)
- E (Educational)
- F (Factory)
- H (High Hazard)
- I (Institutional)
- M (Mercantile)
- R (Residential)
- S (Storage)
- U (Utility and Miscellaneous)
- Other (please explain): _____

11. What is the specific timeframe a business remains as a self-inspection before a regular inspection from fire department personnel must occur?

- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- Forever
- Other (please explain): _____

12. What percentage of business owners return their self-inspection forms?

- 0 to 19%
- 20 to 39%
- 40 to 59%
- 60 to 79%
- 80 to 100%

13. What is the average turn-around time between receipt and response of the typical business owner?

- Less than 1 week
- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- 3 weeks
- 4 weeks
- 5 weeks or more
- Other (please explain): _____

14. Do you feel your self-inspection program allows business owners to learn risk reduction techniques?

- Yes No Unsure Please explain:
-
-

15. Have your personnel taken the time to explain to the business owner, in person or in writing, your self inspection program and how they stand to benefit from it?

- Yes No Unsure Please explain:
-
-

16. Do you feel your self inspection program is meeting the expectations of your personnel?

- Yes No Please explain:
-
-

17. Do you feel your self inspection program is meeting the expectations of your Department?

- Yes No Please explain:
-
-

18. Do you feel your self inspection program is meeting the expectations of your business owners?

Yes

No

Please explain:

19. What is your overall impression of your self-inspection program?

Thank you very much for taking the time to assist me with my Applied Research Project!

If you would like a copy of the final product, please email me at steve.prziborowski@cnt.sccgov.org or call me at 408-205-9006.

APPENDIX F

External Fire Department Survey Results

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

9 or less	(4)	5.2%
10 to 14	(8)	10.4%
15 to 19	(17)	22.1%
20 to 24	(16)	20.8%
25 or greater	(32)	41.6%

Number answering question = 77

Number skipped question = 0

2. What is your current rank / title?

Firefighter	(3)	3.9%
Engineer	(1)	1.3%
Lieutenant	(3)	3.9%
Captain	(10)	13.2%
Battalion Chief	(5)	6.6%
Division Chief	(5)	6.6%
Assistant Chief	(7)	9.2%
Deputy Chief	(7)	9.2%
Fire Chief	(5)	6.6%
Fire Inspector	(6)	7.9%
Deputy Fire Marshal	(2)	2.6%
Fire Marshal	(19)	25%
Other	(3)	3.9%

NOTE: 1 person did not answer the question.

Number answering question = 76

Number skipped question = 1

3. Please provide some information about your fire department:

Name: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Alabama	1
Arizona	2
California	25
Colorado	1
Connecticut	1
Florida	2
Georgia	2
Illinois	3
Indiana	1
Kansas	1
Massachusetts	2
Maryland	1
Minnesota	1
Missouri	4
Nebraska	1
New Hampshire	1
New York	1
Oregon	1
Pennsylvania	2
South Carolina	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	5
Virginia	3
Washington	5
Wisconsin	4
West Virginia	1

Number answering question = 73

Number skipped question = 4

4. What is the population served by your fire department?

49,999 or under	(30)	39%
50,000 to 99,999	(22)	28.6%
100,000 to 249,999	(15)	19.5%
250,000 to 499,999	(3)	3.9%
500,000 to 999,999	(3)	3.9%
1,000,000 or more	(4)	5.2%

Number answering question = 77

Number skipped question = 0

5. Does your fire department currently utilize a fire prevention self-inspection program?

Yes	(15)	19.5%
No	(62)	80.5%

Number answering question = 77

Number skipped question = 0

6. If you answered “no” to number 5 above, are there any plans to implement a self-inspection program?

Yes	(4)	6.6%
No	(43)	70.5%
Unsure	(14)	23%

Number answering question = 61

Number skipped question = 16

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- We did have a self-inspection program that we used for 3 years. We found it unsuccessful. We were having to go to approximately 70% of the businesses because either they had discrepancies that needed to be followed up or they just never sent the paperwork back. We had it set up that every 3 years we would go and inspect in person. The 3rd year came and we found items the owners stated was in compliance actually was not and needed our gentle persuasion to get the issues corrected. The program was not successful.
- The State of Wisconsin distributes monies collected from property insurance to Fire Departments that perform inspection activities of public buildings.
- Yes, for time management purposes. Also, recent studies suggest risk based inspection programs are more effective as well as more cost effective.
- Our department collects revenue from the current engine company inspection program. The cost is \$40 for each business for an initial inspection and one reinspection. After this the FPB can charge follow up charges. It's not much and has not increased since its inspection 1990s. If we went to a self-inspection we would assume we'd lose this funding. Although I heard of a self inspection program that a fire department still charged??
- Local experience is that business owner pencil whip the form and thus a waste of stamps and staff time.
- A self-inspection program sounds like a good cost-saving measure, but would probably take a dedicated staff person to get the program up and running. We have no resources available to do that.
- We are currently not doing Inspections of commercial structures. That is something we hope to start very soon. Once that is started and underway Self Inspection might be the next step.

