

PA FIRE POLICE ***Fire Police Programs***

By Tony Riccardi - PA State Fire Academy Approved Fire Police Instructor

Many fire police officers claim they are not aware that there are now seven (7) fire police training programs available. Basic, Advanced, Communication, Emergency Response, Legal Concepts, Non-Emergency, and the newest one, Fire Police Review. There are fire police officers who have taken the Basic class, several years ago, and never return for additional training. Their claim seems to be that all they do is direct traffic. Stand by and watch as they engage in this activity and soon it becomes evident they either did not pay attention during this training or, developed bad habits and use improper signals, then get angry when motorists do not respond as the fire police officer desires. Are the motorists wrong? According to these fire police officers, yes! Yet, the vehicle code requires that signals must be clear and understandable which places the responsibility on the fire police officer in a clear and understandable manner. Another problem we recently encountered is the misinformation being circulated as to what the seven manuals actually cover. For example, in one class it was suggested that the new Fire Police Review is actually a compilation of the six manuals, meaning that segments of the six manuals were used to develop this program. Obviously, if this is believed, fire police will not take this class since it is their belief that it will be a repeat of what they already learned in the other classes. First, the vast majority of fire police do not remember over 90 percent of what they learned in the classes. They readily admit they do not open the book again once they complete that particular class. During class, when asked a question that may appear in one of the other manuals, despite their admission that they attended that class, they cannot respond correctly to the question. Did you ever go to the movies and see a film a second time? It's amazing how much you see the second time that you missed the first time you saw the film. That's the way it is with training, you learn so much more the second time and have a better capability of remembering the information better than when the first time you attended that

class. Try to convince a fire police officer he/she should take a previously attended class a second time.

The Fire Review course contains very little actual "review", the majority of the program goes deeper into PennDot and Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices requirements that every municipality in the United States are bound to obey at the risk of no federal funding and liability if the procedures are not followed and a law suit is filed. It also goes deeper into the PA Vehicle Code for those sections that may apply to fire police officers. It is, in fact, a new program, not a "review" of older ones. We concede that the title may confuse you but, when the book was written, we had no idea what to call it so we settled for a current title.

If you examine each of the seven manuals you will find they address many issues that fire police officers must be familiar with in order to do their job to the utmost efficiency. The Emergency Response for example covers many responsibilities fire police have at accident scenes (vehicle, motorcycle and trucks), structure fires, car fires, railroad accidents, plane crashes (light, commercial, and military) to name just a few. It covers how to write reports, and various topics that are important to the fire police officer. The Legal Concepts class is incorrectly titled since the material covers how the civil courts operate when law suits are filed, type of law suits, four different types of negligence, depositions, testifying in court, and many other legal issues that apply to everyone in the emergency services, not just fire police. However, since it is titled "for Fire Police" other emergency services personnel rarely attend.

Another Fire Police program that applies to all emergency personnel is the Non-Emergency course. Over ninety percent of the material covered applies to leadership abilities and obviously, applies to all personnel in leadership roles. Unfortunately, many people assume that by winning an election and being elevated to a position of authority, leadership

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skills just come along, they don't! Others feel that leadership skills are developed on the job. If you don't know what these skills are you probably wind up merely perfecting your mistakes. At a time when volunteerism is dying a fast death, leadership skills are needed more now than ever.

The Advanced Class actual title is "Beyond the Basics" and covers information such as professionalism, dealing with the news media, handling stress, crowd control, "fundamentals of humanics" (why people behave the way they do) and other topics. The Basic course is the prerequisite for all the other programs. In other words, the Basic is the first class to take and a fire police officer must have basic before taking any of the other programs. The basic course covers the fire police law, proper attire, red and blue light requirements, Traffic control and other subjects too numerous to mention here. The communication class is one of the most important yet least attended of all the programs. Why? Most people assume they know how to talk so they don't need this class. You may know how to talk but, very few people actually understand how to communicate. When

you consider that of all the emergency personnel that respond to incidents the fire police officer is the one who is required to communicate the most and, is the one most likely to have to deal with the news media, emergency personnel, general public who may become arrogant, belligerent, pompous, ignorant, or hysterical, and they are expected to do so in a professional manner.

Will the communication class make you a better fire police officer, depends; will it make you a better communicator, again it depends; will it teach you why communication fails so frequently, absolutely. Communication is very vital to our society. When you consider that members of families have not spoken to each other for years over a simple misunderstanding, and when you consider that quite a few words in the English language have from twenty-five to one-hundred different meanings per word, is it any wonder that the English language is one of the most difficult to learn, yet our belief is that we know how to communicate. We may know how to talk but, unfortunately, we don't know how to communicate.

Hopefully this will give you a better understanding of what the seven courses actually cover.

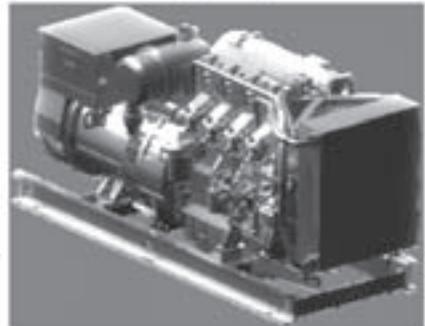


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