

**ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1997 - JUNE 1998**

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

JEFFREY J. MORRISSETTE, State Fire Administrator
Established - 1975 Statutory authority - Chap. 7-323
Central office - Connecticut Fire Academy, Perimeter Road,
Windsor Locks, CT 06096
Average number of full-time employees - 22
Recurring operating expenses - 1997-98 - \$1,747,473
Capital outlay - \$84,482

Organization structure - Office of State Fire Administration, Training, Certification, Public Information and Fiscal Services.

The Commission which is comprised of four operating divisions; Training, Certification, Public Information and Fiscal Services proudly presents the following summary of services, programs and activities as evidence that the responsibilities entrusted to it have been faithfully administered to Connecticut's fire service and citizens.

Agency Mission

To prevent or mitigate the effects of fire and disasters, either natural or manmade, on the citizens of the State of Connecticut. This objective shall be accomplished through the development and delivery of state-of-the-art educational programs designed to meet nationally recognized standards, certification of individuals to such standards and maintenance of up-to-date resources for use by fire service personnel, public educators and other first responders.

Statutory Responsibility

The Commission is an autonomous state agency within the Department of Public Safety for administrative purposes only. The agency is charged with and has primary responsibility for training, public fire and life safety education and professional certification for members of the fire service. Conn. Gen. Statutes Title 7; Secs. 7-323(j) through 7-323(q),13(a) - 248; and others.

Public Service

The commissioners and staff are committed to Public Service Excellence. Feedback is continually sought through the use of comment sheets, surveys and interaction with fire service organizations.

In an effort to promote and market agency services, a display booth was staffed at five state and regional conferences during the year. Also, throughout the year staff members served as a resource on fire service and public fire education issues to the television, radio and newsprint media. The Academy and its programs were the basis for numerous feature stories positively impacting public safety.

Improvements/Achievements

A conscious effort is always made to schedule programs and services within every region of the state. The needs of both the volunteer and career sectors of the fire service are constantly gauged in consideration of program development and delivery:

- Enhanced the agency's internet web page by more frequently updating information and providing direct links to fire service related legislation. Greater than 10,000 have visited the site.
- Accepted delivery of training equipment on a permanent loan basis from equipment vendors - estimated cost savings \$60,000.
- A total of 3,499 Academy dormitory rooms were occupied during the fiscal year.
- Received a \$9,000 grant from the National Volunteer Fire Council via the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association in support of the Introduction to the Fire Service Summer Camp Program for youths aged 14-17 and for the development and delivery of a Fire Apparatus Driver Training Program.
- Provided logistical support and resources to numerous fire departments, regional fire schools and others utilizing Academy facilities and curriculum.
- Conducted quarterly Academy safety committee meetings to review and update safety policies to maintain OSHA compliance.
- Completed revision of the agency's Audio/Visual Resource Catalog. This will allow fire departments and the public greater access to these free resources.
- Subject matter experts volunteered to validate eight certification test banks- estimated savings \$6,400.
- Established a computer laboratory utilizing donated computers.
- The Connecticut FAIR Plan donated \$5,000 for the purchase of a public fire education robot.

Reducing Waste

The Commission remains a small, efficient, organizationally streamlined agency. Through the use of full time staff serving as facilitators and coordinators, part-time instructors deliver a majority of agency services. The Commission achieved savings through:

- Continued utilization of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Central Printing as a one stop shop for printing and mailing services - estimated cost savings of \$50,000.
- Continued to adopt and modified for use training curriculum developed by other state training organizations or commercial providers.
- Instructor start-up packages have been revised and streamlined by eliminating unnecessary paperwork allowing for greater classroom efficiencies.
- A new course catalog was designed and distributed to fire departments for fiscal year 1998-99. This new format is more comprehensive providing a greater amount of information to departments. Eliminated direct mailing to individuals resulting in a modest cost savings.

Strategic Planning

Divisional goal setting coupled with continual reassessment of the agency's strategic plan continues to guide planning and delivery of services. The Commission has scheduled a strategic planning session for fiscal year 1999.