- We waste too much time on company inspections in fully-sprinklered, non-combustible, business occupancies.
- Due to the limited availability of manpower.
- Not enough personnel to accomplish.
- The implementation of such a plan has not been discussed to date in the department.
- A department inspector is up to date on all state fire codes and laws.
- Have not considered it. Don't know much about it. Interested in learning more.
- We believe it is important for the community to see us on a regular basis. This in itself can create a sense of expectation on their part that there will be a regular visit. We want to witness the performance and code compliance of all fire protection. We also want to insure that the occupancy has not changed and possibly became non compliant. Areas such as changing egress, adding tables or chairs in an assembly, doing renovations that may negatively affect compartmentation all of these may be otherwise missed.
- We did a pilot self-inspection program in late 2007. It was somewhat successful; however, we have not yet evaluated the entire process due to other issues currently being addressed within the department. It is almost a certainty that we further develop and employ this program in 2009.
- We have considered such a program in the past due to workload issues. The real advantages of our engine company based inspection program are the knowledge of the community that such inspections impart on our suppression staff.
- Not enough interest. Admin also seems to not want to train or certify individual company officers as certified inspectors due to overtime costs while their at training.
- Due to CT regulations inspections to enforce the CT Fire Safety Code need to be conducted by an appointed fire code official.
- Self inspection programs have a poor record of being effective. Currently, the engine companies annually complete inspection on Group A; B, F, E, non residential daycares; H, repair garages; M; R-1 and R-2; and S occupancies.
- Inspection is the responsibility of the Township.
- We are looking into a modified type plan where initial inspections will be conducted by Bureau personnel and the corrections will be made by the responsible party and we would be notified in writing that corrections were made.
- We use companies to inspect most occupancies. Fire Inspectors perform the more complex inspections (H occupancies, etc), with the companies along.
- Our current program works well.
- Not at this time. We explored the idea a couple years ago when I first came into the office here. In looking to establish the criteria on what would be eligible for a self inspection, we determined it would be businesses that have a safety-risk manager of some sort on staff. This is usually your larger facilities and these facilities we usually don't find many fire code violations in because of the on site safety risk manager.
- We were using engine companies and now we are going to all inspections by prevention staff. I am previous job we did use self inspection only on "B"

occupancies and we found low return <50%, and follow up for violations indicated numerous were missed. Seemed to be a lack of knowledge.

- We are looking into this and are set to run a trial on one street as part of our 2009 inspection program. The reason we are considering this is to cut down on the amount of time engine companies spend conducting business inspections in Class-B occupancies (typical business offices). All other occupancies will continue to be conducted by Operations or the FMO.
- Research indicates self inspections are less than effective. We have found that company inspections are far more effective in two areas identified areas that are part of our strategic plan - firefighter interaction in the community and inventory (building) familiarity for operations personnel. Company inspections have been reduced to building surveys with check lists combining training operations with minimal life safety inspections.
- Through trial and error we found the self-inspection program did not work for us. A majority of the businesses either forgot or pencil whipped the form. During our 'spot' inspections, to check on compliance, businesses missed several key violations. We tried to re-educate the businesses, however, with turnover in most of the retail areas, this was futile. Even with very simple, straightforward forms, and a 'training course' in fire prevention, business managers/owners are not properly trained.
- Inspections are performed by engine companies for pre-plan purposes. Official code enforcement inspections are performed by part time employees for the Fire Marshals office.
- Presently have a full time staff of 18 fire prevention inspectors.
- Possibly implement them low hazard occupancies with a square footage limit, i.e. under 2,000 sf, etc.
- Lack of resources to implement any form of inspection program...at least at this point. We WANT to, but don't have the staff time (all volunteer) or the county-level support.
- Still not 100% comfortable with the fox guarding the henhouse...
- We used to have a self inspection program for B2 occupancies.
- I have studied the up-sides and down-sides of self-inspection procedures for many years. I feel that the loss of personal, one on one contact with the public using self-inspection degrades the fire prevention program. One specific example is the program that was tried in Poway some 25 years ago. I have yet to be convinced that self-inspection is a positive program, except for savings in time and money.
- Being an Educational Institution our policy is have on-duty fire personnel perform the inspections. It is a different climate here and our inspections are functions under the responsibility of the fire department. We do not have private business owners to perform simple 'M' inspections. Most of our campus is a little complex with research laboratories with H's, B's and L's. Every building does have a manager who performs monthly fire extinguisher inspections per OSHA and they also catch fire safety issues and correct them, contacting us only with questions.
- In process of a survey of "best practices" nationwide, to develop a Fire Prevention Business Plan. I suspect there may be some form of self-inspection activity in our future.

