
Chapter 13 – HUMAN RESOURCES

As was demonstrated in previous chapters, the Olympia Fire Department's success relies on its personnel. Having sufficient, professional, well-trained, and healthy officers, firefighters, and civilian personnel is key to the Department's ability to deliver service to the citizens it protects. The Department is responsible for recruiting, maintaining, and retaining its most precious assets: its personnel.

13.1 Human Resources Management

Like most municipal fire departments, the Department enjoys services from the City's Human Resources Department. The mission of the Human Resources Department is "to contribute to the City's organizational effectiveness by providing personnel and employee services which enhance the ability of individuals and departments to do their jobs."

The Human Resources Department develops Administrative Guidelines for Personnel Administration which apply to all Fire Department employees except in situations where the Fire Department's labor agreement, Civil Service Rules, statutes and memorandums of understanding prevail. These Administrative Guidelines are for the purpose of stating the policies of the city of Olympia as they relate to employee status, conduct, benefits, personnel actions and remedies.

Because of Civil Service Rules, a collective bargaining agreement and Washington's statutes and Administrative Code; the Fire Department must provide much of its own human resources administration. The Fire Department's human resource administration includes professional level human resources support, advice, and guidance to chief officers, supervisors, and other employees on personnel issues affecting the Department. The Fire Department's human resources management processes include the development of recommendations on the personnel policies, advice to command staff on appropriate disciplinary actions, resolution of grievances, and advice to the City on classification, compensation, and employee benefit plans.

In addition, the Fire Department:

- Reviews compensation plans
- Ensures pay issues are addressed in a timely manner
- Updates and publishes job descriptions
- Ensures that job descriptions are compliant with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations
- Distributes human resources policy to the Department's personnel
- Supervises mandated employee benefit programs
- Negotiates compensation rate structures

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- Provides education and communications to all employees concerning the benefit programs
 - Ensures and maintains strong professional relationships with labor
 - Maintains personnel records and provides reports as needed
 - Serves as the first line of contact regarding sensitive personnel issues and documentation of employee performance or pre-disciplinary issues
 - Helps coordinate components of the overall employee support network, e.g., Employee Assistance Program and Wellness Committee

13.2 Health and Safety

Health and safety are of primary concern to all Fire Department members. Health and safety are affected by many factors, including training, equipment, facilities, operating procedures, medical supervision, government regulations, lifestyle, and nutrition, as well as attitude, awareness, and perception. Preventing injuries and maximizing the health of its members is a primary goal of the Department.

The Department has been proactive in this regard. The Department provides its members with workout areas and encourages physical fitness among its members. The Department also places an emphasis on scene safety. The Department should continue these efforts in a manner consistent with the National Fire Protection Association's Standard 1500 and the Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative by:

- Continuing to emphasize physical fitness
- Providing stress management and critical incident stress intervention
- Providing appropriate safety equipment and apparatus
- Providing a comprehensive fire apparatus preventive maintenance program
- Continuing to provide emergency incident management training
- Ensuring fire stations are built/remodeled with an emphasis on personnel health and comfort
- Conducting medical examinations for personnel

13.2.1 Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative

The Olympia Fire Department, in cooperation with IAFF Local 468, is developing an overall wellness/fitness system to maintain uniformed personnel's physical and mental capabilities. While such programs are mandates in other fire departments, the approach to developing the Initiative was mutual between the Department's Administration and its members represented by the Local 468. Successful programs for physical fitness are positive and not punitive in design; require universal participation by all uniformed personnel; allow for age, gender, and position in the department; allow for on-duty-time participation and utilization of facilities and equipment provided or arranged by the Department; provide for rehabilitation and remedial support for those in need; contain

training and education components; and are reasonable and equitable to all participants. The Department's program should address the following key points.²²⁵

- Confidentiality of behavioral, medical, and fitness evaluations
- Physical fitness and wellness programs that are educational and rehabilitative, and not punitive
- Performance testing that promotes progressive wellness improvement
- Commitment by labor and management to a positive individualized fitness/wellness program
- Developing a holistic wellness approach that includes:
 - Medical evaluation
 - Fitness
 - Rehabilitation
 - Behavioral health
- Maintaining a long-term program that, where possible, is made available to retirees.

Department's Program

The Department is in the process of developing a comprehensive wellness program that promotes the health, safety, and longevity of personnel in a responsible and cost-effective manner. The program is being designed to improve the performance and productivity of personnel and enhance services and commitment to the community. The program is based upon the International Association of Firefighters/International Association of Fire Chiefs Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative of 1997.

