

Credentialing for Volunteer Chief Officers

A recent study has shown that significant factors contributing to declining memberships in volunteer fire departments are the lack of competent leadership and management related issues. By following the Commission on Professional Credentialing model for achieving the highly competitive Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation, volunteer fire departments can be sure that their leaders have the educational and technical competencies necessary to be successful leaders in today's highly competitive society.

Today's volunteer fire departments compete with its member's personal and professional obligations. As the demands for service and responsibilities to our communities increase, today's chief fire officer must be well prepared to successfully manage the divergent forces that impinge on our volunteer's time and energy.

Public service and community education has become an additional challenge for volunteer fire departments. A chief fire officer is required to have professional competencies in the areas of business management, human resources, and public administration. By being active in the community, a CFO opens the door to a talent pool of perspective members that will bring the passion to deliver these services as well as bring new and innovative ideas to the department.

In addition to having fire ground competencies, to be a successful leader, today's chief fire officer needs administrative and management abilities in order to successfully run a volunteer fire department. Volunteers want to belong to a well-run organization led by competent leaders. If this is not the case, the members will become disenchanted and take their skills elsewhere. Organizations with incompetent leaders will have difficulty attracting and sustaining new members. Most importantly, a CFO sets an exemplary standard for others to follow. The CFO designation assures that today's volunteer fire departments will be led by competent individuals who have the education, training, and experience necessary to provide effective leadership.

— *David W. Schramm, CFO, Fire Services Administrator
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