

**REPORT ON FIREFIGHTER TRAINING  
TO THE 1998 LEGISLATURE**

**FEBRUARY 1998**

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**FIREFIGHTER TRAINING STUDY COMMITTEE  
AUTHORIZED IN MINN. LAWS 1997, CH. 239, ART. 2, SEC. 9**

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

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# FIREFIGHTER TRAINING STUDY COMMITTEE

February 1, 1998

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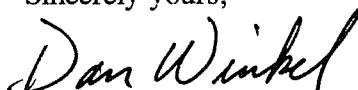
The Firefighter Training Study Committee is pleased to present its report on firefighter training in accordance with Minn. Laws 1997, Ch. 239, Art. 2, Sec. 9. As directed in the legislation, public comments on the draft report are included, in a separate attached document. The committee consisted of representatives of the major firefighter organizations as well as other significant stakeholders in firefighter training.

The committee held public meetings in Redwood Falls, Grand Rapids, Detroit Lakes, St. Cloud, and Rosemount, surveyed a substantial number of fire departments (fire chiefs and firefighters), received many letters and other communications, and contacted interested persons and organizations during this study. Additionally, in accordance with the statutory directive, a draft of this report was circulated for public comment. The comments are contained in a separate document that accompanies this report.

We concluded that firefighter training currently works better in some parts of the state than others and that fire departments and their communities need additional help to ensure good-quality, accessible, cost-effective training for firefighters. We are recommending a strategy that preserves the many components of training that work well, leaves local discretion intact to determine what training is needed, and provides additional firefighter training funding — directly to local governments — through training cost reimbursement that is tied to documented quality training. We believe that a board of firefighter training, with representation of fire service personnel, municipalities, public safety, education, and the public, can best perform this function.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss the study and its recommendations.

Sincerely yours,



Dan Winkel  
Committee Chair



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# **CONTENTS**

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CURRENT TRAINING DELIVERY SYSTEM</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CURRENT FUNDING LEVELS and TYPES of FUNDING</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>SELECTION and EVALUATION of TRAINING INSTRUCTORS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>LEVELS of SERVICE and NEED for STANDARDIZED TRAINING</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>FEDERAL and STATE LAWS and STANDARDS THAT AFFECT TRAINING</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SYSTEM for REIMBURSING LOCAL JURISDICTIONS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>NEED for CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTION of TRAINING</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>STATUTORY CHANGES</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>30</b>



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The 1997 Minnesota Legislature created the Firefighter Training Study Committee [Laws 1997, Ch. 239, Art. 2, Sec. 9] to study firefighter training needs and options and to report findings and recommendations, including any changes in statutes required to implement the committee's recommendations. The committee was to consider funding of training, the current delivery system, selection and evaluation of instructors, levels of service and any need for standardized training, federal and state laws that affect firefighter training, a system for reimbursing local jurisdictions for training programs, and need for centralized administrative direction of training programs. This report summarizes the data-gathering efforts and processes used by the committee as well as the findings and recommendations.

The committee conducted five public meetings during October and November in Redwood Falls, Grand Rapids, Detroit Lakes, St. Cloud, and Rosemount. The public meetings were attended by representatives from 102 fire departments. Two questionnaires (Fire Chief Questionnaire and Firefighter Questionnaire) were sent to fire departments statewide, asking about the status of their training and sense of need and preferences for changes. About one of every four departments (204 of 795) responded to the Fire Chief Questionnaire, and about one of every eight firefighters (2,365 of 19,500) responded to the Firefighter Questionnaire. Additional contacts were made with fire service organizations, city and township officials, insurance industry representatives, education providers, and others. A draft report was circulated for public comment for three weeks in December and January, with a copy sent to every fire department and a copy posted on the Internet. Each committee member received a copy of all public comments. The committee met to discuss the public comments and made decisions about changes to the draft report based on the comments. The committee's decisions are reflected in this final report.

The committee heard that current firefighter training works well in some respects. In parts of the state there is general satisfaction with training quality and availability, notably some technical college training and most in-house training. However, in many parts of the state, consistent quality, adequate funding, and access to needed training are not present.

A strong conclusion from the study is that fire service personnel favor continued local determination of the types of training needed based on local needs. There also is a clear preference for consistently high-quality and appropriate in-house training because most training now is in-house and travel distance and related costs are minimized. The importance of accessible, quality training is further apparent considering that about 90 percent of firefighters are volunteers — firefighting is not their full-time employment — and recruitment and retention of volunteers are regarded as a continuing problem.

Inconsistent quality of instruction, inadequate curriculum standards, unclear accountability for the uses of some current funding, and under-funding were frequently mentioned during this study as key problems with current firefighter training. Awareness of and compliance with existing base-line training requirements for all fire departments, such as those in Minnesota OSHA standards, were noted as

sometimes lacking. Many firefighters and fire chiefs noted their current needs for training and refresher training in basic firefighting skills and knowledge (“live burn” training, breathing apparatus, pumpers, hoses, hazardous materials, blood-borne pathogens, and others) and areas of specialized training for fire and emergency response (fire service leadership, vehicle extrication, confined space rescue, high angle rescue, terrorism response, and others).

Local-level funding deficiencies for firefighter training were noted more often than other concerns by fire chiefs who returned surveys and fire personnel who attended public meetings. Fire training funding is mostly local. However, other sources of training are provided with state funding. For example, some specialized training is provided at no or low cost by state agencies such as the Department of Public Safety (State Fire Marshal Division, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and Division of Emergency Management) and the Department of Natural Resources (Forestry Division). The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, through technical colleges and the Metropolitan State University’s Fire/EMS Center, provides firefighter training paid by local governments with a state-funded subsidy to the technical colleges. Technical college fire training programs and the Fire/EMS Center have the benefit of the firefighter training subsidy and dedicated firefighter training funds.

Deficiencies in training would come to light, for example, if Minnesota OSHA made an inspection, if a firefighter was critically injured, or if a lawsuit brought out the training issue. In the 10-year period ending in 1992, fire departments were inspected under a special emphasis inspection program at a rate of at least 40 per year. However, since the expiration of the program in 1993, the number of inspections of fire departments by MnOSHA has declined to an average of seven inspections (less than 1 percent of departments) annually. This change is due to MnOSHA’s concentration of enforcement activities in other high-hazard industries with high injury and illness incidence rates.

Training records for firefighters and fire departments are maintained in each department. Each municipality and fire chief is required to keep records to demonstrate that adequate training is provided. Some training providers, notably the MnSCU system institutions, maintain records of firefighter training they provide, but the records are for internal purposes and pertain only to classes taught by MnSCU instructors. Individual departments must ensure training completeness and quality as well as maintain appropriate records.

Fire service personnel who participate in a *voluntary* certification program of the Minnesota Fire Service Certification Board (a private, nonprofit organization) must pass written and practical tests to be certified or recertified. However, a large number of firefighters were “grandfathered” into certification when the program began. In this program, firefighters are not required to produce training records to obtain certification or recertification (fire chiefs notify the certification board that a firefighter should be certified or recertified) but would be required to make records available if an audit was requested.

Even if individual department training records reflect that training hours were provided in appropriate topics, the other above-noted areas of concern — consistent instructor and training delivery quality,



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consistent curriculum content, and completeness for local needs — have no reliable means for quality assurance.

The study committee concluded that municipalities, fire service personnel, and fire departments can benefit from state-level funding administered through a reimbursement program tied to documented quality training; improvements to ensure instructor quality and consistent curriculum content; and oversight of these functions by a board of firefighter training made up of fire service, municipal, education, public safety, and public members.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee's principal recommendations are that the Legislature:

1. **Create an independent board of firefighter training.** The board would be independent but associated with an existing state agency for administrative support to save costs. The 16 board members would include representatives from:
  - Volunteer firefighters (8 members representing the 15 regional fire districts on a rotating basis)
  - Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (one member)
  - Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association (one member)
  - the Commissioner of Public Safety or the Commissioner's designee
  - the Chancellor of MnSCU or the Chancellor's designee
  - the League of Minnesota Cities
  - the Minnesota Association of Townships and
  - the public (two members who are not engaged in fire service professions or industries).
2. **Provide the board with these powers and duties:** (a) to establish and administer a training reimbursement program; (b) to establish curriculum, policies, and procedures for qualifying funded firefighter training programs; (c) to establish qualifications for instructors; (d) to establish procedures for handling complaints and standards for disqualification of instructors; and (e) to adopt rules necessary to carry out the duties. Powers *not* provided to the board are firefighter certification and establishment of statewide minimum training requirements. The board oversees all non-credit-based firefighter training (that is, training other than two-year and four-year degree programs).
3. **Direct that the board administer a firefighter training reimbursement program on the following principles:** (a) training reimbursement program funds will be paid directly to municipalities, fire departments, or MnSCU institutions; (b) municipalities or departments can

choose whether to participate in the program and the extent of their participation; (c) the board will reimburse the local government for part or all of the costs of training based on the number of training hours successfully completed in accordance with rules set by the board; (d) the board will determine the amount of reimbursement for each hour of qualified training; (e) an instructor must be deemed qualified by the board before offering the training for which reimbursement is sought; and (f) before issuing a training reimbursement, the board will determine that the training was conducted by a qualified instructor and met the standards set by the board and will require verification of the costs associated with the training and the number of training hours.

- 4. Increase the state share of costs for firefighter training through funding of the firefighter training cost reimbursement program and board operation.** Funding would come from a combination of sources including extension of existing emergency-response-related user fees and redirection of certain existing dedicated firefighter training funds.

The committee determined that it **would not submit a bill** to the Legislature based on its recommendations. Other interested parties may use the committee's work and recommendations as they see fit to promote legislation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

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The 1997 Minnesota Legislature created the 18-member Firefighter Training Study Committee to study firefighter training needs and options. The committee was to consider funding of training, the current delivery system, selection and evaluation of training instructors, levels of service and any need for standardized training, federal and state laws that affect firefighter training, a system for reimbursing local jurisdictions for training programs, and need for centralized administrative direction of training programs [Laws 1997, Ch. 239, Art. 2, Sec. 9]. This authorizing provision of statutes is presented in Appendix A; the study committee members and representation are listed in Appendix B.

The Department of Public Safety was directed to provide administrative and staff support to the study committee. The department hired the Department of Administration's Management Analysis Division to provide assistance to the committee: planning and facilitation of public meetings, research and data gathering on study issues for the committee, planning and facilitation of committee meetings leading to the committee's development of recommendations, and preparation of a draft report for public comment and a final report for the committee to present to the 1998 Legislature by Feb. 1.

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## BACKGROUND

Minnesota fire deaths, reported by the Minnesota State Fire Marshal, totaled 50 in 1996. In the past 13 years, 853 Minnesotans died in fires, with about two-thirds of those deaths outside the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area. The per capita death rate for Minnesota in 1996 was 1.1 per 100,000, comparing favorably with the national rate of 1.9 per 100,000. Decade totals for fire deaths in Minnesota are: 1970s, 961; 1980s, 776; 1990s, 605 (projected). In 1996, 257 Minnesotans were injured in fires; however, this number includes only victims who had direct contact with fire departments, not those who were taken to emergency rooms by ambulance or private car. Arson fire incidents have increased in number in recent years, and they are often more complex and dangerous for firefighters than other fires.

In 1996, 230 firefighters were injured while responding to emergency situations. Three-fourths of the injuries were directly fire-related. And, as noted in the State Fire Marshal's report, the statistics do not include injuries that occurred during training or at fire stations.

The estimated direct dollar loss from fires in 1996 in Minnesota was \$144 million, up 9 percent from the previous year. The other figures to complete the five-year trend for direct fire losses were: 1992, \$122 million; 1993, \$109 million; 1994, \$153 million; and 1995, \$132 million. Residential fires accounted for nearly two-thirds of all structure fires and 47 percent of total dollar losses from structure fires in 1996.

The State Fire Marshal reported more than 20,000 fire calls and more than 65,000 rescue calls by fire departments in 1996. With all categories of responses, fire departments responded to more than 140,000 calls statewide in 1996. The multi-year trend in total calls has been steadily upward: 1992, 98,500; 1993, 107,000; 1994, 122,000; 1995, 133,000. Although the total number of *fire* calls has increased slightly over the five-year period, the number of *rescue* calls is up by about 45 percent, and *hazardous condition* calls have nearly doubled since 1992 to about 10,000 in 1996.

Nationally and in Minnesota, calls for firefighters' services in emergency response non-fire situations have increased. Examples include giving CPR to heart attack victims, extricating persons from cars after wrecks, and cleaning up hazardous materials spills. A newer role in emergency response for firefighters is as a first line of defense following a terrorist attack. Overall in Minnesota, an increasingly broad range of emergency response capabilities is being asked of firefighters, and they are responding to more emergency calls each year.

## FIREFIGHTER INFORMATION

The number of firefighters in Minnesota is estimated to be at 19,500. The number of fire departments in the state, based on a list maintained by the State Fire Marshal, is 795. That includes municipal departments, about 100 nonprofit departments that serve municipalities under contract, private

departments, and departments of other units of government such as the Metropolitan Airports Commission.

Firefighters can be categorized according to their pay status as full-time (“career”), unpaid volunteers, or volunteers paid-on-call (“POC”), although there are many variations of these categories. Unpaid volunteers in Minnesota may still receive some compensation and most participate in a firefighter pension plan. POC volunteers essentially have a part-time job that includes paid time on calls and in training, at widely varying levels of compensation among departments, and most are participants in a firefighter pension plan. POC volunteers are usually paid either at an hourly rate for the number of hours spent on each call or training session or a lump sum for each call or training session.

