

## **How the Firefighter Bill Affects the Howland Fire Department**

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**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

For years, the Howland Fire Department has included training for its workforce on a regular basis. In 2007, the Ohio lawmakers adopted a policy that was sponsored by the three main firefighter lobbies. The Ohio Fire Chief's Association, The Ohio Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Ohio Volunteer Firefighters Association all agreed the changes were for the advancement of the service. The law resulted in regulatory policies on how they were to be carried out. This was to be completed by fire departments and fire fighters throughout the state.

Based on the evaluative research most of the department's training was relevant and conducted in a method to meet or exceed most of the states requirements. Even with the EMS continuing education requirements and their constant changes, it would not be a problem for most active firefighters to be able to maintain their firefighting certifications. The greatest glaring defects were parts of the administrative code that specifically pertained to instructors and inspectors. The instructors were receiving the bare minimum requirements. Instructors would need to teach more in-house training classes if they are not part of a certified training center. Inspectors were receiving no education at all unless it was outsourced and only three of the department's inspectors were sent to external courses. This would result in the loss of thirteen to fourteen inspectors for the department. Even when considering the lesser requirements of a company inspector, no inspectors would retain certification except those that attended outside training.

Several key changes should be implemented in order to prevent the loss of these certifications. A policy of rotating instructors for in-house training should be adopted for those who are not employed by a training center in order for them to acheive the required hours.

Instructor updates should be held on a more frequent basis. This would allow instructors to obtain their requirements easier. It would also not impact time off or force personnel to attend other regions training sessions to maintain their certification.

The firefighter training hours should be amended to include inspector topics with emphasis on these classes to include building fire safety such as sprinkler systems. Inspector classes need to be held on a quarterly basis with each session to last a minimum of 5 hours. This would allow the departments nineteen inspectors to obtain all of their continuing education hours in two sessions a year, without making the classes mandatory thus costing overtime pay. The only additional cost would be for the inspector instructor which would be cheaper than either outsourcing or overtime.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of the Problem**

In 2007, Ohio legislation was passed mandating all firefighters to complete continuing education requirements based upon every fire certification they obtain at the state level. The new continuing education requirements are conferred for every firefighter, inspector, and instructor in the fire service. The problem was how to evaluate the current training criteria and topics with regards to the Ohio administrative codes. This will be based upon the recently enacted legislation.

The areas to be examined will include the recent fire department training history and possible prospective instructional changes in the core curriculum. When the continuing education requirements are studied, changes to the curriculum may be necessary to meet the newly enacted standards.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to delve into and scrutinize the current training regimen. It will also determine if the training methods are meeting every continuing education category required. Evaluative and action research will be utilized to collect data and analyze training data. This will be conducted in order to determine the current effectiveness of training in Howland Township. It will also be used to develop and make the necessary corrections when deficiencies occur. As part of the evaluative research aspect of this study, a research survey will be performed within the department. Interviews and questionnaires will be conducted with other fire department heads to determine their training strategies. The survey will be conducted to see if current schedules are meeting the requirement of individuals. The study will be used as a point of

reference for the training officers. This will assist them in instituting a new training schedule that incorporates all currently mandated training requirements at the local, state and federal levels.

The new state regulations may have not been a surprise to the department, but certain certification requirements were. The numbers of hours and specific training requirements have to be analyzed to determine their full impact.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will be answered by this evaluative and action research:

1. What does the administrative code require for recertification?
2. What was the Howland Fire Department doing for training?
3. To what extent was the Howland Fire Department's training already meeting the requirements of the new administrative code?
4. What are other fire departments doing to meet the requirements of the administrative code?
5. What are some other states' fire departments doing to meet their requirements of similar legislation?

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In 2001, a United States Fire Administration issued a report on the state of firefighting in Ohio. The article was published Hall, Karter and Whitney (2001, 2005) and follow up reports were republished in 2004 and again in 2007. In the report, one major fact was a significant. The report issued the statement that the majority of volunteers did not have the training to conduct interior firefighting according to NFPA standards. Because of this report, a House Bill was proposed in the 126<sup>th</sup> General Assembly on October 26<sup>th</sup> 2005. The proposed bill would remedy some of the aspects of the report. One other item, the report pointed out was the lack of information on how many current firefighters were on active status. Due to record keeping errors in the past, this figure was unknown. Dead and retired personnel were still on active rosters. This House Bill 401 subsequently renamed the Firefighter Training Bill would allow the current Ohio Department of Public Safety, EMS division to institute and regulate the mandated training requirements for all firefighters, inspectors, instructors, inspector instructors and training centers.

**Table 1**

*Specific Requirements of the Administrative Code dealing with the Firefighter Bill*

Certification	Cycle Total (3 yrs)	Annual	Instruction Provided
Firefighter	54	18	N/A
CFSI	30	10	N/A
Fire Instructor	6	2	24 per cycle
Asst. Fire Instructor	6	2	8 per cycle

The potential impact of this study could have is changing the future training regimen of the department. The Firefighter Training Bill greatly impacts the Howland Fire Department by adding additional training categories. The current training schedule does not provide for complete coverage in all the related topic areas.

The following table is a breakdown of the certifications held by Howland Fire Department personnel.

