

*National
Fire
Academy*



*Board of Visitors
Annual Report
2001*



FEMA

United States Fire Administration

Fiscal Year 2001 Meeting Schedule:

October 5-8, 2000

January 24-27, 2001

March 21-24, 2001

June 13-16, 2001

Recent years have been a time of major change for the National Fire Academy (NFA). While this report is intended to cover Fiscal Year 2001 (FY2001), we believe it is important to view the changes with the perspective of the last several years.

One of the most basic concepts implemented and yet the one that has contributed the most to significant change is adoption of a United States Fire Administration (USFA) mission statement and supporting operational objectives. This has given focus and direction to all of the work at NFA and USFA.

All program revisions and proposed new programs are now reviewed with reference to potential contribution to the mission of the agency. In addition, stakeholders have more opportunity to provide input into the decisions regarding which programs are developed and to also have State developed programs “endorsed” by the NFA for use by fire service training agencies across the Nation.

To increase partnering opportunities with the States, NFA introduced the concepts of *Enfranchisement* and *Endorsement* in FY2000. These strategies allow States more opportunities to take advantage of NFA-developed courses and for States to receive NFA endorsement for courses they have developed. NFA has stepped forward to serve as a facilitator for the exchange of course materials between the States.

As recommended by the *Blue Ribbon Panel* and the *America Burning Revisited Report*, there is now more focus on prevention, including both fire prevention and multi-hazard risk reduction.

NFA is also positioned to deal more effectively with emergent issues, such as terrorism and hazardous materials. An integral element of this effort involves establishing new partnerships. Partnerships have been created with other federal agencies that have mandates to address these issues, as well as the State training agencies and fire service organizations.

The Authorization Act of FY2001 required NFA to prepare and submit to the Committee on Science of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the Senate an assessment of the courses of instruction offered by NFA. This completed report identified redundant and out-of-date courses of instruction, examined the current and future impact of information technology on NFA, and provided recommendations for updating the curriculum, instructional methods, and program delivery.

The NFA continues to seek ways to leverage technology in support of training. The demand for training courses exceeds what can be accommodated at the Emmitsburg campus. Additionally, some students find it difficult to travel to the campus for an extended period of time. These issues have been addressed through the use of innovative delivery methodologies. Multi-media self-study courses, simulation exercises on CD-ROM, Internet conferencing, and live satellite broadcasts are now used to provide greater access to NFA course materials.

NFA has also increased its use of technology to provide course materials to students in a more cost-effective manner. Registration materials, and in some instances course materials, are available via the Internet. The use of new technology is also beginning to reduce the number of requests for student manuals.

Based on the recommendations of national fire service leaders including the *Blue Ribbon Panel* and the *Action Plan Working Group*, the senior staff of USFA proposed and implemented a reorganization plan in FY2001. Reporting relationships were redefined so the “working relationships can be improved in terms of empowerment, delegation of authority and accountability” and in the interest of “developing strong organizational linkages between and among the organizational components of the United States Fire Administration.”

As part of the reorganization, USFA introduced and implemented a team concept. Teams were initially created to address the myriad of items in the *Action Plan*. These four teams did an outstanding job of addressing the various issues while team members continued to perform their daily jobs. After meeting with each of the teams in March 2001, the NFA Board of Visitors (BOV) was so impressed with the accomplishments of the teams that it presented awards to each member of the teams at the graduation ceremony on June 15, 2001. This team concept has expanded at the USFA/NFA and now includes program development initiatives.

There have been many improvements on campus over the last few years. The latest capital project has been the development of a state-of-the-art simulation facility. This facility allows for the training of command officers in incident management.

Over the years, the BOV has focused much of its attention and questions on preventive maintenance. In FY2001, there was a problem that involved the viability of the water supply for the campus. While the ability of the community to supply water was a key part of this problem, we need to ensure that the

maintenance plan is being adhered to and that there are contingency plans for emergencies.

While NFA has not suffered any budget cuts over the last several years, new programs have been added that impact directly on the NFA budget. When the NFA gets new programs to administer but gets no new staff or salary and expense (S&E) funding, this has a direct impact on existing NFA programs.

Another important issue discussed by the BOV is the funding of BOV travel. Currently, funds for the BOV travel, although a relatively small amount, come from the NFA S&E funds. This impacts on the travel money available for the staff and provides a built-in conflict since the amount of budgeted funds in this account is insufficient. The BOV believes that funding this activity from Emergency Management Planning and Assistance (EMPA) funds would be more appropriate.

While not within the specific purview of the NFA BOV, we do want to mention the *Fire Grants Program*. The USFA/NFA was able to demonstrate how well its new organization and new approaches – teams, partnerships, responding to emergent issues – worked in implementing the *Fire Grants Program*. USFA was given the unprecedented task of distributing \$100 million in funds through the *Fire Grants Program* in nine months. The USFA was able to quickly assemble a team to create the program, establish guidelines, utilize fire service partners to review the applications and work as a team with the other units of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to award and distribute the grants.

Finally, the Board feels it would be remiss if it did not acknowledge the leadership of Chief Operating Officer Kenneth Burris. Chief Burris did an outstanding job of bringing the staff together to meet the challenges they have faced this past year.

The Board makes the following recommendations regarding the NFA:

Pursue administrative funding in anticipation of the second year of the *Fire Grants Program*.

The USFA/NFA is currently reviewing several options to provide a designated course of study for those individuals preparing to become officers in the fire service. This is a much-needed area and one that needs to be addressed by NFA.

While the NFA has included States and fire service organizations in identifying programs to be developed, this partnership needs to be institutionalized.

The focus on prevention needs to continue and increase.

There needs to be more training and coordination in the area of wildland fires.

The funding for the BOV needs to be converted from S&E funds to EMPA funds and its scope needs to be extended to the USFA BOV. With the changes through the reorganization, the lines between NFA and USFA issues are not as clear as they once were and this change is needed to ensure that all work done at the USFA is coordinated.

The capacity of the NETC campus is capped at 476 students per day. The long-range facilities plan of NFA needs to include the addition of new classroom and dormitory space.

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