- We have utilized the self inspection program in the past for B occupancies, but due to limited resources in prevention and administration we were not able to keep up with the flux of forms that were turned in. We now assign them to a prevention status where they do not receive inspections or a self inspection form.
- With shrinking fire prevention budgets and staffing levels, self-inspection programs may be a viable solution to addressing some inspection workloads.
- We have a company annual inspection program as well as five full time fire inspectors that handle all fire prevention related matters in our district.
- Currently we do not have the support personnel to oversee, track and manage the program.
- Not for general issues. May for smoke detector testing at hotels/motels. Not reliable, does not provide the public education component with the customer, does not develop a rapport with the customer, no confidence that customer will notice "fire hazard conditions" would be too tempting to not finding a problem.
- I believe engine company inspections are 25% Public Relations, 25% Public Education, 25% preplanning and area familiarization, and 25% code enforcement. Even if a self inspection program brought 100% compliance, which would never happen, it would only provide 25% of the benefit of engine company inspections.
- We believe that we have enough staff now so that we can do the inspections ourselves.
- Initial cost of setup.
- We use the self inspection program for commercial inspections. After a violation is found by staff inspectors the business owner is allowed to correct the problem within a given period of time and respond by sending in a compliance card.

7. What do you believe are the advantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?

Number answering question = 64

Number skipped question = 13

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- None.
- For the small department, it would allow staff to handle Fire and EMS calls rather than performing busy work.
- Frees operations personnel to conduct more detailed prefire planning and training.
- Less time spent in really small businesses. Offer as an option for small businesses. Charge something if the owner wants an engine company inspection.
- Numbers of completed inspection go up.
- More community buy-in Fire Department resources can be utilized for other important tasks. More incidents will be prevented before they occur. Lower costs for the fire department.
- Easier for the business, easier for us, helps educate rather than enforce.

- Since we are only performing new construction, target hazard, and complaint generated inspections it would at least allow us to provide some contact with our occupancies.
- PREVENT FIRES AND EDUCATE PUBLIC.
- 1) I feel it makes the business owner/occupant more aware of their own property, thus being "educated" as to what we would look for on an inspection. 2) Also, since it's hard to get to each business annually, we felt that something is better than nothing.
- It would free up crews for other tasks such as training.
- Certainly can be cost saving to your agency by reducing the frequency of department inspections. Has the potential to show more "ownership" in the program from business owners as I believe they would be more educated in fire safety when performing self inspections.
- Less time commitment for personnel to inspect the many occupancies that may otherwise be included in the program.
- I see none.
- It would save time for fire inspectors and bring a level of buy in by the facility manager.
- Conservation of staff resources.
- Reduced work load.
- There is some value to them understanding and using a regular hazard inspection process. Depending on their hazard level or occupancy type you could have them self inspect in off years of an actual code enforcement visit.
- The number of inspections that can be generated through this program with minimal manpower.
- Familiarization of occupancies and locations within our City. Meet owners/managers of these occupancies and locations during non-emergency situations. Build working relationships and alliances with owners and managers.
- Reduction of FD workload.
- Familiarization with properties in still alarm district. Hazard identification of same district.
- Contact Fire Marshal Bill Jolley @ 727-893-7691 William.Jolley@stpete.org
- Saves time for inspectors to conduct other inspections.
- None.
- Most firefighters want to have gear that will protect them. By checking it themselves, they are more apt to find any issues and get them taken care of.
- Members become more familiar with the structures and contents.
- FP Bureaus can see more clients by not having to do follow-up inspections. Bureaus portray less of an authoritative entity and put trust in business owners creating a better relationship with the business community, lower fuel costs, less vehicle maintenance.
- 1. Reduces the number of company inspections. 2. Creates opportunity for enhanced business community awareness and participation in fire prevention. 3. Creates greater efficiency in not expending fuel costs, personnel costs, etc. conducting low-risk, low-hazard occupancy inspections.

- Frees up personnel to focus on other duties. If aimed at low hazard occupancies, frees up personnel to focus on higher risk occupancies. Both risk to the occupants and fire crews.
- Assists our full time fire prevention bureau in completing inspections. We have a large industrial park. The In-company inspections are limited to buildings less than 5000 square feet, and not sprinklered. An advantage also is to have the personnel become more familiar with their districts, and occupants in their district.
- Unknown.
- The biggest advantage I see to a self-inspection program is to state that all businesses in town have been inspected, which will contribute to your ISO ratings.
- See above.
- Familiarization with personnel and property.
- Advantages are that hopefully we will reduce the workload of our engine companies and can utilize the saved time for more beneficial purposes i.e. training, conducting pre-fire plans and walk-throughs of more hazardous buildings etc.
- It encourages business and property owners to look for potential hazards to their operations or properties.
- None.
- I believe it would save an enormous amount of time, money, and man-power (more money). Also, it should lead to uniform, consistent information from each business. This system will allow the department to obtain higher quality information from each business such as simple contact information which is sometimes difficult to obtain from workers who do not know anything other than when their next pay check is due. All this data could then be uploaded in to a computer system where the data could be accessed on the fire ground if needed.
- Would believe it would be beneficial to prepare for the inspection process and to get firms to think in fire prevention/safety programs year round. Culture change to the fire prevention/safety programs.
- You get to collect money and you don't have to drive out there.
- Reduces the number of annual fire inspections our engine companies are required to do. This allows for more time training and fulfilling other engine company assignments. Also there is a reduction in fuel use.
- I am not sure what you mean by self-inspection, but I would think you are talking about inspecting our own facilities. The primary benefits are to assure life safety of individuals in the stations. Also it is important component of "walking the talk." If we are going to inspect and enforce code on businesses, we need to set the example ourselves.
- More knowledge of fire safety in the general public (at the forefront).
- You are your own best safety net. We are trained to check those businesses we serve, why not check behind ourselves also...There would nothing more embarrassing than to have an issue in your department that you caught on for

