



Bringing important information to emergency service organizations

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We welcome comments, suggestions and questions from our readers.

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Firefighter Rehab!

On the afternoon of April 8, 2006, a firefighter attending a live fire training exercise at the Comox Fire Training Centre in British Columbia, Canada suffered a heart attack as a result of heat stroke and dehydration. He collapsed during a rest break while wearing full personal protective equipment. He immediately received first aid (including oxygen and AED) and was taken to a hospital less than a kilometer away, where he DIED. This firefighter was fifty-two years old, in very good physical shape, and had recently been given a clean bill of health from his doctor. He had only participated in exterior fire attack operations (vehicles, etc.) before he collapsed. He had not participated in any interior structure fire attacks, which are typically hotter than exterior fire attacks.

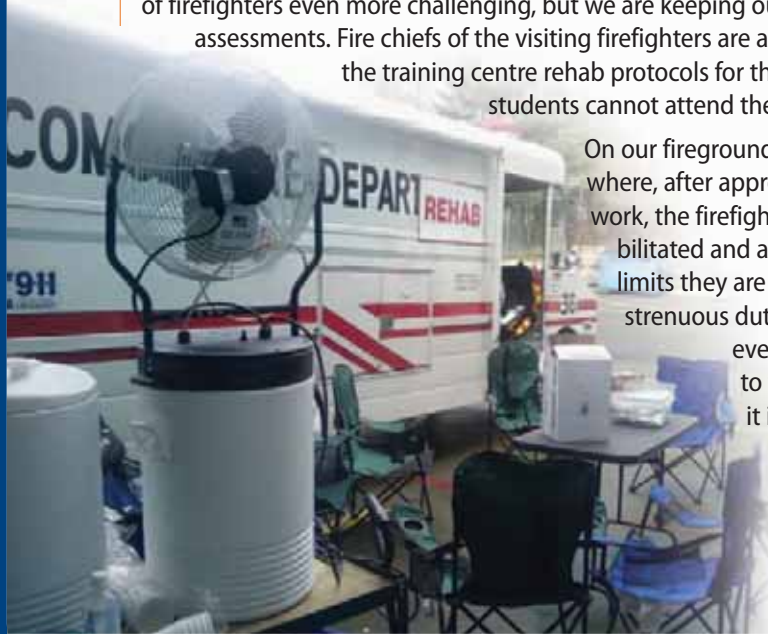
For Comox Fire Rescue and its Training Centre this event changed everything.

Chief Gord Schreiner explains:

In the past, we treated our firefighters as most other fire departments did. We worked them hard and gave them a water break every once in a while. This unfortunate death changed all that for us. We now have a very formal Firefighter Rehab policy and procedure.

In our training centre, students are assessed before they start training, and if they don't meet some very strict medical protocols they are not allowed to participate in the training. We have found that about one in ten students do not meet the accepted medical standards we have put in place. During their training day, the students are constantly re-assessed, and if they fall outside of acceptable limits, their training ends at that time for the day. This makes training and certification of firefighters even more challenging, but we are keeping our students much safer by doing these assessments. Fire chiefs of the visiting firefighters are asked to sign a form agreeing to follow the training centre rehab protocols for their students. If they don't sign, their students cannot attend the training centre.

On our firegrounds, we have adopted a similar approach where, after approximately thirty minutes of strenuous work, the firefighters are sent to a rehab area to be rehabilitated and assessed. If they fall outside of acceptable limits they are not allowed to continue with their strenuous duties. For us, rehab is now a FUNCTION of every emergency and training event. Due to the nature of our emergency business it is not practical to assess a firefighter before each incident, so we do monthly assessments.



Continued on page 2

Firefighter Rehab!

Continued from cover

Earlier this year, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), working in partnership with the International Association of Fire Fighters, studied critical health and safety issues and updated the 1992 USFA document, **Emergency Incident Rehabilitation**. This project also examined areas of emergency incident rehabilitation not discussed in the original manual.

The new **Emergency Incident Rehabilitation** manual covers critical related topics, including operational issues, human physiology, weather issues, and technology. The report addresses ways to better protect firefighters and other emergency responders through the use of proper protective clothing and improved tactical procedures.

For more information, and to download the report, please visit <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/research/safety/incident.shtm>.



