



# Fire Watch

Los Angeles Fire Department Newsletter

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## LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT

Los Angeles Fire Department  
200 North Main Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 978-3845  
Fax (213) 978-3815

Visit Our Website  
[www.lafd.org](http://www.lafd.org)

**Our Mission**  
"To preserve life and property, promote public safety, foster economic growth through leadership, management and actions, as an all-risk fire and life safety response provider."

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Direct Newsletter inquires to:

Planning Section  
LAED  
200 North Main Street, Rm. 1800  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

In 1994, the Board of Fire Commissioners formed the Human Relations Development Committee (HRDC). This Committee was originally developed to address recommendations presented by the City's Personnel Department following a study of human resource management practices in the Department. The committee was comprised of representatives from the Department and our employee organizations including representatives from the Stentorians, Los Bomberos, Sirens, Los Angeles City Fire Department Chief Officers' Association, and United Firefighters of Los Angeles City.

In February 1995, the HRDC submitted their final recommendations to the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Personnel Committee of the City Council.



Recommendations included steps to insure fair and equitable instruction and training techniques provided by the Department to its recruit and probationary Firefighters.

The Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) completed a lengthy redesign of the training academy in 1998 and began its first recruit class in three years.

Along with approving a new curriculum, instructor training and a new academy staff, Fire Chief Bamattre directed the Recruit Training Section to fully implement the newly created Quality Assurance Unit.

Today, the Quality Assurance Unit provides a critical bridge between entry-level training provided at the Department's training academy and the ongoing, in-service training that occurs at probationary field assignments throughout the Department. The Unit provides objective oversight and documentation of the performance of recruit Firefighters throughout their probationary period.



The Quality Assurance Unit is responsible for:

- Participating in the development and implementation of Departmental policies and procedures relating to entry-level recruit and probationary Firefighter training.
- Planning, implementing, and developing programs designed to improve recruit performance in the training academy and future success in the field.
- Evaluating the efficiency of current recruit training programs.
- Identifying trends and providing findings to enhance or improve recruit training.
- Review, process, and analyze the monthly field evaluations for all probationary Firefighters.

**STAFFING**

Originally, in 1998, a Captain II and three Captain I's staffed the Quality Assurance Unit. To meet the additional needs of an increasing number of probationary Firefighters within the Department, the Quality Assurance Unit staff has increased to its present-day staffing of six.

Today, the Quality Assurance Unit Commander, a Captain II, and five-Captain I's staff the Quality Assurance Unit. Staff members

report to their office located at the Department's Frank Hotchkin Memorial Training Center in Elysian Park. Chief Ottman, the Commander of the Department's



Risk Management Section, supervises the Unit Commander and the performance of the Quality Assurance Unit. To provide a balanced workload among each staff member, each Captain I is responsible for managing the documentation



developed for probationary Firefighters in each of the assigned Battalions.

In June of this year, Captain II Steve Hissong, a 19-year veteran of the Department, was selected to serve as the Quality Assurance Unit Commander. Captain Hissong previously served as a Captain I within the Unit and has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new position. Assigned staff of the Quality Assurance Unit also includes: Captain I Thomas Czubek (31-years of service), Captain I Monte Moore (24-years of service), Captain I Joseph Mendoza (19-years of service), Captain I Raymond Hamel (19-years of service), and Captain I Alicia Welch (15-years of service).

**UNIT OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the Quality Assurance Unit is to provide an independent and essential component for the assurance and maintenance of consistent, objective training instruction and performance. This fundamental objective is accomplished through the coordinated efforts of the Bureau of Training and Risk Management and the Bureau of Emergency Services. The Quality Assurance Unit is also tasked with the responsibility for the objective, critical, and formal review of all recruit training aspects. A key component of this is the quality and consistency of academy and field training.



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Quality Assurance Unit officers facilitate a proactive relationship and communication link between the probationary Firefighter, the Recruit Services Section and the Bureau of Emergency Services during the Firefighter's probationary year in an effort to provide a positive and supportive training environment.

The Risk Management Section is responsible for coordinating, monitoring, evaluating, documenting, and recommending changes to the recruit and probationary Firefighter training process. This program is accomplished through the Officer and Preceptor Manual, the Training Academy Policy Manual, and Field Training Evaluation Program Manual.

Quality Assurance Unit officers also work with staff members assigned to the Recruit Training Academy in an independent oversight capacity. Periodically, they independently observe and review the delivery of various academy training sessions to evaluate program delivery and instructional materials. The Quality Assurance Unit then follows the successful fire academy graduates to their probationary fire station assignments to observe and evaluate the instruction and training provided by members of the Bureau of Emergency Services.

Interviews with assigned fire academy staff and the academy graduates have assisted the Quality Assurance Unit in identifying policies and procedures that affect recruit training. To fulfill their assigned responsibilities,



Quality Assurance Unit officers must stay current on effective methods for Firefighter instruction and pertinent information relating to the recruit training process.

Currently, personnel assigned to the Quality Assurance Unit track the progress and performance of



approximately 1,200 probationary Firefighters! Imagine reviewing the

training documentation and periodically meeting with 240 probationary employees. This charge is being effectively accomplished by the dedicated efforts of each officer assigned to the Quality Assurance Unit.

