

ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1998 - JUNE 1999

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

JEFFREY J. MORRISSETTE, State Fire Administrator
*Established - 1975 Statutory authority - Chap. 7-323
Central office - Connecticut Fire Academy, 34 Perimeter
Road*

Windsor Locks, CT 06096

Average number of full-time employees - 22

Recurring operating expenses - 1998-99 - \$1,800,287

Capital outlay - \$107,814

*Organization structure - Office of State Fire
Administration, Training,
Certification, Public Information and Fiscal Services*

The Commission proudly presents the following summary of services, programs and activities as evidence that the responsibilities entrusted to it have been faithfully administered.

Agency Mission

To prevent or mitigate the effects of fire and disasters, either natural or man-made, on the citizens of the State of Connecticut. This objective shall be accomplished through the development and delivery of state-of-the-art educational programs designed to meet nationally recognized standards, certification of individuals to such standards and maintenance of up-to-date resources for use by fire service personnel, public educators and other first responders.

Statutory Responsibility

The Commission is an autonomous state agency within the Department of Public Safety for administrative purposes only. The agency is charged with and has primary responsibility for training, public fire and life safety education and professional

certification for members of the fire service. Conn. Gen. Statutes Title 7; Secs. 7-323(j) through 7-323(q), 13(a) - 248; and others.

Public Service

The commissioners and staff are committed to Public Service Excellence. Feedback is continually solicited through the use of comment sheets, surveys and regular interaction with fire service organizations.

In an effort to promote and market agency services, a display booth was staffed at three state and regional conferences during the year. Staff members continued to serve as a resource on fire service and public fire education issues to the television, radio and newsprint media. The Academy and its programs were the basis for numerous feature stories positively impacting local public safety efforts.

The agency conducted 27 tours of the Connecticut Fire Academy facility in response to requests from legislators, local civic organizations, Boy Scout troops and other interested citizens.

Improvements/Achievements

A conscious effort is continually made to schedule programs and services within every region of the state. The needs of both the volunteer and career sectors of the fire service are gauged in consideration of program development and delivery:

- Filled 3,627 dormitory room reservation requests.
- Received a \$4,000 grant from the National Volunteer Fire Council via the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association in support of the Introduction to the Fire Service Summer Camp program. Hosted two programs with 80 participants from junior, cadet and Explorer programs.
- Conducted quarterly Academy Safety Committee meetings to review safety issues. Developed a training severe weather policy. In support of said policy, developed a reversible heat stress and cold weather reference chart for use by the Academy and local departments.
- Developed curriculum on the tactical use of thermal imaging cameras for hand-off to Regional Fire Schools. Additional funding was appropriated by the legislature for this project.

- Burn Building non-slip floor options were tested by staff with a final recommendation made for correction. Staff labor completed a classroom space expansion project. Several classrooms were carpeted for both comfort and maintenance efficiencies. The Sprinkler Laboratory project was completed and is now operational.
- Agency received a \$5,000 grant from the Connecticut FAIR Plan to aid in the purchase of a new robotic public education device.

Reducing Waste

The Commission remains a small, efficient, organizationally streamlined agency. Through the use of full-time staff serving as facilitators and coordinators, adjunct instructors deliver a majority of agency services.

Strategic Planning

During the last quarter of the fiscal year the Commission initiated an update of its strategic plan. Six public forums were held throughout the state in an effort to solicit local needs and concerns. Issues identified will be evaluated and integrated into the Commission's plan which is expected to be completed in the second quarter of fiscal year 2000.

Administrative Projects

The State Fire Administrator and staff remain active in state and national committees, boards and organizations to maintain a positive proactive impact upon services. By Connecticut General Statute, the Administrator serves on both the State Emergency Response and Enhanced 911 Commissions thus maintaining a communications link. The Director of Training serves as the Commission's representative on the Department of Public Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board.

