

Fiscal Year 2014 Meeting Schedule

December 17-18, 2013

April 17, 2014

September 18-19, 2014

The U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) Board of Visitors (BOV) for the National Fire Academy (NFA) reviewed the Academy in three areas of responsibility and submits the following report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014.

“An examination of Academy programs to determine whether these programs further the basic missions which are approved by the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).”

The NFA continues to be a mission-critical organizational unit within Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA in supporting FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration's mission to support citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards. The NFA serves the whole community in developing core capabilities and has a proven track record of performance in fulfilling this mission.

The traditional role of NFA has expanded over the years in response to changing DHS/FEMA priorities and legislation. The continued integration of emergency medical services (EMS) curriculum in existing courses, and the development of new EMS courses and programs, remains an area of focus; an example includes the 2014 Executive Fire Officer Program Symposium which was dedicated to fire department implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Other courses have been developed and updated to address new challenges in the interest of ensuring the uniformity of the course content.

The NFA continues to play a vital role in working with national, state, local, tribal, and territorial fire and EMS stakeholder groups by soliciting their input with respect to course development and delivery. This single point of contact with numerous organizational stakeholders has improved customer service with respect to the new challenges faced by these stakeholders. NFA also supports other federal agencies, including: Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration; Department of Justice/

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Department of Interior/Bureau of Land Management; and Department of Homeland Security/U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

As with any other academic institution, and despite budget constraints, the BOV serves as the conduit for the receipt of official stakeholder input. To facilitate this process, the BOV convened the following subcommittees in 2014:

- ***Professional Development***

Through a collaborative effort between the Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE) and the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) programs, and the continuing work of the Professional Development subcommittee, the BOV implemented a new business model for a USFA Professional Development Initiative in 2014. This initiative promotes professional development through USFA's three major networks — TRADE (training), Prevention Advocacy Resources and Data Exchange (PARADE/prevention), and FESHE (higher education).

Web-enabled meetings between FESHE and TRADE leadership, along with academic institutions in each region, are being conducted quarterly. FESHE has attracted the interest of numerous states and large municipal fire departments through synergy with the TRADE program. The FESHE Recognition and Certification Program has been implemented in 27 states representing 77 bachelor and associate degree programs.

The first unified Professional Development Initiative Conference was held in June 2014. In conjunction with the TRADE and FESHE leadership, the BOV will continue to monitor the refinement of this conference.

- ***Managing Officer Program***

Building on the successful Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) model, in December 2013 the BOV recommended the development of a new Managing Officer (MO) program to serve mid-level managers in fire and emergency services organizations, including EMS. The

first cohort will assemble on campus in FY 2015. Two subcommittees were formed to recommend admissions policies and curriculum content. Those subcommittees provided their recommendations to the U.S. Fire Administrator on April 25, 2014, and the application process is underway.

- Managing Officer Program Admissions

The Admissions subcommittee met several times via teleconference and had participation from a wide variety of interest groups, reinforcing the idea that the candidates for the MO program should have a strong background as supervising officers, supported by education, training, and experience. The subcommittee made the following recommendations:

Education: Recommended that candidates should have earned an associate degree (or 60 credit hours towards a bachelor degree) from a nationally or regionally accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition, only 25 percent of those credit hours earned should be from non-traditional credits, and these non-traditional credits should come through a structured learning environment.

Training: Recommended that candidates should have a strong record of attending training at the local, regional, and state levels. Their training should have exposed them to more than just local requirements, such as regional and state training with responders from other jurisdictions.

Experience: Recommended that candidates have experience as a supervising officer (fire or EMS), which could include equivalent time as an “acting officer.” The fire/EMS chief of department should verify this experience through their signature on the NFA application.

Capstone Project: The subcommittee recommended that the “capstone project” be an applied project that benefits the fire/EMS agency, or the community it serves. In particular, the candidate’s chief of department or immediate supervisor should help vet the project prior to final approval. The scope of the project should be appropriate to the candidate’s duties/responsibilities in their organization, and be appropriate to the MO program.

