



City of Albuquerque

Office of Internal Audit

FOLLOW-UP

FIRE CERTIFICATIONS & LICENSES

Report #17-10-106F

June 28, 2017

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Internal Audit (OIA) performed a follow-up of Audit No. 10-106, Fire Certifications & Licenses during fiscal year (FY) 2017. The purpose of this follow-up is to report on the progress made by the Albuquerque Fire Department (AFD) in addressing the audit findings and recommendations. Our follow-up procedures rely on the department providing the status of the recommendations.

A follow-up is substantially less in scope than an audit. The objective is to report on the status of corrective action regarding the audit findings and recommendations.

We limited our scope to actions taken to address the audit recommendations from the final audit report dated September 2, 2011 through the submission of actions taken on December 20, 2016.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of AFD is to serve the community by providing all hazards planning, prevention and response that promotes public safety and trust while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its firefighters. Serving in dual roles as both fire fighters and emergency medical technicians, the men and women of the AFD Fire & Rescue Emergency Services Division (FRES) are responsible for providing fire suppression and emergency medical services. There are regulatory requirements AFD FRES personnel must meet in order to acquire and maintain the licenses and certifications necessary to accomplish their mission.

AFD FRES has 673 firefighters who serve in these dual roles of which 460 are emergency medical technicians (EMT) and 213 are paramedics licensed under New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 7.27.2 Licensing of Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Individuals wanting to become fire fighters for AFD must possess a current, valid, and permanent State or National Registry EMT license at the basic level or higher as a minimum requirement to be considered for the cadet program.

EMT and paramedic licenses are renewed every two years. The renewal training consists of continuing education (CE) and refresher training. CE is taught in-house, and refresher training is conducted through the University of New Mexico (UNM) Department of Emergency Medicine EMS Academy.

The firefighters who want to specialize in various fire suppression disciplines such as Wild Land and Hazardous Materials must be certified. These specialized certifications require an initial examination and periodic refresher training. Some certifications, such as firefighter I and II must be achieved while the individual is enrolled in the AFD cadet program. These certifications require an examination, but do not require additional refresher training.

AFD has revised the Fire Chief's Directive known as the Promotional Eligibility Requirements. Beginning in FY 2012, AFD uniformed personnel interested in being considered for promotion to higher levels of rank, such as driver, lieutenant, captain, and commander will have to achieve various certifications. The requirements for each position will increase every two years until FY 2020 when the requirements will be at the maximum level. Some positions, such as commander, will require an associates or bachelor degree.

SUMMARY

The five recommendations addressed in the original audit report have been fully implemented.

The status of the recommendations is identified by the symbols in the following legend:



Fully
Implemented



Resolved



In
Process



Not
Implemented

Recommendation #1 AFD should:

Create a master certification listing to ensure that all uniformed employees holding certifications are current on their training. AFD should provide driver refresher training at least twice a year in order to meet professional standards.

Response: *“A master certification listing that includes all uniform employees can be created and maintained.”*

“The department agrees that driver refresher training would improve performance. The department has over 300 personnel that would require driver refresher training. NFPA 1451 requires hands-on training at least twice a year for personnel with driving responsibilities. The Training Division will be tasked with developing a training regimen that meets the requirements.”

Estimated Completion Date: *“The master certification listing that includes all uniform employees will be completed by the end of FY12. A driver refresher training program can be implemented to FY12.”*

Status Reported by AFD: “Training and certifications are currently tracked using the Target Solutions software platform. A master list is not kept; an individual employee’s training record can be queried.

“An annual driver refresher is assigned to all personnel who operate vehicles under emergency response conditions.

“Additional training is completed at the company level or through assignments from the Training Division. Both the refresher and additional training require a hands-on component.

“Documentation of individual employee’s training history and driver refresher training has been implemented.”



Fully Implemented

AFD tracks training and certifications of all employees using an on-line training management system, and provides driver training at least twice a year.