Comox Fire Rescue researched what others were doing and devised a rehab program that would work for them. The program incorporates basics like hydration and food and includes medical monitoring of each firefighter's pulse, blood pressure, temperature, and oxygen and carbon monoxide saturations. They added equipment, including misting fans, rehab chairs, automatic blood pressure cuffs, CO/Ox meters, coolers, towels and more drinks and food on the fire apparatus.

Chief Schreiner says, "Our firefighters are our number one assets; we need to do all we can to ensure they are safe and come home from every incident or training session." A rehab program can be very simple or more complex, depending on your needs. One simple step is to ensure firefighters have fluids in the cab of the fire apparatus so they can hydrate on the way to an incident instead of during or after.

Shreiner adds, "This simple little step can greatly assist your firefighters in doing their jobs more safely, because we don't know when the next incident will happen or when our firefighters last had some fluids." According to Shreiner, a more complete program should include medical monitoring during the incidents and at all training sessions. This is a function the Comox Fire Department has taken on at the operational level.

"Many fire departments use their local EMS service to provide this function," says Shreiner, "but we wanted to take our program to the next level.

Because we are a small community we cannot always get EMS to attend our incidents, and if we do, they might [have to] leave with a patient from the incident, leave with a firefighter needing advanced medical attention, or [report] to another incident. They may leave while we are doing mop-up or salvage. We need to ensure that Rehab is always there meeting the needs of our firefighters. So we include this very important function with our staging area and staging management. It's run by firefighters, for firefighters. That way we control it; however, we still request

EMS to stand by in case a firefighter needs to go for more advanced treatment."

Chief Schreiner notes that this, of course, takes additional resources, which may be met by using mutual aid or older members who may no longer be fit enough to provide suppression duties. "I look at it a lot like RIT [Rapid Intervention Team]," Schreiner comments. "When RIT started we wondered how we would manage it; now we wonder how we ever did without it. Rehab is much the same. If you aren't doing it yet, you will be soon."

At the Comox Fire Training Centre an additional staff person has been assigned specifically to the function of firefighter rehab. While this has increased the operating costs of the training centre, Schreiner feels it is very well worth the cost. It has also added a whole new focus to firefighter health and wellness. Schreiner observes, "I have seen some of my firefighters change their diet and increase their fitness because they want to ensure they can pass the rehab protocols."

Rehab is so important that the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) has recently included it as a recommended standard (NFPA 1584) for all fire departments. Schreiner points out that firefighting is an extremely challenging job. Firefighters need to be in very good physical shape to perform their duties. Comparing a firefighter to an elite athlete is a good evaluation. Athletes train a lot, practice their skills, stretch their bodies, and eat and drink properly, especially right before an event. A firefighter needs to do as much of this as he or she can, knowing that it is almost impossible to have just the right foods, fluids and stretching right before an incident.

Captain Corey Brooks of Comox Fire Rescue recently delivered three workshops on Firefighter Rehab to over 150 fire chiefs at the annual convention of the Fire Chiefs Association of British Columbia. Brooks says, "I was very impressed and pleased to see so many fire departments interested in this program. It shows that our industry is moving in the right direction and that we can all learn from each other. The fire service has largely been built on sharing and exchanging ideas, and we are happy to share any and all of the rehab [materials] that we have put together." 🌟

For more information, please contact Fire Chief Gord Schreiner at firehall@comox.ca.

Road to Recovery: Data Backup & Recovery Planning

(PART 2 of 2)

David R. Pittman, CNE, Vice-President, Technical Services, Glatfelter Insurance Group

While backing up data is critical, the recovery of data is equally important. Many end users want to be able to restore data periodically. Depending on the strategy that is employed, companies can restore data from the date of inception. While this is not a typical scenario, it can be done. Most organizations look to recover data at a user level for approximately one year from the date of change.

Numerous other methods of data protection exist for older files, e-mail systems and other technology sources. Older files can be protected utilizing a write once, read many (WORM), or least cost disk. These technologies reduce the cost of maintaining the data. E-mail systems can be archived to reduce the overhead on the corporate e-mail system and provide additional storage capacity for the local e-mail server.

