



City of Phoenix

Mission Statement

To improve the quality of life in Phoenix through efficient delivery of outstanding public services.

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1240066

This report can be made available in alternate format upon request.

Fire Department Firefighter Training Review

June 10, 2024

Report Highlights

Certifications

Fire Department staff in our sample had the certifications required for their specialization.

Continuing Education

Not all specializations require continuing education, but for those that do, a significant number of staff did not have sufficient continuing education.

Training Administration

The Fire Department does not maintain consistent policies or standard operating procedures for training or continuing education requirements for all functional areas, leading to not all certifications being kept on file and staff in some specializations not receiving continuing education.

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Executive Summary

Purpose

Our purpose was to validate that firefighters completed required certifications and minimum annual training as required by certifying industry organizations.

Background

Firefighter training is a critical aspect of ensuring that firefighters are well prepared to handle emergencies. Training focuses on safety for themselves and the community they serve. Relevant training ensures that firefighters can perform their duties correctly and minimizes risk. The Phoenix Fire Department (PFD) has multiple levels of training and certifications. Certifying organizations such as International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC), International Code Council (ICC), Arizona Department of Health Services (AZ DHS), Department of Homeland Defense (DHD) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) define criteria and continuing education requirements which all play a role in preparing firefighters to perform their best.

Certifications within PFD

Certification	# of Staff	Accrediting Organization
Firefighter I and II	802	IFSAC
Inspector I and II	54	ICC
Paramedic	859	AZ DHS
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	878	AZ DHS
Hazardous Materials Technician (HMT)	243	IFSAC
Technical Rescue Technician (TRT)	267	DHD
National Incident Man System (NIMS)	2,800	FEMA
Community Emerg Resp Team (CERT)	15	FEMA
HB2431 Training	1,651	None
Total	7,569	

PFD has several certifications across the department.

Results in Brief

All staff in our sample completed initial training and earned certification for their specialization.

PFD maintained rosters of the employees and their certification status. We judgmentally selected employees based on the rosters supplied by Fire and additionally selected from the City's Human Resources System, eCHRIS. We found that all initial training, and the corresponding certification, was completed for each specialization.

Fire did not maintain all certificates on file for each specialization.

While all initial training was completed, Fire did not retain copies of all certificates. We noted that not all Firefighter I and II certificates were on file.. All other testing revealed that the proper certificates were on file and current. We confirmed that training had been completed for the missing certificates, thus all certification samples were valid and current.

A significant number of staff did not complete continuing education (CE).

Not all specializations require CE. HMT and TRT do require continuing education. There were a significant percentage of the HMT and TRT teams who did not complete the required amount of CE. Non-compliant personnel who are not on protected leave status may be required to forfeit their certification and pay as a technician. Fire is aware that staff had not completed CE and is working with employees to become compliant

The lack of consistent policies or standard operating procedures (SOPs) for certifications and continuing education led to certificates not being maintained and CE not being received.

We interviewed management for each functional area to gain an understanding of the continuing education (CE) requirements and/or renewal for each certification. Each functional area had a different way of maintaining files, whether electronically or paper based. Each functional area also had a different way of ensuring compliance with CE requirements and renewals. PFD should define policies or SOPs to ensure that training is managed in a consistent, systematic way. There should consistent methods for managing certifications, ensuring CE requirements are met, and addressing instances where CE is not met.

Department Responses to Recommendations

Rec. #1.1: Develop and implement a consistent framework for managing the training and certification functions across the department to include SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for training requirements and record retention.

Response: Fire will develop and implement a consistent framework for managing the training and certification functions across the department to include SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for training requirements and record retention.

Target Date:

July 31, 2026

Explanation, Target Date > 90 Days: To develop an effective comprehensive training policy, this will require engagement with multiple stakeholders since each training area may be governed by different agencies. The training section is already working on management processes and tracking for the training certifications and CEs. Finalizing an SOP will require labor input. Additional time is needed to review through the Labor-Management Relationship By Objectives (RBO) process/ This process will begin in December 2024 when the 2025 agenda is set. There may be staffing and financial impacts that will take additional time and approvals to request into future budget cycles. Anticipate two years.

Add discussion item to the Training and Special Operations RBO agenda – by July 31, 2025.

Rec. #2.1: Fire develop and implement SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for continuous education/renewal requirements, compliance audits, and record retention.

