



Department of Commerce State Fire Marshal Audit

Audit Period: January through August 2016

Results Summary:

Objective	Conclusion
Fire Prevention Training Services	Improvement Needed

* Please refer to Appendix A for classification of audit observations.



Executive Summary

Background

The Fire Prevention Bureau (Bureau), within the State Fire Marshal (SFM) Division of the Ohio Department of Commerce (COM), creates fire safety publications and conducts fire safety education outreach at schools, senior centers, health care facilities, and other locations as requested. The program compiles and analyzes statistical data collected through the Ohio Fire Information Reporting System regarding the nature and causes of fires. The Fire Prevention Program also (1) operates the Public Fire Safety Decal Program for volunteer fire fighters, (2) provides fire safety courses for health care facility certification, smoke alarms to high-risk families, support for special public recognition events, and support of fire safety fairs, and (3) trains local fire department personnel. The Fire Prevention Program conducted approximately 2,500 fire safety programs for 72,600 Ohioans and distributed nearly 270,000 pieces of fire safety literature in state fiscal year 2014. The budget appropriation for state fiscal year 2017 is \$1.3 million for the program.

The SFM Division utilizes centralized scheduling software, ClickSoftware (CLICK), to provide flexible and responsive service to customers seeking regularly-scheduled training. The scheduling/dispatch operations receives requests and coordinates the fire prevention educational training that is provided by field staff.

During the audit, OIA identified opportunities for COM to strengthen internal controls and improve business operations. OIA conforms with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. OIA would like to thank COM staff and management for their cooperation and time in support of this audit.

This report is solely intended for the information and use of agency management and the State Audit Committee. It is not intended for anyone other than these specified parties.

Scope and Objectives

OIA staff was engaged to perform an assurance audit related to the controls over the Fire Prevention program. This work was completed July through December 2016.

The scope for this audit is the Bureau's Program that provides fire safety training, including:

- Use of the CLICK to schedule and monitor training provided to facilities;
- Scheduling other activities between facility trainings; and
- Training Delivery methods.



The following summarizes the objective of the review:

- Evaluate the design and effectiveness of controls within Fire Prevention's provision of training services, including scheduling, monitoring, and reporting.

Additionally, OIA researched alternative methods to conduct training more efficiently.

Detailed Observations and Recommendations

The Observations and Recommendations include only those risks which were deemed high or moderate. There were no low risk observations.

Observation 1 – Bureau Objectives Not Met

Well designed and executed goals and objectives assist an entity in reaching a desired outcome. Objectives outline a specific plan of action, each being relatively short-term in nature. A goal is created to establish what the entity strives to accomplish over time. Objectives are then created to define the steps the entity plans to complete to meet its stated goal.

The mission of the Bureau is to provide a solid foundation and leadership in fire safety prevention, education and preparedness for all of Ohio. The Bureau has established five goals to meet its mission, including:

- establish a State Fire Marshal Fire & Safety Achievement Award for Ohio Fire Departments;
- provide leadership in fire safety prevention, education and preparedness for all of Ohio;
- establish a mentor program to facilitate improved delivery of Fire & Life safety training programs by Ohio's Fire Service;
- more effectively facilitate fire safety course delivery to healthcare agencies; and
- improve the quality of information submitted on fire incident reports by Ohio's Fire Service.

Within each goal, the Bureau established objectives to meet the goals. Two of the objectives under the goal of providing leadership in fire safety prevention, education and preparedness for all of Ohio are: providing educational presentations on the effectiveness of residential sprinkler systems and work with officials responsible for campus fire safety and provide training to college students. However, through discussions with Bureau Management, review of status updates in the Strategic Plan, and review of the Bureau's activity logs for calendar years 2015 and 2016 (through August), the Bureau has not conducted any activities toward meeting the objectives.