Recruitment and retention of firefighters, especially volunteers who total about 90 percent of Minnesota firefighters, are a significant concern in many communities. The problem is that increased time demands on current and potential firefighters from work, families, and other community commitments don’t leave time for the demands of firefighting calls and needed training. And as competing time demands increase, so have the requirements to become skilled and stay skilled for firefighting.

In many communities some of the same people are emergency responders in more than one branch: law enforcement, emergency medical services, and firefighting. This requires the individuals to participate in training and stay proficient in a broader range of emergency response skills. It also points out the overlap of skills and needed training among the three categories of emergency responders.

In Minnesota, both the Peace Officers Standards and Training Board (for law enforcement personnel) and the Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board (for emergency medical personnel) provide funding for training, among other responsibilities.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

The study committee used many information sources for their consideration of firefighter training issues, in addition to their own backgrounds and individual data gathering during the study period: five public meetings, two questionnaires, the results of a previous study of firefighter training issues (the Joint Advisory Training Committee), and other written and oral information from interested parties in interviews or other communications. Information from these sources is incorporated into the remainder of the report, but is overviewed here. Appendix C shows which fire departments provided information to the study committee through participation in public meetings and by returning completed questionnaires.

**Joint Advisory Training Committee** In 1993, the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association invited the Minnesota State Fire Department Association and the Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association to jointly study firefighter training. The committee met for about three years reviewing

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many firefighter training topics. The committee identified several options for action based on its work. The findings and conclusions from this effort were considered by the study committee in its work to prepare this report. Appendix D has additional information about the JATC study.

**Public meetings** Meetings were held in Redwood Falls, Grand Rapids, Detroit Lake, St. Cloud, and Rosemount. The five public meetings were attended by nearly 200 people, most of them from the fire service. One hundred two fire departments were represented at the five meetings (about one-eighth of all departments in Minnesota). About 90 percent of participants identified themselves as volunteer firefighters. The public meeting procedures are summarized in Appendix E; a more complete description of attendee demographics is in Appendix F. Each meeting had a somewhat different focus of concerns, although certain themes were identified consistently in all the meetings. This summary information for all meetings is presented in the next report section on firefighter training. The detailed summaries of each of the five meetings, in the format used in the meetings, is presented in Appendix G.

**Fire Chief questionnaire** Two hundred four fire departments (about one of every four departments) responded to the Fire Chief Questionnaire. The Fire Chief Questionnaire asked for information about current practices in training, sources of training, training budgets, training needs, and preferences for specific potential changes to firefighter training that were the subject of the study committee's legislative directive. The response rate to the questionnaire (about 25 percent) was not sufficient to draw conclusions about the entire fire chief population. The results provide a supplement to other information used by the study committee. A copy of the Fire Chief Questionnaire is in Appendix H.

All 15 regional fire districts in the state were represented in the responses. Volunteer departments represented 83 percent of respondents, career departments represented 4 percent, and departments identified as combinations of volunteer and career personnel represented 13 percent. Departments of 30 or fewer fire personnel accounted for 76 percent of respondents; departments of up to 60 fire personnel accounted for 95 percent. Appendix I shows more complete demographics by regional fire district, pay status, and department size. Demographics of the communities whose fire chiefs responded to the Fire Chief Questionnaire are in Appendix I. That table shows that 57 percent of respondents came from communities of 2,500 population or less; 77 percent from communities of 10,000 or less; and 95 percent from communities of 50,000 or less.

**Firefighter questionnaire** About one of every eight firefighters in the state (2,365 of an estimated 19,500 firefighters) responded to the Firefighter Questionnaire. The questionnaire asked for information about the training they experienced in the past year, current needs for training, and preferences regarding possible changes to firefighter training that are in the study committee's legislative directive. As with the fire chief questionnaire, this questionnaire response rate was not sufficient to draw conclusions about the entire firefighter population. The results shed light on the issues, concerns, and activities of the segment of the firefighter population that chose to respond. A

copy of the Firefighter Questionnaire is also contained in Appendix H.

All 15 regional fire districts in the state are represented in responses to the questionnaire. Volunteers accounted for 96 percent of respondents. Their length of time as firefighters was: 5 years or less, 31 percent; 6 to 10 years, 22 percent; 11 to 20 years, 35 percent; and 21 or more years, 12 percent. Details of Firefighter Questionnaire respondents' demographics are in Appendix J.

**Other communications** Many other individuals and organizations contacted study committee members or were contacted by members or Management Analysis consultants. The letters and information were reviewed by committee members. Among the organizations (this is not a complete list) were:

Fire Marshal's Association of Minnesota

Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association

Insurance Federation of Minnesota

Minnesota Association of Fire Mutual Insurance Companies

League of Minnesota Cities (also represented on the committee)

Minnesota Association of Townships

Department of Natural Resources, Fire Management Group

Minnesota Fire Service Certification Board

State Fire Training Coordinators Association

Fire Instructors Association of Minnesota

Blue Earth County Mayors and Clerks Association

State Fire and EMS Training Advisory Committee

Arrowhead Regional Fire Fighters Association

Faribault County Township Officers Association

**Public comments to the draft report** The draft report was placed on the Internet and paper copies mailed to all fire departments and to persons who had asked for a copy of the draft report. About 50 persons and organizations made written comments to the draft report. The final report reflects the committee's consideration of the public comments to the draft report received during the public comment period.

## CURRENT TRAINING DELIVERY SYSTEM

Firefighter training for Minnesota fire service personnel is delivered in many ways — through in-house training at fire stations, technical college credit-based courses and customized training, state-sponsored training of various kinds, national fire associations or training academies in other states, and others. Table 1 shows responders' replies to the Fire Chief Questionnaire about training sources for their departments and the percent of training from each source. Each department noted the percent of training in each category, with the sum of percentages for the department being 100 percent. Table 1 shows the average of all the departments' percentages (each department weighted equally).

**TABLE 1. Training sources for Minnesota firefighters (from Fire Chief Questionnaire responses)**

Source of training	Average percent of training from source
In-house training by in-house instructors	54
In-house training by technical college instructors	16
In-house training by free-lance/contract instructors	3
Other in-house training	5
State Fire School training	3
Regional fire training	2
Sectional fire training	6
Fire/EMS Center training	1
Technical college training at technical colleges	4
Industry-provided training	1
Other training	2

NOTE: The table total is 97 percent, due to a few questionnaire responses that did not total 100 percent. Rounding may also contribute to the result.

As Table 1 indicates, more than half of all firefighter training (for the Fire Chief Questionnaire responders) is in-house training conducted by in-house instructors. When all categories are considered, in-house training totals about 78 percent of firefighter training. Fire sectional schools at 6 percent and technical college training at technical colleges at 4 percent are the next highest categories of sources of firefighter training. These other sources of training are explained briefly below.

- Technical college training:** Eleven technical colleges in the MnSCU system provide credit-based training and customized firefighter training. Credit-based programs include the curriculum for Firefighter I, Firefighter II, and the NFPA 1403 ("live burn" training). Each course is generally based on the National Fire Protection Association standards, sometimes with modifications requested by local departments. About 98 percent of firefighter training sponsored by technical colleges, however, is through customized (non-credit workshop) training. Instructors for in-house training can be

provided by or arranged through technical college firefighter training coordinators, who may be full-time or part-time coordinators. In 1996, technical colleges and Metropolitan State University (the Fire/EMS Center) provided about 294,000 student “contact hours” of customized training.

- **Fire/EMS Center training:** The Fire/EMS Center develops and delivers specialized curricula to meet the requirements of such federally funded programs as the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act; Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act; Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting; and the Leaking Underground Storage Tank program initiated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
- **State Fire School:** The Fire/EMS Center coordinates this annual (spring) statewide fire school that covers a wide variety of training subjects.
- **Regional fire training:** Training is conducted in the 15 fire district regions by a variety of training providers on a periodic basis.
- **Sectional fire training:** The technical colleges that provide firefighter training generally conduct an annual sectional school that covers many firefighter training subjects.
- **Industry-provided training:** A few industries arrange for local municipal firefighters who would be called for a fire at the industry facilities to train with the industry fire brigades. In at least one case, local firefighters receive training out of state with industry fire brigade personnel.
- **Other training:** Several examples were named in questionnaire responses: courses taught by the Department of Public Safety (Division of State Fire Marshal, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and Division of Emergency Services), the Department of Natural Resources (Forestry Division) and, outside Minnesota, fire academies that conduct specialized training, for example, the National Fire Academy in Maryland that conducts fire officer training.

Firefighters were also asked about sources of their recent training. Their responses from the Firefighter Questionnaire, shown in Table 2, were mostly similar to the responses from the Fire Chief Questionnaire noted in Table 1. The total for all types of in-house training is lower at 68 percent, but confirms that from two-thirds to three-fourths of all firefighter training for these questionnaire respondents is conducted in-house at local fire stations. Firefighters were asked about the number of hours they spent training in the past 12 months. The average from all responses to the Firefighter Questionnaire was 79 hours. As shown in Table 3, about 60 percent of firefighters reported training hours in the range of 26 to 100, but almost 10 percent reported from 1 to 25 hours for the year (and this does not include the 105 firefighters who did not answer the question).

Firefighters were asked the training level (or training credentials) they had attained to date. The responses (from the Firefighter Questionnaire) are shown in Table 4. The percent of the 2,365 responders indicating they attained each level of training or voluntary certification is shown in the second column. As noted in Table 4 on Page 14, nearly three-fourths of these firefighters indicated they had taken courses to the level of the Firefighter I curriculum, either at technical colleges or otherwise. About one-fourth (23 percent) said they were currently certified in the voluntary certification program (see Appendix K for further



information about this program). The “additional training” was used to indicate many types of specialized courses including fire service leadership, arson, instructor, and others.

**TABLE 2. Training sources for Minnesota firefighters  
(from Firefighter Questionnaire responses)**

Source of training	Average percent of training from source
In-house training by in-house instructors	44
In-house training by technical college instructors	14
In-house training by free-lance/contract instructors	4
Other in-house training	6
State Fire School training	4
Regional fire training	3
Sectional fire training	4
Fire/EMS Center training	4
Technical college training at technical colleges	6
Industry-provided training	3
Other training	9

NOTE: The table total is 101 percent, due to rounding.

**TABLE 3. Distribution of firefighter training hours  
(from Firefighter Questionnaire responses)**

Range of number of training hours	Number of firefighters that reported in this range	Percent	Cumulative percent
Blank (no hours reported)	105	4.4	4.4
1 to 10	43	1.8	6.2
11 to 25	181	7.7	13.9
26 to 50	653	27.6	41.5
51 to 100	817	34.5	76.0
101 to 150	350	14.8	90.8
151 to 200	108	4.6	95.4
201 or more hours	108	4.6	100.0
Totals	2,365	100.0	

**TABLE 4. Level of training or voluntary certification**

Training level or certification	Percent of responders
Voluntary certification	23
Firefighter I from a technical college	50
Firefighter I equivalent (not from a technical college)	23
Firefighter II	30
Firefighter III	9
Additional training	22

## CONCERNS and ISSUES in CURRENT FIREFIGHTER TRAINING DELIVERY

At each of the five public meetings, attendees were asked what they thought worked well with current firefighter training delivery and what was not working well, and for ideas to resolve any problems they identified. These matters are summarized under headings intended to capture major areas of concern and satisfaction. Appendix G has a description of the results of each meeting, by location.

- **Local control.** At each meeting participants expressed the concern that training decisions — that is, how much training and what types of training are needed — should be retained at the fire department and municipal level.
- **Technical college training.** At one meeting, about two-thirds of participants noted that technical college training is working well, while at another meeting just a handful said so. At the other three meetings, between 20 and 40 percent of participants named technical college training as working well. Many participants were very satisfied with the basic firefighter courses available at the colleges and the technical college instructors who provided in-house training at the fire stations. Participants had concerns about training costs, consistency of the curriculum and course content among the colleges, and the oversight provided by technical college coordinators of firefighter training (particularly part-time coordinators). Also, some concerns about consistent instruction quality were mentioned. Overall, the participants were most concerned about the consistency of course content and quality training delivery across the state, and costs, especially for smaller departments.
- **In-house training.** In-house training was noted as working well by at least 25 percent of participants at all five meetings. At the meeting with the highest number of positive comments, about 50 percent said in-house training is working well. The concerns with in-house training included some about instructor quality. The major advantage of in-house training mentioned was that it is closer to home for firefighters, and this was especially important for volunteers.