already having caught someone else. It is like the blame game. Don't blame anyone else until you take a look at yourself.

- See Item 6 above.
- I think for small 'M's and 'B's it helps with the workload issues of managing a fire prevention program. Yes, I believe there is some value.
- Two things: accountability for property owners, and reduced staff requirements for fire department.
- The self inspection program is important for the occupancies that inspectors do not have the time to inspect. It helps us to keep track of the businesses and any changes. I think it is a good program for B occupancies that do not have a hood system; however, if you do not have the staff to keep up with the paperwork it is a cost that the department cannot afford.
- Less staff, money, and resources.
- A possible reduction of some personnel costs associated with maintaining a traditional full inspection staff. OR With a fully staffed bureau it would be possible to expand the number of inspections conducted each year.
- None.
- All the high hazard/risk inspections in our community are conducted by the Fire, Life and Environmental Protection Division. The balance of our commercial, industrial and some multi-family residential are done by our engine companies. A targeted self-inspection program could potential reduce the number of annual inspections conducted by the crews, allowing them additional time for other activities (training, drills with high hazard/risk facilities, etc.).
- Reduces the number of annual inspections engine companies must complete. Increases business persons' knowledge in fire safety issues by having the individual responsible to complete the inspection and self-certify their site is in compliance. A business is inspected by the engine company once every 2 years, so if there are fire code violations that were missed during the self inspection, they will be identified for correction versus not at all.
- 1. Tool to reach select types of occupancies (low hazard) 2. Could be effective for departments with little to no fire prevention activities.
- Reduce work load. Give credit/reward to consistent compliant businesses.
- Makes for numbers on reports.
- Less time spent by engine companies on inspections (we inspect every commercial and multi-family occupancy in town every year. We use self-inspections for small, simple "B" occupancies.
- It has the potential to save time and money.
- Effectively uses resources to maintain a basic level of fire and life safety in lower risk occupancies.
- Self inspections let the fire prevention staff take care of more technically advanced inspections, especially when staff may be limited.
- Makes the public aware of there primary responsible for home safety, and community prevention.
- Education of commercial owners and occupants.

- Education, awareness and, for commercial inspection related inspections, cost savings.
8. What do you believe are the disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?

Number answering question = 64

Number skipped question = 13

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Waste of postage. Waste of time having to follow up on businesses that would not send the info back. Having to trust the owner in their comments only to find out most were misleading. See number 6.
- It would remove the personnel from viewing occupancies. Leads to FF laziness. Fire personnel should take a very proactive approach and learn their response area. This can only be accomplished by spending time in the field, looking at places of public occupancy, and being involved. Crews should be out looking at new construction, old construction, remodels, and applying the teachings of Francis Brannigan. We need to be in the field to learn what to do and how to make sure we come home safely. You cannot preplan or role play incidents from the recliner.
- 1) Should not be the case for medium-large businesses, assemblies, restaurants, manufacturing, hotels/motels, nursing homes, repair garages, or hotels/motels. Probably left a few out. 2) If there were a fatal fire in a self inspection business where the residence was above the business, this would not be good from a customer service stand point. The community would wonder if the fire department could have prevented this by doing engine company inspections. 3) I think a self inspection program is a last resort, if a department is laying off firefighters or closing/browning stations then yes proceed. Otherwise, self inspections seem like a cop-out. Headline... "Something new is actually something we're not doing." 4) What do small business owners think? I think most small business owners would like the FD to do the inspections. Are we moving away from the community by not doing inspections?
- Accountability and trained inspectors.
- Fire Department crews are not actually walking the businesses in their first-due area Reliance on citizens who may not have the best fire prevention intentions Logistics of information between the citizens and the fire department.
- Fire Department crews are not actually walking the businesses in their first-due area Reliance on citizens who may not have the best fire prevention intentions Logistics of information between the citizens and the fire department.
- Harder for fire prevention to document and get ISO credit. Not good for all occupancies. I would limit to sprinklered business occupancies that submit a sprinkler inspection report.
- Proper follow through and customer understanding of the importance of a proper self-inspection.