**Table 2**

*Distribution of Certificates by employment class :HTFD*

Full Time	EMT's	Medics	FFI	FFII	CFSI	Fire Instructor	EMS Instructor
25 <sup>a</sup>	8	15	0	25	16	14	3
Part Time							
11 <sup>a</sup>	5	6	0	11	3	3	0
Volunteer							
18 <sup>a</sup>	12	0	6	12	0	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>54 Employees</b>	<b>152 Certifications</b>

<sup>a</sup>N = (as of 1 June 2008).

The Howland Township Fire Department services a community of approximately 18,000 people. The department consists of three fire stations, 25 line personnel, 11 part time staff, 18 volunteers and two clerical staff. The department provides a whole host of services to the public.

These services include fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS) at an ALS level, hazardous material response and mitigation, building construction plan checks, and fire and life safety code compliance. We also perform in home carbon monoxide testing for residents. The department also offers a variety of public safety education programs such as CPR, and fire safety for children. Currently the department has a child safety seat program and a bicycle safety program along with a smoke detector program. We presently run the county's technical rescue responses that include confined space and trench rescues. Our department is also state chartered to conduct fire and EMS programs. This can be used for some of the instructors benefit for instructional provided hours as seen in Table 1.

Call volume has expanded from just over sixteen hundred calls to almost three thousand calls in just fifteen years. As a department, we have developed from a strictly rural to a suburban department with urban responses. Our department responds to mutual aid calls, when requested by the neighboring jurisdictions, on a regular basis. The department's operational expenses have gone from a totally volunteer department with minimal expenditures, to a combination department with twenty five career and eleven additional part time personnel and eighteen volunteers. The operating budget is just over one million dollars. The volunteer numbers were just recently expanded and was down to a low of eight just a few years ago. This new influx of people will require training under the new guidelines in such a fashion as to not upset and turn them away.

While training is conducted in house for the majority of hours required, many times the training is broken up by call volume. This cuts down on the efficiency of the training when you cannot be there for the entire class. Methods must be researched to improve the implementation of any scheduling of instruction. Several training officers from other departments and states that have

similar mandated requirements will be interviewed for possible strategies. The remainder if classes are held by other entities and are not included in this study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review that was utilized for preparation of this project consisted of excerpts from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), fire journal articles, newspapers, text, and the following internet search engines and web sites. The underlying theme of research documentation returned more of a request for legislated fire training research data than available information. For this reason, other professions including teaching and EMS that requires continuing education was used for the basis of methodologies in curriculums and observations about their continuing educational practices. The primary emphasis would be on the EMS aspect due to the close relationship to the fire service .Another reason is that the majority of the fire department's members are EMS cross trained.

Hall, Karter and Whitney (2001, 2005) sent out surveys to different departments in Ohio and analyzed the results covering different aspects of coverage and training issues. The reports concluded that volunteer firefighters in Ohio in some jurisdictions were not adequately trained for structural firefighting. The study was based on NFPA 1500, 1997 edition. While the numbers were not statistically significant, they did cause some concern because many personnel were being trained on the job rather than in a controlled environment. The numbers that were not statistically significant were the overall number of firefighters not trained in structural firefighting methods including paid and volunteer. Due the small numbers involved, almost exclusively volunteers, they were not relevant to the overall numbers of the study. Rural areas were especially susceptible to this. While this does not affect the vast majority of personnel in the

Howland Fire Department, two members of the current staff were grandfathered into some certification levels. This means that they were basically trained on the job. This research was just one of the mitigating factors in the recently enacted training regulations.

Spring (1989) introduces the impact of lobbyist and other organized groups in state legislatures with special interest in educational topics and the different types and strategies employed in getting their agendas approved. The book goes into specific details about four major types of lobbying that occur to get educational proposals passed. The implications of this in regards to this research project amount to the fact that, the three major entities finally came together to get further education requirements for its constituents. The three major entities include the Ohio Fire Chiefs, the Ohio Volunteer Firefighters and the Ohio Professional Firefighter organizations. Usually, when they lobby politicians they approach from different perspectives and have different agendas.

Ohio House Bill 401 (2005) or the Firefighter Training Bill (2007), as enacted into law from the Ohio Revised code 4765.55, gives the legal rights for the EMS division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety with firefighter participation to set standards and re certification standards for each firefighter in the state of Ohio. This standard was given a year for implementation and select the curriculum and standards for each level.

The Ohio Administrative rules 4765.20.13-19 (2007), are the actual implemented requirements and contain the continuing education requirements for each level of certification. These levels reveal that every firefighter will have eighteen hours of continuing education every year. This requirement affects every member of the Howland Fire Department. Other continuing education requirements include instructor certification requirements that affect 19 members of

the department. The new inspector requirement affects 19 personnel. In addition, the inspector requirements are specialized and must be in the specified areas of education. These areas of study must include any of the following topics.