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- **Other sources of training.** At each public meeting, several participants noted that other sources of firefighter training are working well: sectional schools, state fire school, regional schools, other state-agency-sponsored education, and the National Fire Academy. The concerns noted by participants usually concerned access: costs and travel time. At most meetings, shared training where two or more departments conduct joint training was noted as working well by several participants. No concerns were noted that were exclusive to this type of training.
  - **Training curricula.** At one meeting, about 25 percent of participants noted that their training curriculum works well and applies to their departments' needs. At other meetings, a lesser percent of participants noted satisfaction. Most often, basic firefighting courses, such as the Firefighter I, Firefighter II, or NFPA 1403 courses, were noted with satisfaction. The major concern about training curricula was the lack of agreed-upon content standards. Participants also were concerned that training be appropriate to their local situation and that no new unnecessary requirements, or "mandates," be imposed.
  - **Instruction quality.** The concern about instructor quality was often noted as inconsistency. Many of those who expressed the concern also noted that most instructors are very good. However, participants were concerned that there is no comprehensive system for evaluating firefighter training instructors and improving quality where needed. It was noted, however, that the technical colleges evaluate instructors within the technical college system.
  - **Access to training.** At one meeting, about 25 percent of participants said their training is accessible in terms of travel distance. About 10 percent of participants at the same meeting noted that training is accessible in terms of cost. In other meetings, access to training was generally not often mentioned as something that works well. Access issues of funding, travel distance, and availability of specific needed classes were noted often by participants at all meetings. The issues are related significantly to the time that firefighters, especially volunteers, feel is available to devote to training in light of their other commitments. Many suggestions were noted, including more in-house training, more regional training centers, trainers who travel around the state to train at departments, more mutual aid training, more train-the-trainer programs for in-house training, and increased funding.
  - **Funding for training.** Increased funding for firefighter training was the most often mentioned area of need and recommendation for improvement of firefighter training. Comments were made with respect to adding funding and also for increasing the disclosure and accountability for the uses of current funding in the technical college system. Smaller and rural departments most often mentioned need for more funding.
  - **Training oversight and administration.** At all meetings some participants noted need for a function to oversee firefighter training, usually to ensure consistent quality of training delivery, support departments to ensure that all firefighters receive needed training, set and help get adherence to curriculum and instructional standards, and oversee increased state funding. Conversely, as noted above, there is broad concern that training decisions remain at the local level so the specific needs of communities and departments are met. From 20 to 40 percent of people at the meetings referenced this need or stated it as a recommendation.

Fire chiefs and firefighters were asked how satisfied they were with various aspects of firefighter training delivery as it exists. Tables 5 and 6 show their responses.

**TABLE 5. Fire Chief Questionnaire respondents: level of satisfaction**

	Percent very satisfied or satisfied	Percent neutral or no opinion	Percent dissatisfied or very dissatisfied
Funding for training	37	30	33
Quality of instruction: in-house	76	18	6
Quality of instruction: technical colleges	71	19	10
Quality of course materials	30	44	26
Availability of courses needed	59	23	18
Overall training compared to needs	59	27	14

**TABLE 6. Firefighter Questionnaire respondents: level of satisfaction**

	Percent very satisfied or satisfied	Percent neutral or no opinion	Percent dissatisfied or very dissatisfied
Funding for training	36	36	28
Quality of instruction: in-house	79	18	3
Quality of instruction: technical colleges	67	27	6
Quality of course materials	68	27	5
Availability of courses needed	57	32	12
Overall training compared to needs	55	35	10

The quality of instruction in-house and at technical colleges received the highest ratings from both fire chiefs and firefighters. The lowest level of satisfaction for both fire chiefs and firefighters was the level of funding available for training. The chiefs also had a low level of satisfaction with the quality of training materials.

In summary, the concerns expressed by parties contacted during this study were:

- Lack of appropriate or consistent delivery in some parts of the state
- Inconsistent costs of training
- Inconsistent quality of instruction (consistent trainer and delivery quality)
- Need to tailor training to local needs but keep it consistent
- Meeting minimum training requirements
- Schools not teaching the same curriculum but calling it the same class (nonstandard curriculum)
- Programs and courses not available in all areas
- Access to training, including driving time and costs
- No statewide oversight of firefighter training to ensure consistent quality courses and instruction

Fire chiefs and firefighters were also asked what changes to current firefighter training delivery they would favor, oppose, or have a neutral opinion (or no opinion) about. Tables 7 and 8 show the results.

**TABLE 7. Fire Chief Questionnaire respondents:  
opinions about specific possible changes to firefighter training delivery**

	Percent in favor	Percent opposed	Percent neutral or no opinion
Certify instructors	55.4	17.2	27.5
Establish minimum training standards	59.3	20.6	20.0
Standardize curriculum	72.5	13.2	14.2
Create a training oversight function	34.3	17.2	48.5

**TABLE 8. Firefighter Questionnaire respondents:  
opinions about specific possible changes to firefighter training delivery**

	Percent in favor	Percent opposed	Percent neutral or no opinion
Certify instructors	48.6	19.7	31.7
Establish minimum training standards	52.5	21.1	26.4
Standardize curriculum	53.4	19.9	26.6
Create a training oversight function	24.3	26.1	49.6

From the questionnaire results only, the actions favored by greater margins both by fire chiefs and firefighters who responded to the questionnaires were:

- **Standardize curriculum:** favored by nearly three-fourths of the chiefs and more than half the firefighters.
- **Establish minimum training standards:** favored by about 60 percent of the chiefs and more than half the firefighters.

One action was favored by around half of the respondents to both surveys:

- **Certify instructors:** favored by more than half of the chiefs and slightly less than half of the firefighters.

The other possible action was less favored but also did not show substantial opposition:

- **Create a training oversight function:** This action was favored by about a third of the chiefs, opposed by about one-sixth, with about half neutral or no response. For firefighters, about one-fourth favored, one-fourth opposed, and half were neutral or made no response to the question.

## **CURRENT FUNDING LEVELS and TYPES of FUNDING**

The amount of funding that goes into firefighter training is unknown. Local governments (the municipal general funds) pay for the greatest portion, with some state subsidy from a number of sources, notably the MnSCU system, and other smaller sources.

Fire chiefs were asked in the Fire Chief Questionnaire where the funding for their departments' training originates. Their responses indicate the understanding that nearly all funding is local:

- **Local funding** — 129 departments (63 percent) noted that local funding provides 100 percent of their funds for firefighter training.
- **State funding** — 32 departments (16 percent) noted that state funding is part of their firefighter training funding. Of these, 11 noted that it provided 10 percent or more of their training funds. Of these 11, two noted that state funding provided half their training funds and 3 noted it provided a quarter; the others were less than a quarter.
- **Federal funding** — 23 departments (11 percent) noted that federal funding is part of their training funding. Of the 23, five were at or above 15 percent; the others were 10 percent or less.

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- **Industry funding (industry-provided training)** — 22 departments (11 percent) noted this source of firefighter training. Of these, 5 said it provided 10 or 15 percent of their training funds. The others were 5 percent or less.
  - **Other sources** — 19 departments (9 percent) noted other sources of funding for firefighter training. Many of these were such things as local fund-raising efforts.

The fire chiefs were also asked in the Fire Chief Questionnaire the amount of their total 1996 firefighter training budget and the number of firefighters in the department in 1996. The great variety of responses indicated that, unfortunately, they had many interpretations of the budget question. For example, it was not clear in many cases if payroll or equipment costs were included. Much more specific and detailed information would have to be collected in order to get reliable data. It may be of interest, however, to note that the average of all reported 1996 department budgets on a per-firefighter basis was \$335. And if that average pertained to all 19,500 Minnesota firefighters, the amount of local budgets for firefighter training would be about \$6.5 million.

Local funding pays for firefighter training through the MnSCU system. However, training provided through the MnSCU technical colleges and the Metropolitan State Fire/EMS Center are benefited by a subsidy and dedicated funds:

- **The firefighter tuition subsidy.** The tuition subsidy was initiated by the Minnesota Legislature in 1987 as a source of funding to “buy down” the cost of tuition paid by firefighters for technical college training. The rate was 50 cents per student “contact hour” until July 1993, when it changed to \$1 per student “contact hour.” The subsidy is paid directly to the college or center providing the training, based on submission of documentation that training was provided. Any amounts unpaid in a year carry over to the next year. From Fiscal Year 1988 through Fiscal Year 1996, about \$1.94 million was paid from the fund. In FY 97, about \$294,000 was paid to 14 MnSCU institutions. In FY 98, \$318,000 is available for payment from the fund. The firefighter tuition subsidy had a carryover from last year of about \$283,500. With the addition of the FY 98 allocation, the total available in the subsidy fund currently is about \$601,500.
- **The technical and community/technical college fire training allocation.** MnSCU received additional funds in FY 98 to support fire training. The fire training allocation is about \$770,000 for FY 98 and is distributed to 17 MnSCU technical and community/technical colleges based on a formula from several years ago that represented each institution’s portion of the total training provided. According to MnSCU, the formula does not now represent the portion of training each institution currently provides.
- **The Fire/EMS Center (Metropolitan State University).** The Fire/EMS Center received a FY 98 allocation of \$632,000 to provide training and other services to the fire service and emergency medical services.

Other state and federal organizations provide funding for firefighter training as part of their budgets dedicated to such training or through grants. Additionally, private organizations, especially those with their own fire brigades and who rely on municipal fire departments for support, may pay for some municipal firefighter training. The amount from these sources is unknown, but may be estimated as small compared with local government and MnSCU funds allocated for firefighter training.

State agencies that provide limited specialized firefighter training at low or no cost to firefighters are the Department of Public Safety (State Fire Marshal Division, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and Division of Emergency Management) and the Department of Natural Resources (Forestry Division).

Concerns expressed about these various sources of firefighter training funds can be summarized as follows:

- Many departments noted that the funding available for firefighter training is small in relation to their needs. At the local level of funding, other emergency services personnel such as law enforcement and emergency medical services are favored over firefighters when funding decisions are made.
- For MnSCU funds, there is concern that the firefighter tuition subsidy paid to individual technical colleges may not actually be buying down the cost of firefighter training. The concern was expressed as a strong desire to ensure that the institutions are accountable to clearly demonstrate the appropriate uses of the subsidy funding.
- It was noted that, although other emergency response professions in Minnesota such as law enforcement and emergency medical personnel receive supplemental training funding or reimbursement, the fire service does not.

## **SELECTION and EVALUATION of TRAINING INSTRUCTORS**

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Instructors for firefighter training include technical college instructors, fire service personnel, and freelance instructors, among others. Each department arranges its training with locally available trainers and may use the assistance of a technical college fire training coordinator to identify and arrange training. The coordinators are located around the state at several technical colleges. In some areas of the state, the positions are devoted full-time to fire training; in others, it is a part-time responsibility. Some departments have good-quality instructors in the department; others are able to arrange for good instructors through a technical college coordinator or by networking and word-of-mouth.



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Fire training instructors can receive teaching credentials from Minnesota organizations (that is, apart from MnSCU or technical college instructor credentials).

- The Fire Instructors Association of Minnesota (FIAM), located in Bloomington, was organized in 1969 to help fire instructors and training officers with their training duties. The 1,000-member association describes its role as distributors of training manuals for the state’s firefighters. It acts as a clearinghouse of information on new and old training programs, resources, and instructors, and provides courses, classes, and conferences to help instructors and training officers perform their functions. FIAM maintains a library of visual aids for members. Members receive a membership certificate. The organization does not assess the credentials for teaching knowledge, skills, or abilities of members but assists them with training resources.
- The Minnesota Fire Service Certification Board, a private nonprofit organization, administers among its certification programs a *voluntary certification* program for Fire Instructors (based on NFPA 1041 standards). However, a very small percentage of fire training instructors have been certified by this organization, the program for instructors is relatively new, and “grandfathering” of members for the first year is a feature of the program. Further information about this program is in Appendix K.

As noted earlier, firefighters and chiefs who responded to the questionnaires are generally satisfied with the overall quality of instruction. However, concerns about quality of instruction were often noted:

- Some instructors don’t have the necessary education, technical background, or teaching skills to train on subjects they undertake.
- There is no uniform system to certify or qualify instructors to help ensure consistently good quality of instruction on the statewide scale that is needed.
- There may be a shortage of well-qualified instructors, especially outside the metropolitan area. And the pool of available instructors may get smaller if substantial requirements for qualification or certification are imposed.
- Instructor evaluation is not done on a comprehensive basis; evaluations to ensure good-quality instruction and improvement aren’t effectively used; technical college training evaluations are routine, but the information is available only within the MnSCU system.
- Training and support for instructors, including train-the-trainer programs, are limited.

## **LEVELS of SERVICE and NEED for STANDARDIZED TRAINING**

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In theory, the “level of service” provided by a fire department refers to the amount and types of fire suppression capabilities and other emergency response capabilities that the local fire department determines it should provide, based on local conditions. The determination is based on the risks likely to be encountered as well as on available resources. A department having made this determination then trains to the level of service it has determined is needed for the community. Each capability requires specific training to be undertaken by firefighters. The fire chief in consultation with municipal officials determines specific training contents and timing.

In practice, the determination of an appropriate level of service is complicated when budgets, including for training resources, are inadequate or the capabilities for a thorough assessment of local risks are not present. Additionally, translating the risk assessment into specific training needs may not be easy.

Discussion of this topic during the study included consideration of whether it would be possible or desirable to define and specify levels of service that departments could fit into for their local situations. An advantage would be that the training requirements inherent in the particular level of service could (perhaps) also be specified. Then training could be standardized based on levels of service. This line of inquiry was not pursued to conclusion by the committee; most discussion focused on the need for standardized training without the relationship to levels of service.

The need for standardized training, as brought out in public meetings and the committee’s discussions, results from a lack of consistent curriculum content among training providers. For example, a class by a certain name or even a program like the Firefighter I series may not be taught with the same contents among institutions. As a result, one would not know what someone who completed a course had actually been taught, in terms of course contents. While the objective of this “tailoring to local conditions” might be appropriate in matching local needs to the training, it is confusing in that a firefighter could be assumed to have trained in some skill based on the standardized coverage of the course or series (curriculum content) when in fact they had not been trained.

Standardized training contents for firefighter training courses and series by specified names exist and are widely known and recognized. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1000 series Professional Qualifications Standards provide training standards. The fire service has other national and international standard-setting organizations.