- NONE.
- 1) Time-consuming for amount of returned self-inspection reports. 2) Need to audit businesses occasionally to see they are saying they did the inspection, when they did not. 3) Amount of time when we would see occupants face to face and possible fire hazards not noticed by a trained professional.
- It wouldn't give crews an opportunity to get into the buildings as much, familiarization of the area and building would fall. In addition, we bill for inspection services. You can't collect on something you don't do. We would stand to lose approximately \$50,000 in our small 5.5 square mile town.
- Reduces the amount of "feet on the ground" for prevention folks and engine companies. This could result in less local knowledge of response areas / target hazards etc. Preplan programs could suffer. Non-compliance or "checking the boxes" by business owners could result in reduced firefighter / public safety.
- Confirmation that requirements are adhered to.
- A building owner/manager is not up to date on fire and building safety codes.
- A true self-inspection may not be done.
- Thoroughness and accuracy of self-reporting.
- Reduced quality control.
- Mostly stated above in why or why not. Main thing is to assure compliance with codes.
- Lack of participation by some of the businesses included in the inspection program.
- Owners/managers who believe there are ulterior motives for the familiarization tour.
- Lack of department knowledge on individual buildings or complexes. Varying degree of quality/detail of self inspection by property occupant or owner.
- Level of training. Personnel dealing with citizens in a capacity to impose fines may alienate owners.
- Contact Fire Marshal Bill Jolley @ 727-893-7691 William.Jolley@stpete.org
- The reliability of the self- inspection report. Did the person actually conduct the inspection or just fill out the form? Does the person conducting the self-inspection understand the importance of the inspection and conducts conscientiously?
- They really do not happen. I does an occupant effectively change a hazardous condition when they do not perceive it as a hazard.
- On the flip side of that, you could have the same firefighters check there gear and think oh that is not a big deal when in reality it is or it becomes one later usually when it is too late.
- Overload to a sometimes busy schedule.
- Relying on business to make needed corrections without actually confirming they have been done. An increase in administrative work to process incoming paperwork. Personnel not getting out in the community to interact with business owners.
- 1. Ties up staff sending the letters, follow-up letters, and additional time in tracking the statistics associated with this program. 2. Less face-to-face contact between firefighters and business community.

- Crews are not getting inside the buildings for familiarization/preplanning regularly. It may not be as effective, the occupant may pencil whip it. Could be helped by alternating self with department inspection. If there are fees associated, looks to be just a money generator.
- I do not see a disadvantage. I guess we could use that designated day to complete more training.
- Unknown.
- Tracking the businesses to ensure they are inspected on a regular basis. It also did not pass the newspaper test for us, which means how would it look in the newspaper if there was a significant incident at this facility and they ask for inspection records and we said that the staff there inspected the facility themselves. We are easily subjected to questions such as "what type of training did we provide the staff to ensure they could adequately inspect these facilities", etc.
- See above.
- Takes a lot of time, crews don't want to do it.
- My suspicion is that we may not get a high enough level of participation from the businesses and that will result in even greater effort required to follow-up on the ones that were not returned. Also, we run the risk of them not being completely forthcoming with information. They may not return the forms in a timely manner. We do plan to "spot check" the trial area as part of the evaluation of the self-inspection program in 2009.
- Without encouragement from the authority having jurisdiction, they are ignored.
- Business managers/owners are not trained fire prevention inspectors. They would either not complete the form on time, correctly or at all, thus required a fire inspector to go to the facility anyway. We were very diligent on our training with business managers/owners, yet they did not take the program seriously.
- Some business may need to be prodded to participate at first until they learn the benefits of the process.
- Getting done and compliance would be another issue.
- Inspections will be pencil whipped.
- You are trusting the business owner is giving a fair and accurate safety inspection of his/her business. Also engine companies are not in the structure sizing it up and making a mental pre-plan. Also this is a lost customer contact opportunity (this can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on the attitude of the crew).
- Depending on who does the inspection, there may be problems with consistency.
- Never quite sure if the issues are being addressed. My feeling is if you asked today, 99.999% of business owners would say they have no fire code violations in the buildings, while in reality they may have hundreds.
- It can be costly, but what is the price of an injured or killed firefighter? It takes incredible discipline to check you yourself.
- See Item 6 above.
- 1) Getting the program off-the-ground. 2) Identifying which occupancies you're comfortable with performing their own inspections. 3) Follow-up with those

businesses that do not complete their inspections. 4) The quality of the self-inspection (will they understand what needs to be inspected).

