

## Backs, Brains, and Underwater Basket Weaving

02/13/07 134 W - + 11 - 5

Drawing upon a user comment, let's open this can of worms... For centuries, the fire service has drawn upon "strong backs" as the foundation for its service delivery. Times change, of course, and the need for "strong minds" has become increasingly important. Can the two coexist in the same universe? Should they coexist? Is the fire service best-served by the... sliding scale that exists right now? That is, the higher you want to be, the more educated you need/may need to be? How do degree requirements come into play? And what does the future hold? Is there a model in the armed forces, perhaps, such as an ROTC for officers who want to start their fire service careers on such a track? Let's see where this leads...

The answer as with most things is somewhere in the middle. We need the brains and brawn in a nice mix, someone who can think outside the box to handle the situation, yet physically able to handle the demands of the fire service. I have a 4 year degree in a field completely unrelated to fire/rescue/EMS, does this mean since I have a piece of paper that I am somehow more qualified or will make a better fire fighter? Certainly not, just as it does not mean that I somehow will make a better officer in the military. Few other professions in the world today require us to be experts on everything from fire behavior, chemistry, physics, biology, physiology, medicine, history etc... and this is why education is important in the fire service in general, 911 one call handles it all now, from fires, EMS to UFO crashes. You can't have an egg head who is in charge and has no common sense or physical abilities or physical experience in fire but has a bunch of letters after their name.

Yes we could go back to the basics days of my grandfather in the 1920's but the world is different, fire is different. We now enter into structures that fail quicker when exposed to flames and we push deeper thanks to our gear, simply being Paul Bunyan doesn't cut it anymore you have adapt as the world changes, keeping one foot in the past, and one in the future to stay alive in this profession. As far as education for promotions, knowledge isn't a bad thing, but it isn't the only thing either. As for an OCS or ROTC type program most departments have something or at least here they do, you want to be promoted to FFII, take these classes, Engineer, take these, Captain etc... the outside education only helps by offering more options and in most cases the department will help pay for it.

**Guest** - 02/13/07 - 18:56

I'll go first Mike! We have talked a little about this before in a blog about the new RFD promotional requirements. First off the following are my 2 cents and are in no way to get anyone fired up much less for Mike to edit or kick me off the blog! (laughing Mike). I have been in the fire service a total of 13.5 years, first as a vollen who was very impressed with the paid FF that I volunteered with. Then to the career ranks for 11 years. I went to college for 2 years(no degree) before the fire service. I am working on my NCFO 1. I will go back and get my education to meet the requirements for promotion. Now with that said, I have been a Instructor since 1998 and have taught all over Wake and Johnston county. I have taught ff with a GED to the college grads.(most of whom got laid off and looking work). And both are different, I did not say bad just different. The one thing that always was tough for me with the higher educated ff was they always asked why versus the high schools ff just did it! But after Silver and I talking and a little more open mindedness in my next class I did realize that was their way of learning more. I have been fortunate to work with some great people at work with both sides of the education spectrum. I once worked with a ff that has a 4 year engineering degree, was a level 2 instructor in VA. I learned a lot from him, he also has a lot of common since, He now is one of the best Captains at work, well respected and a great motivator. He now has his fire science degree. But I have worked with others with 4 year degrees that could not even pass the NC EMT exam.

Now for the strong backs ( high school grads.) I have worked with a bunch of great ff and leaders that had no higher education but all the common since in the world. I also learned a great deal from them as well. I think the Fire Officer program and other classes with on the job experience should hold just as much weight than a 4 year degree in anything( not job related). Now I'll get to my point. We can work together, we already do! #1 a degree in fire science, EMS, Emergency Management or even Business is related to our careers so that should help. But not a degree in music or P.E. #2 Degree or not we all want our fire service to be the best and it is hard to grow with change, the hardest part is the pay check employees. If we get rid of the ones that are just there to get a pay check every 2 weeks. The ff with the basic and higher education will grow together and not apart. We will take the challenge of growth and education side by side like brothers and sisters instead of being divided by the ones that are there just passing time until their big job comes up or there next off duty job pays out a crap load of money. I am not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I am not here to sit back and get fat! PTB-FTM later!!!!

