

10/18/78
OMBS

WOMEN FIRE FIGHTER PRE-RECRUIT TRAINING PROGRAM

I. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

To provide more detailed information about the Women Fire Fighter Pre-Recruit Training Program proposed in the 1979 Budget.

II. SUMMARY

The 1979 Budget proposes the continuation of 7 existing women fire fighter pre-recruit positions. The women in these positions will continue the schedule they currently maintain, half days in physical fitness training and half days in mechanical and equipment manipulation training, until they have attained the strength levels required for entry into Recruit School. At that point, the women will transfer to a schedule that will provide periodic physical strength training but will focus on "on-the-job-training" in the Fire Marshal's Office and in Battalion One at Headquarters.

III. BACKGROUND

The present Pre-Recruit Program has 7 women involved in a program of building physical strength and the development of mechanical and manipulative skills.

The Pre-Recruits spend one-half of each day involved in a strenuous physical fitness and strength building program at the downtown Y.M.C.A. under the supervision of a female physical education instructor. This program was designed and is overseen by T. Lee Doolittle, Ph.D, at the University of Washington. A daily record of each Pre-Recruit's progress is maintained. Dr. Doolittle re-evaluates each Pre-Recruit's progress every two months or as circumstances dictate. At this time we do not have sufficient experience or data to accurately predict which if any of the Pre-Recruits can reach the required strength levels or the time it will take to reach those levels.

In addition to the lack of strength problem, we have also recognized a real deficiency in the ability to perform manipulative tasks and mechanical background and knowledge. In an attempt to overcome these deficiencies, the Pre-Recruits spend one-half of each day performing a variety of Fire Department related tasks. In this portion of the program they are given classroom instruction on such things as the operation of fire pumps, internal combustion engines, building construction, electricity, emergency medicine, sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, and fire chemistry. Outside of the classroom they are involved in working with all the various tools and equipment used by the Fire Department. They are trained to perform all the required hose and ladder operations used in the Fire Department. It should be recognized that progress in working with certain equipment and performing certain operations can only proceed at a rate consistent

with their ability to physically be able to perform the operation. We are continually adding new experiences for the Pre-recruits, along with a constant review of the material covered previously.

They have performed operations at a variety of training sites, which provide them with the opportunity to perform various firefighting operations in buildings located in different areas of the City. This training gives them the experience of working in an environment similar to the fire-ground, and gives them an opportunity to put their training to use and have to reason out a variety of problems that can occur on the fireground. This training also gives them the experience they need working with hand and power tools.

After 19 weeks of training, the present Pre-recruits have shown a considerable improvement in their capabilities, however, they still have deficiencies in many areas. These deficiencies include insufficient physical strength, inconsistent performance in performing manipulative operations (retention of skills) and the inability to reason out work related problems, due to the lack of background in working with the variety of tools, equipment, and situations requiring them to reason out problems. These deficiencies would make it impossible for them to successfully perform as a combat firefighter at this time.

The Seattle Fire Department has developed two "on-the-job-training" assignments for the seven current female pre-recruits. It is anticipated that the pre-recruits will enter these assignments after having successfully completed the training program, with emphasis on physical development, to which they are currently assigned. Physical strength training will be reduced at that time to 2 half-days per week.

The assignments will be in the Fire Marshal's Office and the Combat Division. The women will be rotated through these two positions, allowing them to get a broad perspective on Department procedures. The Fire Marshal's Office assignment will be seen as the primary assignment. From this assignment, the women will be rotated through combat assignments in Battalion One's Office to serve as aides.

When first assigned to the Fire Marshal's Office, the seven pre-recruits will receive the same training as is given to Fire Fighters assigned to the Fire Marshal's Office. They will receive intensive instruction in the fire prevention training package. They will accompany an inspector into the field for first-hand application. When these skills are well developed, they can handle certain re-inspections by themselves.

After the initial training period in the Fire Marshal's Office, the pre-recruits will be assigned, one per shift, to Battalion One. This will allow them to work the Fire Fighter schedule, become familiar with combat division procedures, and learn the locations of all the fire stations.

A nucleus of four pre-recruits would always remain in the Fire Marshal's Office. The remaining three would be assigned to the three shifts. All seven would be rotated through two assignments continuing 2 half-days

per week in physical strength training. The assignments to Battalion One could be of two-week duration and the Fire Marshal's Office assignment could be of five-week duration.

!! A recent Fire Department analysis suggests that the training of women in the Emergency Medical Service Program and at the Fire Alarm Center is not practical at this time. Although these roles have been suggested as possible training alternatives for women in the Fire Department, no plans exist at present to pursue these proposals given the circumstances describe below.

!! Dr. Leonard Cobb, who administers the Medic-One program, has established that only fire fighters with five years or more experience are eligible for consideration to take paramedic training. The State law requires that paramedics be experienced Emergency Medical Technicians. Eighty hours training is required to qualify as an EMT. In addition, the Fire Department has established a requirement of two to three years experience on an Aid Car as an EMT to be eligible for consideration for paramedic training.

!! The F.A.C. administration states that the procedures used for caller interrogation, incident triage and dispatch decision-making are inherently dependent on the experience that can only be obtained from emergency operations in the field. Part of the existing recruitment criteria is a minimum of five years experience as a firefighter before becoming a dispatcher trainee.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive continues to support the goals of Affirmative Action for women in the Fire Department. Until such time as the schedule for the next Fire Recruit Class is established, it is recommended that the seven women currently participating in pre-recruit training continue in the existing program. When physical requirements for Recruit School participation have been reached, the women will be moved into a rotational training program in the Fire Marshal's Office, Battalion One and physical training review, as described above.