



Field Training Skills

By Christopher Huston

Part of using the Training Division concept is utilizing Field Training Officers, Subject Matter Experts and On the Job Trainers. (Officer is not exclusive to Fire Officer.) These individuals enhance the training program by providing oversight in the field and reduce the Instructor-Student ratio. Each brings personal knowledge, skills and attitudes to increase the long term effect of the training event.

Field Training Officer (FTO) – The FTO is well versed in the Training Divisions mission, goals and expectations. A pool of several members is sufficient to have for utilization during training. A FTO can help on the training ground when conducting large hands on evolutions. More importantly, a FTO conducts training at the firehouse. These include company based drills with members of the engine, truck, rescue and medic. The Company Officer (CO) may or may not be a FTO. Regardless of having the designation, the CO can conduct training when needed. The formal FTO has the prerequisite knowledge of the Training Divisions objectives.

Subject Matter Experts (SME) – A SME is someone who has extensive knowledge in a particular area. For example a member of the truck company has an in-depth understanding of through the lock forcible entry. A Firefighter who is a Landscaper knows chain saws, inside and out. Utilize these internal resources whenever possible. For the Volunteer/Paid on Call Training Division, these members bring further depth to training. Possibly even create feelings of training program ownership. Although some may not feel comfortable with certain aspects such as speaking, writing or demonstrating, they can still be a wealth of knowledge for you, the instructor.

Traits to look for in FTO/SME.

So much of our profession is On the Job training. Develop strong habits of ‘sharing nuggets’ during/after emergency operations. Experienced members can connect the dots by simply saying, “The skill we performed in training, see that here? That is why we train on it.” Most members will seize those moments to share lessons. Yet, we want to ensure it takes place as much as possible.

When choosing a Field Training Officer or other type of On the Job Trainer, consider the following:

- ✿ They are competent in basic and intermediate skills.
- ✿ Exhibit a willingness to share information.
- ✿ Displays professionalism.
- ✿ Communicates clearly with others.
- ✿ Demonstrates clearly for others.
- ✿ Personal traits include sound judgment, integrity and honesty.
- ✿ Able to observe and critique while offering ways to improve.
- ✿ Can organize a training session in advance and accountable for meeting deadlines.
- ✿ Understands and reinforces Training Division expectations.

Although not a complete list, these traits and personal qualities ensure high standards of training are maintained during in-formal sessions. Even if you need an extra hand for a particular session, this list can help you choose from your department who you can count on. Including others in the big picture of training not only entices a team effort, but will start the next generation of Training Officers down the road of success.