Recommendation #2: AFD should ensure that:

- Employees who serve as trainers outside of the City receive written approval from the AFD Chief or the CAO.
- It follows City Personnel Rules and Regulations when granting educational leave to employees.
- Employees who participate in outside employment submit the required form.
- Outside Employment forms are approved by the CAO.

AFD should change the educational leave taken by the employee to either his vacation or compensatory time.

Response: *“As defined in City Personnel Rules and Regulations Section 310.4 and within the scope of the Audit, the only trainers our department has would be those employees that hold a teaching position as a form of outside employment. The department will ensure that employees that serve as trainers outside of the City receive written approval from the Fire Chief. The department will also ensure employees that participate in outside employment turn in the Outside Employment form. These improvements can be implemented in the fall of 2011 so that the required documentation is submitted as required in January 2012.*

“Section 18.3 of the Agreement between the City of Albuquerque and the Albuquerque Area Fire Fighters Union, IAFF Local 244, City Chapter, states “Bargaining unit members may be granted leave to attend courses at the high school, vocational school, or college level. Requests for leave will be judged on the basis of job performance and the department workload”. This is in conflict with Section 502.2 of the City Personnel Rules and Regulations that states a course or seminar has to be a “requirement for the employee’s current position”. In following the language in the Agreement, the department believes it followed policy correctly.

“As for the number of hours granted for educational leave, the department did err in granting both WOS and OPA for attendance. The department will adhere to the Section 502.2 that limits educational leave to 3 hours per week.

“The department disagrees with the finding that the time granted for educational leave did not benefit the City. The education and training received by the department member while on leave did benefit our firefighters. Training based on the education received was provided to all department members as a portion of a continuing education compliment required to maintain EMS licensure. All courses being considered for continuing education are approved and assigned a CE number by the EMS Bureau. The Bureau found benefit in the educational material, as did

the department. Finally, given that the employee was granted the educational leave by a ranking supervisor, the department does not intend to change the educational leave granted to either vacation or compensatory time.”

Estimated Completion Date: *“A submission of outside employment forms are completed in January of each year but is a continuous process as employees engage in outside employment throughout the year.”*

Status Reported by AFD: “In January of each year AFD distributes a memorandum advising all personnel of the requirement to submit the “Request for Permission to Engage in Employment Outside the City of Albuquerque”. Forms are collected, reviewed, signed by the Fire Chief, and then forwarded for additional review and signatures/approval.

“AFD follows the language of Section 18.1 of the CBA which now only permits leave be granted for attendance in courses at the college level – leave for high school and vocational education is no longer granted.”



Fully Implemented

AFD employees who participate in outside employment or serve as trainers outside of the City are advised annually to submit the Request for Permission to Engage in Employment Outside the City of Albuquerque. The requests are approved by the Fire Chief and the CAO. AFD follows Section 18.1 of the collective bargaining agreement for educational leave of uniformed employees and Chapter 5 Employee Development of the Personnel Rules and Regulations for civilian employees. Since the EMS Bureau and AFD found benefit in the educational material received by the department for the employee who was on educational leave the recommendation is considered resolved.

Recommendation #3: AFD should develop a process to manage the CPR card inventory and the revenue from the sale of the cards that include:

- Reconciling cash and A/R to the G/L monthly
- Ensuring that funds are deposited within 24 hours of receipt
- Creating and maintaining an inventory of CPR cards
- Ensuring separation of duties

AFD should determine why batches of cash and checks could not be reconciled to deposits in the G/L.

Response: *“The AFD Fiscal division and AFD EMS training division have implemented City procedures for the tracking and reconciliation of monies. The AFD training Captain has developed a spread sheet that tracks the number of CPR cards on hand and those disbursed to AFD personnel and Civilians. The monies are now tracked by a separate identified member of the AFD training staff and all funds are remitted to the fiscal Division at the end of each day by the close of business.*

“The authorization of transactions is the responsibility of the EMS Division Commander and will be executed by the AFD Fiscal Division.”

Estimated Completion Date: *“Currently implemented.”*

Status Reported by AFD: “The EMS Division Commander and Training Division no longer handle CPR card inventory, sales, and revenue. The Fiscal division now manages all CPR card transactions.

