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Dear National Fire Academy Student:

Congratulations on being accepted into the U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy's (USFA/NFA's) *Fire Service Course Design--One-Week* (FSCD) class.

During your 6-day class, you will receive the tools to develop a design for a complete course that can be delivered by you or by other instructors in your department. Each unit in FSCD is designed to give you the knowledge and skills needed to develop effective and comprehensive course plans. Each day in class you will receive assignments related to the design of your course. You will have the opportunity to work in various groups with other participants (who will be designing similar courses) to compare assignments and to give each other constructive feedback.

The course requirements are divided into three main categories:

1. Requirements to be completed prior to arriving in class. **Please follow attached instructions for completion and submission of your precourse assignment.**
2. Requirements completed during class.
3. Requirements to be completed at night, as homework assignments.

Each of these requirements must be completed before you receive a certificate of successful course completion. Unlike some NFA classes, or earlier versions of this course, there is **no postcourse project work**. Students who have successfully completed course requirements will get their certificate following the class.

It is important to note that this is a 6-day class, and the first day of class will begin on Sunday at approximately 8 a.m. Orientation will normally commence at 8 a.m.; however, make sure you confirm this when you check in. Subsequent classes will meet daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with graduation occurring on Friday at 4 p.m. Because of this schedule, you will be provided lodging for Friday night. Evening classes may be required.

Increasing numbers of students and instructors are bringing laptop computers to campus. You alone are responsible for the security and maintenance of your equipment. The NFA cannot provide you with computer software, hardware, or technical support, including disks, printers, scanners, etc. There are a limited number of 120-volt AC outlets in the classrooms. A Student Computer Lab is located in Building D and is available for all students to use. It is open daily, with technical support provided in the evenings. This lab uses Windows XP and Office 2003 as the software standard.

Please read the enclosed information carefully regarding each of these requirements. We are looking forward to having you in this course. Should you need additional information related to course content or requirements, please contact Mr. Gerry N. Bassett, Training Programs Curriculum Training Specialist, at (301) 447-1094, or email at gerry.bassett@dhs.gov

Enclosures

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denis Onieal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent
National Fire Academy
U.S. Fire Administration

Fire Service Course Design--One-Week **In-Class Course Project**

Overview

During this 6-day course, you will develop the framework for a complete course (not a lesson) that can be used by you or other instructors in your department. Each unit in *Fire Service Course Design--One-Week* (FSCD) is designed to give you the knowledge and skills needed to design and develop effective courses. Each day in class you will receive assignments related to the design of your course. During the course, you will have the opportunity to share your progress with other students in the class, comparing similar assignments and offering each other constructive feedback.

Please be aware that your in-class course project is a design document with an outline only, containing course objectives, methods, media, content, etc. You will **not** be expected to develop complete lesson plans or course materials for a Student Manual as part of this project. You will be using your design document to prepare the lesson plans and course materials for your own purpose upon returning home.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of this course are for you to:

- apply and use accepted standards, and processing instructional design; and
- develop a design document for your own course.

The information and experiences provided in this course will enable you to meet specific objectives. As a result, you will

- develop a comprehensive instructional design plan for a course needed in your local fire department or organization;
- conduct a precourse needs assessment based on information from your department;
- conduct a job analysis of the tasks involved in the skills to be taught;
- write a Course Goal and develop two Terminal Objectives, and at least two Enabling Objectives for each Terminal Objective;
- outline course content;
- plan appropriate evaluation strategies and identify instruments to measure student progress, course effectiveness, and instructor performance;
- select appropriate and effective instructional methods to facilitate achievement of objectives; and
- select or develop instructional materials and media to support the lessons.

Precourse Requirements

You will need to submit information which you will gather from your local department or organization in order to complete the needs analysis (see attached Precourse Assignment). Follow the directions provided and send your Precourse Assignment Worksheet to the National Fire Academy (NFA). **You will be required to submit this information at least 4 weeks in advance of the class.**

You may want to bring to class an example of a course manual used by your department for your guidance regarding format/policy of your training materials, and to share with other class participants.

The topic for your in-class course project should have a fairly narrow focus in order to be a workable size for the available class time. **It should be a new course not a revision of an existing course.** The course must be larger in scope than a lesson or unit. At the NFA, you will be working on a Course Goal, two Terminal Objectives and two Enabling Objectives supporting the Terminal Objective (from your selected course topic).

