


Think You Are Ready To Be A Company Officer?

*International Association of Women In Fire &
Emergency Services – 8th Biennial Leadership Training
Seminar: April 26, 2008 – Glendale, AZ*



**Steve Prziborowski, Battalion Chief
Santa Clara County (CA) Fire Department**

Objectives

At the end of this session, you will be able to.....

- Identify what you should be doing prior to getting promoted to company officer
- Define what to expect as a first year company officer

Objectives

At the end of this session, you will be able to.....

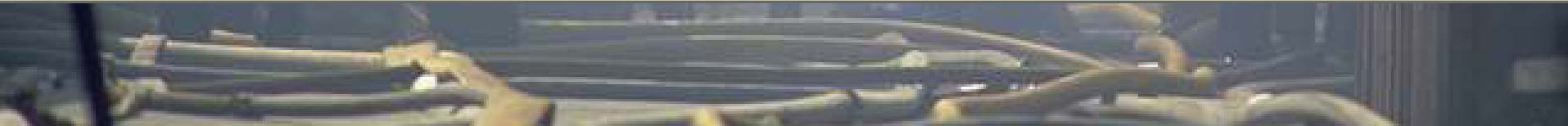
- Determine how to set personnel expectations appropriate for your situation
- Identify techniques to successfully survive your first year as a company officer

Before You Get Promoted To Company Officer.....



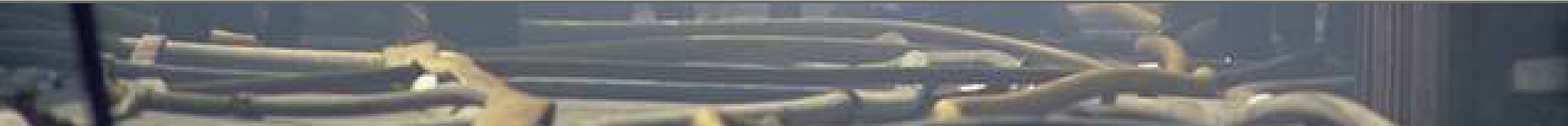
Before Getting Promoted:

- Start preparing for the position, long before the promotional examination
- Carefully select your mentors / role models
- Determine how you will act as a company officer
 - This may mean getting your act cleaned up now!
- Be prepared to hit the ground running



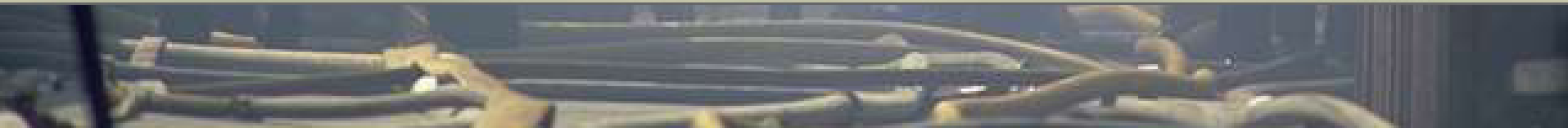
Before Getting Promoted:

- Keep a low profile (when necessary)
- Remember you're being watched
- Learn as much as you can about your department, your community, your personnel
- Remember that one poor choice or inappropriate comment (via either oral or written communications) may doom you.....



Before Getting Promoted:

- Really take a deep look at the daily life of a company officer – or the expectations of a company officer today – this may not be the job for you after all.....
- Realize you are no longer going to be “one of the guys or gals” – you are the supervisor – and you’re expected to SUPERVISE!



What To Expect Your First Year As A Company Officer



Now You're Promoted.....

- You will probably have a probationary period
- You may have a project to complete
- You will be evaluated
- You will be under the microscope
- You will be tested continuously
- You will make decisions daily that could have serious long-term effects on your trust, credibility, and long-term success, among other things.....



As a Company Officer.....