Response: Fire will develop and implement a consistent framework for managing the training and certification functions across the department to include SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for training requirements and record retention.

Target Date:

July 31, 2026

Explanation, Target Date > 90 Days: To develop an effective continuous education policy, this will require engagement with multiple stakeholders since each training area may be governed by different agencies. Additional time is needed to review through the RBO process. There may be staffing and financial impacts that will take additional time and approvals to request into future budget cycles. Anticipate two years.

Add discussion item to the Training and Special Operations RBO agenda – by July 31, 2025.

Rec. #2.2: Fire develop an SOP to define monitoring for the HMT and TRT continuous education evaluation process. Ensure the process includes documenting

the review and any remediation actions and retaining the documentation for an appropriate length of time.

Response: Fire will develop and implement a consistent framework for managing the training and certification functions across the department to include SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for training requirements and record retention.

Target Date:

July 31, 2026

Explanation, Target Date > 90 Days: To develop an effective HMT and TRT continuous education policy, this will require time to review through the RBO process. Additional time is needed to develop a program to support members to complete CEs to minimize impact on staffing and financial burden to the city. Remediation actions will need to be reviewed with various partners before it can be included in policy. Anticipate staffing and financial impacts that will take additional time and approvals to request into future budget cycles. Anticipate two years.

Add discussion item to the Training and Special Operations RBO agenda – by July 31, 2025

Rec. #2.3: Once a monitoring process is defined (Recommendation #2.2), ensure that all HMT and TRT groups are reviewed for compliance with continuous education requirements.

Response: Fire will develop a policy and tracking system to ensure HMT and TRT certifications are following CE requirements.

Target Date:

August 31,
2027

Explanation, Target Date > 90 Days: Once the HMT and TRT policy is in place, PFD will need a year to assess compliance. Several CEs are annual in nature. Fire can create a report to confirm compliance.

1 – Certification

Background

PFD staff specialize in different aspects of firefighting and emergency response. These specializations require demonstrated competence of the core curriculum by Fire staff in the following areas:

- Firefighter I and II certification – Practical skills for new recruit firefighters.
- Inspector I and II and Plans Examiner – Demonstrated competence for fire inspections with building codes and standards.
- Paramedic – Advanced knowledge and skills to stabilize and transport patients.
- EMT – Basic knowledge and skills to stabilize and transport patients.
- Hazardous Materials Technician – Skills and abilities to perform actions against hazardous materials incidents.
- Technical Rescue Technician – Skills and abilities to perform actions for rescue incidents involving difficult to access areas.
- NIMS – Roles for all levels of government to work together, prevent, mitigate, and respond to incidents.
- CERT – Instructor program that educates volunteers about disaster preparedness in the community.

We interviewed staff and reviewed policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to understand the training requirements for PFD. As of March 2024, Fire employed approximately 1,650 sworn personnel. We tested Fire's roster of employees by sampling and validating that the given employee had obtained the proper certificate and that it remained valid and unexpired. Additionally, we incorporated testing for training for the ambulance refusal process (HB2431) compliance, which encompassed all PFD sworn staff.

Results

All employees in our sample had the certifications required for their specialization.

We judgmentally selected a total of 100 employees based on the rosters supplied by fire and from the City's Human Resources System, eCHRIS. We reviewed each employee and determined that they had completed their required, initial training to earn their certification.

Not all employees sampled had the proper, current certificate on file.

While employees had completed the training, PFD did not maintain the certificates for all staff and we had to contact the accrediting organization to confirm the training. Specifically, out of the 90 employees, we found:

Certificate Testing

Certification	Sample size	Certificates on file	Certificates not on file	All certificates valid and current
Firefighter I and II	15	4	11	Yes
Inspector I and II	10	10	0	Yes
Paramedic	10	10	0	Yes
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	10	10	0	Yes
Hazardous Materials Technician (HMT)	10	10	0	Yes
Technical Rescue Technician (TRT)	10	10	0	Yes
National Incident Management System (NIMS)	20	20	0	Yes
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)	5	5	0	Yes
HB2431 Training	10	10	0	Yes
Total	100	88	11	Yes

Out of a sample of 100, 11 certificates were not on file.

Not all Firefighter I and II certificates were on file. We verified training was received for missing Firefighter I and II certificates with Arizona Center for Fire Service Excellence, the testing agency for Firefighter I and II certification. Thus, all certifications samples were valid and current.