- *Managing Officer Program Curriculum*

The Curriculum subcommittee met several times via teleconference and had participation from a wide variety of interest groups. The goal of the subcommittee was to determine the appropriate 6-day on-campus, 2-day off-campus, and online curriculum to be included as part of the MO program. The subcommittee made the following curriculum recommendations, with the understanding that the Academy may need to change or alter course titles as appropriate:

NFA On-Campus Courses (four 6-day)

- ✓ 21st Century Training for Fire/EMS Training Officers (R0354)
- ✓ Conducting Local Risk Reduction for Company Officers (R0186)
- ✓ Safety Program Operations (R0154)
- ✓ Technology for Emergency Services (R0153)
- ✓ Cultural Competence in Risk Reduction (R0394) — added based on discussions during the April 17 meeting

It was recommended that R0186 and R0394 courses be blended, with a concentration on ethics and cultural competency as the courses are revised.

NFA Off-Campus Courses (four 2-day)

- ✓ Leadership I for Fire and EMS (F/W0803)
- ✓ Leadership II for Fire and EMS (F/W0804)
- ✓ Leadership III for Fire and EMS (F/W0805)
- ✓ Shaping the Future (F/W0602)

NFA Online Courses (online)

- ✓ Introduction to Emergency Response to Terrorism (Q0890)

NFA Overview

Resident classes are reserved for those requiring: high level discussion/interaction; specialized simulation or modeling capabilities; close supervision and counsel; or the introduction of new subject areas. NFA continues to leverage its resources through delivery of regional and state courses and a growing number of distance education course offerings through the Internet. NFA Online continues to be the NFA's fastest growing training program with more than 37,000 completions in FY 2014.

In FY 2014, the NFA pilot tested a new blended learning arson detection course which allows students to complete 8 hours of classwork online before attending a conventional 2-day class. Once finalized, this new course will be made available for delivery by State Fire Training Agencies.

The NFA staff continues to pursue new applications for technology in course delivery, administration, and information dissemination. The NFA enhanced its automated course call process to provide State Fire Training Agencies with a more manageable window to forecast their training needs and provide more course options. This new program automates the scheduling and provides NFA staff with the tools to manage their course load demand. The NFA added courses to the materials download feature, giving State Fire Training Agencies and contract instructors direct access to NFA 2-day course materials. This provides users with real-time access to up-to-date NFA course material.

The NFA introduced the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) downloadable student manuals in many of its FY 2013 resident classes. The 26 pilot tests were extremely successful with a 75 percent rate of participation and high student appreciation. In FY 2014, the National Fire Academy realized a savings of more than \$30,000 in printing costs by implementing BYOD in 30 percent of resident classes. Continued testing and implementation is scheduled with 28 additional courses to be BYOD in FY 2015.

The BOV supports the NFA's use of technology to expand its reach and believes continued progress in this area will be essential to address future challenges and opportunities. In education, however, one size does not fit all. There are appropriate uses for online training, off-campus classroom based training, and resident training. The NFA takes great effort to assure that finite resources are used effectively and efficiently by carefully assessing the

student population, desired outcomes, and performance evaluation before a delivery method is chosen. Only 6 percent of the students who took NFA courses in FY 2014 actually attended a course on campus. The remaining 94 percent took courses in classrooms at the state and local level, and online.

The EFOP continues to play a crucial role in the preparation of the next generation of fire and emergency services leaders. The 26th Annual EFOP Symposium was held September 4-6, 2014, and included 185 participants. The use of online tools for EFOP pre-course activities is still expanding. Demand continues to exceed capacity and available resources for this signature program.

The NFA Internship Program continued bringing participants from colleges and universities to the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) campus. The BOV believes this program is extremely useful for developing citizens' knowledge about the fire and emergency services, with added potential to attract future leaders from the whole community.

The NFA awards Continuing Education Units credit for all NFA courses through the International Association of Continuing Education and Training. This remains beneficial to a growing number of NFA students who are required to meet continuing education requirements for certification.

The American Council on Education (ACE) conducted its annual review of 28 NFA courses (10 existing and 18 new). Twenty-eight courses were recommended for credit without conditions. The ACE review process provides an independent and objective third-party assessment of the NFA's program quality, as well as a tangible benefit for students who can use the credits to pursue higher education through other academic institutions.