Administrative projects completed or ongoing include:

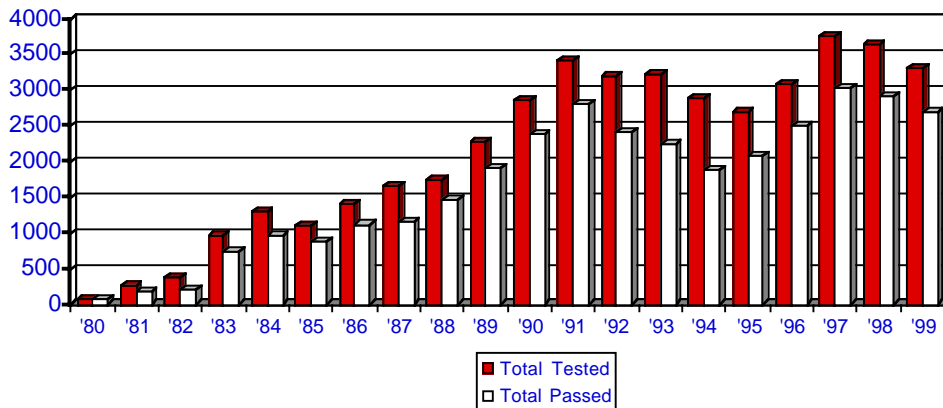
- In cooperation with the National Volunteer Fire Council, implemented a national volunteer fire and emergency services recruitment program entitled 1-800-FIRE LINE. Interested callers can be referred to local volunteer fire departments, EMS organizations, Civil Air Patrol and the American Red Cross. During the fiscal year, a total of 176 calls were received with 84 being referred to local organizations.
- The Commission has made available, at cost, a number of FIRE LINE promotional materials including brochures, videotapes, posters and reflective signs that promote volunteerism. Planning was initiated to produce a series of audio and video public service announcements for distribution to media outlets. The Commission also facilitated the free distribution of a volunteer fire and emergency services videotape to every public and private high school and library in the state.
- Hosted two forums on volunteer recruitment and retention with 73 attendees.
- Staff development was presented on issues of Sexual Harassment Awareness and Team Building.
- Planned and coordinated the State Emergency Response Commission's Annual Conference. A total of 292 participants took part in three regional dinner meetings.

- Provided ongoing assistance to the Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations including planning for Fire Service Day at the Capitol.
- Enhanced and expanded the agency's homepage presence on the internet. For a second year, the site has been accessed in excess of 10,000 times.
- Upgraded the agency's information technology resources and completed various Y2K compliance assessments and upgrades where necessary on computers, software and embedded building systems. Expanded electronic mail and internet access to all staff members. Interested adjunct instructors were also provided electronic mail accounts. Purchased a laser color printer greatly enhancing in-house printing.

Certification Division

The Certification Division is headed by Director Frederick W. Piechota, Jr. The division is responsible for the development and administration of a voluntary fire service testing and certification program. All examinations are based upon the Standards for Fire Service Professional Qualifications developed by the National Fire Protection Association. The Certification System continues to be held in high regard nationally as is evidenced by the national accreditation granted to the Commission by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. The Commission is currently scheduled for a site visit for the purpose of receiving a second national accreditation by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. The security and integrity of the system remains a high priority as numerous fire departments have mandated certification through contractual or organizational requirements making it crucial the system be able to withstand legal challenge.

Fiscal Year 1999 saw a total of 3,322 personnel tested within the 13 levels of professional competency offered with an 81 percent passing rate.



Five test item banks were reviewed utilizing the Commission's peer question review process which is designed to ensure the nationally developed test item banks utilized are valid for Connecticut's fire service. Planning has begun on a project to develop interactive computer simulation testing that will allow more realistic certification examinations at advanced levels.

A major initiative continues to be the development and administration of an entirely new method of examining practical skills required by the newly revised and formatted Fire Service Professional Qualifications Standards.

During the year, the Commission and the division worked closely with the Department of Administrative Services to develop and modify examination procedures to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Special emphasis was placed upon development of appropriate testing accommodations that fall within the parameters of the Fire Service Professional Qualifications Standards.

The division continues to execute its contract with Performance Training Systems, Inc., a private corporation that markets this agency's certification questions to state and local fire training agencies throughout the United States. The continuation of this contract and the significant increase in dependence on the Commission to provide up-to-date, state-of-the-art, examination questions demonstrates the high regard and esteem with which the Commission's Certification System is viewed.

The division continued to assist a number of departments with the administration of local promotional examinations through the use of its question database.

Fiscal Services Division

The Fiscal Services Division is headed by Director Peter F. O'Neil. The division is responsible for all of the Commission's accounting, budgeting, personnel, purchasing, payroll, contracting and physical plant functions at the Connecticut Fire Academy. The Commission also continues successful use of a contracted food service operation for its customers and staff.

The Commission's database allows this division to increase its effort in collecting past due accounts. Total accounts receivable over 120 days continues to be less than one percent outstanding. Use of the state's on-line accounting system allows for daily deposits with the State Treasurer. Final phase of system implementation this fiscal year will increase timeliness of invoice payments, helping to take advantage of vendor discounts.