In addition to backing up your data, take precautions when deciding where to store your tapes. Some companies contract third-party vendors to store tapes off-site. Others have alternate sites where they ship their tapes in case of disaster. Smaller end-users have individuals take the tapes home periodically in the event of a fire. Organizations must deploy some strategy to protect their tapes from destruction.

The last component of data protection is testing the recovery process. Many end users fail in their data backup and recovery procedures because they do not have a plan to periodically check their backup systems. To effectively test a solution, run a recovery of a file or system throughout the year.

While there are several solutions, processes, and procedures for backing up and recovering data, not one solution will fit every organization. Care must be taken when determining the length of time necessary to retain the data, which may depend on a corporate records retention strategy. After taking all policies into account, your organization can determine the most appropriate method to effectively reduce the risk and exposure of losing an organization's most valuable technological asset—data. 🌀

Six Steps to Protect Your Data

1. Be proactive.
2. Run backup daily.
3. Back up older files on WORM disks.
4. Archive e-mail systems.
5. Design an off-site storage system for backed up data.
6. Check your backup system periodically.



Together We Can...The Firefighter Cancer Support Network

Firefighters Face Increased Risk for Certain Cancers

University of Cincinnati (UC) environmental health researchers have determined that firefighters are significantly more likely to develop different types of cancer than workers in other fields.

(Visit <http://fcsn.net/index.cfm?Section=1&pagenum=183&titles=0>)



In 2003, Mike Dubron, a 17-year firefighter/paramedic with the Los Angeles County Fire Department, found himself with a horrifying challenge—he was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. After his battle with cancer (he is now

five years cancer-free), Mike decided to develop a support program that he felt was long overdue in the fire service, and started the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN).

The objective of the FCSN is to provide timely assistance to all fire service members and their families in the event of cancer diagnosis. The network provides mentoring from individuals who have personal experience with many types of cancers. FCSN also raises awareness among fire

TOGETHER WE CAN
offer comfort, strength and hope through firefighters' own experiences in dealing with the devastating effects of cancer.

TOGETHER WE CAN
educate fire department members regarding the importance of cancer screenings and early detection.

TOGETHER WE CAN
provide an awareness that cancer does not have to be dealt with alone.

TOGETHER WE CAN
make a difference.

service members and their families about the importance of cancer prevention and screening by coordinating educational opportunities with various health programs.

FCSN does not provide legal or medical advice, but can give assistance and guidance for other support options such as behavioral health services, fire service organizations, fire service chaplains, and other cancer support programs. The network collaborates with the American Cancer Society and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. FCSN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit operation, whose ability to operate is made possible solely by generous donations. The

website, www.firefightercancersupport.org, features information, testimonials, memorials, and upcoming events, as well as a forum, library, shop, and donation area. 🌀



Lights and Sirens

Protecting Emergency Responders

In this issue, I will not be talking about a specific coverage area. Rather, I would like to energize the fire, rescue and ambulance services on an issue that I believe must be addressed in the near future.

An aggressive campaign is needed to target civilian awareness of emergency service vehicle operations.

I am proud of the efforts of the VFIS Education and Training and Loss Control departments in identifying issues associated with vehicle accidents and developing sound training programs and standard operating guidelines to ensure that emergency service organizations have the tools they need to manage this significant exposure. If you have not yet done so, I urge you to visit the VFIS website (www.VFIS.com). There you can review all of the education and training programs we have available to help make your members aware of the risks associated with emergency service vehicles.

It is well known that one of the critical goals of VFIS is to minimize the loss of life and property associated with these accidents. Vehicle accidents continue to represent around 25% of firefighter fatalities and thousands of disabling firefighter injuries. In addition, the response delays and public relations nightmares associated with accidents continue to create an undue burden on the emergency service community.

During a meeting called to discuss vehicle accidents, our conversation drifted to how civilian drivers act in response to emergency service vehicles. The conclusion reached was that without an aggressive campaign to target civilian awareness, the best efforts of VFIS and emergency service leadership will not meet our goal of significantly reducing vehicle accidents.

The carelessness of civilian drivers is shocking. Some of the more common stories I hear involve drivers:

- not hearing sirens because their radios are blasting
- not paying attention because of cell phones

- speeding around stopped vehicles without realizing the stopped vehicle is stopped to give an emergency vehicle the right of way
- not pulling over to give emergency service vehicles the right of way

These are just a few of the behaviors facing your emergency vehicle drivers on a daily basis.