OIA performed an analysis using the Inspection Files system to determine the percentage of the Bureau's activities for nursing home trainings compared to other training activities. The analysis identified the following:



Breakdown of Nursing Home vs. Other

	2015		2016	
Nursing Home	1,732	90.63%	1,536	92.31%
Other	179	9.37%	128	7.69%
Total	1,911		1,664	

There was a decrease of 28.5 percent in the number of “Other” trainings provided from 2015 to 2016 and trainings to entities other than nursing homes are less than 10 percent of all training activities. Few trainings or activities beyond nursing home and residential facility trainings does not facilitate actions the Bureau needs to take to achieve its mission and goals.

To more effectively facilitate fire safety course delivery to healthcare agencies, the Bureau established objectives to select software to allow for delivery of both video and text based trainings; improve, augment or replace current general fire safety lessons; and develop a registry to record the satisfactory completion of training and allow participating agencies the ability to view the registry. Bureau management indicated they have reviewed available software to allow for conducting training via the internet and agency management is reviewing their software selection. However, Bureau management also indicated that no changes are planned for the current training or delivery methods until a decision is made regarding the software, which delays the Bureau’s achievement of its goal to more effectively facilitate fire safety courses.

Failure to reach the objectives established in the Strategic Plan results in inability for the Bureau to achieve established goals. Ultimately, this may result in an inadequate level of education and preparedness to provide Ohioans with a solid foundation in fire safety prevention knowledge.

Recommendation

To meet established goals and objectives, Bureau management may consider development and implementation of the following:

- Increase the number of trainings provided to entities other than nursing homes and healthcare facilities. Identify needed trainings based on issues consistently noted in fire incident reports. Additionally, provide trainings to schools and churches. In order to provide trainings beyond those provided to nursing homes and healthcare facilities, time spent in nursing homes and healthcare facilities must be reduced.
- Attend business and industry meetings to learn of issues affecting communities to identify training needs.
- While in the process of reviewing software for the delivery of training via the internet, set reasonable timelines for completion of objectives to ensure progress is made to implementing the software. While awaiting implementation of the software, consider additional options to reduce time spent on nursing home and healthcare facility training



activities, including providing such trainings in regional locations or establishing a maximum number of trainings to provide at each nursing home or healthcare facility.

Periodically review goals and objectives to determine achievement status. Once objectives are met, create new objectives to meet established goals. If satisfactory progress is not made on the objectives, identify causes, resolutions, or needs to revise objectives.

Management Response

- Software purchase has been approved and we are waiting for verification of the license purchase. Until the license can be obtained for use, it is difficult to proceed with a timeline. Each time we have set progress points, they have been pushed back while waiting for delivery. However, we have developed a list of potential stakeholders that can be reached with both direct delivery and online delivery courses. These include:
 - Increased delivery of healthcare related courses using online 24/7 availability. Field staff will participate in building this course so that known Department of Health education objectives (and code related items) are accomplished.
 - Delivery of workshops and seminars for fire department personnel, not limited to:
 - § Community Risk Reduction Education
 - § Best practices for reaching high-risk audiences in the community
 - § Ohio Fire Incident Reporting System instruction/refresher courses
- Educators are already reaching out to business and industry stakeholders
- Delivery of regional training is being discussed, however, there are a number of logistical and resource challenges identified that indicate that this is not a quick or easily facilitated solution. Many determinants have been identified.
- Lean and Six Sigma tools are being used to determine best process and most appropriate paths to take to meet established goals/objectives.
- Addressing many of the challenges identified in the current scheduling processes has already removed some of the barriers that exist in meeting bureau education and customer service goals.

Risk*	Remediation Owner	Estimated Completion Date
Moderate	Fire Prevention Bureau Chief	July 2017



Observation 2 – Inefficient Scheduling Process

An efficient scheduling process is necessary to help increase productivity, maximize efficiencies, and balance workloads. The Bureau utilizes Inspection Files and CLICK to schedule fire prevention training. Prior to the implementation of CLICK in January 2015, the Bureau's educators created their own schedules and directly contacted healthcare facilities to schedule annual training sessions required by the Ohio Administrative Code. Since the implementation of CLICK, the CLICK Scheduler handles all scheduling requests and inputs the training sessions into Inspection Files, which is then pushed to CLICK. The scheduled training sessions are then available for viewing on the GANTT calendar, which is the CLICK schedule viewer. Daily, educators receive a system-generated email of the schedule from the GANTT calendar for the next two weeks.