- Lack of accountability if there is no follow-up or management of information. I believe a successful program would require occasional (4-5 years?) "drop-in" audits to confirm compliance.
- The cost it takes to have the administration staff manage the program.
- Self-inspections are lower quality and the percentage of people providing the "self-verification" may lead to unethical acts.
- Without comprehensive program oversight, audit system to ensure compliance, and the required follow-up a self inspection program is not of much value.
- Occupants of a facility are not trained to the level of the fire inspectors or firefighters. Firefighters learn the layout of the facility and notice changes annually. Public education by our staff during the inspection process. Hazardous materials and other hazards are discovered. Building changes without a construction permit are discovered.
- Tracking could be a bureaucratic nightmare. Less familiarity with the facilities that are put on a self-inspection program.
- Increases workload on administrative staff to identify those business that should be included in the self inspection program, track responses, and rotate business through the program. Some businesses will not complete the self inspection of their business, but will sign the form.
- 1. Effectiveness. 2. Lack of business participation and commitment. 3. Need resources to oversee program. 4. Minimizes department education, communication and interaction with business community 5. Essential transfers responsibility back to the business community which is not necessarily driven by safety issues as much as profitability.
- Quality assurance. Education of persons conducting education. Lack of pre-fire planning.
- See #6, voices my thoughts.
- No on-site presence. Relying on occupant to be honest and complete the inspection.
- I believe engine company inspections are 25% Public Relations, 25% Public Education, 25% preplanning and area familiarization, and 25% code enforcement. Even if a self inspection program brought 100% compliance, which would never happen, it would only provide 25% of the benefit of engine company inspections.
- No one ever really fails a self inspection.
- Customers and companies will just pencil whip the self inspection and not know a potential hazard that they may have.
- Out of State and Country residents do not respond in a timely manner. This has been true with properties own by banks as well. They seem to go into a business black hole. Lots and greenbelts need additional oversight, which cannot be accomplished by mailers.
- Administration of process.
- Reliance upon trust that violations are corrected

Questions for Fire Departments currently using a Self-Inspection Program:

9. How long has your fire department been using a self-inspection program?

Less than 1 year	(2)	20%
1 to 2 years	(0)	0%
3 to 4 years	(2)	20%
5 to 6 years	(2)	20%
7 to 8 years	(1)	10%
9 years or more	(3)	30%
No answer	(67)	

Number answering question = 10

Number skipped question = 67

10. What specific types of occupancies qualify for your self-inspection program?

A (Assembly)	(2)	22.2%
B (Business)	(8)	88.9%
E (Educational)	(2)	22.2%
F (Factory)	(2)	22.2%
H (High Hazard)	(1)	11.1%
I (Institutional)	(2)	22.2%
M (Mercantile)	(6)	66.7%
R (Residential)	(1)	11.1%
S (Storage)	(3)	33.3%
U (Utility)	(3)	33.3%
Other	(0)	0%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

Respondents were able to choose more than one answer

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Only those with no sprinkler system specific to their business and the businesses have no FACP. Group B, M and S occupancies within a larger sprinklered building will be assigned self-inspection status. Any business refusing to be on self-inspection will be reassigned to the respective fire company.
- Lot's and greenbelts.

11. What is the specific timeframe a business remains as a self-inspection before a regular inspection from fire department personnel must occur?

1 year	(4)	44.4%
2 years	(1)	11.1%
3 years	(2)	22.2%
4 years	(1)	11.1%
5 years	(0)	0%
Forever	(0)	0%
Other	(1)	11.1%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Some really low risk/low hazard will probably stay on the list permanent. This frequency is currently being reassessed.
- We follow up in all high severity zones, and less impact inspection are completed every two years.

12. What percentage of business owners return their self-inspection forms?

0 to 19%	(1)	11.1%
20 to 39%	(1)	11.1%
40 to 59%	(0)	0%
60 to 79%	(1)	11.1%
80 to 100%	(6)	66.7%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- This past year we have seen a return/participation rate of about 93%.
- Currently unknown - this is the first year we have implemented the program. The program is designed for 100% participation. If the self inspection business owner does not returned the form in the required time the Fire Marshal's office provides an on-site inspection.
- If the compliance card is not returned within 60 days re-inspection is scheduled within 90 days.

13. What is the average turn-around time between receipt and response of the typical business owner?

Less than 1 week	(0)	0%
1 week	(1)	11.1%
2 weeks	(2)	22.2%
3 weeks	(3)	33.3%
4 weeks	(1)	11.1%
5 weeks or more	(0)	0%
Other	(2)	2.2%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- We give them one month. After two reminder letters an inspector goes out and completes the inspection.
- Normally mailed out in April with a three week response period and notification of inspection beginning each June 1.

14. Do you feel your self-inspection program allows business owners to learn risk reduction techniques?

Yes	(7)	77.8%
No	(0)	0%
Unsure	(2)	22.2%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- See answer on previous question.
- Sometimes owners are unaware of problems or do not realize the situation is a problem.
- We provide as much information as necessary to assist them in understanding the parameters of their responsibilities. It has been well received by those businesses agreeing to participate.
- We try to educate our business owners on the dangers of fire and what we are looking for on an inspection no matter if they are self inspected or receive an annual engine company inspection. All business owners are mailed a letter 30 days prior to their engine company inspection informing them that the Capt. will be contacting them to set-up an inspection. In the letter it outlines the areas and items we are inspecting for. The intent is for all business owners to conduct a self

inspection before the arrival of the engine company to reduce the number of return inspections required and reduce the fire risk in the building.