FSCD-One-Week is designed so that you will not need a computer to complete the worksheets. You will be given a CD with the Course Activities on it. If you bring your own laptop computer, you can complete your assignments on the disk, print them off, and turn them in. (If you bring your own personal laptop computer, the NFA cannot assume responsibility for protecting and maintaining your personal computer.) A computer lab is available on campus for your use if you do not bring a computer.

You also may want to bring any materials that refer to the content of your topic or the skills required by the target audience. The Learning Resource Center (LRC) on campus is also a good resource for fire, burn, and injury materials. The LRC now has an online service, which you can use at home to see what resources exist for your topic. The LRC online search can be found on the USFA home page at the following Internet address: <http://www.lrc.fema.gov> Click on "Learning Resource Center," found on the USFA home page, to locate the online search.

In-Class Requirements

During class, you will be able to complete an overall plan for the design of your course. You will show the group your written work, discuss how and why you made the decisions you did, and critique each other's work. At each step along the way, you will obtain instructor feedback and approval. Time for these activities is built into the schedule. Your instructors will provide you with a detailed list of requirements for each step in the project. If you need additional help, evening sessions can be scheduled with your instructors. **You will receive more complete details in class.**

PRECOURSE ASSIGNMENT

I.

Please bring to class materials that may support the content and skills taught in your selected project. During the course, you will be examining these materials. You also will be able to obtain research materials from the Learning Resource Center (LRC) on campus.

II.

Your precourse assignment is to define a training need from which you could begin to design a course. The training need must be acceptable to you and your department or organization. You must submit the training need you have identified and the data that support your training decision to the National Fire Academy (NFA) (see enclosed form). This will enable the NFA to determine if you have understood the nature of needs assessment data collection. Your training need also will give the NFA the flexibility to pregroup students by interest groups.

In order to attend this course, you must submit this Precourse Assignment to the NFA **at least 1 month before the class**. NFA staff will read your data. If you are **not** on track, you will be contacted by the Training Specialist. The Academy will not contact students whose work is acceptable. This precourse assignment will be given back to you for use in class.

The needs assessment is the foundation from which all other work on your course design document is based. An insufficient training need usually causes problems for course developers. If you have been asked to make changes in your precourse assignment, you must complete them before coming to class.

This assignment may require up to 1 day of your time in order for you to collect all the information you need to write your needs assessment.

III.

Complete the Precourse Assignment Worksheet and send it to the address at the bottom of the sheet at least 1 month before your course is scheduled to begin.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the needs assessment is to identify a training need. Training is something one undertakes to close a gap between performance as it is and as one would like it to be. This sounds straightforward and simple. However, many of the needs defined as training needs actually can be solved by means other than training. Sometimes changes in equipment, personnel policies, or the environment--rather than training--can improve performance.

When you have addressed the questions below successfully, the basis of your needs assessment will be complete.

Use the following checklist only as a guide to complete your Precourse Assignment Worksheet.

1. Have I interviewed my superiors to determine our most pressing training needs?
2. Have I defined the audience for which this training will be developed; i.e.,
 - target audience, by title;
 - educational level;
 - area of interest; e.g., haz mat, suppression, arson, public education, etc.;
 - previous knowledge of the subject; and
 - experience in subject area.
3. Have I interviewed members of the target audience for which I might be developing the training to see if such training is needed?
4. Am I certain that the needs I have identified are actually training needs, or can they be better met by:
 - changes in the work environment;
 - changes in the political climate; and
 - changes in personnel policies.

NOTE: It is very important that the need you identify be a training need. If you have doubts, check with your superiors and/or the NFA.

5. Do I have facts and figures to support the need for developing this course, such as:
 - Have I looked at how personnel actually perform the tasks now?
 - Have I identified what needs to be improved, i.e., the time it takes to complete a task, response time, greater accuracy, etc.?
 - If knowledge needs to be improved, have I given tests or looked at test results to see what gaps exist in people's understanding of the subject?
 - Have I looked at safety records (if our department keeps them), etc., to see if they support the need for training?
 - Have I examined changes in equipment, procedures, or departmental mission that have created new training needs?
6. Have I included all supporting documentation of the need for this course?

7. Have I checked the organization's policies and procedures regarding the topics for which I plan to develop training?
8. Do I have a clear idea of the tasks that require training?

NOTE: This is only a checklist guide. You should determine what information is relevant to you and what is most important to your department. If you complete all of these, your needs assessment should be very strong, and the job of developing a good design document should be easier.

Do not do any further work on your project and try not to have any mindset about the course content, sequence, media, etc. You will have an opportunity to make decisions about your course at each step throughout the class.