- The theory of fire code enforcement
- Enforcement of fire codes
- Life safety system of building and uses or fire code administration
- Legal methods of code enforcement
- The safe handling of materials which pose a fire hazard
- Legal rights of landlords and tenants under federal, state, and local laws
- The safe use and maintenance of facilities, building, and uses which are subject to the state of Ohio fire code.
- The application, installation, use, and interpretation of the NFPA standards

Compton (2006) states that training is but one method officers have of maintaining performance over their crews. Ludwig (2006) states that continuing education is an important and integral part in the career and success of any firefighter. Continuing education is the key to success in any fire department both in improving and maintaining the skills necessary to apply during any emergency.

Brown, Kazmierzak, Loraine and Walker (2005) compiled a survey and research project. The project described the current training and continuing education requirements for firefighters in all fifty states. The report describes ten states with continuing education for recertification requirements for compliance issues. The report also gives a brief description of all legislated

requirements and will narrow the research and possible survey states for inclusion in this research project.

Howland Local 2786 Contract (2006) sets the requirements regarding certification levels required for full-time personnel. It also sets the requirements for the maintaining of these certifications during your career. The basic tenet of this agreement is that all full-time staff will maintain certain certifications. All lieutenants must have either an inspector certification or an instructor's certification. All captains are required to have both certifications.

Howland Township Policy Manual (2001) sets the minimum requirements for part-time employees including fire and EMS certifications. They include a minimum EMT license and a level two firefighter certification.

Howland Township Volunteer Association Contract (2007) includes all personnel will obtain a 36 hour certification in the first year and pass the transitional firefighter course the following year. Training will be provided for the EMT or above level certifications at the townships expense. The EMS training is not a requirement for maintaining a position on the volunteer roster. The NIMS training is mandatory for any employee to be an active member.

Howland Fire Department Training Records (2005-2008) [Data File] gives all the personnel training records to compare with the mandated continuing education requirements, including topics covered. In the purview of this research project, all names will be removed and only levels of certification will be considered for this study.

Kosinski (2008) wrote an article for the newspaper about dwindling volunteers. The article sited statements from nearby departments. The training and educational requirements were found to be a decisive factor in the decreasing amount of volunteers.

Gaspar (2005) wrote a research paper on improving training in Chardon. His paper closely mirrors this one except the new Firefighter Bill was not included in his research. His paper was to improve the quality of training and to match the NFPA standards in each category.

**Table 3**

*Total Training hours by types and hours by each certification for the past three years(In House training only)*

	2008	2007	2006	2005
Firefighting Classes	51	54	44	51
Hrs Available	151	326	260	235
Amassed Full Time	961.5	1308	663.5	975
Hrs Possible	3775	8125	6500	1275
Amassed Part Time	139.5	189	181	67 <sup>a</sup>
Hrs Possible	1661	3586	2860	2585
Amassed Volunteer	350	466.25	210.5	312
Hrs Possible	2718	5868	4680	4260
Instructor Classes	1	2	2	0
Hrs Available	3	6	6	0
Amassed Full Time	42	48	30	0
Hrs Possible	75	150	150	0
Amassed Part Time	9	0	6	0
Hrs Possible	33	66	66	
Amassed Volunteer	6	12	24	0
Hrs Possible	54	108	108	
CFSI Classes	0	1(4)	5 <sup>b</sup> (10)	0
Hours Available	0	4	10	0
Amassed Full Time	0	24	42	0

Hrs Possible	0	100	250	0
Amassed Part Time	0	6	10	0
Hrs Possible	0	44	110	0
Amassed Volunteer	0	0	12.5	0
Hrs Possible	0	72	180	0
<hr/>				
EMS Classes	48	29	41	49
Hours Available	78	56	81	49
Amassed Full Time	789	669.5	512	546
Hrs Possible	1950	1400	2025	2375
Amassed Part Time	166.5	189	107	67
Hrs Possible	858	616	891	1045
Amassed Volunteer	243.5	175.5	172.5	236
Hrs Possible	1404	1008	1458	1710

- <sup>a</sup> Due to budget constraints in 2005 and 2006 the part time staff was let go and recalled at a later date.
- <sup>b</sup> Even though the topics met the criteria for inspector topics only two classes were led by a CFSI qualified instructor.
- <sup>c</sup> These are the total hours that have to be divided between all of the CFSI people see Table 4 for a further summary of these numbers.

*Note: While the hours possible reflect the total hours that can be received. Full Time personnel only acquire while on duty not for the repeated class on subsequent turns. This is roughly 1/3rd of total possible hours.*

**Table 4**

*Total personnel that would not meet the minimum state requirements for each category(In House training)*

	2008	%	2007	%	2006	%	2005	%
Firefighters								
Full Time N=25	0		0		0		0	
Part Time N=11	7(64%)		5 (45%)		6(55%)		8(73%)	
Volunteer N=18	7(39%)		10 (55%)		6(33%)		6(33%)	

### Instructors

Full Time	7(28%)	5(20%)	2(8%)	1(4%)
Part Time	2(18%)	1(9%)	2(18%)	2(18%)
Volunteer	1(5%)	0	0	0

### CFSI

Full Time	16(64%)	16(64%)	16(64%)	16(64%)
Part Time	3(27%)	3(27%)	3(27%)	3(27%)
Volunteer	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Bates (2006-2008) wrote a series of articles of the impacts of the new firefighter bill and how it would impact Ohio's fire departments. The series of articles gave both positive and negative aspects of the bill along with a review of the aforementioned administrative codes. Some of these will be included in the discussion portion of this research paper in how they relate to the Howland Fire Department's training operations. One of the negative aspects of his editorial includes increased paperwork and recordkeeping. Jenaway (2004) writes that where required, and the Ohio codes certainly do require this, the training must be recorded and evaluations completed to make certain that the required knowledge had occurred.