**Jason Lane** - 02/13/07 - 19:40

To clarify my ROTC comment, imagine two classes of fire service personnel. One starts with zero experience but is trained as a line member, the other starts with zero experience but is trained as an officer. The military does it, but could the fire service?

**Legeros** - 02/13/07 - 19:46

Mike, that is a good question. But I'm not that familiar with the military. Don't they still get trained at the basics? Check this one out Mike. You were here when they use to send you through first class school and if you were a first class no limited time before the Lt exam you could take it. I worked with a Capt. that made first class in may, took the Lt exam in September and got promoted to Lt in February. He worked 2 years as a Lt. and got promoted to Captain. On his first working fire he criticized his Lt on how he ran the engine. The problem he later admitted was he never pumped on a fire as a first class or Lt. so how could he judge or educate his Lt. with no experience him self!!!!!! I think recruiting at the college level to get those people with higher educations like the PD. does could get some of the higher educated people interested in the fire service. But taking them to officer from the beginning with less experience would be tough me. Like I said how can a officer teach me how to take the next step when he has never been in my shoes! Answer that one.

**Jason Lane** - 02/13/07 - 20:11

I don't think education is a bad thing, although I agree with the statement of an old captain who said " there ain't no way you can pull up and read the fire out. At some point you have to go in there and get after it if you ever want to do any good".

Now, i do agree that in this day and age with the complexity of building construction it is almost necessary to have some education on the relevant topics to be better prepared for the "battle". This education could be company level training, if we got more serious about learning while we're at work. I think we are trying to rely too much on a piece of paper. I also would rather be with a crew who had common sense and experience over a crew who all had degrees with not much common sense.

As I said initially, I'm not against education, just the thought that in order to move through the ranks that it be mandatory. In fact, I think it would be good to give a pay incentive to those who have (or get) a fire related degree. Maybe give them a 5% pay raise for such.

**firedriver** - 02/13/07 - 21:21

well said Lt. I have one question to help me be a better new boy. As an officer and an instructor would you rather have someone that when you tell them to do someting asks you why and after a brief discussion gets the job done, or someone who gets the job done and then if the "why" didnt hit em in the head while they were doing the job might bring it up later? I started just like you as a volunteer in johnston county and looked up to the raleigh guys who were there and i found out that if i just did what they said i usually saw why they told me to do it and, it kept them off my back. I think if you keep your mouth shut and your ears open while you are sitting around with the brothers and sisters with some time under their belt they will answer most of your questions before you ask.

i dont care if you have a degree or not I have seen excellent firefighters with and without college educations what seperates firefighters is their attitude and love for the job.

**guest** - 02/13/07 - 21:46

Just throwing this out there, but I would not be a fan of an ROTC-type program for the Fire Service. One of the best ways to learn is from other's mistakes. By taking a group and immediately training them to qualify as Officers, I don't believe that they would be able to learn from other's mistakes. I feel that it is a good practice to conduct an incident critique after EVERY incident, whether it be your simple EMS call to a large scale incident. I'm not talking about anything too in-depth for the EMS calls, just basically thinking about how well the call went and if anything else could have been done to improve the way the incident went. It should NOT be used as a time to "what if" the incident or anything like that; however, I think it is a good time to see if there were any lessons to learn... they type of stuff you can NOT learn from sitting in a class, hearing other people's stories, or reading from a book. I am a firm believer that this job requires a balance of book knowledge, matched with an ever-growing amount of REAL knowledge. We can learn the basic concepts and ideas from the books, but applying these concepts/ideas and trying them out in the "real world" is a very important aspect as well.

Another plus to having more REAL knowledge is that you will have the opportunity to work with many different people with many different personalities, experience, and knowledge. This is a great way to learn how to work with everyone and gain knowledge from their past. Learning to work with many different people will thus make you a better Officer. It will give you "real world" experience with how to relate and get along with these many different people. It will give you the chance to take note on how YOU think the "ideal" Officer should act and treat his crew. You will be able to build a list of the positives and negatives which you find in all your previous Officers and then when you become an Officer you will be able to review that list and see what things you should/shouldn't do based on previous PERSONAL experience. That is an idea that a fellow Firefighter told me, and honestly, it is a great idea and one that could not be achieved without that "real world" experience as a Firefighter rising through the ranks.