- You have one of the most influential positions in the fire department:
 - You're representing the F.D.
 - You're representing the Fire Chief
 - You're the conduit between the line personnel and administration
 - You're acting in the best interest of the public (our bosses)



Personnel Expectations

Either you set the stage for your personnel.....
or they will set it for you!



Expectations

- I encourage you to create your own to discuss with your crew
- Ensure they are realistic, measurable, obtainable, legal, ethical, within the expectations of your administration, etc.
- Do not forget to ask your crew what they expect of you!
 - It's a two-way street!

Expectations

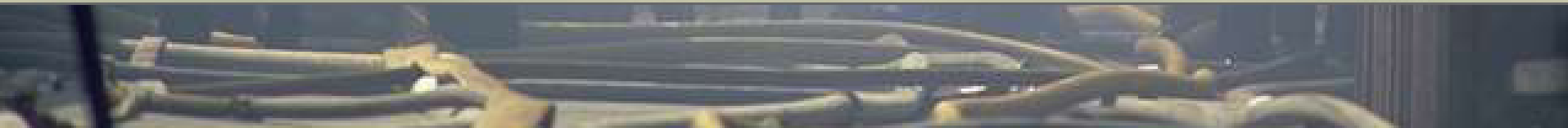
- Now that you have shared your expectations
 - make sure you hold your personnel accountable for their actions or non-actions!

Techniques To Successfully Survive Your First Year As A Company Officer



Information You Should Know Inside and Out

- Department rules and regulations
- Department MOU / MOA
- Department policies and procedures
- Federal/State/Local laws relating to your job
- IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting (or whatever other book your department uses for probationary firefighters)
- Strategy/Tactics, Fire Behavior & Building Construction (the big three!!!)



Training

- A minimum of two hours per day
- Make every opportunity to train
- Be creative, know what you're teaching
- Empower your personnel, don't be the only instructor
- Don't rely on the Department Training Officer to provide you with all the tools to train you're personnel - you are a TO!

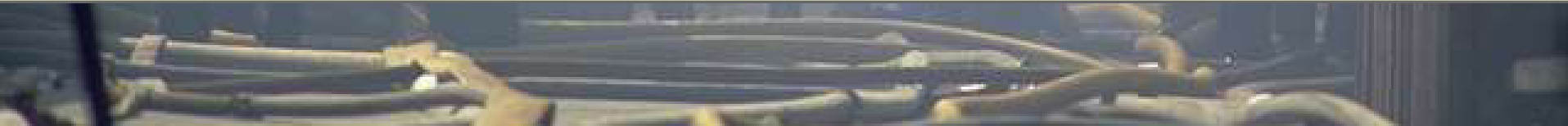
Subject Areas Company Officers Need To Be Proficient In

- Management
- Fire Investigation
- Fire Prevention
- Fire Command
- Public Education
- Instructional Techniques
- Incident Command System
- Technical Rescue (Haz Mat, Confined Space, etc.)
- Leadership
- Supervision
- Time management
- Planning skills
- Organization skills
- Delegation



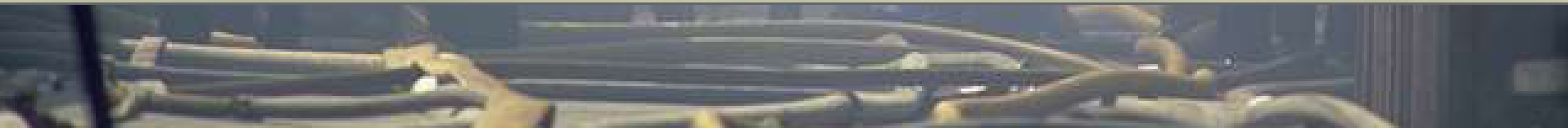
Subject Areas Company Officers Need To Be Proficient In

- Report writing
- Communications –
Oral and Written
- Public speaking
- Team building
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Facility maintenance
- Apparatus
maintenance
- Training
- Instructional
techniques
- Motivation
- Safety
- Construction trades
- Mechanical ability