Methods in how the Howland Fire Department accomplishes this will also be regarded for possible changes to improve the system.

Whats the relevance of this study of the current curriculum of the training in Howland Fire Department? Cooper and Ryan (1984) state that a few questions must be asked to

determine the relevancy. They include the following questions: Relevant to What? Relevant to Whom? Their writing then goes into details about curriculum and its relevancy to education. For the purposes of this research paper, the relevancy is first to the people taking the continuing education hours. In this case, it is the fire department's firefighters and another to the society that mandated the training which in this case are our elected officials.

McClincy (1995) and Stowell (2006) in their works go into great detail on how to evaluate not only individuals taking educational classes and how they perform. They also elaborate on how to evaluate a program. This collection of work also takes into consideration the responsibility of taking the results of evaluations and turning them into actions. While this work was originally EMS based, it has great relevancy when dealing with firefighter training. The same types and in many cases the same individuals are involved in both activities. Some of the tools and methodologies that will be incorporated in this research is to first analyse then create the training curriculum needed to meet the current state firefighter standards for every certification level. Taking their works and analyzing a training curriculum will be used to determine if one of the most common mistakes in instruction is taking place at the Howland Fire Department. That strategic error, established in most programs as proposed by Doorlag and Lewis (1987) is that instructional material is presented sporadically and not systematically over time. This has relevance in that our continuing education must contain specific topics over the recertification time frame. This is more important for inspectors and instructors than the average firefighter. This is because many of the mandated topics can be used for firefighter training that has fewer restrictions than either the instructor or inspector requirements.

## **PROCEDURES**

Parts of the research for this project for the OFE program was collected through a number of different surveys and interviews. The first survey (see appendix A) was conducted at the Howland Fire Department and given to all other members of the department except officers. This was in part to prevent any personal prejudice as most of the officers were in a previous Ohio Fire Executive course. They may also be responsible for the current training regimen.

The first survey was compiled in written form and passed out during a training night. The survey was a sampling of the entire fire department population. Only three of the surveys passed out were not completed and returned. Forty five surveys were sent out. Forty two of them were returned. The surveys were anonymous. Only a paid status question was used for sorting and categorizing . This was sorted out by the first question that requested a paid status answer. The survey was not mandatory in any fashion.

In the survey, a question was asked of department personnel to rate how they felt about the current training environment as far as meeting the current state guidelines. The choices were: “Exceeds the state requirements in all areas”, “Just adequate to meet the state minimums in all areas”, “Adequate in some areas and inadequate in other areas” and “Not adequate in any area”.

Other questions on the survey included how the members get their training. The how portion of the survey listed where they received their training whether it was in house training or received utilizing outside agency trainers.

The second questionnaire (see appendix B) was conducted using mailed surveys using departments in Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana Counties. The self addressed return envelopes were coded with a three or four digit code for identifying the department that completed

the survey. The coding involved the county number 78 for Trumbull as an example. The rest was initials of the fire department “HA” for Hartford as an example. Interviews would also be included for departments with similar demographics to our department and those that failed to return the mailed surveys. The questionnaire was conducted in a manner consistent with mailing surveys to individual departments and receiving them back in the mail. The following questionnaire was also conducted by phone during the aforementioned interviews. (See appendix C for a complete listing of departments used .)

The second survey was mailed for completion. A total of seventeen respondents representing their respective departments completed the survey by mail. An additional eighteen departments completed the survey by phone when contacted. This was based on the coding system that allowed missing departments to be identified. This survey was sent to a variety of different department types including full time only, combination and volunteer only departments. The departments surveyed all have a run volume of one thousand to three thousand calls annually. This survey was also conducted in electronic form using Survey Monkey web site with an additional forty five respondents from throughout Ohio. The survey was conducted in a mailed survey methodology but using an electronic format.

The departments surveyed have between one thousand and five thousand calls annually. See Appendix D for respondents by mail and phone.

The third questionnaire was conducted using fire departments in other states that mandate continuing education such as Texas. This was to see how their training is conducted to meet their requirements. This survey was conducted by phone with a couple of respondents from each state selected solely for informational purposes. This was done to see if their approach is different and

to consider other possible credible methods in conducting training. Their methods might be adapted for our departments' continuing education.