Quality Assurance Unit personnel are also involved in Program development and implementation. These Programs generally concern the probationary Firefighter, Officer and Preceptor Training Program. This four-phase training Program encompasses:

- The recruits in the drill tower training academy.
- Firefighters completing their probation transitioning as new Preceptors.
- All Department members promoting during their CORE (Company Officer/Operator Responsibilities and Expectations) course provided by the In-Service Training Section.
- Fire station personnel receiving probationary Firefighters during a bi-annual refresher Officer/Preceptor Training Program.

The basic duties of tracking probationary Firefighters consist of both field and office work. Routinely,

Quality Assurance Unit staff will





interview probationary Firefighters during their field internship to ensure a positive learning environment is provided, assist with available Department resources as needed, and ensure all avenues have been provided for the success of the probationary Firefighter. The Unit also reviews the field evaluations to ensure clear expectations are being provided and required written plans for improvement are developed if needed.

## **PRECEPTOR TRAINING**

Originally, the Quality Assurance Unit presented an initial 36-hour Preceptor/Mentor Training Program for all uniformed members. This Program has been continually reviewed and improved to the current Preceptor Training Program. At the direction of the Fire Chief, the following Officer/Preceptor Program is now in place:

### Phase One

During the first two weeks of the fire academy, Emily Williams, a Senior Policy Advisor with the Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission, provides recruits with five hours of human relations training. As the recruits near academy graduation, they are provided with an additional two hours of human relations training.

The human relations training offered includes areas, such as sexual harassment procedures, hostile work environment issues, and adult learning theory.

### Phase Two

The Recruit Services Section details all probationary Firefighters to the fire academy for 120 hours of continuing education (i.e. HazMat, Swiftwater Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Two-line rope rescue training). This Program includes eight hours of mandatory Human Relations and Preceptor Training titled, "Train the Trainer/Preceptor."

"Train the Trainer/Preceptor" Training is provided to each Firefighter at the conclusion of their twelve-month probationary period. The Program includes the following course topics:

- LAFD Expectations
- Adult Learning Theory
- Elements of the Field Training Evaluation Program (FTEP)
- Liability Issues for Field Personnel
- Human Relations / EEOC Concepts / Harassment
- Learning and Teaching Styles (Instructor 1A & 1B methods)

### Phase Three

The In-Service Training Section provides all uniformed members on a current promotional list with Company Officer/Operator Responsibilities and Expectations (CORE) training. This provides an excellent opportunity to officially meet with perspective and newly promoted personnel to provide two-hours of mandatory Human Relations and Preceptor Training. The CORE curriculum includes the following training topics:

- LAFD Expectations
- Adult Learning Theory
- Elements of the Field Training Evaluation Program (FTEP)
- Liability Issues for Field Personnel
- Human Relations / EEOC Concepts / Harassment
- Learning and Teaching Styles (Instructor 1A & 1B methods)
- Computer and Documentation Skills for the Officer's CORE Training



Phase Four

The Quality Assurance Unit provides members assigned to fire stations receiving probationary Firefighters with four hours of mandatory Company Officer/Preceptor Training on a bi-annual basis. This Training is reviewed and revised regularly based on current Department issues, Human Relations Training, and the documents necessary to complete required monthly evaluations of probationary Firefighters. Company Officer/Preceptor Training topics discussed include:

- LAFD Expectations
- Adult Learning Theory
- Elements of the Field Training Evaluation Program (FTEP)
- Liability Issues for Field Personnel
- Human Relations / EEOC Concepts / Harassment
- Learning and Teaching Styles (Instructor 1A & 1B methods)
- Computer and Documentation Skills



Providing the four-hour Company Officers/ Preceptor Training on a bi-annual basis allows the Department the ability to review expectations with field personnel and emphasize the importance of maintaining a proper work environment conducive to probationary Firefighter learning.

**PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTER FIELD EVALUATIONS**

Officers assigned to the Quality Assurance Unit are also required to regularly attend the scheduled 4, 7, and 10-month probationary Firefighter field evaluations. These evaluations are completed by all probationary Firefighters

and used as a tool to benchmark progress. During the evaluations, probationary Firefighters are graded on their ability to demonstrate effective and safe ladder evolutions, required hose evolutions, and the use of tools and equipment carried on the apparatus they are assigned to.

**CONCLUSION**

Since 1998, the Los Angeles Fire Department has trained approximately 1,200 new Firefighters. Success in providing an effective recruit training program has been realized by Department members adopting the philosophy that a probationary Firefighter is truly an investment in our collective future. Today, Department firefighting personnel share the responsibility for providing probationary Firefighters the opportunity for success via a positive and supportive training environment. The Quality Assurance Unit supports the efforts of the fire stations that are assigned probationary Firefighters through quality and consistent training.



*Special thanks to Captain II Steve Hissong for his contribution to this month's Fire Watch. Captain Hissong is a 19-year veteran of the Los Angeles Fire Department and is currently assigned to the Quality Assurance-Recruit Training Section. A "thank you" to Captain II Roger Krueger and Battalion Chief John Miller for the additional information they provided to the Fire Watch.*