In summary, the problems noted by the committee in this area included:

- Possibly inadequate levels of service being provided in some communities, with commensurate inadequate training for existing risks.
- Lack of resources (funding and access) to train for preferred level of service.

- Tradeoff between customizing course or series contents and ensuring that named standards are taught with all the specified and expected skill contents.
- No overall controls over firefighter course contents for courses taught at individual training institutions or in-house at the departments.

## **FEDERAL and STATE LAWS and STANDARDS that AFFECT TRAINING**

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A number of federal and state laws affect training for Minnesota firefighters. They have been referenced elsewhere in this report, but are repeated here (this list may not be all-inclusive):

- Minnesota occupational safety and health laws (which frequently reference standards set by other fire service organizations, specifically or by implication)
- Leaking Underground Storage Tank program initiated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Federal Hazardous Materials Transportation Act
- Federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
- Federal Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting
- Federal Department of Transportation Emergency Medical Response Standards

Other laws direct that certain training of firefighters be done:

- Grants to train fire departments in techniques of fire control for wildfires, sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources
- Arson training for law enforcement and fire service personnel, sponsored by the State Fire Marshal Division, Department of Public Safety

Many standard-setting organizations promulgate fire service standards that affect firefighter training. Primary among the standard-setting organizations for the fire service is the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

As noted above, the standards set for occupational safety and health often reference other standards for the fire service. OSHA standards are essentially minimum requirements and are generally written in “performance” terms so that employers, including fire departments, can develop training that meets

the needs of their particular workplace. For fire departments, the fire chief or other responsible persons must determine what firefighters will be expected to do as part of their job responsibilities and ensure that training is provided to meet those needs.

Minnesota's Occupational Safety and Health Division (MnOSHA) in the Department of Labor and Industry enforces training standards for fire service personnel. The enforceable standards for training people in the fire service are contained in federal and state OSHA standards. The standards often reference industry standards such as those from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and standards from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

MnOSHA standards apply to all firefighters, including volunteers who receive some form of "compensation" for their services, even if the only compensation is a pension at the end of their term of service. This determination was made by the state Attorney General's Office in 1982, at the time that the fire brigade standard was adopted in Minnesota. MnOSHA has compiled a list of the major training standards that pertain to fire departments in the state, shown in Table 9.

The study committee heard in public meetings and otherwise that some departments do not recognize the need to comply with the standards or are not familiar with what the standards require.

MnOSHA standards for firefighters prescribe minimum training based on local conditions and specific risks to which local firefighters may be exposed and the duties and tasks of individual firefighters. MnOSHA checks compliance with these standards through on-site inspections. Like the inspections in other industries, fire department inspections can originate through a random selection process or as a result of MnOSHA receiving a complaint.

Between 1983 and 1992, when fire departments were subject to inspection under a special emphasis inspection program, MnOSHA conducted an average of 40 fire department inspections per year. Since 1993 when the fire department special emphasis inspection program ended, MnOSHA has conducted an average of seven inspections per year (less than 1 percent of departments) including general programmed inspections and responses to complaints.

The reduced emphasis on fire department inspections reflects MnOSHA's strategy of focusing its limited resources in high-hazard workplaces with the highest injury and illness incidence rates. Thus, MnOSHA inspections, by themselves, cannot ensure widespread compliance with minimum training standards by all fire departments.

**TABLE 9. Minnesota OSHA standards that require training of firefighters**

Subject	Reference	Summary
Fire brigades	29 CFR 1910.156	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires firefighter training commensurate with the duties and functions they are expected to perform. Firefighters must be provided with training and education on all equipment they are required to use and on how to perform the tasks and duties they are assigned.</li> <li>• Requires training in special hazards.</li> <li>• Requires more comprehensive training for chiefs and training instructors.</li> </ul>
Respiratory protection	29 CFR 1910.134	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires respirator users to be trained in the selection, proper use, limitations, and maintenance of respirators.</li> </ul>
Hazardous waste operations and emergency response	29 CFR 1910.120(q)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training of emergency responders based on their expected level of response. MnOSHA recommends a minimum of operations-level training for firefighters who take action beyond identification of an incident.</li> </ul>
Personal protective equipment	29 CFR 1910.132	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training of employees in the selection, use, care, maintenance, and disposal of personal protective equipment. Specific types of personal protective equipment are covered in 1910.133 to 1910.138. Examples: eye and face protection, hand protection.</li> </ul>
Confined spaces	Minn. Rules 5205.1020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training of employees who enter confined spaces and standby persons in operating and rescue procedures and on the hazards that may be encountered.</li> </ul>
Occupational exposure to blood-borne pathogens	29 CFR 1910.1030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training on blood-borne pathogens for employees whose job responsibilities expose them to blood.</li> </ul>
Employee right-to-know	Minn. Rules 5205.0700	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires training on hazardous substances, harmful physical agents, and infectious agents.</li> </ul>
General duty clause	Minn. Stat. §182.653, subd. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires employers to provide a safe and healthful workplace.</li> <li>• Cited when a serious hazard exists that is not covered by a specific standard.</li> </ul>
Other standards	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The above list is not all-inclusive — it includes only standards with major training components. Other standards may not include a specific training component but suggest that training is needed, for example, by allowing only “trained persons” to perform a task or operate a piece of equipment or by requiring that employees “receive instruction.” Some examples are standards for noise, portable fire extinguishers, and signs and tags.</li> </ul>

SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement Division, December 1997.

## **SYSTEM for REIMBURSING LOCAL JURISDICTIONS**

The study committee found that problems of access to needed training and funding and inconsistent quality of training delivery are of concern to the fire service community in many parts of the state. The committee concluded that the objectives of improving public safety and protecting firefighters would be served by a program that provides funding directly to local governments in a manner intended to promote quality, accessible training for firefighters. The mechanism for this funding would be a training cost reimbursement program tied to documented quality training. The reimbursement program would provide funding directly to municipalities, fire departments, or MnSCU institutions. A reimbursement would be made if the training was conducted by a qualified instructor and met curriculum standards and other appropriate standards. Verification of the costs associated with the training and the number of training hours would be required for reimbursement. The study committee believes that decisions about what training is needed should remain local decisions. Municipalities and fire departments can choose whether to participate in the reimbursement program and the extent of their participation.

The committee considered how to estimate the amount of funding that would be needed in order for a reimbursement program to have a notable impact on improving firefighter training. The determination is complicated by a lack of reliable information about training costs, particularly for training that is not conducted through technical colleges or state-sponsored training.

Based on the committee members' knowledge and experience and some very limited training budget information derived from responses to the Fire Chief Questionnaire, \$200 per firefighter per year was determined to be a reasonable estimate of funding requirements in relation to the committee's objectives to notably affect the quality and accessibility of training. At that level of funding, a reimbursement program would require about \$3.9 million per year.

The committee reviewed potential sources of funding for a firefighter training reimbursement program. While not wanting to limit options, the committee determined that it would recommend using existing sources of funds rather than new fees or fines or a separate general fund appropriation. Two potential sources of funding for a reimbursement program that could be used singly or in combination are:

- **Firefighter Training Subsidy funds (FY 98 estimate: \$318,000).** The committee concluded that the funds currently used to reimburse (that is, subsidize retroactively) technical colleges at a rate of \$1 per student contact hour for firefighter training could be redirected to local governments and fire departments. The departments would determine what training met their needs and whether training would be done in the MnSCU system. They would be reimbursed for the costs up to the established limit per firefighter. The FY 98 Firefighter Training Subsidy funding was established at \$318,000. In addition, the fund has a carryover balance from previous years, bringing the current balance to about \$600,000. (NOTE: The two other firefighter training-related funds in MnSCU should be distinguished from the tuition subsidy fund: the technical college and community/technical college fire training allocation [FY 98: \$770,000] and the Fire/EMS Center allocation [FY 98: \$632,000].)

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- **Nondedicated portion of the DWI Reinstatement Fee, including if needed a moderate fee increase (FY 98 estimate at current fee level: up to about \$3.2 million).** Currently about 45 percent of this fund is dedicated to various public safety purposes; the remainder is undedicated. The committee noted that the firefighter role in responding to vehicular emergencies (vehicle fires, extrication, other road emergencies) is related to the existing purposes and uses of the fund.

The committee believes that other sources of revenue to fund the firefighter training reimbursement program should be considered if these suggested resources fall short of providing the needed funding.

## **NEED FOR CENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTION of TRAINING**

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There is no “authority” over the appropriateness or quality of firefighter training in Minnesota. Each fire department determines its own requirements, attempts to find qualified instructors, and determines its own program and curriculum. Additionally, no agency oversees the application of funding to help ensure that firefighter training is supported with funding directed to fire departments in support of quality training based on local needs.

Training records that document training are kept at the local fire department level and no other entity — including MnOSHA and the voluntary certification board — reviews records with enough frequency to give reasonable assurance that good training is occurring and the documentation supports that this is happening.

In the study committee’s review of data — from public meetings, returns of the two questionnaires, and many other sources of information from key stakeholders in firefighter training issues — the principal conclusions that relate to central administrative direction are these:

- Improvements to firefighter training can be addressed through specific improvements in the delivery system that help to ensure access to training, widely available good-quality instruction and appropriate curriculum, and funding directed to fire departments, municipalities, or MnSCU institutions.
- Fire departments and local governments are most concerned that local control over decisions about training needs and priorities, and how training resources are used, be kept at the local level.
- There is a widely perceived need for more funding directed to fire departments, local governments, and MnSCU institutions for firefighter training.
- An effort to improve instructor quality to ensure quality delivery of training is needed. While fire service personnel are largely satisfied with the overall quality of instruction, there is considerable con-

cern about the wide variation in skills, knowledge, and abilities of persons who provide the training.

- Adherence to standards for curriculum and programs of firefighter training is needed. Standards for curriculum and programs exist and are widely recognized, but current variations in content actually being taught can create confusion about the actual training and skills of firefighters who have taken courses that should have had a standardized content.
- Minimum mandatory training requirements set by an oversight agency are not needed because required training already exists in laws and in the requirements of standard-setting organizations in firefighting — for example, MnOSHA requirements. In relation to this, the study committee does not see a need to certify firefighters.
- Fire chiefs and firefighters largely favor the actions noted above, as shown in the responses to the two questionnaires. They are less certain, however, about a central administrative agency that would oversee training. In that case, the largest block of preferences is the “neutral” category, and there is not a strong negative indication.

The study committee concluded that the desirable actions noted above to improve firefighter training delivery, access, and funding can be done only by an agency that oversees certain aspects of firefighter training on a statewide basis. The study committee concluded, after reviewing several potentially workable options, that creation of a new board of firefighter training is the most effective means to accomplish the noted objectives. The committee noted that both law enforcement and emergency medical services personnel are served by independent boards that, among their duties, provide training oversight and funding for approved programs, instruction, and curriculum. The committee had no conclusions or recommendations about any organizational relocation of the Fire/EMS Center or the role of the Fire/EMS Center in relation to the duties and powers of the proposed board of firefighter training. The board of firefighter training would hire staff or find existing agency staff to do the board’s work.

Coordination by the board of firefighter training with MnSCU, notably the work and efforts of technical college coordinators, would be necessary; however, the purview of the oversight board must encompass training that is outside the usual concern of technical college coordinators and MnSCU instructors, including most in-house training.

A system to fairly reimburse departments for costs related to documented quality training would be an important part of a new board’s work. The board would have to establish policies and procedures to ensure that funding is tied to documented good-quality training that meets local needs as decided locally. This would help ensure that firefighter training funding is well spent and that the training produces good-quality documentation in training records.

Among its duties to serve local fire departments, the board would administer a firefighter training reimbursement program (reimbursements directed to municipalities, fire departments, and training institutions), develop course materials based on existing standards, maintain a list of qualified instructors, and develop and administer a training course approval process tied to the reimbursement program. Fire



departments and municipalities can choose whether to participate, but access to the board funding through the training cost reimbursement program would be tied to documented, approved training.

The study committee concluded that the objectives of improving firefighter training, based on information gathered from this study, consistent with the conclusions of the Joint Advisory Training Committee, can be best met as described above with:

- local control over training needs and decisions;
- creation of a board of firefighter training;
- additional funding channeled directly to departments, municipalities, and training institutions, through a training cost reimbursement program with required documentation of quality training;
- instructor qualification and support;
- curriculum approval; and
- improved documentation in training records resulting from the board's programs.

## **STATUTORY CHANGES**

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The study committee determined that current statutes relating to firefighter training do not require amendment. See Appendix L for the text of current statutes.

The study committee determined that it **would not propose legislation** based on its recommendations. However, as directed in the committee's enabling legislation, language reflecting the committee's recommendations in a pre-bill format is presented below. Interested parties may use the committee's work and recommendations to make legislative proposals as they wish.