My thoughts about a college degree are a total different topic... these comments are directly related to what I think about having an ROTC-type program in the Fire Service. As stated earlier, the Fire Service these days seems to require a balance between book knowledge and REAL knowledge.

**Luke** - 02/13/07 - 22:03

OK...someone put the military method out there, so let's clarify what that is and how the system works. EVERYONE goes through some sort of basic training that covers physical conditioning, self defense, field craft, drill and ceremony, first-aid, and weapons. Everyone learns the M-16. Everyone gets topsleep on the ground and wash dishes in the mess hall. Everyone also gets to deal with drill sergeants at some point in time. Now, enlisted personnel go on to their advanced training, then on to their assignments. The officers follow the same sort of track, in that they also go through training in their career field. As an example, 'grunts' get infantry training, officers get infantry tactics training.

What makes the system work are the non-commissioned officers (NCOs), the sergeants. They are the ones that have come up through the ranks, learned the ropes, and are responsible for passing on their knowledge on to the new blood. They are also responsible for making sure the officer's don't step on their \*\*\*\*'s out in the real world. An officer is only as good as his NCOs- period.

I don't think this method would work so much within the fire service without a total overhaul of the entire career field (something that is not likely to happen). It would mean that we hired people specifically for officer slots, not expecting to appoint captains from the folks who go through a fire academy like we run now.. Sure, some members of the military rise through the ranks, starting out as enlisteds, and gaining an appointment to some sort of officer's training program, including the service academies (i.e. West Point), but they are a rarity.

And who would fill the function of the NCOs as in the military? Maybe the engineer/driver/lieutenants. EMS has the FTOs which is as close as anything to the NCO roles.

No...it would be really hard to make it work.

**DJ** ([Email](#)) - 02/13/07 - 22:36

I think that you need a certain mixture of both brains and braun. I definitely disagree with the idea of hiring straight up officers, training them to be that and sending them to the firehouse. You need to work your way up from the bottom. By doing this as Luke said you learn from others mistakes, you learn from the FF's that are more senior to you and you learn more about your craft by doing it. You can have all of the book knowledge in the world, this is to include a fire science degree, but until you can't realistically apply it until you see it in the real world. Meaning you can read about fire behavior and ladders, and building construction, but until you are in a building and fire is rolling over your head, or you have to throw a ladder, or you see building components on fire and fire spread due to that construction you can't fully understand it and then try and teach others about it. How are you as the fire officer supposed to critique your new boy or teach your new boy after a fire if you yourself have never walked in his shoes? I don't know of a single company that when they get a new officer whether it be a LT or Capt. that they don't question or find out what firehouses they served in, or what kind of firefighter they were. This job is based on respect, that being I respect that Capt. because of his experience, knowledge and how he handles himself on the fire ground and trust, I trust that through my Capt's knowledge and cool demeanor that he and I both are going to be going home in the morning. Who wants an officer that they can't trust or can't respect. As an officer I want to be the type officer or firefighter that others would say that they would follow me anywhere including to the gates of hell and back (didn't mean to sound corny) if we had to go because they know I had the knowledge gained through experience to get us back home. Everyone of us can look around and pick out those ff's that have the certs and degree, that talk the big game and talk about how much they know because of those pieces of paper, but would you really want to follow them when the sh@t hits the fan?

**Mike** - 02/13/07 - 23:16

Dang!(as Joe Dirt would say), 1st to the guest, I would have to say either way is usually fine, it just makes it easier to get the job done first and discuss why later, not unless it is a safety question. But then again you called me Lt. you know who I work with and what I deal with ( in a positive learning way for my self)! You know me call me we can talk more!!!!!!!!!! Now to the engine driver, I agree!!!! Luke I can only say Rock on Brother!!!!!!!! I have always learned from something small, to the kick your butt huge calls. And what you said is right, the key is we know doing the right thing is by learning from our mistakes as well. That is NOT written in a book or part of a teaching out line, that is something learned from in the field, on the streets, at the station, at 3:00 am with your kidneys backed up, eyes crusted over and the buzzer taking one more year off the old ticker!!!! Here is one for all of us?