During this discussion, someone asked what type of action the government was taking to ensure that the public provides the proper response when confronted with an emergency vehicle responding to an incident. Vehicle codes address some of these issues, but they come into play after the unsafe accident. Two questions were raised about public awareness: 1) **Why are drivers so focused on safety when approaching a school bus?** and 2) **how are emergency service vehicles addressed in the student driving manual?**

One of our associates obtained a copy of the Driver Training Manual from Pennsylvania. School buses were covered in a half-page article, which included statements like:

- Pennsylvania has special rules you must follow when you drive near a school bus
- You must stop at least 10 feet away from the bus
- You must remain stopped until the red lights stop flashing
- All vehicles must stop. (in a boxed text)
- Failure to stop...will result in a 60-day suspension of your driver's license, five points on your driving record, and a fine

I know you will agree that the above points hit home with civilians studying for their driver's test. Now let's look at what the same manual says under "Emergency Vehicles and Situations:"

- Certain vehicles have flashing red lights or a combination of flashing red and blue lights
- The lights assist emergency vehicles to move quickly through traffic. Watch out for them.
- When you hear a siren or see a vehicle approaching... you should
 - Pull over to the curb and stop
 - Drive parallel and as near to the curb as possible
 - Stay clear of intersections
 - Start driving again after the emergency vehicle passes, keeping at least 500 feet away from it
 - Make sure another vehicle is not coming
- During an emergency situation all drivers must obey the direction of any uniformed police officer, sheriff, constable or any properly attired person including fire police.
- Take sirens seriously and make way for an ambulance, fire truck or police vehicle. Someday you may be the one calling for help, or the life on the line might be a friend or family member.

What's the difference between the two descriptions? How about specific serious penalties for non-compliance? With a school bus, you know you will

receive a 60-day license suspension, five points, and a fine. With an emergency service vehicle, there is no specific penalty, and the language almost makes it sound like the state *suggests* you follow the rules.

I would urge you to review your state's driver manual, and if it is similar to Pennsylvania's, maybe the first (and most overlooked) step toward protecting our emergency responders is simply to change the manual, and if necessary, tighten up the motor vehicle code. From a personal perspective I will be promoting this initiative through the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Service Institute. I would appreciate your input on what you plan to do to raise the awareness of emergency service vehicle operations in your community. 🚚



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Operating Safely: Improving Driver Retention

Chief Bill Jenaway, Ph.D., CSP, CFO, CFPS, Executive Vice-President, VFIS

A recent article in *Professional Safety* magazine discussed techniques to improve driver retention. Similar to the fire service findings of the USFA project on Safe Vehicle Operations of Emergency Vehicles, the article noted that consistent observation of employee driving provides the best opportunity to improve driver performance. In addition, the development of a risk management program for vehicle operations is crucial to managing driver behavior. Similar to the best practices found in the USFA report, the following issues were identified:

- Authority and Responsibility
- Training
- Loss Analysis
- Hot Topics
- Apparatus Design and Construction
- Timely Reporting of Incidents
- Loss Prevention Practices
- Regulatory Compliance
- Driver Behavior Management
- Accident Investigation

The *Professional Safety* article also indicated a number of key areas that could improve driving safety and ensure compliance with existing company policies.

Highlighted "keys" to program success included developing and implementing a driver improvement and risk management solution. To maximize success, they recommend the following:

- Get all stakeholders on board
- Introduce the program to drivers
- Apply the solution in both driver and manager vehicles
- Implement a rewards system
- Communicate continuously and consistently
- Deploy and manage the program locally
- Use the solution as a tool to report near-collisions to foster discussion on improving risky driving behaviors
- Create and communicate the ground rules of the program
- Provide positive and consistent coaching
- Tap the driver's risk management provider for tools to use during your implementation

This project found most drivers want constructive criticism (appropriate coaching and feedback) on their driving, which is a critical component of supervision and fleet safety. 🚚

References: Lisk, Del, "Retain Better Drivers," *Professional Safety*, August 2008, Page 43-46.