“The purchaser of CPR cards is invoiced. A/R receives payment and deposits are made at Treasury on Tuesdays and Thursdays as needed.”



Fully Implemented

The AFD Fiscal division manages all CPR card transactions and has developed a process to track and reconcile monies. The AFD training Captain has developed a process to track CPR cards on hand and distributed. AFD should work with the Department of Finance & Administrative Services Treasury Division to determine if the current deposit process is an acceptable practice.

Recommendation #4: AFD should:

- Establish policies and procedures requiring users to change their passwords regularly.
- Ensure that any newly implemented information technology systems have the ability to force users to change their passwords regularly.

Response: *“AFD will be upgrading the Fire RMS program this fiscal year. The upgrade will include an automatic rotating password configuration. This will require the user to change their password at identified intervals. Prior to the implementation of the upgraded program, a memo on procedures regarding password development and change intervals will be disbursed. These procedures will be utilized for all technology platforms within AFD. The limiting factor in reference to the upgraded Fire RMS is training. The new program will require that all personnel receive training in its use. The program has changed somewhat and requires a change in the method in which data is entered. The projected training would take place during a previously scheduled training / CE cycle. This is slated to begin in September 2011.*

“The department will establish policies and procedures that require members with IQS access to change their passwords regularly. This improvement can be implemented immediately.”

Estimated Completion Date: *“In process and coincides with software upgrades.”*

Status Reported by AFD: “AFD now uses ImageTrend, not Fire RMS. ImageTrend requires a password of at least 5 characters, one of which must be a capital letter and one of which must be a number. Currently, there is no time setting for password expiration. The system has the ability to establish such a setting however.

“AFD now accesses IQS through a New Mexico State Forestry website. Password measures are established.”



Fully Implemented

Upon further consultation, it was determined that AFD follows City of Albuquerque IT Policies and Procedures which require users to change their passwords regularly. The ImageTrend system is configured to force users to change their passwords every 90 days. AFD no longer uses the Incident Qualifications System (IQS) instead they access IQS via the New Mexico State Forestry website. IQS enables AFD to track qualifications, experience, and fitness levels for the Wild Land certifications.

Recommendation #5: AFD should implement the recommendations that were not fully implemented.

Response: *“AFD will review Computer software for adequacy of tracking CE, EMS refreshers and AHA certification. The upgraded version of Fire RMS to be implemented in December 2011 – January 2012 will address electronic tracking of AHA certifications and refresher hours. AFD will stop altering original documentation in training files. This practice has been addressed and in areas where confusion may exist, AFD has elected to implement the most current procedures utilized and enforced by the EMS bureau, i.e. Signatures of class rosters will reflect appropriately those in attendance and those instructing. AFD will date refresher course certificates at the end of course completion and will initiate a conversation with the EMS bureau to clarify the concerns. Implementation of the appropriate direction will take place upon explanation.”*

Estimated Completion Date: *“Ongoing.”*

Status Reported by AFD: “AFD is currently using the Target Solutions software platform for tracking CE, EMS refresher, and AHA certifications.

“Course rosters are not altered. Instructor and student names are included on rosters. Names and dates of course completion are tracked in Target Solutions. Verification of affidavit statements are not included with CE summary sheets, however, the EMS Bureau does conduct periodic records inspections. The practice of giving all students the same course completion date has ceased.”



Fully Implemented

All recommendations that were not fully implemented from the 2005 EMS Bureau Audit have been implemented. AFD has switched to an automated process for tracking training and certifications, which has enabled it to implement the EMS Bureau recommendations that were not fully implemented. Also, according to the Fire Chief, the EMS Bureau conducts periodic records inspections.

SUBMITTED:

Senior Information Systems Auditor

REVIEWED:

Contract Auditor

APPROVED:

Lawrence L. Davis, Acting City Auditor
Office of Internal Audit

APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION:

Chairperson, Accountability in
Government Oversight Committee