The Wellness/Fitness Initiative has five major components: medical, physical fitness, behavioral, rehabilitation, and data collection. The Program should be inclusive of various ranks, ages, and genders, and include staff and line personnel. In addition, the Initiative should:

- Have an annual budget
- Be lead by a team of personnel, which are representative of the department's various ranks, ages, and genders, and include staff and line personnel
- Meet regularly
- Publish its activities
- Make recommendations on wellness issues
- Conduct surveys
- Review new information in order to keep the program healthy

The medical fitness aspect of the program should include physical exams based on NFPA standards. The frequency of physical exams should vary depending on age. Annual physical exams should be provided for line personnel aged 40 and over, biennial exams for personnel between ages 30 and 39, and triennial exams for personnel 29 years old and younger.

The fitness for duty aspects of the program should include fit-for-duty evaluations conducted with regularly scheduled physical exams, evaluations conducted following injuries and rehabilitation, and the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT).

The CPAT was developed by the IAFF and IAFC and is licensed by the IAFF. The CPAT is designed to be a fair and valid evaluation tool to assist in the selection of fire fighters, and to ensure that all fire fighter candidates possess the physical ability to complete critical tasks effectively and safely.²²⁶ The CPAT Program, which is for new hires, is required for participation in the Office of The State Fire Marshal's Fire Training Academy.²²⁷

The fitness program should include Peer Fitness Trainers. Peer Fitness Trainers are American Council of Exercise-certified trainers who work with personnel on physical fitness issues, conduct fitness evaluations, and assist with rehabilitation exercises. Annual fitness evaluations should be conducted for all personnel to determine individual goals.

Behavioral fitness activities should include peer and family support programs, alcohol and tobacco cessation programs and nutrition education programs.

The Department should develop a modified-duty program as part of the rehabilitative care aspects of the Initiative. The modified-duty program should strive to provide meaningful work, time for rehabilitation, and a quick return to full duty for personnel injured on or off the job or personnel with acute illnesses that may temporarily prohibit full duty. The modified duty should be prescribed by a physician and remains until the individual is cleared by a physician for full duty.

As will be discussed below, data collection is an important part of the Initiative. By identifying trends in on-the-job injuries, the Department will be better able to prevent injuries. Unfortunately, the ability of the Department to identify injury trends is limited with its current system.

Civilian Personnel Wellness Program

While the City's wellness programs are available to civilian personnel, participation is lacking. The wellness program for civilian personnel does not have the same cultural imperative as it does for the line personnel. The Department should better communicate the value of the wellness/fitness program to civilian personnel.

13.2.2 Reportable Injury/Exposures

Collecting data on occupational injuries and illnesses is an important aspect of avoiding these injuries and illnesses. By having a better understanding of the cause and effect of work-related injuries and exposures, the Department can better tailor its training programs, fitness programs, policies and procedures, and equipment purchases to decrease the incidence and severity of injuries and exposures.

While the City has a thorough workers' compensation case management system, the Department is lacking in its ability to easily track causes of injuries and exposures and whether the cause was related to emergency incident activities or other activities. The Department should include more detail related to causes of reportable injuries and exposures in its reporting system.

Table 18 shows abstracted injury/exposure reports for 1999 through 2002. As seen in Table 18, the Department averages 14.75 reportable claims annually. The average annual medical expense and indemnity costs are \$31,325*, which excludes costs associated with lost time. The Department annually averages 110 days lost and 155 days paid for workers compensation claims. The Department averages 0.175 claims per person annually, which is below its target of 0.2. However, lost days is comparatively large, which is most likely the result of two large claims (one in 2002 for 229 lost days and one in 2000 for 125 lost days).

Table 18, Reportable Injury/Exposure Claims

Loss Measure	Year				Total
	1999	2000	2001	2002	
Reports/Claims	11.00	23.00	12.00	13.00	59.00
Average Reports/Claims per Year					14.75
Total Days Lost	33.00	176.00	22.00	231.00	462.00
Average Days Lost per Reportable Injury/Exposure	3.00	7.65	1.83	17.77	7.83
Total Cost of Medical Care and Indemnity	\$18,162.98	\$41,417.73	\$9,337.25	\$65,720.02	\$134,637.98
Average Cost of Medical Care and Indemnity per Reportable Injury/Exposure	\$1,651.18	\$2,436.34	\$848.84	\$5,476.67	\$2,639.96

As part of this planning process, the need for enhanced risk management was identified, including the following personnel safety issues:

* Real dollars.