Think about this one Mike, would you rather read out of a book and I tell you how to fight fire, how it will react to the water, how them bumble bee's will bight your ears and neck, it will be dark in there. Or would you rather read it, hear it and then go through the gates that are dark as night, hot as hell and fight the dragon head on? I would rather have someone teaching me and leading me who has that experience. Before I

forget this reminds me of a training burn I participated in one time. It got into the attic and I remember the div 1 officer called command for an attic ladder as they were pulling the ceilings to put out the fire. First off the fire was lapping out the gable of this one story house. And as the crew of 4 went in to help out this one highly educated person( more than a 4 year degree but never a officer) was asking to sound the evacuation alarm and screaming to get the crews out it was unsafe! maybe 2 minutes went by and the black smoke changed to white and the div 1 officer called command and said fire under control in the attic. We burned that house all day long. My point being is that brain with no brawn experience under his own belt could have burn the house down early and non of us would have learned anything that great day! Remember that old song "it takes 2 to make a thing go right"!

**Jason Lane** - 02/13/07 - 23:17

Jason, that was what I was trying to say in my post, I would rather learn from someone who has that experience and the knowledge learned through those experiences. I don't know if it came out that way or not.

**Jason** - 02/14/07 - 07:47

This is a very interesting discussion.

The fire service has an excellent competency-based education model, built around NFPA 1021. Education is definitely a component.

I have been studying the military professional development model for several years. It has SOME applicability to emergency services in the USA, but not much. It is much more applicable to much larger organizations, and it is to some extent used in the United Kingdom (where pretty much all officer development is done at the Royal Fire College at Morton-on-Marsh.

While the two-track approach has its issues (and illustrates why "mustang" officers, who are former enlisted members who jumped off the enlisted-NCO track to go to school and jump on the officer track), the real beauty of the military system is its planned, structured approach to training. In the USA emergency services, we treat education and training as something we do between calls, when we can find the time, or something that some (if they are ambitious) do in their off duty hours. In the military, or the Royal Fire Service, training and education (professional development) is something that is your WHOLE JOB while you're doing it. As an example—a soldier goes to boot camp (school) and takes a skill course (MOS or NEC school). Then they are assigned to a unit (work). A couple of years later, an assignment to an NCO school for 16 full time weeks (school). Then, an assignment as an NCO (work). Some years later, for those who are still upwardly mobile, senior NCO school (like Sergeant Major Academy) which is again, school. Then, an assignment as a senior NCO. Then...retirement.

Officers, the same scheme. College, then OCS (school). The Marines add something additional – "The Basic School," where all officers (pilots, lawyers and combat arms) learn basic "Marine skills" and mostly, leadership. Then, an "assignment with troops" such as platoon commander (work). Later, as a captain/major, a master's degree, and Command and General Staff school. Then, assignment as a mid-level officer (battalion logistics or operations), then maybe a command tour. Still on track? Back to the Army War College or some other masters/doctoral level school.

They really INVEST in training and developing their people. Our emergency services organizations are so small, and have so much human resources consumed by bureaucracy, that we can't afford to make those investments. Imagine if all the fire departments (or EMS agencies or law enforcement agencies) in whole states were merged. Could we then make similar investments? I'm not sure, but if you take a look at the Commonwealth (UK, Australia, New Zealand) fire services, or EMS services (only 5 for all of England), you can see that they do not struggle for survival, and they have some ability to invest in large people and program development efforts.

Sorry for running on and on, but this is a good thread and a topic of great personal and professional interest.

Skip

**EMS 100 (Email)** - 02/14/07 - 09:48

I believe that formal education does not make a good firefighter, but makes the individual a "better" firefighter, and perhaps a better officer, as their job descriptions are increasingly administrative. I know I have become a better firefighter since starting classes, and it has prepared me to become a good officer one day.. As I look at it the fire service is no longer a "wet stuff on red stuff" service. That and the fact the those people with experience are falling away left and right, we don't fight as many fires, we don't see as many things so formal education is one of the only ways, or perhaps one of the better ways to learn about these things. The 2 year degree also teaches legal issues, HR issues, and many other topics beyond the essentials of firefighting book. It's a great program and should, in my opinion be required of all firefighters before ever seeing a bugle, or perhaps before seeing the first nozzle in their career. After all almost every book that is on a reading list for officer tests are also used in the 2 year program. How better to prepare yourself. Education coupled with experience is the best thing out there.