## **DEFINITIONS**

1. "BOARD" means the board of firefighter training.
2. "FIREFIGHTER" means one who is regularly entered on the payroll of a fire department, is serving on active duty with a designated fire company in the department, or is in charge of one or more of the companies and engaged in the hazards of firefighting. "Firefighter" includes:
  - (a) members of the electrical and mechanical divisions of the fire departments who are subject to like hazards,

- (b) volunteer firefighters of a local government who regularly comply with rules of the local government prescribed for service by its volunteer firefighters and who are engaged in the hazards of firefighting, and
  - (c) persons defined in any provision of Minnesota Statutes as firefighters.
3. "LOCAL GOVERNMENT" means a county, statutory, or home-rule charter city or town.
  4. "FIRE DEPARTMENT" means a regularly organized fire department, fire protection district, or fire company, as defined in the uniform fire code adopted under section 299F.011, regularly charged with the responsibility of providing fire protection to the state or a local government and includes a nonprofit fire department directly serving a local government. It does not include private and industrial fire brigades.
  5. "INSTRUCTOR" means a person deemed qualified by the board to train firefighters.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The board has 16 members:

1. Eight volunteer firefighters representing the 15 regional fire districts on a rotating basis, appointed by the Governor.
2. One representative from the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association, appointed by the Governor.
3. One representative from the Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association, appointed by the Governor.
4. The Commissioner of Public Safety or the Commissioner's designee.
5. The Chancellor of MnSCU or the Chancellor's designee.
6. A representative of the League of Minnesota Cities, appointed by the Governor.
7. A representative of the Minnesota Townships Association, appointed by the Governor.
8. Two public members who are not engaged in the fire service professions or industries, appointed by the Governor.

## **TERMS, CHAIR, COMPENSATION**

Members described in Nos. 1 to 3 and 6 to 8 will serve two-year terms. No members appointed under Nos. 1 to 3 may serve more than two consecutive appointments. The board chair will rotate annually among members appointed under Nos. 1 to 3. The members appointed under No. 8 are entitled to compensation according to statutes for such service, but other members serve without such compensation.

## **POWERS and DUTIES**

The board will oversee all non-credit-based firefighter training (that is, training other than two-year and four-year degree programs). The board's specified powers and duties will include only the following:

1. To establish curriculum, policies, and procedures for qualifying funded firefighter training programs.
2. To establish qualifications for instructors.
3. To establish and administer a training reimbursement activity in accordance with requirements specified below.
4. To establish procedures for handling complaints and standards for disqualification of instructors.
5. To adopt rules necessary to carry out the powers and duties.
6. The board can develop a multi-year plan for improving fire education and training.
7. The board will have MnSCU universities, colleges, and technical colleges' cooperation to develop specialized courses for firefighters.
8. The board can make studies and surveys relating to improving firefighter training in Minnesota.
9. The board will prepare a report every year concerning its activities and the allocation of funds appropriated for firefighter training, and will transmit copies to the Governor and the Legislature.

## **TRAINING REIMBURSEMENT**

The board will establish requirements for local governments to obtain reimbursement for funded training costs. When requested by the fire department of a local government, the board will reimburse the local government for all or part of the costs of firefighter training based on the number of training hours successfully completed in accordance with rules adopted by the board. The board will determine the amount of reimbursement for each hour of qualified funded training. Before making a reimbursement, the board will require verification of the costs of training and the number of training hours and will determine that the training was conducted by a qualified instructor and met the standards set by the board. An instructor must be deemed qualified by the board before the instructor offers the training for which reimbursement is requested.

## **APPENDIX A.**

### **STATUTE THAT AUTHORIZED THE STUDY COMMITTEE**

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#### **Minnesota Laws 1997, Chapter 239, Article 2, Sec. 9.**

##### **Subdivision 1. [MEMBERSHIP; CHAIR.]**

(a) The firefighter training study committee consists of:

- (1) two representatives of the Minnesota state fire chiefs association, appointed by the president of the association;
- (2) two representatives of the Minnesota professional firefighters, appointed by the president of the organization;
- (3) four representatives of the Minnesota state fire department association, at least two of whom are volunteer firefighters serving a city or area with a population under 10,000 outside the seven-county metropolitan area, appointed by the president of the organization;
- (4) two representatives of the league of Minnesota cities, appointed by the president of the league;
- (5) the director of the Minnesota state colleges and universities FIRE/EMS center, or the director's designee;
- (6) a public member, appointed by the governor;
- (7) an employee of the department of labor and industry whose responsibilities include fire-related occupational safety and health activities, appointed by the commissioner of labor and industry;
- (8) the commissioner of public safety or the commissioner's designee;
- (9) two members of the house of representatives, one from each caucus; one representing a district within the metropolitan area as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, and the other representing a district outside the metropolitan area, appointed by the speaker; and
- (10) two members of the senate, one from each caucus; one representing a district within the metropolitan area as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, and the other representing a district outside the metropolitan area, appointed by the subcommittee on committees of the committee on rules and administration.

(b) The committee shall elect a chair from the members.

**Subd. 2. [ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.]** The commissioner of public safety shall provide necessary administrative and staff support to the committee.

**Subd. 3. [COMPENSATION.]** Committee members who are not public officials or employees are entitled to reimbursement for expenses in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 15.059, subdivision 6.

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Legislative members are entitled to compensation in accordance with rules of the house of representatives and the senate.

**Subd. 4. [DUTIES.]**

(a) The committee shall:

- (1) review findings and recommendations of the joint advisory training committee formed by the Minnesota state fire department association, the Minnesota state fire chiefs association, and the Minnesota professional firefighters;
- (2) conduct further study of firefighter training needs and options;
- (3) consider current funding for firefighter training, determine any need for additional funding, and recommend possible sources of the funding;
- (4) consider the current delivery system for firefighter training, including statewide coordinating of training, and any needed improvements;
- (5) consider the selection and evaluation of training instructors and any needed improvements;
- (6) study levels of service delivery and any need for standardized training;
- (7) consider federal and state laws and standards that affect firefighter training;
- (8) determine a fair system for reimbursing local jurisdictions for training programs; and
- (9) consider the need for centralized administrative direction of training programs.

(b) The committee shall conduct at least three, but no more than five, public meetings around the state to gather public input relevant to paragraph (a). Before submitting the report required by subdivision 5, the committee shall prepare and disseminate a draft report and seek public comment on it. A record of comment received must be kept and submitted along with the report required by subdivision 5. At least one-half of the meetings must take place outside the seven-county metropolitan area.

**Subd. 5. [REPORT.]** The committee shall submit a report and its recommendations to the chairs of the senate and house committees or divisions having jurisdiction over criminal justice policy and funding by February 1, 1998. The report must identify any changes in statutes required to implement the committee's recommendations. The committee expires upon submission of the report.

**Subd. 6. [LOCAL COOPERATION.]** Local government units shall cooperate with the committee in the preparation of the report required by subdivision 5.

## **APPENDIX B.**

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

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<b>Member</b>	<b>Representing on the Committee</b>
1. Dan Winkel, Committee Chair	MN State Fire Department Association
2. Jerry Rosendahl	MN State Fire Chiefs Association
3. Howard Swenstad	MN State Fire Chiefs Association
4. Mike Stockstead	MN Professional Firefighters Association
5. Jeff Brennan	MN Professional Firefighters Association
6. Dan Cline	MN State Fire Department Association
7. Paul Jacobs	MN State Fire Department Association
8. Wayne Durant	MN State Fire Department Association
9. Ulie Seal	League of MN Cities
10. Gary Curtis	League of MN Cities
11. Adam Piskura	MnSCU FIRE/EMS Center
12. Mark Salmen	Public member appointed by the Governor
13. Don Voss	Department of Labor & Industry, OSHA
Pat Lorentz (alternates)	
14. Tom Brace	Public Safety Commissioner designee
15. Rep. Harry Mares	House of Representatives, metro district
16. Rep. Henry Kalis	House of Representatives, non-metro district
17. Sen. Dave Johnson	Senate, metro district
18. Sen. Michelle Fischbach	Senate, non-metro district

## APPENDIX C.

### PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDEES and QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS by COMMUNITY

**PMtg** a mark in this column denotes attendance by persons from the community at a public meeting

**Chf** a mark in this column denotes that the Fire Chief Questionnaire was returned to the study committee from the listed community

**FF** a mark in this column denotes that one or more Firefighter Questionnaires were returned to the study committee from the listed community

	PMtg	Chf	FF		PMtg	Chf	FF
Albany		■	■	Chatfield	■	■	■
Albert Lea		■	■	Chisholm	■	■	■
Albert Lea Township		■	■	Clear Lake			■
Alexandria		■	■	Clearwater	■	■	■
Amboy		■	■	Cloquet		■	■
Andover	■	■	■	Cold Spring	■		
Anoka-Champlin		■	■	Coleraine		■	
Apple Valley	■		■	Colvin		■	
Audubon	■			Comfrey	■	■	■
Aurora	■	■		Coon Rapids		■	■
Balsam	■	■	■	Cottage Grove		■	■
Barrett		■		Cottonwood	■		
Becker		■	■	Courtland	■	■	■
Belle Plaine	■	■	■	Crane Lake		■	
Beltrami		■	■	Crookston	■	■	■
Bemidji		■	■	Crosby	■		
Benson		■	■	Crosslake		■	■
Big Lake		■		Crystal	■		■
Blooming Prairie		■	■	Dassel		■	■
Blue Earth	■			Dawson		■	
Breitung		■		Dayton	■		
Bricelyn			■	Deer River	■	■	■
Brooklyn Park		■	■	Deerwood	■	■	■
Brooten		■	■	Delano	■	■	
Brownton		■	■	Delavan	■		
Buffalo		■	■	Dent	■		
Burnsville	■	■	■	Detroit Lakes	■	■	
Canyon (Northland)		■		Dover		■	■
Chaska			■	Duluth		■	

	PMtg	Chf	FF		PMtg	Chf	FF
Dunnell-Lake Frem	■	■	■	Hawley	■		
Dunnell-Lake Frem				Hayfield		■	
Eagle Lake		■	■	Hector		■	■
East Grand Forks		■	■	Henderson	■		
Easton	■	■	■	Hermantown	■		
Echo	■		■	Hill City		■	■
Eden Prairie		■	■	Hills		■	■
Edina	■	■		Hinckley		■	■
Elk River		■	■	Hoffman		■	■
Elmore		■	■	Holdingsford		■	■
Elysian		■	■	Hopkins		■	
Embarrass		■	■	Houston			■
Emmons		■	■	Howard Lake		■	■
Erskine		■		Hugo		■	■
Esko-Thompson	■	■	■	Hutchinson			■
Eveleth		■		International Falls		■	■
Eyota		■	■	Inver Grove Heights	■	■	
Fairmont	■	■	■	Jackson			■
Fairbault	■	■	■	Jacobson	■		
Farmington	■	■	■	Janesville		■	■
Fergus Falls	■			Kasota		■	■
Foreston			■	Keewatin	■	■	
Fort Snelling			■	Kerkhoven		■	■
Fountain		■		Kettle River		■	■
Freeborn		■	■	Kiester		■	
French Township		■		Lake Crystal	■	■	■
Fridley	■	■		Lake Elmo		■	
Frost			■	Lake George	■	■	■
Garvin	■	■		Lake Johanna	■		■
Gaylord	■	■	■	Lakeville	■		
Ghent	■			Lakewood Township		■	
Gibbon	■		■	Lamberton		■	■
Glencoe	■	■	■	LeCenter		■	■
Glenwood		■	■	Leaf Valley Township	■	■	
Golden Valley		■	■	LeSueur		■	■
Good Thunder	■	■	■	Lewiston	■	■	■
Grand Rapids	■	■	■	Lewisville		■	■
Ham Lake		■	■	Lino Lakes (Centennial)		■	■
Hamel		■	■	Litchfield		■	■
Harmony	■	■	■	Long Prairie		■	■
Hastings		■	■	Lonsdale		■	



	PMtg	Chf	FF		PMtg	Chf	FF
Lynd				Paynesville			■
Madison		■	■	Pemberton		■	■
Madison Lake		■	■	Pierz	■	■	■
Mahnomen	■	■	■	Pipestone		■	■
Mahtowa		■		Plato	■	■	■
Mankato (Skyline)	■	■		Plymouth		■	■
Maple Grove		■	■	Prior Lake		■	■
Maple Lake		■		Ramsey	■	■	■
Mapleton	■		■	Randall		■	
Maplewood		■		Ray (Kabetogama)		■	
Marine on St. Croix		■	■	Red Wing			■
Marshall	■		■	Redwood Falls	■		
Medford			■	Remer	■		
Medicine Lake	■			Renville	■		■
Melrose		■		Rice	■	■	■
Mendota Heights	■	■	■	Richfield		■	■
Minn Lake	■			Richmond	■		
Minneota	■	■	■	Rochester		■	
Montgomery		■	■	Rosemount	■	■	■
Moorhead	■	■	■	Roseville	■		■
Mora			■	Rush City			■
Mountain Iron	■	■	■	Rushford		■	■
New Auburn		■	■	Sabin-Elmwood	■	■	■
New Brighton	■	■		Sanborn	■	■	
New Prague		■	■	Sartell-LeSauk	■	■	■
New Ulm	■	■	■	Sauk Centre		■	■
New York Mills	■	■	■	Scanlon	■	■	■
Newport			■	Shakopee			■
Nicollet		■	■	Shelly		■	■
North Branch	■			Silver Lake		■	■
North Mankato	■	■	■	Sleepy Eye			■
North St. Paul		■	■	South Bend Townshp	■		
Northland			■	South St. Paul		■	
Oak Grove			■	Spicer		■	■
Odessa		■		Spring Lake Park		■	■
Odin		■	■	Spring Valley	■	■	
Oronoco		■	■	Springfield	■		
Osakis		■	■	St. Anthony			■
Ottertail		■	■	St. Charles		■	■
Owatonna		■	■	St. Cloud	■	■	■
Parkers Prairie	■	■		St. James	■		

	PMtg	Chf	FF		PMtg	Chf	FF
St. Johns			■	Waseca		■	■
St. Louis Park		■		Watertown		■	■
St. Paul Park		■	■	Waterville		■	■
St. Peter	■	■	■	Wayzata		■	
St. Stephen	■	■	■	Welcome	■		■
Stewart		■		Wells		■	■
Stewartville		■	■	West St. Paul		■	■
Taylor's Falls		■		Wheaton		■	■
Thief River Falls		■		White Bear Lake		■	■
Tracy	■	■	■	Willmar	■	■	■
Trimont		■	■	Willow River		■	■
Truman		■	■	Windom	■	■	■
Vadnais Heights	■	■	■	Winnebago	■	■	
Vermillion Lake		■		Winona		■	
Victoria		■		Winthrop	■	■	■
Virginia		■		Woodbury	■	■	■
Vista	■	■		Wright			■
Waite Park	■	■	■	Wykoff		■	■
Waldorf			■	Zimmerman			■
Walters	■	■	■	Zumbro Falls		■	■
Warren		■	■	Zumbrota		■	■

NOTES: At the public meetings, four persons who identified themselves as fire chiefs did not identify their department. They are counted in the total of departments for public meeting attendance.