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- The Department has multiple people responsible for various aspects of a risk management program. The Department should further consolidate risk management functions.
 - The Department wishes to have a more formal system for identifying and evaluating workplace hazards.
 - The Department wishes to have more formal methods and procedures for correcting unsafe or unhealthy conditions and work practices once they have been identified, and a record system that identifies steps taken to implement risk reduction through corrections.
 - The Department wishes to have a more formal system for communicating occupational health and safety matters, including provisions designed to encourage reporting of hazards and minimizing occupational exposure to communicable diseases or chemicals.

13.2.3 FLSA Issues

By hiring full-time firefighters, the City becomes liable for wages consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Employees of State and local governments are covered by the FLSA (§3(s)(1)(c)). The FLSA establishes special rules for fire protection personnel. The FLSA defines fire protection personnel as employees working for an organized fire department or fire district who have been trained for and have the legal authority and responsibility to engage in the prevention and control of fires. The FLSA requires that all covered, nonexempt employees be paid at least the statutory minimum wage – \$5.15 an hour. Further, the FLSA requires that all covered, nonexempt employees be paid time and one-half their regular rates of pay for all hours worked in excess of 40 in a workweek. However, Section 13(b)(20) of the FLSA provides an overtime exemption to law enforcement or fire protection employees of a public agency that employs fewer than five employees in law enforcement or fire protection activities.²²⁸

Section 7(k) of the FLSA provides that employees engaged in fire protection or law enforcement may be paid overtime on a “work period” basis. A “work period” may be from seven consecutive days to 28 consecutive days in length. Fire protection personnel are due overtime under such a plan after 212 hours worked during a 28-day period. For work periods of at least seven but less than 28 days, overtime pay is required when the number of hours worked exceeds the number of hours that bears the same relationship to 212 as the number of days in the work period bears to 28.²²⁹

Under certain prescribed conditions, a State or local government agency may give compensatory time at a rate of not less than one and one-half hours for each overtime hour worked, in lieu of cash overtime compensation. Employees engaged in fire protection work may accrue up to 480 hours of compensatory time. An employee should be permitted to use compensatory time within a reasonable period after making the request, if doing so does not “unduly disrupt” the operations of the employer. At the time of termination an employee must be paid the higher of: (1) his or her final regular rate of

pay; or (2) the average regular rate during his or her last three years of employment for any compensatory time remaining “on the books” when termination occurs.²³⁰

New FLSA Rules – “FairPay” Rules

Beginning 23 August 2004, new FLSA rules concerning Defining and Delimiting the Exemptions for Executive, Administrative, Professional, Outside Sales and Computer Employees go into effect. The new rules may have an impact on the some of the Department’s personnel.

Section 13(a)(1) of the new FLSA rules provides an exemption from both minimum wage and overtime pay for employees employed as bona fide executive, administrative, professional and outside sales employees. To qualify for exemption, employees must meet certain tests regarding their job duties and be paid on a salary basis at not less than \$455 per week.²³¹

Police officers, firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, ambulance personnel, rescue workers, hazardous materials workers and similar employees (“first responders”) who perform work such as preventing, controlling or extinguishing fires of any type; rescuing fire or accident victims; and other similar work are not exempt under Section 13(a)(1) or the regulations and thus are protected by the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the FLSA.²³² For example, “a police officer or fire fighter whose primary duty is to investigate crimes or fight fires is not exempt under section 13(a)(1) of the Act merely because the police officer or fire fighter also directs the work of other employees in the conduct of an investigation or fighting a fire.” Subsection 541.3(b)(3) provides that such employees do not qualify as exempt administrative employees because their primary duty is not the performance of work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers as required under section 541.200.²³³

In addition, subsection 541.3(b)(4) provides that such employees do not qualify as exempt learned professionals because their primary duty is not the performance of work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction or the performance of work requiring invention, imagination, originality or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor as required under section 541.300. The subsection also states that “although some police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians and similar employees have college degrees, a specialized academic degree is not a standard prerequisite for employment in such occupations.”²³⁴

Finally, firefighters, paramedics, EMTs and other public safety employees also cannot qualify as exempt under the highly compensated test in final section 541.601, as final section 541.601(b) provides that the highly compensated test “applies only to employees whose primary duty includes performing office or non-manual work.”²³⁵

The further definitions of nonexempt employees may mean that some of the Department's personnel, which could have been treated as exempt executives under the previous regulations, may be entitled to overtime under the new rule because of the additional requirement in the standard duties test that an exempt executive must have the authority to "hire or fire" other employees or make recommendations given particular weight on hiring, firing, advancement, promotion or other change of status.²³⁶

While it appears that the Department's policies and practices are consistent with the new rules, the Department should ensure that they are.