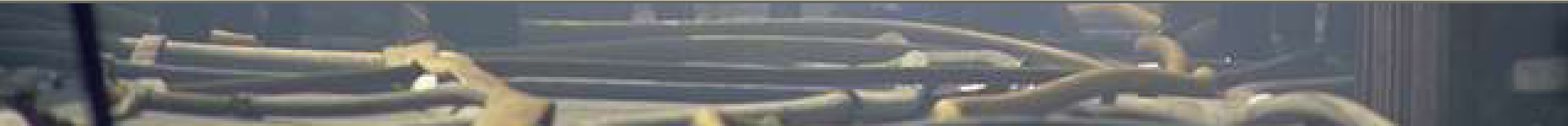
Subject Areas Company Officers Need To Be Proficient In

- Risk management
- Progressive Discipline
- Mentoring
- Last, but not least - the 3 most important fireground items:
 1. Fire Behavior
 2. Building Construction
 3. Strategy and tactics
- If you think you have a lot to learn – you're correct!
- There is no excuse for not being proficient in those areas – our personnel & the people we serve deserve the best!
- Anything I missed?



Continuing Education

- If you think the previous information was too much, maybe reconsider being an officer.....
- Complete your two year or four degree
- Attend at least one conference per year
- Attend at least two seminars per year
- If you are going to train your personnel daily, you better know what you're doing!!!
- Subscribe/read fire service publications



Time Management

- One of the biggest problems facing society and the fire service today
- Learn time management skills
- 24 hours per day you're getting paid for
- Telling your supervisor "I didn't get to it is unacceptable"
- Make things happen, be proactive/creative

Buddy to Boss

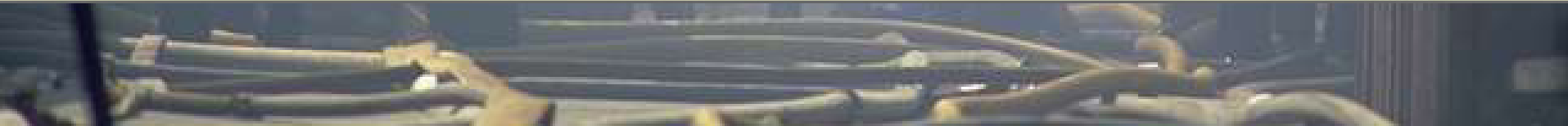
- Don't forget where you came from.....but don't forget you're now getting paid to be a supervisor!
- Very tough for many folks to do
- Your job is not to selectively enforce the rules and regulations
- Be firm, fair and impartial, and do your job!

Decision Making

- Most importantly - make decisions!
- Utilize the “**Headline Test**” whenever possible:
 - Is it the right thing for the department?
 - Is it the right thing for our personnel?
 - Is it the right thing for our community?
 - Would you mind reading about it in the morning newspaper?
 - If you can answer yes to all four - GO FOR IT!!!

Closing Thoughts For The Newly Promoted Company Officer

- Set expectations
- Hold your personnel accountable
- Lead by example
- Enforce the rules and regulations
- Do not tolerate inappropriate behavior, incompetence, or mediocrity



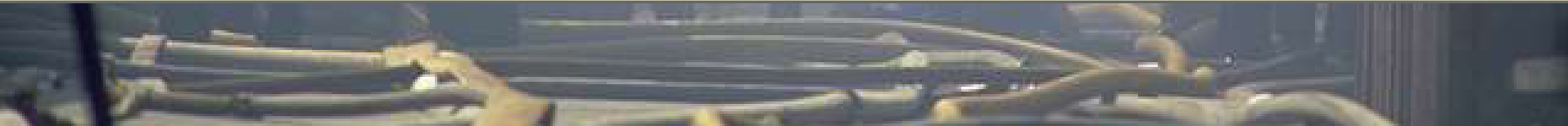
Closing Thoughts For The Newly Promoted Company Officer