The scheduling process includes redundant steps and provides little flexibility to the educators. For instance:

- A Bureau administrative professional calls nursing homes and healthcare facilities to facilitate timely scheduling of annual training. During the call, the administrative professional advises facilities to provide three available dates and times for the training. However, the administrative professional does not have the ability to schedule the trainings during the calls. Instead, the administrative professional enters the dates and times provided by the facility into an in-service form that is submitted to the CLICK scheduler.
- The CLICK scheduler receives an email when the in-service form is submitted. The scheduler also contacts facilities to schedule the trainings based on the preferred dates and times.
- Educators do not have ability to schedule trainings. For instance, during visits to fire departments, chambers of commerce, healthcare facilities, etc., educators cannot schedule any on-demand requests for training. Educators must direct requesters to call the Bureau's CLICK scheduler to schedule trainings. Additionally, during trainings at healthcare facilities, educators do not have ability to schedule a facility's annual training for the following year and must direct the facility to call the Bureau's CLICK scheduler.
- The daily two week schedule email has limitations for the educators. For instance, educators cannot see their schedules beyond the next two weeks in order to plan other activities, such as county association fire chief meetings, chamber of commerce meetings, and/or any other special events. The two week schedule also does not allow sufficient time to schedule any activities during downtimes in the schedule. Limiting schedule visibility to two weeks also limits educators' ability to plan future continuing education opportunities and time off work.
- Schedule information is maintained in multiple forms. Training sessions are scheduled in Inspection Files, which is transferred to CLICK and to the GANTT calendar. Non-training events, such as meetings or leave time are entered in the GANTT calendar by the



scheduler and are also tracked in Outlook calendars.

Insufficient information is available to the scheduler to efficiently schedule the trainings and to ensure an adequate number of attendees. For example:

- The size of facilities (number of beds) is not maintained in Inspection Files so during the CLICK scheduling process, the scheduler cannot consider the size of the facility to determine an appropriate number of training sessions. A facility with only 10 employees may request two trainings in one day, which is inefficient for the educator. However, the scheduler does not have this information to evaluate the reasonableness of requests for multiple training sessions. Additionally, the facility’s proximity to other facilities is not kept to aid in scheduling those facilities’ trainings for the same day.
- The CLICK scheduler accounts for time necessary to travel to facilities, but does not consider inclement weather or time needed to set up prior to the start of training sessions.
- During calls with facilities, the scheduler advises that the minimum class size is 12 participants and enters an estimated attendance of 12 into Inspection Files instead of obtaining and entering an actual estimated attendance. If the class size is fewer than 12 participants on the day of the training session, the educator has the option to cancel the training. However, from a sample of 24 Inspection Files for trainings conducted during the period January through August 2016, the actual class size was fewer than 12 participants (range of 7 to 10) for five (21%) trainings with no indication in Inspection Files that the educator approved the class to proceed with so few participants. For one (4%) training, the actual class attendance with not updated in Inspection Files.

Additionally, educators’ assignments may contribute to longer than necessary commutes. Rather than assigning the educator that lives closest to a facility to conduct training, each educator is assigned to a district and conducts trainings to facilities in the assigned district though another educator may live closer to the facility and would incur less travel time. Since implementation of CLICK in January 2015, travel has increased approximately 10%.

Total Comparison		
(numbers in gallons of fuel purchased)		
<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
6,937	7,204	7,655
	3.84%	6.27%
from 2014 to 2016		10.35%

Inefficient scheduling processes and software increases the likelihood of a decrease in productivity and an increase in costs. Activity (trainings and other activities) may decrease and program costs (travel) may increase. In addition, staff may not have the ability to provide certain services to the facilities, increasing customer dissatisfaction.