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## **APPENDIX D.**

### **JOINT ADVISORY TRAINING COMMITTEE**

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Representatives of the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association, Minnesota State Fire Departments Association, and Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters Association formed a task force in 1994. The purpose was to review fire service and EMS training in Minnesota. Many stakeholders were brought into the discussions of the committee, including the State Fire Training Director (MnSCU Fire/EMS Center director), League of Minnesota Cities, state OSHA representatives, the State Fire Marshal, St. Paul Fire Chief, State Fire Training Coordinators Association, State Technical Colleges Chancellor, and many others. The JATC released a list of the findings and conclusions:

- (1) There are currently many laws and standards in place that affect the fire service. They are administered through the Department of Transportation, National Fire Protection Association, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Health Department, Superfund amendments and reauthorization act, and others.
- (2) Minimum training requirements for fire departments already exist, based upon the services provided by the fire department. What a department does determines minimum training requirements. Fire departments choose their levels of service and then must train appropriately to meet the minimum standards for the services. Many fire departments in Minnesota are not meeting this requirement.
- (3) Uniformity of training throughout the state is lacking. Training class "X" is not consistent in content even though the title may be the same.
- (4) A central location for overall administration and documentation of all training in Minnesota is needed.
- (5) Adequate funding for minimum training requirements is not available.
- (6) There is a need to better identify the various levels of service and training available to the fire service. There is also a need to better communicate these levels and the associated requirements for training to the fire service.

The JATC also identified options for future action: (1) Do nothing. (2) Establish a multiple-level categorization of services provided by fire departments. Identify all applicable training requirements established by various laws and standards already in place. Continue the voluntary certification system, but specifically recognize the multiple levels of training that there are. (3) Initiate legislation that would establish a state training and certification system for firefighters using the multiple-level categorization of services. A state board would be established to administer the program, made up of representatives of a wide range of fire service organizations as well as the public. The Fire/EMS Center would approve all training programs and the State Fire Marshal would oversee the certification program. The program would include written and physical agility examinations. (4) Initiate legislation that would establish a state training and licensing system similar to the police POST board system.

## **APPENDIX E.**

### **PROCEDURES USED IN THE PUBLIC MEETINGS**

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Five public meetings were held from late September through October. The purpose of the public meetings was to receive public comment concerning firefighter training issues. Meetings were held in Redwood Falls, Grand Rapids, Detroit Lakes, St. Cloud, and Rosemount. Substantially all participants were from the fire service.

Each participant at the meetings completed a worksheet seeking basic information about (1) what aspects of firefighter training are working well, (2) what aspects of firefighter training need improvement, and (3) specific ideas for improving firefighter training.

Participants then assembled in small groups of from four to 10 people to discuss their concerns, needs, and preferences. Study committee members joined the groups, listening and engaging in discussion. Each small group completed three summary sheets noting, for the three focus questions, several items considered most important in their discussion. A representative from each group presented the results of their discussion to everyone at the meeting. Following these presentations, the meeting was opened to general discussion of firefighter training issues.

## APPENDIX F.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDEES

The following table describes the attendees of the five public meetings held by the study committee.

**TABLE A-1. Public meeting attendance and demographics**

	Redwood Falls Sept. 25	Grand Rapids Sept. 30	Detroit Lakes Oct. 9	St. Cloud Oct. 14	Rosemount Oct. 23	Cross- Totals
Number of fire departments represented	39	16	13	16	20	104*
Number of participants	95	23	19	20	31	188
Participants by title						
• Fire chief	21	11	8	7	12	59
• Asst/deputy fire chief	7	3	3	4	6	23
• Training officer	5	2		2	3	12
• Firefighter	58	6	7	6	10	87
• Other fire service title	1	1	1	1		4
• Public official	3					3
Fire service participants by pay status						
• Volunteer - paid on call	46	13	5	16	21	101
• Volunteer - unpaid	45	9	8	1	4	67
• Career (full-time pay)	1	1	6	3	6	17

\* Representatives of departments could attend more than one meeting. The number of departments represented at the five public meetings, without duplicates, was 102.

## **APPENDIX G.**

### **SUMMARY OF FIVE PUBLIC MEETINGS BY LOCATION**

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#### **REDWOOD FALLS**

##### *What is working well?*

About two-thirds of participants noted that their technical college training is working well for them. This includes both the firefighter classes at technical colleges and the technical college instructors who provide in-house firefighter training. Several participants suggested that technical colleges in the area be used as a model for the rest of the state.

About a quarter of participants noted that in-house training conducted by their staff is good. A few said it is helpful that their staff trainers have been trained in the technical college system. They also noted that being able to train on their own equipment is very desirable. Many noted the importance of hands-on training.

About a quarter of participants noted in response to this question that they approve of their training curricula — that the classes and training apply to the specific needs and circumstances of their departments and communities. In terms of specific curricula, about 20 percent of participants noted they like the NFPA 1403 course, a smaller number mentioned sectional schools, and a few participants said they like the Firefighter I and Firefighter II training.

About 25 percent of participants noted that their training is very accessible. For example, some commented that they don't have to drive long distances for training, either because they are close to a technical college or the trainers come to their locations. Many also noted that classes are offered at the times their departments want the training during the year. About 10 percent of participants also noted that their training is accessible with respect to cost.

About 10 percent of participants noted they are satisfied with shared arrangements with other departments — sharing training and working together on incidents.

##### *What needs to be improved?*

About two-thirds of participants noted that funding available for firefighter training needs improvement. Many comments pertained to funding for smaller and rural communities, and some said that funding should go directly to local governments and fire departments. Several participants noted that their departments cannot afford training, including training equipment, that they believe they need. Several suggested giving technical colleges more funding, while others questioned whether the colleges are being held accountable for funds they receive in the firefighter tuition subsidy program.

Need for improvements in training administration was noted by about 20 percent of participants.

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Administration refers to matters such as ensuring that record keeping is done accurately, instructors are qualified, teaching materials are appropriate and up to date, and training is consistent. About 15 percent of participants noted that poor or inconsistent quality of instructors is an area of needed improvement; however, some also mentioned fire training coordinators and a technical college. About 5 percent of participants mentioned the need for standardization of training curricula and teaching.

Concerns about access to training, such as travel distances and times that classes are offered, were expressed by about 15 percent of participants. Many discussed the general concerns of volunteers — they have other regular jobs and community activities, need to spend time with their families, and also are responding to fire calls and participating in training. Some noted that it will be difficult to recruit and retain volunteers if more training is mandated.

About 10 percent of participants noted that firefighter training as it currently works for them does not need improvement and should not be changed.

### *What should be done to improve firefighter training?*

The largest number of participant comments concerned keeping training “local.” About 25 percent of participants emphasized that training must be appropriate to community needs and resources. About 10 percent of participants noted that departments, with additional resources, should be able to conduct needed training in-house. A little more than 10 percent said that training should be kept in the technical colleges. A few also noted that keeping training with technical colleges would keep training local and appropriate to the communities’ needs. A few participants said that they want local instructors so they could “learn from their own”; others saw value in bringing in outside perspective and ideas.

On the other hand, many participants noted a need for greater oversight of firefighter training, or “one boss.” About 20 percent of participants noted a need for some sort of central administrative or oversight role. Opinions differed about where this authority should reside.

Other suggestions included less emphasis on training hours and more on task performance and more opportunities for hands-on training, especially using a department’s own equipment. About 10 percent of participants recommended reducing regulations on “live burn” training.

About 20 percent of participants noted funding issues. For example, some participants noted that technical colleges need to disclose and be accountable for use of the firefighter training subsidy funds. Others said that funding for firefighter training should instead go directly to local communities or departments. Several participants cautioned against any consideration of using the existing 2 percent surcharge on fire insurance premiums that goes to firefighter pensions as a potential additional funding source for firefighter training.

Nearly 20 percent of participants commented on instructor quality, noting needs for improvement in accountability for quality instruction, record keeping, mechanisms to move out poor instructors, and training for instructors to improve the quality of instruction. About 15 percent of participants noted there should be some standardization of classes taught throughout the state.

Recommendations for making firefighter training more accessible were noted by about 20 percent of participants and included making training materials available in county libraries, offering specific classes not currently available, providing more opportunity to obtain a firefighting degree, developing regional training facilities, and adding more trainers who travel to departments. About 10 percent of participants identified the need for additional training officers and full-time technical college firefighter training coordinators. Additionally, the many comments about enabling departments to conduct more in-house training was mentioned often in relation to accessibility of training.

About 10 percent of participants suggested using the existing systems that work, such as those in this area, as models and cautioned against overhauling the system in a way that might endanger what is working well.

About 5 percent of participants warned against imposing firefighter certification, out of fear that volunteers would be more difficult to recruit and retain.

## **GRAND RAPIDS**

### ***What is working well?***

Between 15 and 20 percent of participants noted that technical college firefighter training is working well for them. The same percent of participants said in-house training is working well for them. More than half the participants noted that one or more of these: the state fire school, regional schools, sectional schools, or other state-sponsored training, are working well for them. Several noted that the Firefighter I, Firefighter II, and NFPA 1403 standards provide a “good base” for training. Many participants said they prefer to use their own equipment for training.

### ***What needs to be improved?***

The biggest issue for participants was access to training — cost, location, and frequency of needed classes. Costs can include lodging and other travel-related expenses of taking classes a long distance away, in addition to tuition costs.

Another often mentioned concern was lack of training standards and the need for greater consistency of training content throughout the state. Other needs for improvement included poor or inconsistent quality of instructors, training tailored to department needs, and greater resources including funding and equipment. Funding needs were especially noted for the smaller, volunteer departments. Several participants noted that props for hands-on training are not always available.

### ***What should be done to improve firefighter training?***

The most often mentioned idea for improvement of firefighter training was more funding. The funding-



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related suggestions often included making it available directly to departments, especially to smaller and rural departments.

The second most often mentioned suggestion was to centralize administration of firefighter training in order to, for example, set guidelines for classes, certify instructors, and administer funds for training cost reimbursement.

Several participants mentioned additional training for instructors and instructor certification. A smaller number suggested performance-based training and certification of firefighters. Other suggestions related to improving access to training: more training facilities to reduce travel distances, training tailored to individual department needs and circumstances, and more mobile props. Also noted was reduced restrictions on “live burn” training.

## **DETROIT LAKES**

### *What is working well?*

About half the participants noted that in-house training is working well. The same percent said that any training they considered most applicable to a department’s circumstances, particularly hands-on training, is working well. In-house training by both department staff and outside instructors was mentioned as working well.

About 30 percent of participants noted that the state fire school and sectional schools are working well. About 20 percent said they think that training is accessible, some noting that they appreciate that classes are offered on weekends.

Other items mentioned as working well by a small number of participants included: interaction with other departments for training and the curricula of Firefighter I, Firefighter II, and NFPA 1403.

### *What needs to be improved?*

Participants focused on technical college instruction and administration for improvement areas. One technical college was mentioned by several participants. About 30 percent of participants said that instructors need to be better trained and held accountable for quality instruction. About 25 percent of participants noted that courses need to be standardized across the state so that, for example, Firefighter I is taught the same from class to class. About 40 percent of participants referred to a need for better coordination of classes, credits, and instructional props across the state. For example, some participants called for “someone in charge.” Others noted that communication between the training facilities and fire departments needs improvement.

Several participants noted that accountability for funding needs improvement. Others noted that, overall, costs are too high, especially for smaller departments.

### ***What should be done to improve firefighter training?***

Half the participants mentioned that more funding is needed, including more directed to smaller departments. Slightly more than 40 percent of participants noted in some respect that a “central leader” or board for firefighter training should be established. The focus of responsibilities would be to set standards, provide direction, and hold instructors accountable for quality training.

Improving access to training, including props and training materials, and the applicability of training to local circumstances were noted by about 25 percent of participants. Many noted that local control should be retained.

## **ST. CLOUD**

### ***What is working well?***

About a third of participants noted that the technical college system is working well, and about one-third said that in-house training works well. Other sources of training mentioned by several participants included sectional schools, state fire school, regional schools, and National Fire Academy-sponsored training.

### ***What needs to be improved?***

About half the participants noted that funding needs to be improved. Specific comments included that mandated training for small departments can break the budget and that funding needs to be provided in a fairer and more equitable manner.

