

**Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
Fiscal Year 2015
Meeting Schedule**

May 7, 2015
September 22-23, 2015

The U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy (Board) reviewed the National Fire Academy (Academy) in three areas of responsibility and submits the following report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015.

“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 Academy continues to be a mission-critical organizational unit within Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA in supporting FEMA's USFA 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 Academy serves the whole community in developing core capabilities and has a proven track record of performance in fulfilling this mission.

The Academy has established two Board subcommittees for FY 2016. The first subcommittee will further define the “whole community”, and develop a strategy or plan that addresses the sharing of information and programmatic initiatives and/or best practices to encourage “whole community” preparedness, prevention and mitigation planning in accordance with the USFA Action Plan for 2016-2018. Since the current version of the National Fire Incident Reporting System is fifteen years old, a second subcommittee was established to identify needs for updates in both the system and training. This effort will help support fire departments nationwide as they harness the power of advanced data analytics for their communities.

The traditional role of Academy has expanded over the years in response to changing DHS/FEMA priorities and legislation. The continued integration of emergency medical services (EMS) curriculum includes the conversion of existing content to online delivery.

The Academy 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. The Academy 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. The Academy supports the work of the Department of Labor, Department of Justice and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to analyze and support work place diversity in the fire, EMS, and emergency service communities.

The Board adopted a new business model for the USFA Professional Development Initiative. The Board continues to support this initiative that promotes professional development through USFA’s three major networks – Training Resources and Data Exchange (TRADE/training), Prevention Advocacy Resources and Data Exchange (PARADE/prevention), and Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE/higher education). The second unified Professional Development Symposium was held in June 2015. In conjunction with the TRADE, PARADE, and FESHE leadership, the BOARD will continue to monitor the refinement of this symposium.

Building on the successful Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) model, in December 2013, the Board 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 assembled on campus in April 2015. With an initial goal of 100 students, the Academy received 300 applicants, of which 200 were selected. This overwhelming response has prompted the Academy to schedule quarterly offerings. The program intent is to enhance the professional competencies of supervising officers.

Academy 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. The Academy continues to leverage its resources through delivery of regional and state courses and a growing number of distance education course offerings through the Internet. The Academy has experienced a 28% increase in students served from FY14 to FY15. The following chart reflects the student enrollments in each of the program areas:

	2014	2015	Increase
On-campus Code: R/W	4,832	5,190	7%
ACADEMY Sponsored Off-campus Code: F/N	3,845	6,885	79%
State Sponsored Code: O	17,224	24,430	46%
State/Approved Code: Y	6,116	9,527	56%
Colleges/Universities Code: C	1,110	2,258	103%
On-line Code: Q	25,611	26,953	5%
Total:	58,738	75,243	28% (overall)

The Academy staff continues to pursue new applications for technology in course delivery, administration, and information dissemination. The Academy's automated course call process to State Fire Training Agencies contributed to the higher student enrollments in Academy-sponsored off-campus deliveries. The Academy continues to add courses to the materials download feature, giving State Fire Training Agencies and contract instructors' direct access to Academy 2-day and 6-day course materials. This provides users with real-time access to up-to-date Academy course material.

The Academy continues the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program for downloading student manuals for resident courses. In FY 2015, the Academy realized a savings of more than \$60,000 in printing costs, which was an increase of 100% over the previous fiscal year. Of the 79 resident courses, the BYOD program is currently being used in 44 resident courses. Ten additional courses have been identified for conversion in FY 2016. The Board recommends a goal of 100% BYOD conversion. The Board supports the Academy'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 Academy 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.

The EFOP continues to play a crucial role in the preparation of the next generation of fire and emergency services leaders. The 27th Annual EFOP Graduate Symposium was held September 10-12, 2015, and included 207 participants. The focus of the 2015 EFOP Graduate Symposium was "big data" and its impact on and decision making in fire service organizations.

The Academy Internship Program continued bringing participants from colleges and universities to the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) campus. The Board 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 Academy awards Continuing Education Units credit for all Academy courses through the International Association of Continuing Education and Training. This remains beneficial to a growing number of Academy students who are required to meet continuing education requirements for certification.

The American Council on Education (ACE) will conduct its annual review of 30 Academy courses (20 existing and 10 new) later this year. The ACE review process provides an independent and objective third-party assessment of the Academy's program quality, as well as a tangible benefit for students who can use the credits to pursue higher education through other academic institutions.

The Academy continued a systematic study of resident courses with students and their supervisors to determine long-term training effectiveness. During FY 2015, 448 students

and 401 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	2015
Students reporting they were able to apply Academy training at home	95.5%	97.2%	96.6%	95.9%
Students reporting Academy training improved their job performance	97.1%	96.7%	95.1%	96.2%
Students reporting they shared Academy training with their peers	96.9%	98.3%	97.9%	97.9%
Students reporting they conducted formal courses with Academy material	24.6%	34.9%	26.7%	27.4%
Students reporting they established new policies and procedures based on Academy training	65.6%	74.9%	73.5%	84.4%
Supervisors reporting improved performance from Academy training	88.6%	89.6%	87.2%	90.5%
Supervisors reporting improved departmental performance	88.8%	89.4%	87.9%	88.5%
Supervisors who say they will recommend Academy training to others	97.0%	97.3%	95.2%	97.2%
Supervisors reporting Academy benefits outweigh costs	92.1%	93.9%	92.9%	92.2%

Note: Data reported was derived from Academy Long-Term Evaluation Forms sent to both students and their supervisors 4–6 months after the Academy 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 Board appreciates the tremendous support FEMA has provided to address capital improvement and maintenance issues on campus.

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 Board recommends that FEMA establish an annual \$5 million deferred maintenance budget as suggested by the Office of Management and Budget. The Board commends FEMA and NETC staff in their ongoing efforts to upgrade and maintain the physical infrastructure.

Although campus facilities including the Library (formerly the Learning Resource Center) and the Publications office continues to provide essential support for the

Academy, 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 the Academy 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. However, students and Board members experience significant issues with internet connectivity and access. As an example, the FEMA firewall prevents access to many fire-based sites necessary for research. The Board recommends appropriate funding to improve internet access on campus and 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 the Academy 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, EMS, and emergency service providers, it remains imperative that Academy receive necessary funding in accordance with its mission and the expected role it plays within DHS/FEMA.

Academy is 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. Academy 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 Academy would 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-campus 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 23,419,923 local emergencies reported to NFIRS last year and only 44 Presidentially-declared disasters reported in 2015 per FEMA website – <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/grid/year>.

While training may have a cost, the lack of training is even more expensive. According to USFA data, in calendar year 2014 there were 91 on-duty firefighter fatalities. While specific data do not exist, the National Fire Protection Association estimated there were

65,880 firefighter injuries in calendar year 2013. Initial reports suggest that some of these deaths and injuries could have been averted through training. Above all else, the Academy was created to prevent those tragedies. The Board recommends an emphasis in firefighter health and safety as a part of its training mission.

In closing, throughout 2015, visionary leadership was provided by the U.S. Fire Administrator Ernest Mitchell and the late Deputy Fire Administrator Glenn Gaines. The Board wishes to recognize the late Deputy Fire Administrator Glenn Gaines' lasting contributions to the Academy and the Nation's fire service. The dedicated and passionate staff and leadership of the Academy and the other USFA units support this work. Superintendent Denis Onieal and Deputy Superintendents Kirby Kiefer and Robert Neale led this talented staff. Management, Operations and Support Services Director Al Fluman and his staff deserve much credit for the NETC facility.

Fiscal Year 2015 Board of Visitors

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