Recommendation

To increase scheduling efficiency and flexibility to the educators, develop and implement the following:

- Push scheduled training sessions in Inspection Files to the educators' Outlook calendars. Per discussion with the agency's IT Department, Inspection Files has this capability and it would permit the educators to view more than a two week window of their schedules. Grant access to GANTT calendars to the educators to plan other activities, such as county association fire chief meetings, chamber of commerce meetings, and/or any other special events such as continuing education trainings and time off from work. Determine a system of record for the schedules to limit routine viewing of multiple forms and systems.
- Grant educators the necessary access to schedule on-demand training requests.
- Grant the administrative professional the necessary access to schedule trainings during calls to the facilities.
- Include the size of the facility and the facility's proximity to other facilities within Inspection Files to aid in scheduling.
- Adjust travel time for inclement weather, as well as, allowing time for set up and tear down before and after training sessions.
- Dispatch the educator that lives closest to a facility to conduct training to incur less travel time.

Evaluate the minimum number of participants required to schedule training and give educators flexibility to immediately alter schedules with other events if minimum training attendance is not met.

Management Response

- Facility IT staff have determined the capability to provide Outlook notification of transmitted schedule entries. After testing and viability of use, the educators will receive an Outlook notification with schedule entry to add to their calendar. Fire Safety Educators will have the opportunity to view real time additions to their schedule and will be able to request special events, meetings, work sessions, curriculum development and other activities more readily.
- Discussions are being held to determine how educators may be able to schedule on-demand requests. In the meantime, they will have the capability to better forecast their schedule using the Outlook notifications. They can request schedule items through their supervisor, or if appropriate, directly with the scheduling staff.
- Facility sizes may be determined by records in place with the Code Prevention Bureau. We will



be exploring the option to add/indicate facility size to the Inspection Files records so schedulers can better determine potential size/need for additional classes. It is unclear at this time how best to determine proximity to other facilities using the tools in place.

- Travel time is indicated on the Gantt timeline, however it is not visible until after the scheduled activity is transmitted into the system. Administration and Bureau staff are exploring options for determining travel time more realistically. Software adjustments may be possible and are being considered.
- As noted above, it may be possible to determine better geographic locations of facilities. However, there does not appear to be a system in place to communicate facility addresses into CLICK so that schedulers can determine closest educator. We will explore what options may exist in the session or what interventions can be introduced to allow schedulers this opportunity. Current districts are necessary to help balance activities between educators; home offices are not evenly distributed throughout the state.
- Policy does indicate a minimum number of students per class session. Educators are encouraged to continue to stress this. We often find that facilities state they will meet minimums only to find that there are fewer persons in place on arrival. Since educators have already traveled, it does not seem reasonable to cancel when the trip has already been made. We will explore alternatives for handling this concern and may need to establish a more strict policy for delivery.

Risk*	Remediation Owner	Estimated Completion Date
Moderate	Fire Prevention Bureau Chief	May 2017

Observation 3 – Lack of Supervisory Review

An effective system of internal controls includes supervisory review of work performed to ensure processes are performed completely, accurately, and timely. The reviews and results should be documented and any issues should be communicated to staff to provide assurance procedures are being followed and to ensure issues are addressed. Additionally, management should review the activities performed to ensure completion, as well as to anticipate periods when supplementary activities may be needed.

Other than cursory reviews of staff members' calendars to view scheduled activities, completed work, and downtime, the Bureau does not have procedures for conducting regular reviews of staff members' activities. Additionally, there is no established process to review completed trainings in Inspection Files, the Bureau's software which tracks activities at each facility, and there is no report or other notification to supervisors when evaluations are in the Inspection Files and ready for review. During testing of a sample of fire prevention trainings completed during the period



January through August 2016, the following issues were noted in the Inspection Files:

- One (4%) of 24 Inspection Files did not note the actual attendance of the training;
- Three (12.5%) of 24 Inspection Files did not contain the customer signature to signify completion of the training; and
- One (5.6%) of 18 Inspection Files did not contain evidence that the Bureau sent a training verification form to the facility after receipt of the training evaluation form.

