

## 6.0 TRAINING

### 6.1 Overview

The Oakville Fire Department Training section operates from the Training Campus for Emergency Excellence, located on South Service Road and opened in 2000. The training section is staffed by a Chief Training Officer, an Assistant Chief Training Officer and two Training Officers. This section is also assigned a full time administrative Clerk/Typist.

The training section's primary responsibility is to provide training programs that meet the legislative requirements of the Ontario Fire Prevention and Protection Act (FPPA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario. With respect to the latter guidance notes are regularly being written and revised by the Ontario Fire Service Advisory Committee to address Section 21 health and safety issues.

Several new roles and responsibilities have been identified on the fire scene as a result of the Section 21 Committee work. These include responsibility for rehabilitation, the use of Rapid Intervention Team (RIT), use of an Incident Safety Officer (ISO), and training for the above which are expanded responsibilities from previous training requirements. Department trainers fulfill the recently mandated role of Incident Safety Officers during emergencies.

To accomplish training goals the following activities are carried out:

- Development of training schedules for the fire suppression division
- Development and delivery of specialized training programs
- Management of medical training
- Management of live fire training exercises
- Records management for personnel files
- Preparation of classification exams and participation in the recruitment process
- Provision of officer training to meet succession goals
- Preparation of standard operating guidelines and procedures
- Investigation of new equipment/technical request and delivery of associated training
- Management of training facility (e.g. bookings by outside agencies, facility and equipment maintenance)

### 6.2 Training

The Office of the Fire Marshal's Firefighters Curriculum is used as a base for core training. While the certification process under this program is voluntary, it provides a consistent and current level of training. The department also uses training materials from the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), NFPA, OFM, and other recognized standards as a basis for their training. The training is delivered by a range of staff from the Chief Training Officer (CTO) to company officers through the OFM trainer-facilitator process. The CTO and Assistant CTO currently coordinate and deliver all recruit training.

Training associated with succession planning has been flagged as an area of concern. At this time the department sends firefighters and officers to the Ontario Fire College to complete the Company Officer

Training Program. To improve the delivery and cost effectiveness of the program an initiative is being developed to complete specific components of the officer training curriculum in Oakville by approved associate-instructors.

This will be accomplished through the OFM Associate Instructor program and by introducing computer-based distance learning. This in-house program will not lead to an OFM Company Officer Diploma due to the fact that not all components of the curriculum will be included at this time. However, it will ensure that firefighters receive adequate company officer training and provide them with the leadership skills to progress within the department. Firefighters completing the Officer Training Program will be provided with the opportunity to attend the courses not included in the local program to obtain a diploma and advance to higher level educational opportunities.

### 6.3 Specialized Training Programs

The Oakville Fire Department assumes responsibilities for intervention in a number of other than fire related emergency situations. These include assistance to the EMS ambulance service, highway extrication, hazardous materials problems, confined space, trench rescue; swift water, ice and high-angle rope rescue categories. Fire suppression response personnel train in all these areas.

The Training Division monitors best practices, health and safety guidelines, OFM direction and local risks in order to develop specialized programs for its fire suppression division. In addition to structural and industrial fires the Town of Oakville boundaries and adjacent areas contain other potential risks such as:

- Building/structural collapse
- Critical infrastructure failure
- Oil and natural gas supply emergencies
- Explosion/fire
- Hazardous material – fixed site or incidents “in transit”
- Transportation emergencies (rail and road)
- Water rescue and emergency response

Given the range of potential emergencies, the Fire Department should develop a policy which prioritizes the focus of specialized training program towards the most probable events. The Fire Department should look for partnering opportunities with adjacent municipalities to deliver specialized training. The Department should also consider joint training opportunities with local industrial partners.

The Town of Oakville Fire Department should identify the crucial programs which may be required and develop a long range plan to deliver these programs. Such a plan would outline expected training levels, staffing requirements, records management needs and budget projections and consider future development in the Town of Oakville over the next ten years.

### 6.4 Administrative Duties

There is an authorized staff complement of four within the training section with support from one Clerk/Typist. In recent years, staffing changes have made it difficult to maintain full staffing (e.g. staff moves, long term sick leave). Even with all staff in place, the new training model’s focus on in-house

delivery exceeds their workload capacity under existing division of tasks.

Interviews with training staff revealed that a substantial portion of time is consumed by paperwork, attending to the physical upkeep of the training facility and managing facility leases to outside agencies. In addition, training staff are required to prepare the site for training activities and act as Incident Safety Officers. These activities take away from the number of hours training staff can devote to their main function of developing and delivering fire department training. The recent addition of a second Training Officer within the Training Division has addressed many of these concerns.

There is no formal fire service equipment maintenance program in place. However the responsibility for maintaining training apparatus and equipment (e.g. thermal imaging cameras, SCBA) has recently been transferred from training staff to the Deputy Chief Support Services. First responder medical assistance is a service that is provided by the fire suppression division, however, the management of records, training programs and equipment certification is currently the responsibility of training staff. A reorganization of roles and responsibilities could free up more of the training staff's time.

Interviews with training staff have also identified that a substantial percentage of time is now employed completing training modules to initiate the OFM Associate Instructor program. The initiative to opt into the OFM Associate Instructor program is very time consuming and because of the number of officers in Oakville it could be the primary role of one of the training officers, or a new position.