Nearly three-fourths of participants commented on the need for training standards or improved training delivery. Many noted the need for agreed upon training standards for firefighters. Participants also commented that delivery of training should be more consistent and of high quality. Examples of other comments were: Standards are needed for new firefighters to get everyone to the same basic level. Basic firefighter classes need to be standardized so that training at one technical college is recognized by others and credits transfer. Also, the course contents need to be the same among schools for classes by the same name and curriculum should be delivered uniformly and consistently across the state.

Instructor quality was mentioned as an area of needed improvement by about 20 percent of participants.

### ***What should be done to improve firefighter training?***

About 40 percent of participants noted that funding should be increased. Comments included: Funding should be provided so that all firefighters get basic training, smaller departments should get more funding, and the burden on cities and departments should be reduced. Participants were concerned that the determination of each department’s training needs should be retained at the local level, with decisions by the communities and fire chiefs.

About 30 percent of participants suggested that some kind of central organization, institution, person, oversight board, or board with a director should be in charge of administering and controlling firefighter training statewide. Additional comments were that it would improve accountability, could provide departments with a list of qualified instructors, could work with colleges to help coordinate firefighter training programs, and could be a statewide center for firefighter training information.

Several participants also said that training programs should be made more alike in content and cost across the state. However, custom training should be available, suited to each department's needs, they added.

Several participants had recommendations concerning instructors. For example: Instructors should be paid for qualifications and experience. They should be better supported, including with higher pay. There should be minimum standards for qualified instructors, such as meeting NFPA requirements. All instructors should be evaluated. They should be required to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date. A few participants recommended instructor certification.

Other recommendations included having greater access to training materials and props, creating regional training centers, providing more fire leadership training, initiating mandatory firefighter certification, and having one overall coordination function for the technical college firefighter training programs.

## **ROSEMOUNT**

### ***What is working well?***

About 40 percent of participants said that training from the technical colleges is working well for them. Some mentioned the basic firefighter classes; others mentioned in-house training by technical college instructors. Three colleges were mentioned. The second most often mentioned item was in-house training, noted by about one-fourth of participants. Several participants noted one or more of the following training sources: sectional schools, mutual aid training, state schools, and regional schools.

### ***What needs to be improved?***

The most often mentioned need was for funding, mentioned by about half the participants. Among specific aspects of funding mentioned were the overall need for more funds, especially for smaller departments; equitable distribution of funds among departments; accountability for funds; and more consistent costs for the same classes at various colleges.

Curriculum standards for firefighter training were mentioned as a need by about one-fourth of participants. As an example, it was noted that classes should be the same across the state. Another item mentioned by several participants was that the quality of instruction needs to be more consistent. This was mentioned by several people by referencing consistent quality training and by several other people as instructor accountability. In total, about one-fourth of participants noted improvement needs related to instructors.

About one-fourth of participants noted that the availability or access to courses needs improvement. Other items noted as needs for improvement by several participants were oversight of technical college firefighter training coordinators and specialized firefighter training, including officer development.

***What should be done to improve firefighter training?***

Slightly fewer than half the participants had suggestions concerning funding. Nearly all of them recommended increasing the amount of funding available to departments, increasing funding to smaller departments, or equalizing funding among departments.

About one-third of participants suggested standardized curriculum and consistency in curriculum content. About a sixth of participants recommended improving instructor quality through more accountability, certification, or greater support and training (train the trainers). Several participants suggested creating a position that oversees the technical college firefighter training coordinators. Also noted was making the technical college coordinator positions full time.

Additional recommendations noted by a few people each were: Certify firefighters, provide more in-house training, tailor training to the needs of each department, and have state trainers visit departments around the state on a regular basis for basic firefighter training.

**APPENDIX H.**  
**FIRE CHIEF QUESTIONNAIRE AND FIREFIGHTER QUESTIONNAIRE**

**FIREFIGHTER TRAINING STUDY COMMITTEE**

Questionnaire for FIRE CHIEFS  
September 1997

Mailing label

The Firefighter Training Study Committee was created by the 1997 Legislature to study training needs, funding options, and other training issues. The study is directed in Minnesota Laws 1997, Chapter 239, Article 2.

**Instructions:** The committee is asking ALL FIRE CHIEFS to respond to this questionnaire. Complete the questionnaire and return it to the Management Analysis Division (a consultant group in state government hired to assist the committee) at the address shown below. *Include any additional comments on a separate sheet.* If your comments relate to a specific question, label them by question number. The responses will help the committee understand your training status, needs, and preferences. All responses will be reviewed and summarized by the Management Analysis Division and presented to the committee. The deadline for returning surveys is Wednesday, Oct. 29, 1997, but immediate response is recommended.

Return completed questionnaire to: **Firefighter Training Study**  
**Management Analysis Division**  
**203 Admin Bldg**  
**50 Sherburne Ave**  
**St Paul, MN 55155** (Fax: 612/297-1117)

**TRAINING STATUS**

1. How many firefighters are in your department now? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. How many of them are: volunteer - paid on call \_\_\_\_; volunteer - unpaid \_\_\_\_; career \_\_\_\_;  
other \_\_\_\_ specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  3. How many firefighters were in your department last year (average)? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. How many current firefighters have voluntary state certification? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. How many current firefighters have completed Firefighter 1 training at a technical college? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. What is your total budget for firefighter training for 1997? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Does this budget for training include the hourly firefighter pay during training?  Yes  No
  8. What is the range of hourly pay for firefighters taking training? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to \$ \_\_\_\_\_
  9. What was the total number of training hours for all firefighters in 1996 from all sources? \_\_\_\_\_
  10. What were the sources of training for these firefighters in 1996 (check all that apply and indicate percentage of the total hours)?
    - In-house training by in-house instructors \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - In-house training by technical college instructors \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - In-house training by free-lance/contract instructors \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Other in-house training \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - State Fire School training \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Regional fire training \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Sectional fire training \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Fire/EMS Center training \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Technical college training at technical colleges \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Industry-provided training \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Other training (specify: \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Other training (specify: \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ %
    - Other training (specify: \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Total = 100%

11. What funding sources are used for firefighter training (check all that apply and estimate the percentage of total funding):

- Local government funding \_\_\_\_\_ %
- State government funding \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Federal grants or other federal sources \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Industry provided training \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ %
- Other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ %

Total = 100%

**TRAINING NEEDS**

12. How satisfied are you with these components of training for your department?

	Very satisfied		Neutral		Very dissatisfied	No opinion
Funding for training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of instruction: in-house training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of instruction: technical colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of course materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of courses needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall training compared to needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. List your department's three most important training needs:

- a.
- b.
- c.

14. List your three most important concerns about or problems with current firefighter training:

- a.
- b.
- c.

15. Describe what you are most satisfied with (what works well) in current firefighter training:

**TRAINING PREFERENCES**

16. What do you think about the following possible changes to current firefighter training?

- Certify instructors  In favor  Opposed  Neutral or no opinion
- Establish minimum training standards  In favor  Opposed  Neutral or no opinion
- Standardize curriculum  In favor  Opposed  Neutral or no opinion
- Create training oversight function  In favor  Opposed  Neutral or no opinion

17. List three improvements you would like to see made to firefighter training:

- a.
- b.
- c.

**OTHER COMMENTS**

18. What advice or recommendations do you have for the committee about any aspect of firefighter training?

19. If you want to contact the Management Analysis Division about any issues in this study, call Mark Scipioni (612-296-7566) or Donna Koren (612-297-1860). The fax number is 612-297-1117. If you would like a Management Analysis staff member to contact you, provide your name and telephone number and indicate the issues you want to discuss \_\_\_\_\_

# FIREFIGHTER TRAINING STUDY COMMITTEE

Questionnaire for FIREFIGHTERS — MAKE AS MANY COPIES AS NEEDED (BOTH SIDES)

September 1997

The Firefighter Training Study Committee was created by the 1997 Legislature to study training needs, funding options, and other training issues. The study is directed in Minnesota Laws 1997, Chapter 239, Article 2.

**Instructions:** The committee is asking FIREFIGHTERS to respond to this questionnaire. Complete the questionnaire and return it to the Management Analysis Division (a consultant group in state government hired to assist the committee) at the address shown below. *Include any additional comments on a separate sheet.* If your comments relate to a specific question, label them by question number. The responses will help the committee understand your training status, needs, and preferences. All responses will be reviewed and summarized by the Management Analysis Division and presented to the committee. The deadline for returning surveys is Wednesday, Oct. 29, 1997, but immediate response is recommended.

Return completed questionnaire to:

**Firefighter Training Study  
Management Analysis Division  
203 Admin Bldg  
50 Sherburne Ave  
St Paul, MN 55155**

**(FAX: 612/297-1117)**

## TRAINING TAKEN

1. How many years have you been a firefighter? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you:  volunteer - paid on call;  volunteer - unpaid;  career  other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What fire department do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which of the following do you have (check all that apply)?
  - Voluntary state certification
  - Completion of Firefighter 1 training at a technical college
  - Completion of Firefighter 1 equivalent training not at a technical college
  - Completion of Firefighter 2 training
  - Completion of Firefighter 3 training
  - Additional training (list highest level of training attained):  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How many hours of firefighter training have you taken in the past 12 months from each of these sources?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ In-house training by in-house instructors
  - \_\_\_\_\_ In-house training by technical college instructors
  - \_\_\_\_\_ In-house training by free-lance/contract instructors
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other in-house training
  - \_\_\_\_\_ State Fire School training
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Regional fire training
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Sectional fire training
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Fire/EMS Center training
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Technical college training at technical colleges
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Industry-provided training
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other training (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other training (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Other training (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ = Total hours of training

**TRAINING NEEDS**

6. How satisfied are you with the following components of training?

	Very Satisfied		Neutral		Very Dissatisfied	No opinion
Level of funding for training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of instruction: in-house training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of instruction: technical colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of course materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of courses needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training you have vs. training you need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. List *your* three most important training needs:

- a.
- b.
- c.

8. List what you think are the three most important training needs of *your department*:

- a.
- b.
- c.

9. List your three most important concerns about or problems with current firefighter training:

- a.
- b.
- c.

10. Describe what you are most satisfied with (what works well for you) in current firefighter training:

**TRAINING PREFERENCES**

11. What do you think about the following possible changes to current firefighter training?

Certify instructors	<input type="checkbox"/> In favor	<input type="checkbox"/> Opposed	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral or no opinion
Establish minimum training standards	<input type="checkbox"/> In favor	<input type="checkbox"/> Opposed	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral or no opinion
Standardize curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> In favor	<input type="checkbox"/> Opposed	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral or no opinion
Create training oversight function	<input type="checkbox"/> In favor	<input type="checkbox"/> Opposed	<input type="checkbox"/> Neutral or no opinion

12. List three improvements you would like to see made to firefighter training:

- a.
- b.
- c.

**OTHER COMMENTS**

13. What advice or recommendations do you have for the committee about any aspect of firefighter training?

14. If you want to contact the Management Analysis Division about any issues in this study, call Mark Scipioni (612-296-7566) or Donna Koren (612-297-1860). The fax number is 612-297-1117. If you would like a Management Analysis staff member to contact you, provide your name and telephone number and indicate the issues you want to discuss



## APPENDIX I.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF FIRE CHIEF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Table A-2. Fire Chief Questionnaire respondents: fire service demographics

Regional Fire Districts	Number of departments	Distribution of departments by pay status of firefighters				Distribution of departments by size (number of firefighters)		
		Volunteer - unpaid	Volunteer - paid on call	Career (paid fulltime)	Combination	1 to 30	31 to 60	Over 60
1 Capital City	18	1	10	2	5	5	10	3
2 Northern	8	2	2	—	4	7	1	—
3 Arrowhead	23	12	7	2	2	23	—	—
4 Northwest	6	4	1	1	—	6	—	—
5 Cuyuna	6	3	3	—	—	6	—	—
6 Lake	19	8	10	—	1	18	—	1
7 St. Croix Valley	3	2	1	—	—	3	—	—
8 North Suburban	11	—	6	—	5	3	7	1
9 West Central	6	3	3	—	—	6	—	—
10 Central	15	6	9	—	—	11	4	—
11 United	16	3	9	1	3	7	6	3
12 Minn. Valley	10	3	5	—	2	8	2	—
13 Southwest	6	2	4	—	—	5	1	—
14 South Central	28	20	8	—	—	25	3	—
15 Southeast	24	12	8	1	3	19	4	1
Not identified	5	2	2	—	1	5	—	—
<b>Totals</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>
Percents		41%	42%	4%	13%	76%	19%	5%

**Fire Chief Questionnaire respondents: community population**

<b>Community population</b>	<b>Number of fire departments responding</b>	<b>Percent of all respondents</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
1 to 1,000	73	36%	36%
1,001 to 2,500	42	21%	57%
2,501 to 10,000	41	20%	77%
10,001 to 50,000	37	18%	95%
More than 50,000	6	3%	98%
Community not identified	5	2%	100%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>—</b>

## APPENDIX J.

### FIREFIGHTER QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table A-4. Firefighter Questionnaire respondents: firefighter demographics by regional fire districts

Regional Fire Districts	Number of firefighters	Distribution of firefighters by pay status			Distribution of firefighters by length of time in the fire service (years)				
		Volunteer – unpaid	Volunteer – paid on call	Career (paid fulltime)	1 or less	2 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 20	21 or more
1 Capital City	147	11	116	20	18	30	35	47	17
2 Northern	37	7	24	6	2	5	10	14	6
3 Arrowhead	127	58	63	6	14	20	24	59	10
4 Northwest	29	22	6	1	3	5	9	9	3
5 Cuyuna	66	25	41	—	8	17	14	17	10
6 Lake	198	54	142	2	15	44	43	70	26
7 St. Croix Valley	44	16	28	—	3	9	16	14	2
8 North Suburban	255	19	228	8	22	77	60	79	17
9 West Central	59	9	50	—	1	10	11	24	13
10 Central	248	128	120	—	22	58	59	89	20
11 United	258	32	213	13	31	52	63	89	23
12 Minn. Valley	104	35	64	5	9	20	19	39	17
13 Southwest	58	14	44	—	8	11	13	21	5
14 South Central	472	287	185	—	30	101	103	168	70
15 Southeast	263	126	110	27	24	66	48	88	37
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2365</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>1434</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>276</b>
Percents		36%	60%	4%	9%	22%	22%	35%	12%

## **APPENDIX K.**

### **VOLUNTARY FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION**

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The Minnesota Fire Service Certification Board is a private, nonprofit corporation that operates a program of *voluntary certification* of fire service personnel. It was created in 1988 and members include representatives of the State Fire Marshal, Fire/EMS Center, Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association, Minnesota State Fire Department Association, Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota, Fire Instructors Association of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators. The Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association declined participation.