Administrative Projects

The State Fire Administrator and staff remain active in state and national committees, boards and organizations to maintain a positive proactive impact upon services. By Connecticut General Statute, the Administrator serves on both the State Emergency Response and Enhanced 911 Commissions thus maintaining a communication link.

Administrative projects completed or ongoing throughout the year include:

- Completed planning for the implementation of the 1-800 FIRE LINE volunteer emergency services recruitment program. The program became operational on July 1, 1998.
- Agency legislative proposal to grant the Commission the authority to adopt regulations was passed during the 1998 legislative session.
- The final report of the Emergency Response Task Force was distributed. Follow-up meetings to monitor implementation of recommendations is ongoing. Connecticut Light and Power Co. donated equipment and labor to install a number of electrical hazard safety props at the Academy.
- Established an Industrial Training Advisory Board to make recommendations to the Commission.
- Provided technical support and testimony in support of Rep. Alex Knopp's proposal to secure funding for the development of a training program on the tactical use of thermal imaging cameras. A total of \$29,000 has been appropriated by the legislature for this project.
- Completed the examination and hiring process for a new Director of Fire Training to manage the Training Division.

Training Division

This division is headed by Director of Training, Adam D. Piskura. The division is responsible for the development and delivery of fire, EMS, and allied emergency services training programs.

In Fiscal Year 1997-98, 510 programs were delivered to 16,904 students, resulting in 159,658 student contact hours. This represents a doubling of student contact hours over the previous reporting period. Program participants include municipal firefighters, law enforcement officers, public works, state employees, industrial and military employees. An additional 3,500 Emergency Responders were trained through the agency's Train-the-Trainer programs by municipal certified instructors. Numerous programs were funded by federal grants passed through the State Emergency Response Commission for hazardous materials' training. An additional \$50,000 federal grant was received to provide response to terrorism training. The division is also responsible for the agency's Children Escape Trailer which is designed to aid in teaching third grade students to plan and practice emergency home exit and escape plans. The trailer was utilized by 54 municipalities and non-profit organizations reaching a total of 19,000 children.

Staff continued development and revision of curriculum including Hazardous Materials - Operational and the Public Fire and Life Safety Educator I student manual. Staff time was also spent developing specifications for the future purchase of training equipment to ensure delivery of the highest quality programs. Equipment specifications included a rack body tow vehicle, replacement rescue truck, confined space entry and trench rescue equipment.

In addition to the regularly scheduled training programs, the following special programs were offered:

- 15th Annual June Fire School, attended by 1,000 students.
- 8th Annual Hazardous Materials' Week, attended by 400 students.
- Annual Fire Officer Weekend at the National Fire Academy, attended by 180 students.
- Co-sponsored the 13th Annual Fire Apparatus Driver Safety Rodeo, designed to promote and reward the safe operation of emergency vehicles.
- Co-sponsored the Annual Trade Region I, New England Training Weekend in Amherst, MA. Greater than 40 per cent of the attendees were from Connecticut.
- Planned and coordinated a Junior Firefighter Summer Camp in July, 1997 in addition to program scheduled for July and August, 1998..
- Hosted the 8th Annual Northeast Extrication Competition. A total of 20 teams from the Northeast and Canada competed with over 300 spectators in attendance.

Certification Division

This division is headed by Director Frederick W. Piechota, Jr. This division is responsible for the development and administration of a voluntary, statewide, fire service certification and testing program. All examinations are based upon the Standards for Fire Service Professional Qualifications established by the National Fire Protection Association. The Certification System continues to be accredited by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. The Commission is currently making application to a second accreditation board, the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. The security and integrity of the System remains a high priority as a number of fire departments have mandated certification through contractual or organizational requirements and it is crucial that the System be able to withstand legal challenge.

Fiscal Year 1998 saw a total of 3,649 personnel tested within the 13 levels of professional competency offered with an 80 per cent passing rate realized. This total is a decrease of approximately 3 percent from the number of persons tested the previous fiscal year. A total of 1,494 personnel completed all requirements and received State of Connecticut certification to one or more levels.