### **Definition of terms**

- Combination department - for the purposes of this study will mean any department that has a compliment of paid and volunteer staffing. This could entail part-time or full-time employees for the paid component.
- In-house training - Training conducted in the fire station or in the fire departments jurisdiction either by instructors inside or from outside the department.
- Outsourced training – Training held outside the confines of the fire department by other agencies.
- CFSI – Certified Fire Safety Inspector
- NFIRS- National Fire Incident Reporting System
- FLSA- Fair Labor Standards Act

### **Limitations of the study**

Limitations of the study included not having all surveys completed by members of the Howland Fire Department. The state survey was only a small sampling of departments in Ohio. The departments polled were from three counties adjacent to Trumbull. Cumstances similar to Howland Fire Departments including the availability of regional training centers were used. This sampling best represents the departments operating under the similar circumstances. Other states training methods may not require the same academic units as Ohio requires. This research paper will not be a complete state by state reference guide but will only include a few states with

similar requirements. This study is not intended to be a review of the Ohio EMS requirements, but is stated in this research paper for the purpose of including an EMS component in a training programme. Even as this paper is being written, there are changes pending for EMS hours including more geriatric hours specializing in their trauma care and the EMT scope of practice will include twelve lead EKG administration and nitro dispensing even when not prescribed to the patient to name just a few. This research project is intended to improve the types of classes offered in-house as opposed to having to get the necessary diversity of classes outside the department to meet the administrative code. This study will not include assistant instructors or company inspector certifications as they are not utilized by the Howland Department. Only selected departments from other states were used based upon their size and run volume. This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive comparison between states.

## **RESULTS**

The training records for the Howland Fire Department show the loss of certifications especially the instructor and inspector hours for the career personnel (see Table 4). The training hours that would have been appropriate for inspectors was nonexistent; therefore the loss of certifications was by the entire amount. The outsourced hours, that met the state's requirements, would have only allowed three personnel retain this certification. The volunteer staff had their worst year in 2007 for training. This would have resulted in 55% of the volunteer staff failing to meet the continuing education criteria. Seven of the ten volunteers missed by just a few hours. The rest missed by nearly half of the required hours.

The data collected during this research project looked at several different aspects of the training requirements mandated in Ohio. This was done to establish a baseline in order to

determine whether the Howland Fire Department was in compliance. Surveys were done and data was collected from within the department, from other fire departments, and other states with similar requirements. The data collected from other fire departments were from a variety of departments ranging from all volunteer to all full-time. The goal was to research whether training was conducted differently, or if some aspects of fire training are the same. The goal was also to determine how much training is accomplished in house versus being held outside of departments.

**Research Questions**

1. How do you rate the current training at Howland Fire Department?

Answer: Through data conducted through a survey done at the department polling firefighters, a clear determination was made on where the department now stands with its current training. Volunteer firefighters feel that training exceeds the current state requirements. Paid firefighters feel that training is adequate in some areas and inadequate in other areas. The data suggest that the department should not do any less training, but should change several topics for improving certification renewal. (See Table 5)

**Table 5**

*Fire Department members were asked to rate the current training at the Department*

	<u>Members surveyed</u>		
	<u>N</u>	<u>Vol%</u>	<u>Paid %</u>
<i>Exceeds all state requirements in all areas</i>	16	46%	0
<i>Just adequate to meet all state requirements</i>	3	8%	0
<i>Adequate in some areas inadequate in others</i>	16	0	46%
<i>Not adequate in any area</i>	0	0	0
<u>Total</u>	<u>35</u>		

2. How do you get most of your training at Howland Fire Department?

Answer: Most of the training received for volunteers is during the regular Monday night weekly training. Of the seventeen surveys the volunteers completed 94.1% stated they received their training on Monday nights. The remaining 5.9% received some external training. For the career staff, most of the training is received during shift training with minimal external training. Sixteen surveys were completed, and 93.7% stated their training was completed on shift with the remaining 6.3% stating they received their training outside of the department.

3. How do you feel about the ease of meeting state training requirements?

Answer: The volunteers feel almost unanimously that the training is very easy to meet the state requirements. The part time paid, and the paid staff feel very differently. This can be attributed to the number of certifications that the paid staff has in relation to the number of certifications that the volunteer staff hold.

**Table 6**

*Fire department members were asked to rate the ease of meeting state continuing education*

	<u>Members surveyed</u>				
	<u>N</u>	<u>Vol</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Paid</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Very easy to meet state requirements with in-house training</i>	15		43%	0	
<i>Somewhat easy to meet the requirements</i>	2		6%	0	
<i>Somewhat difficult to meet the requirements</i>	4		0	11%	
<i>Very difficult to meet the requirements</i>	12		0	34%	
<i>No opinion one way or the other</i>	2		0	6%	
<u>Total</u>	<u>35</u>				

Members were asked to write down any ideas that make meeting the requirements easier to meet. The majority of the surveys were returned without any answer completed. Two of the surveys that did respond to the answer did not specifically answer the question. They requested more hands on training. One survey wanted a change in topics to meet the requirements without extending the amount of hours conducted.

Member of the department were also requested to list a schedule that would allow them to retain certification easier. The volunteers did not respond in any fashion to the question other than Monday night training was adequate for this role. The paid staff including part time employees requested at least a quarterly plan for inspector instruction and instructor updates held more frequently.

The surveys returned from Howland Fire Department members were positive and proved that the members were willing to complete the required education requirements if they were conducted in-house on shift days.

Data collected through a survey was sent to various other fire departments in a Tri county area in northeastern Ohio. Thirty departments completed the survey either by returning the provided mail survey or by completing a phone or personal interview using the survey. Information shows that the Howland Fire Department currently stands about slightly above average in frequency. The in-house training of Howland Fire Department is more critical to our operations than many of the other departments surveyed. They tended to send more employees to external training to meet the standards than Howland. Several departments are relying on the provision of the law that allows the chief to sign for completed hours if an instructor is not available.