**CFP 7021** - 02/14/07 - 11:25

Someone recently said to me "this is the only profession where you spend the first half of your career using your back, and the second half of your career using your brain." That's a simplified take, but it may accurately reflect the present progression (is that the right word?) of education / expectation / ability / assignment in the US fire service. But it also begs a question. What about those who enter the fire service but do not necessarily want or perhaps possess the skills to "move up the chain?" Thus were back to tiers. Those who remain in the lower ranks, and those who move up the ranks. The reasons would be varied AND, more importantly, the level of dedication, commitment, etc. is going to be equal on both sides. As it's been over 10 years since I was a member of a department, how are expectations toward these issues these days? Is there any... frowning upon upon those who choose to proudly serve but without moving up, or aspiring to move up? And on the issue of degrees and such, let's be honest, education and formal education is one piece of the puzzle. More important is the ability to learn. (To which, ideally, education aids. That is, you learn how to learn.)

**Legeros** - 02/14/07 - 13:13

I am not sure if this is a day late and a dollar short but I wanted to give my 2 cents. I do not have a degree but am in no way opposed to the notion that we should be educated. The benefit to education is to give you strategies for learning. Making it easier, nothing more. Why would we be opposed to that. If you think we do not need help just go back and read some posts, or better than that do a search on any vehicle in the city and be prepared to laugh your fanny off at the 3rd grade spelling and grammar. We write legal documents folks! My thought is hire the brain. You can get stronger, but a dummy is a dummy. In regards to moving up the chain, hey you have to have indians, not everyone can be the Chief.

**Porter** ([Email](#)) - 02/14/07 - 14:36

For myself, one of the reasons the fire service has always been the best job in the world is because you can take men and women from all walks of life, train them adequately and introduce them to a whole new world that few care to know about and even fewer understand. Best of all, the journey that each of those people take is limited only by themselves. They can proudly serve in the jump seat for 30 years, or they can move up as far as their own limitations will carry them. In my own jaded world, the fire service has always been one of intelligence. Look at the founding fathers of this country. Most of them were volunteer firemen, to include Washington, Jefferson, and more notably Ben Franklin. Can you really get much smarter than founding and leading a nation? Just like everything else in this world, the fire service continues to grow and change. Just like everything else, responsibility is based on experience. Would a Fortune 500 company hire a new CEO because he just graduated top in his class from business school? Nope, because that person lacks experience. Many want ads state, "experience required". In our line of work, firefighters want to follow leaders that have been around the block a few times. That isn't to say that education isn't important...I don't think a company officer in today's fire service can be very effective in every facet of his job without some form of education. But this doesn't really address the question posed here. One part of the military system nobody has touched on is that, yes, the NCO's come from the ranks of basic training. But there is one prerequisite to Officer Candidate School...a college degree. So if the fire service pursued this style of personnel development, it would almost certainly have to pursue it with similar guidelines in place. Many of the questions posed in this thread depend on the person's viewpoint. I personally respect most of the career jumpseat firemen I know. We all know that there are bad apples every now and then, but even the bad apples have something to offer in the way of experience. I think that we are all educated because if we weren't then there would be no need for a fire academy. We have all proven ourselves smart enough for this job by even passing through the application process. You all know that far fewer of us make it than actually apply. To a degree, the fire service and education have always coexisted. Everyone knows that firemen hate change moreso than the average person, but you can't stop it either. We all started out on a level playing field when no one was formally educated, and leaders still emerged from among us. As education requirements become commonplace we will all be on that level field once again, because everyone will have some type of higher education, be it a certification or a degree...and leaders will continue to be born. The question is what will you be? Now...go to work and be smart 'cause that dragon...she don't never sleep. Be safe brothers.