The Commission conducted numerous local examination question review sessions designed to ensure the nationally developed test item banks utilized by the Commission met the needs of, and were appropriate for, Connecticut's fire service.

A major initiative during the year was the development of an entirely new method of examining practical skills as required by the newly revised and formatted Fire Service Professional Qualifications Standards. Administration of these new skills examinations will be during fiscal year 1999.

The 12th Annual Certified Instructors' Seminar was held with over 80 instructors in attendance. This seminar is designed to offer instructors educational methodology refresher training as well as to introduce new ideas and methods which they may use to enhance their presentations.

This division continues to execute its contract with Performance Training Systems, Inc., a private corporation that markets the agency's certification questions to state and local fire training agencies throughout the United States. The continuation of this contract and the significant increase in dependence on the Commission to provide up-to-date examination questions

demonstrates the high regard and esteem with which the Commission's Certification System is viewed on a local, state, and national level.

This division continues to assist a number of departments with the administration of local promotional examinations through the use of the Commission's question database.

Public Education & Information

This division is headed by Director Cynthia Colton-Reichler. A major responsibility of this division continues to focus on providing education and technical assistance in the development of local Juvenile Firesetting Programs.

During the fiscal year, this division spearheaded a number of state and national initiatives on juvenile firesetting including the completion of a Juvenile Firesetting Steering Committee report. This steering committee was comprised of representatives of juvenile justice, mental health, education, law enforcement and fire officials who compiled recommendations regarding the standardization of firesetter screening tools, training initiatives, policies and procedures. The Public Education Director chaired a Juvenile Firesetting Task Group established by the National Fire Protection Association. The Task Group developed job performance requirements for people handling juvenile firesetters.

Professionals from 50 communities completed Firehawk Companion Training and/or required technical assistance in handling juvenile firesetter cases. A total of 10 communities requested technical assistance in implementing juvenile firesetting program policies and procedures.

This division completed modifications to the adopted North Carolina Public Educator I curriculum. Three Public Educator I courses were delivered. Connecticut has the distinction of being one of only three states in the nation to train and certify public educators to meet a national standard.

This division also served as a training liaison to the Department of Public Health and CT SAFE KIDS Coalition on a smoke detector grant application, injury prevention training workshops, and other fire safety related projects. The annual Juvenile Firesetting and Public Education Conferences were successful in drawing 100 participants each.

Fiscal Services Division

This division is headed by Director Peter F. O'Neil. This division is responsible for the Commission's financial, personnel, purchasing and physical plant functions. In January of 1998, the Commission saw a successful transition of its food service operation to Food for Thought out of East Hartford.

This division administers payments to volunteer fire departments for emergency responses to limited access highways. An increase of \$60,000 from past budgeted appropriations now allows for up to 2,200 payments annually at \$100 per transaction. This increase helped eliminate backlogged claims.

A significant amount of publishing continues to be accomplished by this agency. Materials range from student workbooks and manuals to class flyers and the annual Training Catalog/Calendar. The audio-visual library remains productive loaning over 1,000 training/education films, slides, audio and video tapes every year.

The refining of the Commission's database has allowed this office to increase its effort in collecting past due accounts. Total accounts receivable over 120 days are at a low of less than one percent outstanding. The final phases to an on-line accounting system with the state should be accomplished in the ensuing fiscal year.

Membership

Members of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control are appointed by the Governor and represent statewide fire service organizations. The following commissioners served during the year: Chairman Peter Carozza, Jr., Waterbury; Vice Chairman John Vendetta, Hartford; Secretary Edward F. Haber, Berlin; Jon W. Andresen, Windsor, Robert J. Chatfield, Prospect; Edward B. Gomeau, Stratford; William Johnson, West Haven; Kevin J. Kowalski, Simsbury; Maurice F. McCarthy, Waterbury; Daniel Milewski, Stratford; Peter Mullen, Branford; George J. Munkenbeck, Jr., Waterbury; Richard H. Nicol, Middlebury and Douglas Peabody, Middletown.