Of the 30 surveys returned, six departments handled between 100-500 emergency calls, four departments handled between 500-1000 emergency calls, sixteen departments handled between 1000-2000 calls, and four departments handled between 2000-5000 calls.

Portions of the data collected in the survey from other fire departments are outlined in the following tables. Table 7 is broken down according to how the departments were staffed.

**Table 7**

How training is conducted (All full-time departments)

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Daily on duty</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>100%</i>
<u>Total</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>100%</u>

*How training is conducted (Combination departments)*

<i>Weekly on Duty</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>25.9%</i>
<i>Daily on duty</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>14.8%</i>
<i>On weekly training nights</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>14.8%</i>
<i>Daily and on weekly training nights</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>29.6%</i>
<i>Daily and at special trainings only</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7.4%</i>
<i>Daily, special trainings, and on weekly nights</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>7.4%</i>
<u>Total</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>100%</u>

*How training is conducted (Volunteer departments)*

<i>Weekly training nights</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>100%</i>
<u>Total</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>100%</u>

Of the 30 fire departments surveyed, 26 handle emergency medical emergencies as well as fire emergencies. Four stated they do not handle medical emergencies and that portion of emergency response is covered by an outside private ambulance company. Two of these departments did play a first responder role in their communities when notified.

Thirty departments surveyed were asked the question if they handled all training hours in house. Seven departments conducted all training in house. When the departments that had phone surveys conducted they were asked a follow up question. The proposed question asked if an instructor or the chief conducted these trainings. Three departments stated the chief

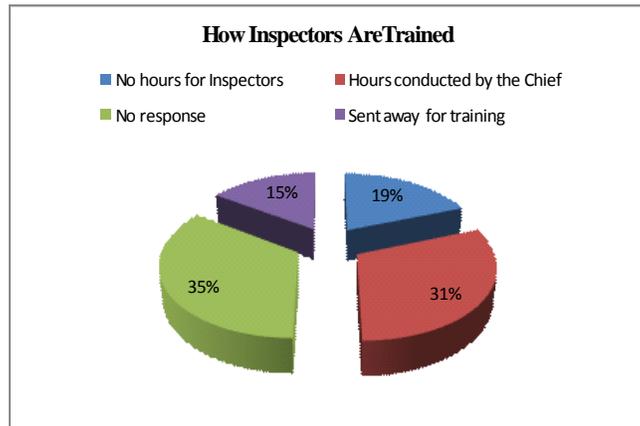
conducted the training in lieu of an instructor. Table 8 was conducted to determine the percentage of in-house training was perceived at the surveyed departments.

**Table 8**

*Surveyed departments percentage of in-house training*

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
0-25%	1	3.3%
26-50%	2	6.7%
51-75%	8	26.7%
76-100%	19	63.3%
<u>Total</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>100%</u>

Thirty departments were surveyed to determine if their training hours included training for inspectors based on the current guidelines by the state. Five departments 16.7% stated they did not have any hours for inspectors. Eight departments had hours that were conducted by the



**Figure 1.**  
The percentage of where inspectors are trained

chief or 26.7%. Another nine departments 30% did not reply to the question. Four departments 13.3% held in-house training for inspectors. The remaining four departments 13.3% sent their inspectors out for the mandated training. (see Figure 1.)

When asked whether the departments had a certified inspector instructor conduct the training hours, eight 26.7% answered no the chief was responsible. Only thirteen departments 43.3% polled responded in the affirmative. The rest did not respond or did not know 30%.

The thirty departments were questioned if they had in-house continuing education hours for their instructors only two 6.7% responded yes. The rest responded they had to send their instructors out or did not have certified instructors.

Departments were asked to reply to the question if their instructors provided the regulated number of instructional hours in a year. Of the twenty three departments that stated they had certified instructors, only eleven or 36.7% stated that they did. The rest did not track to see if their instructors did complete the number of hours or 23.3%.

Other states that had similar requirements that were surveyed by phone had similar patterns of training schedules and habits of training in-house versus out of department training. The Texas departments polled both had training that was conducted by each shift by a training officer that was certified. The departments were of similar size and run numbers compared to Howland. The departments had within five hundred runs and similar personnel profiles. The inspectors in both departments were separated from the department training roles and were conducted outside of the department. One department outsourced 30% percent of its training. The other department stated they outsourced only 15%. Training was conducted on a weekly basis by each shift in both departments.

Another state that was polled was Georgia. While neither department included training for inspectors or instructors, they did conduct hours for officers. They had similar statistical responses that Texas and the Ohio reported to training. One department required one hour of training on every shift except holidays. The other, held weekly training equivalent to Howland. Neither department had any different training regimens that could be used for guidelines for any recommended changes.

These states were used to determine if any new training strategies could be gained for changing Howland's training programme. These states have had their requirements for several years compared to Ohio's recent implementation of continuing education requirements. All of the departments polled in these states run EMS calls. Three departments interchange weekly drills from fire to EMS every other week. This gave them a 50% percent EMS to fire training ratio versus Howland's 75% fire to 25% EMS ratio for in-house hours. The other department had a reverse ratio to Howland in that their in-house training hours were 75% EMS to 25% fire.