**LC** ([Email](#)) - 02/14/07 - 15:48

I agree with LC that most things are a matter of opinion. And I see that most people have agreed to the importance of education. But What is the value of education in a quality company officer as it relates to the fire service? Think hard, this includes annual evaluations all the way to simple service requests. Does a newly promoted officer without an education have the ability to preach to his people the importance of furthering their career by getting the requirements set forth by the dept? This is a topic I would like another perspective on for my own se;fish reasons and to make me a better company officer in the future. ( The very near future I hope)

**Porter** ([Email](#)) - 02/14/07 - 17:24

During my undergraduate work, I took a class entitled "Thinking, Reasoning, and Expressing". It was in the Psych group of classes, but it looked at all facets of how humans interact and how we convey ourselves to others. I think that this is the key skill that one can bring to any job with a solid college education. In the Fire Service, the ability to "think, reason, and express" has implications at all levels – from Lloyd's

jumpseat to the frontseat of the Chiefs car. I think the answer to the question regarding education is what do you want to do with it and how does a department want to apply the education of their staff. You don't want someone who can't "think, reason, and express" dealing with the press or arguing your case in an important budget meeting with elected officials, but how much "thinking, reasoning, and expressing" is required to open a nozzle or pull a ceiling.

From a foundational perspective, this probably isn't necessary to run with the Fire Department, but if you are involved in running the Fire Department (or any organization for that matter), you have to have the ability to "think, reason, and express" yourself. So then we go back to the original question, do you want "backs or brains"? Are you hiring to fill seats on fire apparatus or are you hiring for the future of your department? If the latter, look for the brains with a back. If not, look for a back with a brain that you can put a helmet on. Fire trucks will always have back seats, just don't end up in a few years with no one worthy to move up to the front row.

**Olson** - 02/14/07 - 18:25

I think that is the beauty of the fire service. There is a place for everyone who has the cojones to do the job, higher education or not.

Most departments run 3-4 man crews, either paid or volunteer duty crews. Among these 3-4 people on a crew, each has their strengths and weaknesses. One may have a "higher" fire education, one may have 20 years on the job, and another may have much experience in a technical rescue field. Put all of these together and they make a good team. Is it so important to have a piece of paper to show everyone how smart they are? As a company officer it is more important to recognize these strengths and know how to use them than it is to make sure you are more educated than they are. I guess an advanced education could teach one how to do this, however from my experience good leaders are born not made.

The problem that I have with some of these fire related degrees is the "ease" of obtaining them. I see and talk to people who get others to do their work for them in areas they don't know. Where's the learning in that? All the same they get the degree. That makes them a better officer candidate? I'll take experience, bad spelling and all.

For the military model, I can't speak on that as I was never in the military and don't know too much about how it runs. (Maybe if I had an education I would :) )

**firedriver** - 02/14/07 - 19:15

I could not agree more firedriver. If you take 20 people their first day on the job, half with degrees and half without, you tell them to wash 2 cars and give them 20 min. they have one hose and one shop vac how do you think they would handle it? Do you think the leader would be the one that finally developed a plan to wash the car, or the first person to realize that if there are twenty chiefs and no indians nothing is going to get done so he stops trying to stand out and grabs a mit? I have seen alot of people try to put in their 2 cents and then they come up with a plan and then someone else thinks they have a better idea so everyone listens to that idea meanwhile the only thing moving besides their mouth is the clock. you throw in one person that picks up the hose and a mit and starts washing at least something is getting done. The moral of the story? there is a place for a higher education and their is a place for a high school education. I can tell you this you cant judge anyone's ability to be a firefighter or an officer by thier education alone. I knew a guy who started volunteering when he was 16 then graduated high school, took advantage of god given talent for a few years and left the oppertunity of a lifetime to apply to the fire dept. it would be a shame to loose somebody who wants nothing more than to be a firefighter just because he does not have a degree. I think you should look at the person not the paper.

**guest** - 02/14/07 - 21:34

We are not arguing ability or leadership. Leadership comes in all shapes and forms. The qualifications to begin the job are not in question, it is the means to move up. For the record I believe at this point in the fire service with the legal ramifacations of everything we do under the microscope an extended education is a must. Do I think it should be the standard at the company officer level, no. But as i said before read a service request or a run report filled out in your dept and tell me something does not have to be done.Are simple English classes enough? I do not think the education standard is to create better leaders but leaders that can simply promote a well thought out and well delivered peice of information.