Certification is based on standards of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1000 series. The NFPA standards were adopted by most fire service entities, and in recent years courts have accepted NFPA standards to measure departments in litigation.

For a year after the program began, beginning January 1991, there was a “grandfathering” period during which more than 9,000 people from 580 departments were certified without testing. Later certifications and all recertifications (at three-year intervals) require written and practical tests or documentation attesting to certification by a nationally acceptable state or federal certification agency. The first recertification period ended in 1993, and 121 departments decided not to continue participation on a department level. About 366 departments are in the voluntary certification program.

The board certifies for Firefighter I and Firefighter II (NFPA 1001), Fire Apparatus Operator (NFPA 1002), Fire Inspector (NFPA 1031), and Fire Instructor (NFPA 1041). When a new level of certification is opened, a one-year “grandfathering period” is initiated.

Since 1991, the board has tested technical college students and department training divisions. Tests have been given to more than 2,200 applicants, with a fail rate averaging less than 10 percent. The test fee is \$35; the cost to recertify is \$10.

For recertification (required every three years) applicants must have completed 24 hours of appropriate training each year at the fire service level being recertified. Individual departments keep the training records and would be required to make them available upon request to the certification board.

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## **APPENDIX L.**

### **CURRENT FIREFIGHTER TRAINING STATUTES**

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#### **Minn. Stat. Sec. 88.067 [TRAINING OF LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS.]**

The commissioner [of natural resources] may make grants for training of fire departments in techniques of fire control that will enable them to assist the state more effectively in controlling wildfires. The commissioner may require a local match for any grant. Training shall be provided to the extent practicable in coordination with other public agencies with training and educational responsibilities.

#### **299F.051 Training local firefighters, prosecutors, and peace officers.**

Subdivision 1. Training unit. An arson training unit is established within the division of fire marshal to develop and administer arson training courses throughout the state for law enforcement and fire service personnel and for prosecutors.

Subd. 1a. Curriculum. The arson training unit, in consultation with the bureau of criminal apprehension, the state fire marshal, the Minnesota peace officer standards and training board, the county attorneys association, the attorney general, and the state advisory council on fire service education and research, shall establish a standardized curriculum to be included in the training programs. The standardized curriculum shall include fire scene investigation and preservation of evidence, interviewing of witnesses and suspects, constitutional limits on interrogation by sworn and nonsworn officers, and other topics deemed necessary to successful criminal investigation and prosecution. The training program offered to peace officers shall meet the applicable preservice training requirements established by the peace officer standards and training board under section 626.8456.

Subd. 2. Training locations, instructors. The arson training unit, in cooperation with the superintendent of the bureau of criminal apprehension, the board of peace officer standards and training, the county attorneys association, and the attorney general, shall provide courses at convenient locations in the state for training firefighters, peace officers, and prosecutors in: (1) the conduct of investigations following the occurrence of a fire; and (2) the prosecution of arson cases. For this purpose, the arson training unit may use the services and employees of the bureau, the state fire marshal, and the attorney general. In addition, the arson training unit is authorized to establish minimum qualifications for training course instructors, and engage part-time instructors necessary and proper to furnish the best possible instruction, subject to the limitation of funds appropriated and available for expenditure. Laws 1981, chapter 210, sections 1 to 48, shall not apply to the part-time instructors.

Subd. 3. In-service training. The arson training unit, in cooperation with the bureau of criminal apprehension, shall offer in-service and refresher training for firefighters and peace officers through schools administered by the state, county, school district, municipality, or joint or contractual combinations thereof. The in-service training courses offered for peace officers shall be eligible for continuing education credit from the Minnesota board of peace officer standards and training.

Subd. 4. Cooperative investigation; reimbursement. The state fire marshal and the superintendent of the bureau of criminal apprehension shall encourage the cooperation of local firefighters and peace

officers in the investigation of violations of sections 609.561 to 609.576 or other crimes associated with reported fires in all appropriate ways, including providing reimbursement to political subdivisions at a rate not to exceed 50 percent of the salaries of peace officers and firefighters for time spent in attending fire investigation training courses offered by the arson training unit. Volunteer firefighters from a political subdivision shall be reimbursed at the rate of \$35 per day plus expenses incurred in attending fire investigation training courses offered by the arson training unit. Reimbursement shall be made only in the event that both a peace officer and a firefighter from the same political subdivision attend the same training course. The reimbursement shall be subject to the limitation of funds appropriated and available for expenditure. The state fire marshal and the superintendent also shall encourage local firefighters and peace officers to seek assistance from the arson strike force established in section 299F.058.

#### **299F.058 Arson strike force.**

Subdivision 1. Arson strike force. A multi jurisdictional arson strike force is established to provide expert investigative and prosecutorial assistance to local agencies on request in complex or serious cases involving suspected arson.

Subd. 2. Membership. (a) The arson strike force consists of representatives from the following agencies and organizations:

- (1) the division of fire marshal;
- (2) the bureau of criminal apprehension;
- (3) the office of attorney general;
- (4) the Minnesota county attorneys association;
- (5) the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms of the United States Treasury Department;
- (6) the Minneapolis police and fire arson unit;
- (7) the St. Paul police and fire arson unit;
- (8) licensed private detectives selected by the state fire marshal or the attorney general or their designees; and
- (9) any other arson experts the arson strike force deems appropriate to include.

The arson strike force, as necessary, may consult and work with representatives of property insurance agencies and organizations and any other private organizations that have expertise in arson investigations and prosecutions.

(b) Representatives from the attorney general's office and the county attorneys association who are members of the arson strike force may assist in administering the strike force.

(c) The strike force expires June 30, 2001.

Subd. 3. Investigative duties. (a) The arson strike force shall be available on a statewide basis to assist local public safety agencies in investigating the following types of suspected arson cases:

- (1) serial fires;
- (2) multi jurisdictional fires;
- (3) fires causing death or serious injury to a public safety officer;
- (4) fires resulting in multiple deaths or injuries; or
- (5) fires causing over \$1,000,000 in damage.

(b) The arson strike force shall establish a mechanism for informing local public safety agencies that it is available to assist in the investigation of the suspected arson cases described in paragraph (a).

(c) The arson strike force shall, by means of a memorandum of understanding among the involved agencies, develop and implement a protocol for the strike force's activation and operation in local cases of suspected arson.

(d) The arson strike force shall assist the arson training unit established in section 299F.051 in developing and implementing educational programs for public safety personnel on investigating arson cases.

Subd. 4. Prosecution duties. (a) The arson strike force may identify and establish a team of prosecutors with experience in arson cases who will provide advice, on request, to local prosecutors who are prosecuting or preparing to prosecute arson cases. This team shall include prosecutors from the attorney general's office and county prosecutors who are identified and selected by the county attorneys association.

(b) The arson strike force shall assist the arson training unit established in section 299F.051 in developing educational programs and manuals to assist prosecutors in prosecuting arson cases.

#### **299F.059 Juvenile firesetter intervention.**

Subdivision 1. Intervention network. The state fire marshal shall establish a statewide juvenile firesetter intervention network. The network shall include a clearinghouse of resources and materials to assist fire service personnel, schools, law enforcement agencies, and mental health professionals in understanding juvenile firesetting behavior and symptoms and intervening with juveniles who engage in the behavior or display the symptoms. The state fire marshal shall include in the network the comprehensive injury prevention education curriculum provided for in subdivision 2.

Subd. 2. Educational curriculum. The state fire marshal shall ensure implementation of a comprehensive injury prevention education curriculum that focuses on juvenile fire play intervention and injury prevention. The curriculum shall be made available to schools and other interested organizations statewide.

Subd. 3. Annual training forum. The state fire marshal shall develop strategies and plans designed to reduce the number of juvenile firesetting incidents. The state fire marshal shall offer an annual training forum for fire service and law enforcement personnel and for juvenile justice, medical, educational, mental health, and other interested professionals to discuss these strategies and other issues relating to juvenile firesetter behavior and symptoms.

Subd. 4. Media campaign; keeping fire materials away from children. The state fire marshal shall develop an ongoing media awareness campaign to instruct parents, retailers, and the community on the

importance of keeping fire materials away from children and on methods for accomplishing that objective.

#### **299F.06 Testimonial powers.**

Subdivision 1. Summon witnesses; produce documentary evidence. (a) In order to establish if reasonable grounds exist to believe that a violation of sections 609.561 to 609.576, has occurred, or to determine compliance with the uniform fire code or corrective orders issued thereunder, the state fire marshal and the staff designated by the state fire marshal shall have the power in any county of the state to summon and compel the attendance of witnesses to testify before the state fire marshal, chief assistant fire marshal, or deputy state fire marshals, and may require the production of any book, paper, or document deemed pertinent. The state fire marshal may also designate certain individuals from fire departments in cities of the first class and cities of the second class as having the powers set forth in this paragraph. These designated individuals may only exercise their powers in a manner prescribed by the state fire marshal. "Fire department" has the meaning given in section 299F.092, subdivision 6. "Cities of the first class" and "cities of the second class" have the meanings given in section 410.01.

(b) A summons issued under this subdivision shall be served in the same manner and have the same effect as subpoenas from district courts. All witnesses shall receive the same compensation as is paid to witnesses in district courts, which shall be paid out of the fire marshal fund upon vouchers signed by the state fire marshal, chief assistant fire marshal, or deputy fire marshal before whom any witnesses shall have attended and this officer shall, at the close of the investigation wherein the witness was subpoenaed, certify to the attendance and mileage of the witness, which certificate shall be filed in the office of the state fire marshal. All investigations held by or under the direction of the state fire marshal, or any subordinate, may in the state fire marshal's discretion be private and persons other than those required to be present by the provisions of this chapter may be excluded from the place where the investigation is held, and witnesses may be kept separate and apart from each other and not allowed to communicate with each other until they have been examined.

Subd. 2. Oaths administered. The state fire marshal, chief assistant state fire marshal, and deputy state fire marshals are each hereby authorized and empowered to administer oaths and affirmations to any persons appearing as witnesses before them; and false swearing in any matter or proceeding aforesaid shall be deemed perjury and punished as such.

Subd. 3. Penalty for refusal to testify or produce evidence. Any witness who refuses to be sworn, or who refuses to testify, or who disobeys any lawful order of the state fire marshal, chief assistant fire marshal, or deputy state fire marshal in relation to the investigation, or who fails or refuses to produce any paper, book, or document touching any matter under examination, or who is guilty of any contemptuous conduct, after being summoned to appear before them to give testimony in relation to any matter or subject under examination or investigation may be punished by any district court in the same manner as if the proceedings were pending in that court, subject to the provisions of section 588.01.

#### **Laws 1997, Ch. 239, Art. 1, Sec. 7, Subd. 4. [APPROPRIATIONS.]**

\$225,000 the first year and \$125,000 the second year may be used to:

(1) hire an additional fire investigator to be assigned to northern Minnesota;



- (2) retain mechanical, electrical, engineering, or technical experts to assist with determining the cause of fires;
- (3) reimburse members of the arson strike force for their overtime, travel, subsistence, and related costs and to obtain professional expert services or technical equipment that are beyond the capabilities of the strike force members;
- (4) establish the arson training unit;
- (5) establish the standardized arson training curriculum;
- (6) develop a fire scene preservation video for distribution to fire departments statewide;
- (7) purchase an arson training trailer equipped for use in training events and available as a resource to the arson strike force at major fires;
- (8) develop and maintain an arson resource library collection;
- (9) communicate the importance of arson training to law enforcement, fire service, and prosecuting agencies;
- (10) provide financial incentives to encourage firefighters and peace officers to participate in arson training;
- (11) establish and staff the statewide juvenile firesetter intervention network;
- (12) develop and distribute the comprehensive injury prevention education curriculum;
- (13) provide initial funding for the annual training forum on juvenile firesetting behavior and intervention strategies;
- (14) assist local fire departments in collecting relevant data on juvenile-related fire incidents for inclusion in the fire incident reporting system;
- (15) provide the laboratory instruments and training needed to process arson evidence samples; and
- (16) provide the supporting equipment and services needed to use arson evidence sample processing instruments.

By February 15, 1999, the fire marshal shall report to the chairs of the senate and house divisions having jurisdiction over criminal justice funding on how this appropriation was spent.