## **DISCUSSION**

During the course of this research paper certain facts began to emerge that needed to be corrected for the training records in Howland Township. This would require changes in the training record database itself. This would be required to pull out the information that would be required for personnel as they keep track and verify their continuing education. This part of the research would be an immediate action plan and implementation for the department. The records would have to be able to pull out training specific to the new inspector training categories and better track of instructor hours for those not currently employed by the training center. The

improved database was amended to meet these needs. The writer of this research paper has the direct responsibility and empowerment to make these changes. The changes were completed even before this paper was completed.

Howland Fire Department training schedule prior to 2008 included the following schedules:

1) The first Monday night of every month was for volunteer training with the duty shift and was for fire training. The subsequent two shifts would hold the same training during the Tuesday and Wednesday following the volunteers training.

2) The second Monday evening of every month was for EMS training with the duty shift. The subsequent two shifts would hold the same training during the Tuesday and Wednesday following the volunteers training.

3) The third Monday evening of every month was once again for fire training. The subsequent two shifts would hold the same training during the Tuesday and Wednesday following the volunteers training.

4) The fourth Monday would be volunteer meeting night with no training.

5) Monday holidays were exempt from required training.

6) Any month that had a fifth Monday was for officer meetings.

In 2008 this changed in the following way. The third Monday was changed to a Specialized Rescue Training night. With the subsequent two shifts holding the same training on the following two days. Monday holidays meant that training was to be conducted on Thursday that week. The fourth Monday of the month remained volunteer meeting night. The duty shifts would conduct shift specific training during the day, during that week. This training would be

conducted to improve any shift deficiencies that a shift officer felt needed improvement.

Bates (2006-2008) in his In Command articles listed a series of both positive and negative effects on every fire department. Most of the positive benefits of the bill are true in the case of Howland Fire Department. Some of the negatives not mentioned in the article is the dropping of certifications to lower the impact of the bill on continuing education requirements especially when added to the EMS requirements. Two senior members of the department when questioned are going to give up at least one certification due to the fact that they cannot move up in rank more than one position before retiring. One is letting go his instructor's certification the other an inspector's certification. Another item to consideration is layoffs. The effected personnel will no longer have an affiliation with a department this will limit the ability to obtain hours unless completed at their own cost. Technically, a chief cannot sign for their hours without some affiliation. The regulations make stipulations for injury and military service but not for layoffs. The department came close to losing one individual for the lack of registering during the initial sign up period. He had to retake the firefighter test to retain his certification. Six others from Trumbull County had a similar problem.

While it is beyond the purview of this paper, EMS requirements must be mentioned. Paramedics with additional certifications pay the heaviest burden for renewal. Their hours will go from ninety-six hours every three years to over two hundred with inspector and instructor hours. This does not include extraneous certifications like child safety seats. They require an additional set of hours.

When the state did their fiscal impact study they reported that no cost would be incurred by the individual fire departments. Through the use of grants, this may be true for many

departments as long as they qualify for them. One requirement they must meet is the reporting of fire calls using NFIRS 5 reporting. This is not a problem for Howland, but our demographics usually limit the number of grants received. The major change of cost will be to the individuals due to the FLSA regulations that state an employer does not have to pay for education that is required to retain certification.

The contract responsibility of the township limits the amount of education time they are responsible for to twenty four hours. This puts the onus of responsibility on the individual when they cannot get their continuing education hours during duty hours. This may or may not change in the future.

The contract between the employees and the township states officer positions will hold and additional certification for every grade in rank. Each rise also requires five years in the previous grade before being permitted to test to the next rank. This provision is somewhat responsible for the two individuals mentioned before letting go one of their certifications.

The benefits to the department are many including better regional training and maintaining proficiency, to name a few. More structure in certain aspects of training such as for the inspectors will allow for better retention and improvement in some skills, that were neglected in the past. Another benefit to the bill is making it easier for departments, including Howland to get rid of the “dead wood.” Those are the individuals that do not participate in training or calls regularly.

Based on Kosinki’s (2008) article Howland, appears to be the exception to the rule of dwindling recruits. While other departments are having trouble keeping their volunteers, Howland has expanded. Our recruits are also better trained because eight recently completed the

bridge course under the new state guidelines. This aspect of the law was a benefit to the department.

### **Recommendations**

The analysis presented in this paper has demonstrated the need for Howland Fire Department to change the current training regimen conducted the last four years. The change will be required to meet the current mandated training hours by the state. The changes will have to incorporate more inspector topics and possibly hold several more instructor updates.

The problem stated at the beginning of this project was to address and evaluate the current firefighter training program at the Howland Fire Department. This study was to also examine what changes may be needed in order to confirm that the fire department is currently meeting all of training requirements mandated by the state ,for each level of certification. The areas examined were the past and present training practices, and how much training would be needed to be done. This investigation was conducted for the firefighters, the inspectors and instructors to determine if their mandated continuing education hours were being met.