13.3 Performance Recognition (Appraisal)

Assessing employee performance is a critical function for any organization, but the process rarely gets the time and attention it deserves. It often gets pushed-back in the context of the time-sensitive day-to-day demands. Managers may think reviewing performance is unnecessary for high-performing individuals, and occasionally the process gets postponed because it can involve difficult discussions. The bottom-line is that the Department will strengthen immediate and long-term performance by devoting attention to employee performance.

Why Create A Performance Recognition (Appraisal) System?

Often called "performance appraisal," the Department might choose to think of the process as "performance recognition," denoting a system that is positive and focuses on strong performance rather than a system that is punitive and uncomfortable. A consistent system is critical for many reasons, including:

- Making administrative decisions relating to promotions;
- Determining individual and organizational training & development needs;
- Encouraging performance improvement;
- Counseling and motivating employees;
- Assessing employee potential;
- Helping employees set career goals;
- Providing validation of selection procedures for hiring and promotion;
- Making disciplinary and terminating decisions;
- Strengthening working relations between managers and employees;
- Providing input to human resource planning.

13.3.1 Important Elements of a Successful Performance Recognition System

Performance recognition—the process of assessing the degree to which employees successfully accomplish their work requirements, communicating to the employee his/her performance and establishing a plan for continuous growth and improvement—can be achieved through a variety of methods. Successful programs often integrate more than

one method and are usually tailored to the specific needs of the organization.²³⁷ Regardless of the method, successful performance appraisal systems are:

- Always job related
- Clear in who is responsible for the evaluations
- Simple, easy to use and track
- Upbeat, emphasizing successes as well as deficiencies
- Regular and consistent, thereby avoiding surprises
- Opportunities for two-way communication, allowing officers to give feedback continuously and their subordinates to do the same in one-on-one settings.

Performance should be based on the degree to which an individual fulfills the requirements of a job. Performance should not be confused with effort (how much time and energy one gives to tasks) and it should be primarily based on job requirements. Factors that can impact how an individual satisfies the job requirements can include their skills and abilities (job knowledge) and behaviors (attitudes, personality traits), but they should always relate back to the results achieved. Performance appraisals should always rest on the solid foundation of understanding the tasks, objectives and skills that are spelled out in the individual's job description.²³⁸

13.3.2 Who is Responsible for Performance Assessment?

Most performance appraisal systems rely on the supervisor or higher-level manager to assess employee performance. The person who has the ability to directly observe an employee and who understands the skills needed to perform the job is usually the best person to conduct the performance review. For example, engine company members should be reviewed by their lieutenant, rather than a lieutenant in the Life Safety Line of Business.²³⁹ Some organizations will also incorporate self-assessment or multi-rater ("360") systems.

13.3.3 Specialized Performance Appraisal

For specialized fields such as paramedics, a component of the review needs to be conducted by someone who understands the skills required. The review of paramedic by someone who has never started an IV or cleared an airway will have less validity than a review done by an EMS supervisor. Supervisors should also routinely be in the field to observe specialized performance.

In addition, the paramedics' review process should incorporate elements of the Department's Quality assurance /Quality Improvement (QA/QI) program to ensure a specified standard or level of care. See EMS Chapter (page 159) for more details.

13.3.4 When to Recognize Performance

A hallmark of a successful performance assessment program is regularity. Many organizations review performance annually, either when the entire organization conducts performance reviews (often tied to fiscal year-end) or on the anniversary of a hiring date. Unfortunately, annual reviews rarely capture the immediacy of performance and the time gap allows for inaccuracies and lapses in memory.²⁴⁰

Having an advanced schedule for performance assessment will ensure that it gets done, but the Department should aim to create a culture where recognition and evaluation is continuous. For example, reviewing performance at the completion of a major task or project (immediately after a major incident, for example) captures elements of performance while it is still fresh in both the supervisor and employee's minds.²⁴¹ Discussing performance in regular settings, like regular one-on-one meetings between supervisors and staff, can remove anxiety surrounding performance evaluations, and, more importantly, they foster communication between the supervisor and subordinate.