NFA continued a systematic study of resident courses with students and their supervisors to determine long-term training effectiveness. During FY 2014, 410 students and 315 supervisors responded. As with previous years' responses, students indicated they were able to transfer the training skills and learning to their jobs, and supervisors reported improved performance as follows:

| Long-Term Evaluation Reporting Elements | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Students reporting they were able to apply NFA training at home | 95.5% | 97.2% | 96.6% |
| Students reporting NFA training improved their job performance | 97.1% | 96.7% | 95.1% |
| Students reporting they shared NFA training with their peers | 96.9% | 98.3% | 97.9% |
| Students reporting they conducted formal courses with NFA material | 24.6% | 34.9% | 26.7% |
| Students reporting they established new policies and procedures based on NFA training | 65.6% | 74.9% | 73.5% |
| Supervisors reporting improved performance from NFA training | 88.6% | 89.6% | 87.2% |
| Supervisors reporting improved departmental performance | 88.8% | 89.4% | 87.9% |
| Supervisors who say they will recommend NFA training to others | 97.0% | 97.3% | 95.2% |
| Supervisors reporting NFA benefits outweigh costs | 92.1% | 93.9% | 92.9% |

Note: Data reported was derived from NFA Long-Term Evaluation Forms sent to both students and their supervisors 4–6 months after the NFA training class ended.

“An examination of the physical plant of the Academy to determine the adequacy of the Academy facilities.”

The size, age, and scope of the NETC campus facility continues to offer both challenges and opportunities. On behalf of students and other stakeholders, the BOV appreciates the tremendous support FEMA has provided to address capital improvement and maintenance issues on campus. An example of the benefits of this support is the recent recognition from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with the Sustainable Practice Award for high performance and sustainable buildings.

While much progress has been made, particularly relating to Americans with Disability Act compliance and energy efficiency, deferred maintenance continues to be a crucial issue. Currently, there remains about \$15 million in deferred maintenance. The BOV recommends that FEMA establish an annual \$5 million deferred maintenance budget as suggested by the Office of Management and Budget. The BOV commends FEMA and NETC staff in their ongoing efforts to upgrade and maintain the physical infrastructure.

Although campus facilities including the Learning Resource Center and the Publications office continue providing essential support for the work of the NFA, there remains a long documented need to expand the NETC facilities to accommodate the addition of 300 students per class cycle. While the NETC maintains one of the highest utilization rates in DHS, additional classroom, lodging and support space will be required for NFA to continue fully supporting the broader DHS/FEMA mission.

Enhancements in technology are providing instructors with the necessary tools to use contemporary adult learning principles and practices. Computer support for students has been provided in the form of a newly designed classroom, along with Internet access and Wi-Fi connections in dormitory rooms and classrooms. FEMA Information Technology is helping NFA provide improved Wi-Fi access which is expected to receive a positive response from students and visitors. Appropriate funding will be needed to ensure the adequacy of the campus information technology infrastructure to support the growing number of courses that are delivered online.

“An examination of the funding levels for Academy programs”

The USFA and NFA continue to demonstrate commendable stewardship with respect to the limited resources they are allocated, particularly in these tight fiscal times. Still, by providing the critical foundation for our Nation’s fire and emergency services providers, it remains imperative that NFA receive necessary funding in accordance with its mission and the expected role it plays within DHS/FEMA.

NFA may be unique in the federal government because its specific mission is to train state, local, tribal, and territorial first responders and their leaders, not primarily federal employees. NFA resident courses are those most closely related to the DHS/FEMA mission and development of core capabilities: community risk reduction; National Incident Management System (NIMS) and large regional response to emergencies; and executive leadership / management skills necessary to implement community based preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts. A reduction in resident classes at the NFA will result in a degradation of incident management capabilities, community risk reduction, hazardous materials response, and arson detection and prosecution.

While there is a cost to both on- and off-campus training, it's important to recognize that every emergency, every disaster starts locally. To the extent that a community has a well-trained, well-lead cadre of first responders, that emergency stays local. If it is poorly handled, or if it is so large that the local forces are overwhelmed, it may trigger a state and federal response. It is in the interest of both DHS and FEMA to try to keep local emergencies local; there were 23,000,000 local emergencies reported last year and only 75 Presidentially-declared disasters.

While training may have a cost, the lack of training is even more expensive. In calendar year 2013, 106 firefighters died in the line of duty. Initial reports suggest that some of these deaths could have been averted through training. Above all else, the National Fire Academy was created to prevent those tragedies.

In closing, throughout 2014, visionary leadership was provided by the U.S. Fire Administrator Ernest Mitchell and Deputy Fire Administrator Glenn Gaines. The dedicated and passionate staff and leadership of NFA and the other USFA units support this work. Superintendent Denis Onieal, Deputy Superintendents Kirby Kiefer and Robert Neale lead this talented staff. Management, Operations and Support Services Director Al Fluman and his staff deserve much credit for the NETC facility.

Fiscal Year 2014 Board of Visitors

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