The author has learned through this research project, that there is training that is needed to meet the recently enacted requirements by the state.

Recommendations include:

1. Rotating instructors for in-house training conducted by the department on each shift. This will ensure that each instructor conducts enough hours of instruction to meet the mandates. Many of the department's instructors are not currently hired by the training center. In order

for them to receive their hours, priority during shift trainings should be given to these instructors rather than those employed by the training center.

2. Firefighter training hours should be amended somewhat to include topics that can be used for other purposes such as inspector hours. This can be accomplished by instruction in topics that include life safety systems such as alarms and sprinkler systems. These hours can be used for both firefighter and inspector continuing education hours. Driving education hours can be used for both fire and EMS continuing education.
3. The department should hold at least a quarterly class on any of the nine topics for inspectors. These classes should be of four to five hours duration each. This would allow the inspectors to attend any two classes and get their education requirements without having to pay overtime and would be a minimal cost for the instructors pay. This would also allow for advanced planning and would not interfere with vacations or other scheduled days off.
4. Instructor updates should be held on a more frequent basis. This would allow instructors to obtain their requirements easier and not impact time off or require them to attend other regions training sessions to maintain their certification.

These changes would be a minimal cost to the department and certainly much cheaper than outsourcing or sending personnel to other seminars or classes.

One additional change that was adopted and changed was the data base structure for the training records. This has already been conducted as part of my responsibilities within the department as an action step of the research. A reformatting of the training schedule is under consideration and waiting approval.

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**APPENDIX A**

*In- House Survey*

Lieutenant George A. Beck  
Howland Fire Department  
OFE Class 8, Research Survey

Please complete the survey below by January 2, 2009.  
Upon completion of the survey, please return to Lt. Beck

1. Employee Status (circle one)  
Volunteer                      Part Time Paid                      Career
  
2. Please circle all of your current certifications.  
Firefighter I                      Firefighter II                      Fire Inspector                      Fire Instructor
  
3. How do you rate the current training at the Howland Fire Department (circle one)  
  
Exceeds all state requirements in all areas  
Just adequate to meet all current state requirements in all areas  
Adequate in some areas, not adequate in others  
Not adequate in any area
  
4. How do you get most of your training at Howland Fire Department (circle one)  
  
Monday Nights  
On Shift  
Outside of the Department  
I don't train much at all
  
5. How do you feel about the ease of meeting state training requirements (circle one)  
  
Very easy to meet all requirements with in-house only training  
Somewhat easy to meet all requirements with in-house training  
Somewhat difficult to meet some requirements in house  
Very difficult to meet all requirements with in- house training  
No opinion one way or the other

6. What type of training would allow you to get your recertification easier?

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7. What training schedule would allow you to get your recertification easier?

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**APPENDIX B**

*Outside Departments Survey*

Lieutenant George A. Beck  
Howland Fire Department  
OFE Class 8, Research Survey

OFE Class 8, Research Questionnaire for interviews and/or surveys outside of Howland

1. Is your Fire Department staffed by (circle one)  
Full-time  
Part-time  
Combination  
Volunteer
  
2. How many emergency calls does your department handle annually?(circle one)  
100 – 500  
500 – 1000  
1000 – 2000  
2000 – 5000  
5000+
  
3. Does your department handle EMS as well as fire calls?(circle one)  
Yes  
No
  
4. Does your department handle all training in-house to meet current state requirements(circle one)  
Yes  
No
  
5. If you answered no to Question 1, what percentage in conducted in-house?  
0 – 25%  
26 – 50%  
51 – 75%  
76 – 100%



## APPENDIX C

### *Departments Responding to Survey by mail or phone*

List of the departments that completed the mailed survey or phone survey and the name of the person used, if a phone survey was conducted.

Austintown Fire	Mahoning County	
Bazetta Fire	Trumbull County	Asst. Chief D. Lewis
Boardman Fire	Mahoning County	Asst. Chief D.
Braceville Fire	Trumbull County	Chief D. Maffit
Bristol Fire	Trumbull County	Steve Craiger
Brookfield Fire	Trumbull County	Capt. Dave Coffy
Cardinal Joint Fire Dist.	Mahoning County	
Champion Fire	Trumbull County	Chief J. Hickey
Columbiana Fire	Columbiana County	
Cortland Fire	Trumbull County	William Brewer
East Liverpool Fire	Columbiana County	
East Palestine Fire	Columbiana County	
Franklin Township Fire	Columbiana County	
Glenmore Fire	Columbiana County	
Johnson Fire	Trumbull County	James Williamson
Lake Milton	Mahoning County	
Leetonia Fire	Columbiana County	

Liberty Fire	Trumbull County	
Lisbon Fire	Columbiana County	
Mineral Ridge Fire	Trumbull County	
Minerva Fire	Columbiana County	
Newton Falls Fire	Trumbull County	
North Jackson Fire	Mahoning County	
Salem Fire	Columbiana County	
Springfield Fire	Mahoning County	
Vienna Fire	Trumbull County	Don Walker
Warren Fire	Trumbull County	Capt. Tom Walker
Weathersfield Fire	Trumbull County	
Wellsville Fire	Columbiana County	
Western Reserve Fire	Mahoning County	