**Porter** ([Email](#)) - 02/14/07 - 22:58

Well, I decided to throw my two cents in as well. I see both sides of this topic, but sort of side with "firedriver".

First, to think back to my Durham days. I worked with some awesome people in the Bull City , ones' that had sooo much fire experience, everyday I worked with them I couldn't absorb it all. You had guys that got on the job straight out of high school, because they knew they could learn "on the job", much like a trade, and college wasn't "there thing". My first Captain was one. He took me to the side my first day,

"pick any tool, put it in the cab next to you, and carry it whenever we get out on any fire call and I want you to tell me what it's used for". To this day, I don't get off the rig without a tool in my hand, something that I don't think is engrained into the "rooks" heads these days. Then, policy changed under certain leadership, bringing education requirements to the job. Two guys that were drivers stand out in my head, that had been on the job for about 13 years a piece and could teach you anything. Just to sit back and watch these guys work was amazing. I'll quote one; "shinin' those shoes aren't going to help you put that fire out any faster". Don't get me wrong, when it came to uniforms, they were professional, but firefighting was what they wanted you to know. But, they didn't have that extra education to get promoted to Captain.

Now, Durham policy is in the process of being revised and you get points for experience, as well as further education, not making it required. Now, hopefully those guys will become company officers, ones' that I would kill to work for.

I should also say that I know folks that have education, experience, and LOVE for the job and are going to make outstanding company officers.

I know of a department that has a lot of young guys, in age and service. But, officer level training and obtaining "that paper" is a big push. One member who has a lot of classes, got off at a house fire with nozzle in hand. Looking into the pane of glass to the side of the front door of the seven year old house, he saw smoke banking down to the floor. So, to gain entry he decided to use his gloved hand to break the glass to unlock the door. Rather than the glass, his hand broke. There sat a \$300,000 piece of equipment with all the tools in the world on it for forcible entry. Thank God he was lucky and didn't cut an artery in his hand and really do damage, like a Durham citizen did during a fight, causing his death. Some more experience "on the job" probably would have prevented this from happening, but he's eligible for promotion because of the paper. Don't get me wrong, the guy is good as gold, I just wanted to show the importance of time on the job.

Fires are down this day and age, so further education is great. Do I think it should rule people out completely for promotion? No, I don't. Like one person said earlier, further education doesn't make you a good firefighter, but perhaps a better one. Real world experience is golden, and should be included in promotion processes, rather than just relying on education to determine ones' eligibility. Leadership classes are great, because it's a different day and age of managing people. The autocratic days around the firehouse are over, it's fitting for on the scene, but not around the firehouse. A solution, perhaps sending members, all of them, to classes on duty for management of personnel (like RFD is doing for current company officers), as well as for report writing. No matter what classes you take, there's one thing that's an important trait of a good company officer and that's a love for the job, one thing that some people are made fun of having.

**Silver** - 02/15/07 - 00:15

Mike I'm sorry if this is out of line, but since we're on the subject of brains (or lack thereof), and since you asked about a ROTC like program for fds, I thought I'd post a link to an ongoing thread in the Firehouse.com forums that was started by an explorer (could be used in the future as a semi JROTC) from Rocky Mount. It get's especially entertaining around the 2nd or third page. <http://forums.firehouse.com/showthread.p..>

**Rookienc** - 02/15/07 - 13:17

O.K. Now for another avenue of thought. In an ever increasing requirement of education in the private sector to obtain higher paying jobs, how do we justify a need for across the board pay raises if we do not show increasing requirements in our buisness.

**Porter** ([Email](#)) - 02/15/07 - 17:30

If you are wanting across the board pay raises you could approach the council with the extra duties that are required these days. I.E.: added skills as first responders, car seats, smoke detector installation, etc. (Not to mention the obvious such as haz-mat, USAR, etc.). As I said in my first post, why not give pay incentives to those who already have (or get) a related degree?