13.3.5 How to Measure Performance²⁴²

The Department measures performance because it needs to have documentation of an employee's progress. The following are common methods by which institutions recognize performance:

1. Goal setting (“Managing By Objective” or MBO) – Through this system the manager and employee jointly set goals and objectives prior to a specific timeframe (for example: “Firefighter Jones will complete Lt. testing packet by September 1.”). The strength of this system is that it fosters two-way communication between the supervisor and employee, and it requires identifying measurable results.
2. Checklists – Checklists provide the supervisor a list of descriptive statements that reflect the job requirements, to which he/she must respond “yes” or “no.”
3. Graphic Rating Scales – A very common method of measuring performance, a graphic rating scale outlines key job criteria in a graph and requires the supervisor to evaluate the employee's performance. For example: “Dependability is: 1 – unsatisfactory; 2 – fair; 3- satisfactory; 4 – good; 5 - outstanding.”
4. Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) – This system uses a graphic rating scale but it is tied to behavior that is considered critical to the job rather than performance outcomes (see Table 19 below).

Table 19, Example of a Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale²⁴³

Scale Values	Anchors
7 – Excellent	Develops a comprehensive project plan, documents it well, obtains required approval, and distributes the plan to all concerned.
6 -- Very good	Plans, communicates, and observes milestones; states week by week where the project stands relative to plans. Maintains-up-to-date charts of project accomplishments and backlogs and uses these to optimize any schedule modifications required. Experiences occasional minor operational problems but communicates effectively.
5 – Good	Lays out all the parts of a job and schedules each part; seeks to beat schedule and will allow for slack. Satisfies customers' time constraints; time and cost overruns occur infrequently.
4 – Average	Makes a list of due dates and revises them as the project progresses, usually adding unforeseen events; instigates frequent customer complaints. May have a sound plan, but does not keep track of milestones; does not report slippages in schedule or other problems as they occur.
3 -- Below average	Plans are poorly defined, unrealistic time schedules are common. Cannot plan more than a day or two ahead, has no concept of a realistic project due date.
2 -- Very poor	Has no plan or schedule of work segments to be performed. Does little or no planning for project assignments.
1 -- Unacceptable	Seldom, if ever, completes project, because of lack of planning, and does not seem to care. Fails consistently due to lack of planning and does not inquire about how to improve.

5. Essay Appraisal – In this system supervisors are given instructions on how to evaluate employees, which is then assessed in a written form. While more descriptive than checklists and rating scales, essays are labor intensive and depend upon writing skills of the evaluator. Essay appraisals are often successfully used as a supplement or part of other systems.
6. Comparing Individuals – Also commonly referred to as “Forced Ranking,” this system measures employees on a curve, forcing the evaluator to rank employees. While it can help prevent evaluations which are too lenient or which assess all employees similarly, they can distract the evaluator from core job tasks.
7. Multi-Rater Systems – Commonly known as “360,” multi-rater evaluation systems solicit a full circle of feedback—from customers, peers, colleagues, employees, direct reports—as added step in evaluating the performance of employees. These systems can utilize any of the methods or combinations of methods listed above and can be very effective in gathering a broader range of information on performance.

Performance Assessment Systems²⁴⁴

Technique	Providing Feedback and Counseling	Allocating Rewards and Opportunities	Minimizing Costs	Avoiding Rating Errors
Management by Objectives (MBO)	Excellent: Specific Problems, deficiencies and plans are identified	Poor: Nonstandard objectives across employees and units make comparisons difficult	Poor: Expensive to develop. Time consuming to use.	Good: Tied to observations, reflects job content, low errors.
Checklist	Average: Identifies problem areas, and some information on behavior, but little specific guidance for improvement	Good-Average: Comparative scores available, and dimensions can be weighted	Average: Expensive development, but inexpensive to use.	Good: Techniques available to increase job-relatedness and reduce errors.
Graphic rating scale	Average: Identifies problem areas, and some information on behaviors/outcomes needing improvement.	Average: Comparative scores available but not easily documented and defended.	Good: Inexpensive to develop and use.	Average: Substantial opportunity for errors, though they can be linked to specific dimensions.
Behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS)	Good: Identifies specific behaviors leading to problems.	Good: Scores available, documented, and behavior-based.	Average: Expensive development, but inexpensive to use.	Good: Based on job behaviors, can reduce errors.
Essay	Unknown: Depends on essay topics chosen by evaluators.	Poor: No overall score available, not comparable across employees	Average: Inexpensive development but expensive to use.	Unknown: Good observations can reduce errors, but lack of structure poses a danger.
Comparing individuals (ranking)	Poor: Based on general factors, with few specifics.	Poor-Average: Overall score available, but difficult to defend.	Good: Inexpensive to develop and to use.	Average: Usually consistent, but subject to halo error and artificiality.
Multi-Rater (“360” systems)	Average: Can identify problem areas, but subject to skills of evaluator and does not automatically identify guidance for improvement	Good/Average: Scores available, documented, but not necessarily behavior-based and not always easy to defend..	Unknown: Depends on type of system deployed	Unknown: Research indicates peer review can be subject to errors and low validity.