The benefits of the Associate Instructor program include a reduced need to send firefighters away for external training. This is costly due to collective agreement requirements to pay overtime wages for external training time in addition to maintaining minimum on shift staffing during such training periods, as needed. There is a desire to explore options for "special day shift" assignment for fire suppression staff. This would give management the flexibility to reassign firefighters to "day shifts" in order to facilitate internal training as long as sufficient advance notice was extended. Overtime wage savings gained from internal training could be significant and might cover the costs of additional training officers. A long term strategy for the Training Division could include having qualified Associate Instructors available to provide all Fire Department training needs (i.e. remove need for external training).

Due to the fact that time and staff resources are limited in the Training Division it is essential that a process of seconding qualified instructors and forming special teams from the suppression and fire prevention division be pursued through policy changes and negotiations. Ideally, a firefighter on each shift would be assigned the task of delivering specialized training to his/her shift. Proper training and certification for each specialty would be required of the staff delivering the training.

The training division is one of the most important components of a fire department. It is important that members of the department be afforded the opportunity to take part in training projects which may encourage participation in the training division as part of their career goal. Experience in any of the fire divisions provides valuable experience to firefighters as they manage their career.

Members of the department are very active in the provision of station training as well as participation in outside initiatives such as auto-extrication competitions and the firefighter combat challenge. However, there are collective agreement provisions which discourage officers from gaining experience in the training division and then moving back into the officer ranks. For example, it took a long time to fill a vacant training officer posting and few internal applications were made. It is recommended that the department attempt to enhance firefighters' career path choices within the training section through future negotiations.

Paperwork and records management within the Training Division are very time consuming exercises because these are still based on a hard copy system. The lack of an adequate electronic records management system has resulted in the division not being able to develop a process which enables the company officers who deliver the crew training to enter the information into a computer-based system located in the fire stations. Officer input of information into a central training records program and monitoring by Platoon Chiefs would significantly reduce the administrative load of the training officers and would provide additional time to concentrate on other important specialty programs.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act through the Section 21 Committee Guidance Note #7-3(28) and OFM Public Safety Guidelines require that all training programs be documented. Lack of an adequate records management program is a significant liability issue. The fire department has reverted to a paper-based tracking system for training because of recent software problems. A new or updated computer system tailored to fire department training would facilitate documentation tasks by reducing the amount of manual paperwork to be completed.

An additional Training Officer position was recently filled. This will help ensure that the Training Campus is managed in the most productive way and that department training needs are fully met with internal resources. Given the growth to occur as part of the North Oakville development, the number of fire stations and firefighting staff will increase over the course of the next ten years. Though the recently added training officer should prove beneficial, the fire department growth in North Oakville will pose additional strains on the training section. Another training officer should be added in the future when suppression staffing is hired for the new stations in North Oakville.

## 6.5 Policies and Procedures

The training division does not have a formal process to develop and/or update standard operating guidelines, training procedures or policies. This is a risk management, legal and occupational health and safety issue that has been identified in this and other sections of the fire department. It is vital that a process be initiated as soon as practical that categorizes which guidelines and procedures are priorities and sets a schedule for completion. A regular review of guidelines, policies and procedures should be planned once most are brought up to date.

## 6.6 Training Campus

The Training Division operates out of the South Service Road Training Campus. This “centre of excellence” is an up to date complex which not only contains a clean burning live fire tower, driver training area and water rescue pond, but a number of mock ups to provide realistic training to firefighters. The site also provides office space and training rooms.

The facility was developed with the Town of Oakville providing funding for the site and buildings while local industrial partners and Sheridan College provided equipment and material for mock-ups to simulate the various emergency incidents that could occur at their sites or on the various locations throughout the community. The campus can be made available for the partners’ training needs if required.

While there was an understanding at the time of the development of the Training Facility that it would be available for outside use, there have been a number of significant transformations in the community that requires a fundamental review of the core purpose of the facility and associated fee structure for outside use. The fire department should develop a business plan for the maintenance and utilization of the facility by outside agencies.

The burn-training facility is generally closed from November to April, making it challenging to conduct training during this period. The addition of another building on the Training Campus grounds would expand opportunities for year-round training. The building could be a “shell” or industrial-type building that would provide shelter from the elements and sufficient space for non-fire training (e.g. confined space, auto-extrication, rope rescue, etc.). A new facility should also include sufficient lighting to allow for night training. The Fire Department is currently looking at potential locations for this building with the Training Campus and adjacent Town-owned sites. Any potential existing building would have to be checked for structural soundness.

A computer lab was developed in a portable classroom located at the training centre. It was used by fire crews for distance learning and other on-line training opportunities. This expanded the capability of providing firefighter and officer training with less staff. The lab also has networking capabilities which would allow use at computers within other fire stations. Funding should be allocated on an annual basis to ensure that this technology is maintained and kept up to date. Investments should also be made to the training video/DVD library.

Recently, access to the portable classroom for training purposes was restricted when the portable became the temporary Fire Prevention Office. Use of the training computers will be re-established once a permanent location for the Fire Prevention Office is found.

### ***Summary of Recommendations***

1. One additional training officer should be considered once staff hiring for new North Oakville stations begins.
2. A computerized records management software tool should be made available for the training section as part of the overall department records management.
3. Immediate development of a process to ensure that necessary standard operational guidelines, procedures and policies are identified prioritized and completed. This could be lead by the Special Officer recommended under Administration.
4. Provide adequate budget for computer-based distance learning and a training resource library.
5. Prepare a Master Training Plan to identify and ensure the completion of short and long-term training goals. The plan should consider a range of training delivery options including a process to second qualified non-training personnel to complete special projects, partnerships with other municipalities and joint training opportunities with local industrial partners. The plan should also include a business case for the training centre with respect to maintenance, future development and utilization by outside groups.
6. Add an additional building should be sought to provide year-round training.