- Along with the self-certification form, we send a guideline with common fire code violations. We have found over the years that most self inspected facilities take the program seriously and call with questions when needed, and, do not have serious fire safety violations when inspected by the engine company.
- I feel that with this program, they simply check the boxes after (maybe) checking for the hazard.
- Our inspection forms list required clearance needs with a printed picture of what is expected.

15. Have your personnel taken the time to explain to the business owner, in person or in writing, your self inspection program and how they stand to benefit from it?

Yes	(8)	88.9%
No	(1)	11.1%
Unsure	(0)	0%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- We send the self-inspection checklist with a letter explaining the program.
- We send a very detailed letter, simplified inspection form and brochures, as warranted, to meet their needs. If the need arises we send out a FPB representative to explain the program.
- We send a letter explaining the program and its benefits along with the self-certification form. We also field any questions that arise.
- Written & mailed form and instructions.
- Follow on site inspections

16. Do you feel your self inspection program is meeting the expectations of your personnel?

Yes	(6)	66.7%
No	(0)	0%
Unsure	(3)	33.3%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Unsure of the cost-benefit of allowing self-inspections.

- Many want more, and/or all, business on self-inspection. Except of course during a promotional assessment process and then they really understand the true value of company inspections.
- This is the first year - We will need to take an assessment of the violations next year when the engine company performs the inspection.
- Reduces the number of inspections conducted, and allows more time to be spent on facilities whose business activities present a higher hazard to surrounding businesses, the public and emergency responders.
- Overall compliance is obtained. If violations are not corrected the business will receive fine.

17. Do you feel your self inspection program is meeting the expectations of your Department?

Yes	(5)	55.6%
No	(0)	0%
Unsure	(3)	33.3%

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- Very successful, and we're very pleased, as is City Council and the City Manager's Office.
- This is the first year - We will need to take an assessment of the violations next year when the engine company performs the inspection.
- By allowing staff the time to concentrate on more hazardous occupancies.
- We're small, so it's hard to tell if self-inspections are having the same effect as in-person inspections.

18. Do you feel your self inspection program is meeting the expectations of your business owners?

Yes	(7)	87.5%
No	(0)	0%
Unsure	(1)	12.5%

Number answering question = 8

Number skipped question = 69

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- They appreciate the approach of not expending tax dollars for low-risk/low hazard businesses, but do very much appreciate our efforts to ensure they are included in our fire prevention program activities.

- To many business owners taking time out of their day to follow an engine company through their business interrupts their business day. The self inspection process allows the business owner to perform the inspection at a time that works best for him.
- By reducing interruptions to the business from inspections while still providing them fire safety information and contacts where additional information can be obtained.
- The less they have to do, the better they are with it.

19. What is your overall impression of your self-inspection program?

Number answering question = 9

Number skipped question = 68

NOTE: Answers provided by respondents:

- It has merits, but feel annual inspections by FD personnel are still better.
- Began with a slow start. Once personnel began to complete the tours, they realized how much information could be gained BEFORE an emergency occurs at that site.
- A good program that with tweaking will be even better. Its here to stay and will no doubt grow with our current reassessment.
- Time will tell.
- I think it is good. I'd like to see how other department's programs work and incorporate improvements into our program to better serve our emergency responders and business community.
- Valuable for crew resource management, and plan to continue. There are drawbacks, as mentioned above.
- Its a good start, has potential, but requires a few more resources than are presently available.
- Very cost effective tool.
- The program allows the business owner to comply with violations within a reasonable period. This program allows inspection division to focus on other problematic areas.

APPENDIX G

Personal Interview Senior Deputy Fire Marshal Julie Linney November 5, 2008

1. Please explain the current fire prevention self-inspection program.

We only have it in 3 cities right now, Cupertino, Morgan Hill and Campbell. The crews are the ones that choose which businesses go into the self inspection program. This particular self-inspection program is probably different from most other departments, because our biggest variable is Morgan Hill because they charge for inspections; it throws a wrench in our system. Basically what happens, on a quarterly basis, I send out a letter to the business owners, I go into Filemaker Pro, I print all of the checklists and I send them the checklist and the standard form letter explaining the program and how to do the inspection, and that they need to send it back in 30 days. I have to print out the letters and the checklists, and then get all the envelopes ready.

I then send them to a mailing company, the 2 envelopes and the letter and the checklists. Some quarters I will have 700 to send out; thus I send them to a mailing company who stuffs the envelopes and sends them out. It's just too hard for us to do that type of labor. Then it's a matter of waiting to get them back; it's all date sensitive. If the mailing company doesn't get them out on time, it causes us problems with their scheduled completion date.