13.3.6 Using the Recognition System to Provide Feedback²⁴⁵

Regardless of the system implemented, successful performance review meetings share the following key qualities:

- Both the manager and employee have devoted significant time to preparing for the evaluation meeting.
- The manager uses a positive, upbeat approach that focuses on praise and good performance.
- A manager will acknowledge and trouble-shoot obstacles that may hinder an employee's performance.
- The employee is genuinely participating to a high degree (rather than a manager "talking at" an employee). The manager must allow for an employee to provide feedback on the manager's comments.
- The manager cites specific performance situations that are concretely tied to the goals of the organization and the job description (rather than providing general criticism).

Common errors related to performance recognition that supervisors should seek to avoid include:

- Emphasizing productivity rather than quality of work.
- A tendency to evaluate people against other people and not against job standards.
- Rating on "first impressions," or "halo effect," where judgments are made on the most immediate or easily recognizable parts of the employee's record while other elements are ignored.
- A tendency to rate people higher who are more like themselves than those from different backgrounds.²⁴⁶

13.3.7 "360" Evaluation Systems

Multi-rater systems tend to be most effective for mid- to upper-level management. Should the Department consider incorporating a multi-rater system into its performance recognition program, consider phasing it in for battalion chiefs or higher.

While in recent years "360" or multi-rater evaluation systems have become very popular, some human resource experts are beginning to advise caution in their use.²⁴⁷ Factors to consider include:

- 360 evaluations are frequently administered anonymously in an effort to promote candid responses, yet using methods of secrecy are antithetical to promoting openness and direct communication in an organization.
- Some research indicates low validity in peer evaluations.²⁴⁸
- 360 evaluations are most effective in team-based, development-oriented organizations²⁴⁹
- Environment must be highly trusting and not experiencing any major organizational changes.²⁵⁰

13.3.8 Performance Appraisal/Recognition vs. Performance Management

Performance appraisal and recognition is a process of assessing the degree to which employees successfully accomplish their work requirements. This process involves regular and direct communications with the employee about his/her performance and has a goal of establishing effective plans for continuous growth and improvement.

Performance Management differs from performance appraisal/recognition in that it is a philosophy that supports the supervisory counseling necessary to address and correct employee performance concerns. An effective performance appraisal and recognition system is critical to the success of the Department in meeting its short-term and long-term goals. This success comes with employees understanding their roles and responsibilities and then carrying out their duties in an effective and efficient manner, in order to meet the ever-changing needs of the Department's customers (both internal and external).

Conclusions

The Department must adopt a performance evaluation system that is productive, constructive, meaningful and allows accomplishments to be recognized. Easiness and effectiveness should be hallmarks to the system that may incorporate a blend of the different systems listed above. While type of system adopted is important, more critical is the process of identifying goals, tying those goals to the mission of the Department, learning to coach employees, increasing communication and fostering trust in the Department.²⁵¹

13.4 Recruiting

Attracting talented and committed personnel to the Olympia Fire Department is important if the Department is to continue its strong legacy of service to the community and prepare the organization for the future.

Qualities the Department is looking for in a firefighter include:

- A person who is a team player
- Ability to think clearly under stress
- Ability to get along with others
- A person with organizational loyalty
- A person in excellent physical condition (for emergency response roles)

The City of Olympia hires Entry Level Police Officers and Entry Level Firefighters in accordance with City of Olympia Civil Service Rules.

The first phase of the examination process for Entry Level Firefighter consists of a written examination. Candidates who successfully complete the written examination may be asked to appear before an oral examination board. Upon successful completion of the oral examination, a candidate's written and oral examination scores are combined and the result is used to place candidates on a register. When a position becomes available, the Department is referred the top five candidates on the register for consideration. At that time, candidates must successfully complete a comprehensive background investigation, a psychological screening (pass/fail), a medical physical that includes screening for controlled substance use, a physical ability test, and a Chief's Interview. Candidates who are appointed become Recruit Firefighters and serve an intensive one year training and probationary period. Appointees who successfully complete the probationary period become Firefighters.²⁵²

Firefighter/Paramedic positions go through a similar process. However, Firefighter/Paramedic candidates must also successfully complete a comprehensive medical written exam, and a medical oral interview examination conducted under the auspices of Thurston County Medic One. Candidates who successfully complete the medical examinations must then successfully complete an Entry Level Firefighter Oral Examination.²⁵³

As opportunities present, the Department should take an aggressive approach towards recruiting. The Department should actively market itself and acquaint potential candidates with the nature of the job, expectations, challenges, and opportunities that the position presents. The Department wishes to appeal to candidates without regard to race or gender. Therefore, the City should ensure recruitment efforts target a balanced pool of highly qualified applicants.