This Christmas tree in the office of Special Risk Insurance, Inc. (also known as VFIS of MS/LA) features over 200 different ornaments, all on a fire service theme. Lynda Vince, owner, has been collecting these ornaments since 1989, adding a few more each year.



NEW PRODUCTS

VFIS Safety and Risk Management Video Series Adds Patient Handling

Every day, emergency responders are called to scenes involving patient movement. These range from simply putting a patient back in bed to the most complex calls, which challenge even the most experienced providers. An estimated 42,000* patients are dropped annually; in fact, 115 patients are dropped each day, averaging one patient every 12 minutes. While we have a wide variety of devices available to move patients in a safe manner, the statistics clearly identify the need to take a closer look.

Important topics addressed in this program include proper use of equipment, balance and strength, provider haste, maintenance of equipment, and bariatric patients.

The kit includes a DVD and a CD containing an Instructor's Guide, a Student Handout, and a Communiqué. To order the program (Item: C10:168), visit vfis.com or call VFIS at (800) 233-1957, ext 7961.

*According to estimates by industry equipment manufacturers and risk management statistics.

VFIS Announces Distance Learning Initiative

VFIS, in its continuing efforts to improve the safety and operations of the fire service through education, training, risk management and insurance programs, has joined forces with St. Joseph's University of Philadelphia in the development of a distance learning program.

The first on-line VFIS training through the university will be our Privately-Owned Vehicles (POV) safe driving program, with other selections to follow. The courses will be designed to be taken at your convenience, in your location. In many cases, our courses will include the ability to accommodate your department's specific guidelines and officer sign-off. The VFIS courses will offer everything you would find in the classroom, minus the instructor and classmates, and you will be given a certificate of course completion when you pass the online assessment.

Without question, distance learning is the method of education and training for the future, and VFIS is now poised to offer programs in this fashion as well as through traditional classroom training. For details on this, please talk to your VFIS sales representative or the training staff at upcoming classes, conferences, conventions, or meetings. ❄️

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Residential Sprinkler Impact Study: Christmas Tree Fires

The United States Fire Administration and the National Institute of Standards and Technology have completed a report called "Impact of a Residential Sprinkler on the Heat Release Rate of a Christmas Tree Fire," which demonstrates the value of residential sprinklers related to dry Christmas tree fires. As a part of this effort, videos of the project's experiments are also available comparing a dry Christmas tree fire in rooms with and without a sprinkler, and the ignition of a dry tree versus a properly maintained tree. ❄️

For more information, please visit

<http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/media/press/2008releases/073008.shtm>.



Bill Jenaway, left, receives the 30-Year Service Award from Steve Westerman, IAFIC President.

VFIS' Jenaway Recognized by IAFIC

Dr. Bill Jenaway, Executive Vice-President of VFIS Education and Training Services, was recognized for 30 years of service to the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) at August's Fire-Rescue International in Denver, CO. Highlights of Bill's three decades of involvement include Chair of the IAFIC Risk Management & Liability Committee and representing the IAFIC on the Commission on Fire Accreditation. Bill was first named fire chief in East Bethlehem Township, PA, in the late 1970s. He later served as fire chief in King of Prussia, PA. In 2001, Bill was named IAFIC Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year. ❄️

VFIS.com Resources Continue to Grow

The VFIS website, www.vfis.com, is an excellent resource where emergency responders can find important education, training, and risk control information. Before calling VFIS Risk Control or Education and Training, please take a few minutes to see the wealth of information our website offers.

Many of these assets can be found at www.vfis.com/resources.htm. At the top of this webpage you will find:

- VFIS News - the current issue and archived issues
- Employment Practices Updates - the current issue and archived issues
- Safety Flyers - seasonal and fire safety flyers

Near the bottom of this webpage you'll find the "Other Resources and Downloads" area. Simply click on the ► to expand the grouping. In this area you will find:

- Claim forms
- Education and training books, forms, safety forms, and self-evaluation tools
- Risk management aids, entitled "Communiqués," separated into three categories of hazards: Emergency Vehicle Operations, General Liability, and Management & Employment Practices Liability
- Risk control forms and self-evaluation tools

Please check our site often for new items. On the right-hand side of our main page, www.vfis.com, you'll find a news feed that lists our most recent additions. 🌸



MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES LIABILITY

- Conducting Internal Investigations
- Determining Discipline and Termination Administration
- Electronic Communication Systems (Internet & E-mail Usage)
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Overview
- Exit Interview Procedures
- Grievance Procedures
- Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Training
- Hiring/Applying for Membership
- Job/Position Descriptions
- Performance Management/Evaluations
- Pregnancy Discrimination and Accommodations
- Progressive Discipline and Accommodations
- Safety Committee By-Laws
- Sample Safety Officer Policy
- Sexual Harassment
- Weapons in the Workplace
- Workplace Violence/Threats of Violence

Communiqués on www.vfis.com

EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS

- Aerial Device Maintenance and Inspection
- Driver and Officer Responsibility
- Emergency Vehicle Driver Selection Criteria
- Emergency Vehicle Driver/Operator Requirements
- Emergency Vehicle Response Guidelines
- Intersection Practices
- Maximum Response Speed
- Personal Vehicle Response
- Sample Hose Loading Policy
- Vehicle Backing Practices
- Vehicle Preventive Maintenance
- Vehicle Rollover Prevention
- Vehicle Selection and Design

GENERAL LIABILITY

- Cellular Telephone Use in EMS
- Fidelity
- Fireworks Displays
- Highway Incident Safety
- Liquor Liability
- Patient Handling
- Playground Safety
- Rental Hall Agreements

Cumberland Valley VFA Honored with IAFC SHS Organizational Safety Award

Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association (CVVFA) was the proud recipient of the IAFC's Safety Health and Survival Section (SHS) and VFIS's "Billy Goldfeder Organizational Safety Award," given for its outstanding commitment and significant contribution to fire service health and safety. CVVFA was recognized for its excellent programs and initiatives related to emergency responder highway safety. The CVVFA is made up of fire departments, fire service organizations and individual members. State fire associations who belong to the CVVFA are from Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. Individual members of the Association are from the fire and public safety community from across the country.

Fire departments that are members of the IAFC, public agencies, private companies, and other organizations that are affiliated with or sponsor IAFC may be considered for this award. 🌸



Pictured, left to right: Chief Billy Goldfeder, Loveland-Symmes Fire Department (OH) and Chair of the IAFC SHS Section; Bill Jenaway, Executive Vice-President, VFIS Education and Training Services; Jerry Reynolds, President, CVVFA; Dan Naylor, Regional Vice-President, VFIS; and Dave Wyrwas, President, VFIS.

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Please route to your
local emergency
service organization

Job Descriptions *Tool for Litigation Prevention*

Written exclusively for My Community Workplace for Government. Reprinted with Permission.

Here are some points to include when drafting job descriptions for your organization:

- Title of the position
- Education required
- Experience required, if any
- Skills required and skills that are helpful but not required
- Physical and mental requirements, if any
- Environmental requirements
- Department
- Manager or Supervisor
- Overall goals
- Basic requirements of the position
- Key areas of responsibility

A former firefighter in New York State has filed a lawsuit in an effort to get his job back. He lost the job because he could not complete newly required paramedic training due to his fear of needles. "Fainting Fireman Sues to Get Job Back," www.sfgate.com (Mar. 6, 2008).


Before the fire department hired him, the plaintiff successfully completed emergency medical training. However, the department later changed the requirements of his job to include paramedic training. This training required him to give injections and start an intravenous line, but his fear of needles caused him to faint every time he handled a needle.

The firefighter tried to overcome his aversion to needles and even tried hypnosis upon the suggestion of the Assistant Fire Chief, but he was not successful and was terminated. The plaintiff is seeking reinstatement and back pay in his lawsuit.

Commentary and Checklist

A clearly written job description provides applicants and existing employees a snapshot of the tasks and skills a job requires. It helps employees have a solid understanding of what is expected in their job performance.

A good job description should also be flexible enough to be effective as the demands of the job change. In addition, job descriptions should be updated when there are changes in duties for the position.

In this instance, the fire department changed the firefighter's job requirements to include mandatory completion of paramedic training. The firefighter's inability to complete this training caused the department to rate him as unqualified. While this case is still pending, the job description's new paramedic training requirement will likely be at issue in determining whether the termination was proper. 

This informational piece is part of "The Loss Prevention Journal" published on March 20, 2008.