A substantial amount of publishing continues to be accomplished by this agency. Materials range from student workbooks and manuals to program flyers and the annual Training Course Catalog. The audiovisual library remains productive, loaning to local fire departments in excess of 1,000 training/education films, slides, audio and videotapes annually.

The division administers payments to volunteer fire departments for emergency responses to limited access highways. An increase of \$60,000 to the agency's appropriation now allows for up to 2,200 payments annually at \$100 per transaction. Over 98 percent of last fiscal year's appropriation was remitted to eligible entities.

Public Education and Information

This division is headed by Director Cynthia Colton-Reichler. A major responsibility of this division continues to focus on providing education and technical assistance in the development of local juvenile firesetting programs.

The number of consultations on juvenile firesetting issues rose dramatically. An estimated 60 percent of the 169 towns in Connecticut requested some juvenile firesetting assistance. There were eight new programs established in Connecticut. This division provided technical assistance on program policies and procedures to two towns who

organized Interdisciplinary Juvenile Firesetting Coalitions. In addition, the Director participated on the Department of Public Safety's Connecticut Fire Incident Reporting System 5.0 Implementation Committee in an effort to create a juvenile firesetting module. For the first time, this module will permit the capture of statewide data on the juvenile firesetting problem.

The Director served on the National Fire Protection Association's Professional Qualifications Standards committee for Public Fire & Life Safety Educators which has developed the first national standard on juvenile firesetting.

The Director served as a training liaison to the Connecticut Department of Public Health and CT SAFE KIDS Coalition on a smoke detector grant application, injury prevention training and other fire and injury related projects.

The Kid's Fire Safety House was reassigned to the Public Education Division which delivered 122 programs to 56 communities throughout the state.

An annual Juvenile Firesetting Conference and Public Fire & Life Safety Educators' Conference was well attended with 121 participants. The division's web page was expanded and enhanced to provide a much needed information link.

Training Division

The Training Division is headed by Director of Training Adam D. Piskura. The division is responsible for the development and delivery of Fire, Hazardous Materials/OSHA Compliance, Emergency Medical Services and related public safety training programs.

In Fiscal Year 1998-99, 653 programs were delivered to 11,913 students, resulting in 139,668 student contact hours. Program participants included municipal firefighters and police officers, public works, state employees, industrial and military employees. An additional 10,000 Emergency Responders were trained through the agency's Train-the-Trainer programs by municipal certified instructors and funded by federal grants for hazardous materials training in cooperation with the State Emergency Response Commission.

The staff continued curriculum development efforts focusing on Fire Officer I and II revisions and development of Fire Officer III and IV programs. A course to address platform skills is currently in concept development in an effort to serve as a bridge between the Fire Service Instructor I and II programs. Staff time was also spent developing specifications for the purchase of laptop computers and media projection units. A Flashover simulator was purchased to provide critical firefighter safety and survival skills to class participants.

In addition to regularly scheduled programs, the following special programs were offered:

- 16th Annual June Fire School attended by 1,000 students.
- 9th Annual Chemical Emergency and Community Response Conference attended by 400 students.
- Annual Fire Officer Weekend at the National Fire Academy, attended by 180 students.
- Co-sponsored the 14th Annual Fire Apparatus Driver Safety Rodeo designed to promote safe operation of emergency response vehicles.
- Co-sponsored the Annual Trade Region I, New England Training Weekend in Amherst, MA. Forty percent of the attendees were from Connecticut, while the remainder was shared among the other five New England states.
- Hosted the annual meeting of the North American Fire Training Directors with 55 Directors of Fire Training from throughout the United States and Canada participating.

Membership

Members of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control are appointed by the Governor and represent statewide fire service organizations. The following commissioners served during the year: Chairman Peter Carozza, Jr., Waterbury; Vice Chairman John Vendetta, Hartford; Secretary Edward F. Haber, Berlin; Jon W. Andresen, Windsor; Robert J. Chatfield, Prospect; Edward B. Gomeau, Stratford; William Johnson, West Haven; Kevin J. Kowalski, Simsbury; Maurice F. McCarthy, Waterbury; Daniel Milewski, Stratford; Peter Mullen, Branford; George J. Munkenbeck, Jr., Waterbury; Richard H. Nicol, Middlebury and Wayne Maheu, Middletown.