Finally, the Fire Department's good reputation is its best recruiter. By continuing to provide excellent service, the Department maintains a good reputation and is able to attract more people. The Department can capitalize on the synergy of providing top-quality service.

13.5 Labor Relations

Labor unions in the private sector have served many important functions in American society. They have been used to provide organized workers job security, enhanced wage and benefit packages, and fair treatment. They were the driving force behind basic health safety programs in the workplace. Unions gave some workers training opportunities that resulted in the acquisition of critical skills in various crafts. In addition, unions provided key social functions, giving workers a sense of belonging and control through their democratic processes. American unions were a critical thread in America's social fabric.

Today, labor relations are the most regulated aspect of the American economy. Regulations that are substantive, such as wage and hour laws, have a direct impact on the labor market.²⁵⁴ Employment is sacrificed in order to improve the living standards of many Americans. There are also procedural regulations that do not directly impact the

labor market. The Fair Labor Standards Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act are examples of procedural regulations that indirectly impact the American labor market.

These acts extend protections to all employees – not just organized employees – thereby reducing the need for some of organized labor’s protections. The current regulatory atmosphere has made some of organized labor’s activities redundant.

The fire service initially consisted of volunteer associations that doubled as protective organizations and social clubs. With the urbanization of the United States, municipal fire departments became career departments. In the early 1900s, career fire departments protected many of the larger cities. Firefighters relied on social benefit organizations that provided some “widow benefits” and informal disability benefits. These associations were without significant political power.

Attracted by craft orientation and seeking strength in numbers, several of these firefighter associations approached the American Federation of Labor (AFL) seeking representation. The AFL accepted firefighter organizations as affiliates for several years. The AFL gave indirect support for firefighter demands through annual convention resolutions calling for member assistance of firefighter associations. This, combined with the changes in attitudes towards labor during World War I, led to improvements in firefighter wages and working conditions.²⁵⁵

The AFL began to contemplate a national union of firefighters in 1915. There was some reluctance on the part of firefighters to join the AFL because the Teamsters and the Operating Engineers were claiming jurisdiction over various aspects of firefighting. Finally, the AFL recognized the unique nature of firefighting and ended the dispute in 1918 by adopting the charter of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF). Since that time, the IAFF has become “the most highly organized group of public employees,” including more than 80 percent of career firefighters, and the IAFF is the union of choice for most organized fire departments.²⁵⁶

Freeman and Rogers conducted a comprehensive survey of employee attitudes towards worker representation and participation in the workplace in 1994.²⁵⁷ The survey set out to answer three main questions:

1. Do employees want greater participation and representation at their workplace than is currently provided?
2. What do employees see as essential to attaining their desired level of participation and representation?
3. What solutions do employees favor to resolve any gap between their desired participation/representation and what they currently have?

Not surprisingly, the survey indicated that “most employees want more say in how their companies are run and how key decisions affecting them are made. They want more individual say and more say as a group, and believe greater worker involvement in firm decision-making is good for the company as well as for them.” This finding held across all sex, race, age, occupation, and earning groups.

The results concerning what would be required to achieve enhanced levels of employee participation in the workplace were somewhat more surprising. “Asked to choose between two hypothetical employee organizations ‘one that management cooperated with in discussing issues, but had no power to make decisions’ and ‘one that had more power, but management opposed,’ non-managerial employees chose the weak organization over the stronger one by 3-1.” Union employees showed similar preferences. When asked what kind of employee organization could be used to bolster participation, not just a union, 82 percent to 85 percent (union and non-union, respectively) preferred a system jointly run between labor and management. This result does not bode well for unions that have traditionally been cast into an adversarial relationship with management.

Joint labor-management committees were preferred over unions, and unions over legislative reforms, to increase employee participation. However, a minority of employees (just over one-fourth) indicated they wanted to join a union, a number greater than are currently union members.

Labor is not alone in its desire for cooperative labor-management relationships. Business and government also desire greater partnerships with their employees. The trends towards Total Quality Management (TQM) and process reengineering in the U.S. are consistent with the desire for greater employee participation. Organizations are instituting employee empowerment and joint programs, where allowed.