- Practice Management-By-Walking-Around
- Praise in public, coach/counsel in private
- Take care of your personnel
- Have a daily plan, every day
- Start every shift with a roll call/meeting



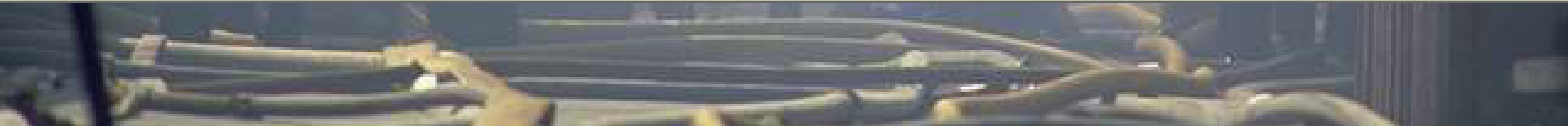
Closing Thoughts For The Newly Promoted Company Officer

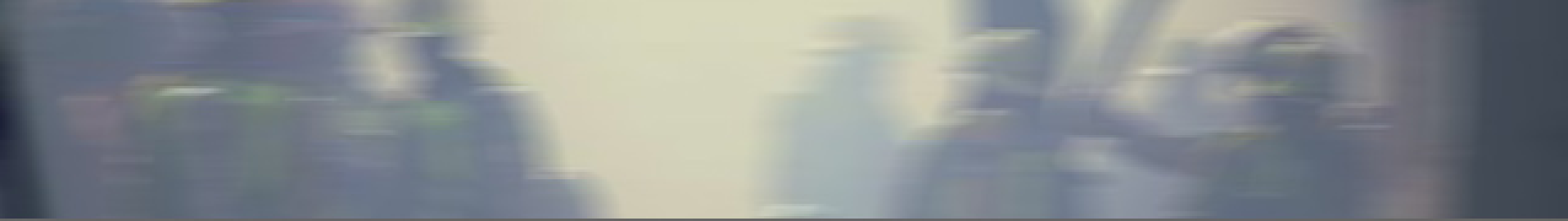
- Do a transfer of command briefing every morning
- Come up with solutions, not problems
- Prepare each of your personnel to do your job (now and in the future)
- Empower and delegate tasks to your personnel
- Keep your supervisor in the loop but don't dump decisions on their plate (there is a difference)



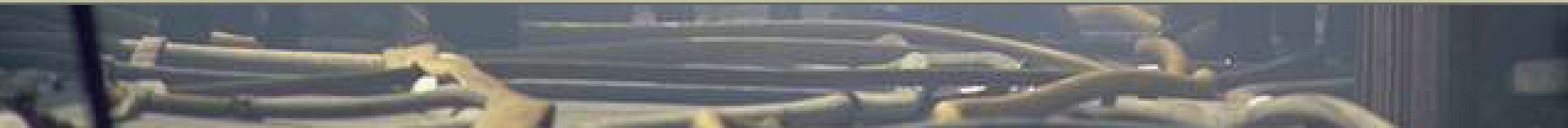
Closing Thoughts For The Newly Promoted Company Officer

- Learn to determine the difference between technical and behavior problems
 - 95% of your personnel problems will be behavior related
 - 5% of your personnel problems will be technical related
- If you won't be the designated adult – who will?





Remember –
you don't get a second chance to
make a first impression!!!!



Last, But Not Least.....


If you remember nothing else,
remember this:

Prepare for your future position -
not for the test



Why?

If you prepare for the position,
you should be able to handle
anything thrown at you during
the test!



Questions?



Thank you very much for your
time and good luck as a
Company Officer!



Contact Information

- Steve Prziborowski
- (408) 205-9006 – cellular
- sprziborowski@aol.com
- www.chabotfire.com