What seems like a problem to me with the way the admin. in Raleigh is pushing education is this: They want an "educated" department, but with the current starting salary they are attracting blue collar "uneducated" people (not that there is anything wrong with these people, i happen to be one). People that have a higher education are not going to go to work for \$30,000 and work as hard as we do for that amount of money, unless they wanted to do this job all along anyway. So what they are doing in essence is hiring uneducated people and then telling them that they can't ever promote unless they get a piece of paper. that seems like a good way to make a stagnant work force with a lot of tailboard firefighters and not may officers.

If you want an educated work force start the pay accordingly. (good luck with that)

Also, a question from Porter's earlier post. If a run report is used in court as a legal document is it going to matter much if there are some misspelled words? (This is a serious question, I don't know the answer)

**firedriver** - 02/15/07 - 20:44

You can most certainly can count on the fact they are going to find every way possible to discredit anything you say and do. We are the professionals, if that can be questioned than we loose credibility. I have unfortunately seen and had reports pulled for various reasons, looking through them and finding basic grammatical errors leaves a sour taste in your mouth. EMS calls, MVAs, Structure fires, or simple F/A are reason enough for people to sue. I do not want my inability to formulate a thought and express fact to be the reason a bucket of chicken ( neck back and wing ) cashes in. I think one of the Chiefs on this thing could give you a better insight to the importance of a well written run report.

**Porter** ([Email](#)) - 02/15/07 - 21:09

Oh yea. As for the merit increases based on education I am all for that and find it to be the best answer. Excluding canidates for not having a peice of paper is a load of bull. Problem with pointing out extra duties to the civilian world is that they simply do not get it. Thats one of those better have it if we need it deals. Sorry i am getting carried away with this.

**Porter** ([Email](#)) - 02/15/07 - 21:13

I fully agree with the step pay scale based on education. If someone works the butt off to get a degree, they should be rewarded; and likewise, if there is that motivation (\$\$\$) there, more FFs are likely to pursue a degree. Also, I believe that those who serve on speciality apparatus (haz-mat, heavy rescue, etc.) should be compensated as well, just for the simple fact that they have to maintain all those additional certifications/training hours ON TOP of what everyone else does. One more thing, if you want someone to be bi-lingual then offer a % increase also. I DON'T think offering someone a "one-time bonus" of \$XXXX is nearly as attractive as paying them a certain % as long as they remain bi-lingual (able to pass a language test).

As a side note, Porter I agree 100% with you about the spelling/grammar errors on run reports. That's a GREAT way to not display a professional image to the public if those reports were ever pulled for a court case or made public in some other way. Typing something on a blog is one thing, but a run report is not the place to find excessive spelling/grammar problems. How in the hell do you expect to convience some lawyer that you are a competent, professional if you can't spell and write correctly!!

That's enough rambling for one night.

**Luke** - 02/15/07 - 22:42

[ Tightened this thread. Fixed some spelling. Added carriage returns to aid readability. Deleted a couple PMs and one-liners. To summarize: Hubbell thinks JL's the man. "Pal" thinks Silver's the man, though they have their differences. Then some initials were exchanged. Isn't brotherhood great? ]

**Legeros** - 02/16/07 - 06:41

Mike...if I had used more of my "brain" over the years, maybe I wouldn't be out of work with back surgery now, who knows...thats how it goes though, although not exactly what the thread was about...lol, great discussion.

**Hubbell** ([Email](#)) - 02/16/07 - 09:54

My ex used to work for a personal injury lawyer and I got him to do several EMS law classes for me. His thing, like referenced above, was to attack any credibility on any report. Spelling and grammatical errors were the easiest thing he could use to make an otherwise top-notch doctor, nurse, paramedic, or police officer look like a dufus on the stand. And he was very successful at what he does...

**DJ** ([Email](#)) - 02/16/07 - 20:37

Please don't think that by my earlier question that i don't take run reports seriously. I usually spend too much time on them ! I do believe that bad grammar looks bad and could be troublesome "on the stand", i was just wondering what the official word was on it. Thanks for the clarification.

**firedriver** - 02/17/07 - 00:43

Name: (real name preferred)  
E-mail: (optional)  
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To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

**What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?**

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

**Small print:** All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.