We're currently having a problem with the mailing company because they aren't working for us as efficiently as we would like them to be. I may be looking for another company. Once they mail them out, the business owners have 30 days to send them back to us. Once we receive them, the secretaries open them up and take a look at them. If they look ok, they put the data in Filemaker Pro and file the information.

If there is an issue, they'll give them to me and I'll look into it. After that, I file them in a file next to my office. As I go out and about, I'll take a stack to the crews that need either filing or follow-up. If we get the letters returned because of a bad address, I send those to the crew to go out and verify the status of the business.

If they don't come back within 30 days, then I have to follow-up with the company. The 30 days should be completed before the crews start their new quarter of inspections. For example, for the first quarter in January, I'll be mailing them out in early November, so the business owners can get them back to us in December.

2. When did the Cities of Cupertino, Campbell and Morgan Hill begin the self-inspection program?

I'm not sure; I didn't start the program, I took it over from someone else. I think Cupertino and Campbell were first, Morgan Hill came in afterward.

3. What is the goal of the current self-inspection program?

I think the goal in the beginning was to eliminate some of the routine inspections; the ones without a lot of fire hazards. It would free up the crews to do other things. Also, when we come out with an engine and crew of three personnel, and go into a small business, it's a disruption of service to the business. So, the program would be beneficial for the business owners to do the inspection on their own time. It is also beneficial for the crews who don't have to go out on the routine inspections and for the business owners to be able to do the inspections on their own schedule.

4. How much time do you and the SCCFD fire prevention staff devote to the self-inspection program?

It really depends; probably more towards the end of the quarter. My time has increased now because of our transition from Filemaker Pro to Firehouse Software and the crews being locked out from making changes while we transition. It is a very time consuming program. While it's hard to pinpoint a time frame, I am dealing with it almost everyday, getting emails from crews and answering questions.

5. What do you believe are the advantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?

It's an advantage to the company to not have us go out there every year. It would be more of an advantage if it could be done online; we'd probably get a better response. It's an advantage for the crews to not have to go out there, assuming there is compliance. But if you don't have compliance on the business owner's side, it can make it difficult.

6. What do you believe are the disadvantages of a fire prevention self-inspection program?

It's hard because we have Morgan Hill, which throws in a big wrench because they charge for inspections. The only disadvantage for them is that when I send out a letter and if they don't comply, we end up sending out an engine company anyway. There are more disadvantages for Morgan Hill since it is a different animal, since the City has expected 100% compliance and has projected revenues based on perfect compliance.

7. In your opinion, is the current self-inspection program meeting the expectations of our Department? Why or why not?

I don't know; I think they would have been looking a higher rate of return than we're seeing now. Nobody has taken the time to evaluate the program as a whole, so it's really hard to say. We really need to evaluate the program because it may be more trouble than it is worth. How many forms are actually coming back, and are correct? Do we eliminate it, and say we need to do the inspections? I don't know.

8. In your opinion, is the current self-inspection program meeting the expectations of our Fire Prevention Division? Why or why not?

No, only because the forms we have are too complicated in some respects for the owners to understand. I'm not getting the answers I really need because of the complicated forms. To me, if you're doing a mom and pop store, and we're looking at basic things, a lot of things we have on the form don't apply to them. It causes problems because the business owner may not be understanding things the property owner may be taking care of, such as sprinkler maintenance.

9. In your opinion, is the current self-inspection program meeting the expectations of our personnel? Why or why not?

Sometimes it does take more time for the crews, primarily in Morgan Hill, to complete the inspections. The problem in Morgan Hill is the fees and the emotions of the business owners, who the crews have to deal with. In Cupertino and Campbell, if they don't do their self-inspection form, we just send the engine company out there and it's done. The crews shouldn't have to deal with the emotions of the business owners due to fees being charged by the city. The fees almost create a hostile environment, which the crews don't like. I want to make it more user friendly for the personnel.

10. In your opinion, is the current self-inspection program meeting the expectations of the business owners? Why or why not?

I say yes, for the ones that are filling them out. For the ones that don't fill them out, probably not because we then have to send the crews out. We need to see if we can have them do it on line, which may help with compliance.

11. What is your impression of the self-inspection program – should we continue it? Should we expand it to other cities, and if so – what cities?

If we're not getting high percentage of returns, which we're not, then no. There's no advantage to the business owner to get it returned to us. For Cupertino and Campbell, if there are 30 self inspections for the quarter, and they get 10 back, then they have to do 10 less inspections; it's a win-win situation. It's still an advantage to the crews because there are fewer inspections to do. In Morgan Hill, it's a little different. We still should evaluate the program before we expand it.

12. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

No, not really. As I said, it can be a good program. I would like to try and evaluate it, restructure it, and see if we can do it without a fee schedule. If I just look at the program from the Cupertino and Campbell aspect, I think it can be a great program. Also if we can get it online, it would help increase compliance.