PFD did not maintain policies or SOPs to consistently document training certifications for all functional areas.

We interviewed management for each functional area to gain an understanding of the training process for each certification. Each functional area had a different way of maintaining files, whether electronically or paper based. Further, we noted inconsistencies for electronic files, as some used City training databases created for the purpose, and some were simply folders with scanned images on the City network. PFD SOPs do not have any published definitions or information for specific training procedures for each functional area. A consistent, systematic framework for managing the training and certification function would provide consistent definitions and guidelines for training records and serve as a critical tool for effective training and certification administration.

Recommendation

- 1.1 Develop and implement a consistent framework for managing the training and certification functions across the department to include SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for training requirements and record retention.

2 – Compliance with Continuing Education

Background

Continuing education (CE) requirements are essential for maintaining or renewing professional certifications. For PFD, only HMT and TRT have CE requirements. All other areas have CE requirements, and/or renewal processes.

We reviewed PFD's processes for auditing compliance with CE requirements in each area to determine if staff were meeting the CE requirements.

Results

PFD did not maintain consistent policies or SOPs for CE or renewals for all functional areas.

We interviewed management for each functional area to gain an understanding of the CE and/or renewal for each certification. Each functional area had a different way of ensuring compliance with CE requirements and renewals. Staff primarily tracked this information via spreadsheets, but some were maintained in PHXYou, the City's training database.

CE compliance for HMT and TRT is maintained in PHXYou. There are 243 staff in HMT roles and 267 staff in TRT roles. Criteria for CE requirements is defined by a Letter of Commitment signed by each team member. PFD offers some CE training in house. To maintain CE compliance team members must complete 70% of the hours offered by PFD. In calendar 2023, PFD offered 54 hours of TRT training and 48 hours of HMT, therefore, the number of CE hours to maintain compliance is 37 hours and 33 hours and above per respective 1-year period.

We obtained training transcripts for the period January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023 to test for compliance, and noted there were 131 HMT team members (54%) and 169 TRT team members (63%) who were not in compliance. PFD's evaluation process identifies any personnel out of compliance, and personnel receive notification of their team status. Any personnel who are on protected leave status are allowed to re-enter the program, at which point their skill sets are evaluated prior to going back into the field as active HMT or TRT personnel. Non-compliant personnel who are not on protected leave status may be required to forfeit their certification and pay as a technician. Management in these areas do have a process to review CE and are working with employees to become compliant; however, there is no SOP that defines this process. Currently, the PFD SOPs do not have any published definitions or information for specific CE/renewal procedures for each functional area except for the Paramedic certification. Consistent, documented definitions and guidelines are essential for effective certification administration.

Recommendations

- 2.1 Fire develop and implement SOP's for all functional areas with definitions and guidelines for continuous education/renewal requirements, compliance audits, and record retention.
- 2.2 Fire develop an SOP to define monitoring for the HMT and TRT continuous education evaluation process. Ensure the process includes documenting the review and any remediation actions and retaining the documentation for an appropriate length of time.
- 2.3 Once a monitoring process is defined (Recommendation #2.2), ensure that all HMT and TRT groups are reviewed for compliance with continuous education requirements.

Scope, Methods, and Standards

Scope

We evaluated Fire training from July 1, 2020, through December 31, 2023.

The internal control components and underlying principles that are significant to the audit objectives are:

- Control Activities
 - Management should design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks.
 - Management should implement control activities through policies.
- Control Environment
 - Management should establish an organizational structure, assign responsibility, and delegate authority to achieve the entity's objectives.

Methods

We used the following methods to complete this audit:

- We interviewed Fire management and staff.
- We reviewed Fire department policies and procedures.
- We validated rosters of Fire specializations by testing certifications.
- We evaluated Fire's continuing education procedures.

Unless otherwise stated in the report, all sampling in this audit was conducted using a judgmental methodology to maximize efficiency based on auditor knowledge of the population being tested. As such, sample results cannot be extrapolated to the entire population and are limited to a discussion of only those items reviewed.

Data Reliability

The reliability of eCHRIS data was previously determined to be reliable through an independent audit review.

Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our

audit objectives. Any deficiencies in internal controls deemed to be insignificant to the audit objectives but that warranted the attention of those charged with governance were delivered in a separate memo. We are independent per the generally accepted government auditing requirements for internal auditors.