Progressive unions are becoming proactive, avoiding the “management acts – labor reacts” way of doing business. They are seeking cooperation in the face of foreign competition and changing U.S. markets in order to maintain a presence. For example, the leaders of the United Auto Workers and the Communications Workers of America are calling for a change in the adversarial relationships of the past.²⁵⁸

While the framework of the Wagner Act codifies an adversarial relationship, it does not mandate one. There is no prohibition on labor and management speaking with one voice. However, there is a prohibition in §8(a)(2) of the National Labor Relations Act on company-dominated unions. This has been interpreted by the NLRB to prohibit some joint labor-management committees, particularly where issues of working conditions and remuneration are discussed.

13.5.1 Local 468

Olympia’s firefighters have affiliated with the IAFF and are recognized as IAFF Local 2468.

The City recognized Local 468 for collective bargaining on May 26th, 1936. The collective bargaining agreement defines management and labor's rights and codifies certain personnel policies. The Collective bargaining agreement includes all Department employees except the Fire Chief, assistant chiefs and civilian personnel as defined by RCW 41.56. The current agreement is a two-year contract that runs through 31 December 2004.

The Department and the Local have excellent working relations. They utilize a meet-and-confer process on issues that arise between contract renewals. The Administration and the Local's Executive Board maintain open and honest communications.

The Local and the Department's Administration utilize a partnership philosophy developed by the IAFF and the International Association of Fire Chiefs called the Leadership Partnership. The Leadership Partnership recognizes the need for the creation of a partnership between local fire chiefs and their union presidents, as well as for the further development of a progressive philosophy for labor-management relations.

The reasoning behind this philosophy is based on two fundamentals:²⁵⁹

1. The individual members of the fire department are the foundation of that organization
2. The fire department can be no better or stronger than its firefighters and other employees

The Leadership Partnership approach encourages labor and management to look at their relationship as something other than a zero-sum game. Union leaders and the Fire Chief are encouraged to look for common ground and focus on service delivery. By using this approach, the labor relations within the Department should continue to strengthen as the Department matures.

13.6 Summary of Human Resources Recommendations

- 1) **Continue health and wellness efforts in a manner consistent with the National Fire Protection Association's Standard 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program and the Department's Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative.**
- 2) **Ensure compliance with NFPA 1500,**
- 3) **Continue to emphasize physical fitness for Department personnel.**
- 4) **Provide stress management programs.**
- 5) **Continue to provide appropriate safety equipment and safe fire apparatus.**
- 6) **Improve the fire apparatus preventive maintenance program.**
- 7) **Continue to provide emergency incident management training.**

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- 8) **Ensure fire stations are built/remodeled with an emphasis on personnel health and comfort.**
 - 9) **Conduct medical examinations for personnel consistent with the IAFC/IAFF Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative.**
 - 10) **Obtain and maintain 100 percent participation in the annual medical fitness examination program.**
 - 11) **Formalize the Department's Light Duty program.**
 - 12) **Ensure that a wellness/fitness program is available for civilian personnel and communicate the value of the wellness/fitness program to civilian personnel.**
 - 13) **Limit National Fire Incident Reporting System reportable fireground injuries to firefighters to one per year.**
 - 14) **Maintain work-related reportable exposures and injuries to less than 0.20 per person annually.**
 - 15) **Develop a system to better track and respond to trends in employee injuries and exposures.**
 - 16) **Include more detail related to causes of reportable injuries and exposures in the City's workers' compensation case management reporting system.**
 - 17) **Develop a more formal system for identifying and evaluating workplace hazards.**
 - 18) **Further develop the system for communicating occupational health and safety matters, and include provisions designed to encourage employees to inform the Department of hazards and minimize occupational exposure to communicable diseases or chemicals.**
 - 19) **Develop more formal methods and procedures for correcting unsafe or unhealthy conditions and work practices once they have been identified, and a record system to track steps taken to implement risk reduction.**
 - 20) **Further consolidate risk management responsibilities. Have one person responsible for implementing the Department's risk management plan.**
 - 21) **Ensure that the Department's compensation program is consistent with the new FLSA "FairPay" rules.**
 - 22) **Develop a formal employee recognition program.**
 - 23) **Take an aggressive approach towards recruiting a balanced workforce.**
 - 24) **Maintain the excellent labor relations within the Department.**
 - 25) **Continue utilizing the Leadership Partnership approach in labor relations.**