Additionally, through analysis of activity data from Inspection Files and work logs for 2014, 2015, and 2016, by the end of 2016 the Bureau will have conducted approximately 16 percent fewer training sessions (projected 1,536) than in 2014 (1,829). However, the number of attendees per training session remained at an average of 27 during the same time period. During the period January through August 2016, 1,152 training sessions were conducted and 139 training sessions were cancelled.

Lack of an effective supervisory review process of scheduled and completed activities limits the Bureau's capability to provide assurance that educators are assigned a sufficient workload, scheduled work is completed, and the Inspection Files are updated completely, accurately, and timely. Lack of established supervisory review processes may also minimize the overall effectiveness of the training sessions.

Recommendation

Develop and implement or update existing policies over supervisory reviews of educators' assigned activities and schedules and of the Inspection Files prepared at the conclusion of trainings. Policies should include detailed procedures to outline processes for reviewing past and future scheduled activities and completed Inspection Files, evaluation criteria, frequency of reviews, format and timing to communicate issues to staff members, and documentation requirements. Policies should include processes to ensure Inspection Files are updated completely, accurately, and timely. Periodically review aggregate training and attendance data to aid in evaluation of productivity and overall effectiveness of training activities. Explore software capabilities to notify supervisors of updates to the Inspection Files to help facilitate the supervisory review process. Policies should also include processes to periodically monitor activities to ensure achievement of the Bureau's goals and objectives.

Management Response

Procedures to address review of scheduled activities and completed files are being discussed. A process map is being built to determine the most efficient system for reviewing these activities and files. As a second supervisor is hired, we will be better able to determine the appropriate plan of action.



Office staff are asked to forward highlighted evaluation criteria to supervisors as it is received. Standard responses will be filed and reviewed from time to time. Above-standard and below-standard evaluations will be saved for discussion with field staff during review/coaching sessions.

It is anticipated that each supervisor will review the weekly activities, including work logs and scheduled events, at the beginning of the following week.

New procedures for communication with field staff are already being developed. These will include weekly discussions to determine challenges with Inspection File entries.

Inspection File accuracy and timeliness is being discussed.

The Bureau Chief had already been using Inspection Files to identify key items that address goals and objectives. These were included in regular communications to the Fire Marshal and Director staff when discussing mission and strategic plan progress. These records are also used in bi-weekly reports to the Marshal, as well as bi-monthly reports to the State Fire Council.

Risk*	Remediation Owner	Estimated Completion Date
Moderate	Fire Prevention Bureau Chief	March 2017

Due to the limited nature of our audit, we have not fully assessed the cost-benefit relationship of implementing the observations and recommendations suggested above. However, these observations reflect our continuing desire to assist your department in achieving improvements in internal controls, compliance, and operational efficiencies.

* Refer to Appendix A for classification of audit observations.



Appendix A – Classification of Conclusions and Observations

Classification of Audit Objective Conclusions

Conclusion	Description of Factors
Well-Controlled	The processes are appropriately designed and/or are operating effectively to manage risks. Control issues may exist, but are minor.
Well-Controlled with Improvement Needed	The processes have design or operating effectiveness deficiencies but do not compromise achievement of important control objectives.
Improvement Needed	Weaknesses are present that compromise achievement of one or more control objectives but do not prevent the process from achieving its overall purpose. While important weaknesses exist, their impact is not widespread.
Major Improvement Needed	Weaknesses are present that could potentially compromise achievement of its overall purpose. The impact of weaknesses on management of risks is widespread due to the number or nature of the weaknesses.

Classification of Audit Observations

Rating	Description of Factors	Reporting Level
Low	Observation poses relatively minor exposure to an agency under review. Represents a process improvement opportunity.	Agency Management; State Audit Committee (Not reported)
Moderate	Observation has moderate impact to the agency. Exposure may be significant to unit within an agency, but not to the agency as a whole. Compensating controls may exist but are not operating as designed. Requires near-term agency attention.	Agency Management and State Audit Committee
High	Observation has broad (state or agency wide) impact and possible or existing material exposure requiring immediate agency attention and remediation.	Agency Management and State Audit Committee