

Identifying Criteria for a Fire Fighter Performance-Based Appraisal System

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. This paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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ABSTRACT

The Clearcreek Fire District was faced with the challenge of changing how personnel performance appraisals would be conducted due to the passage of Ohio Senate Bill 5 because pay raises could no longer be automatic but must be merit-based.

The problem this study addressed was that the current employee performance management system at Clearcreek Fire District was not structured to allow for determination of merit-based pay.

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe an employee performance management system that met the needs of the organization and provided the criteria needed to determine merit-based pay.

This research was accomplished by using action research methodology.

The research questions this study investigated were:

1. What criteria are required for an effective appraisal process?
2. What are the resources needed to develop and implement a performance review system?
3. How will the job specific performance guidelines and rating system be developed?
4. How will the new system be implemented by the organization?

The potential impact this study could have on the Clearcreek Fire District is having a more job specific method of measuring and documenting the performance of CCFD firefighters will enable management to determine which employees will be eligible to get a raise.

The procedures used in this research project consisted of extensive literature review to obtain the most recent information regarding the types of performance appraisals being used today. Research of both public and private sector organizations was attempted to get a more balanced perspective on this issue. This information was gathered using the Internet; published

books, articles, and reports; a review of performance appraisals from CCFD and other organizations; and questionnaires.

The results of the research revealed there was a lot of information available regarding performance-based appraisal systems in the private sector but virtually no information available in the public sector, especially in the fire service. Of the departments surveyed, only one respondent stated they use performance as at least a part of the appraisal process to determine merit pay.

The recommendation is to write a new performance appraisal policy for the Clearcreek Fire District. Once the policy is written and forms that include elements of job descriptions are developed, training should be given to all supervisors. Once that has been accomplished, the new system can be rolled out for CCFD supervisors to implement.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The reason this particular subject was selected as a research project was due to the passage of Ohio Senate Bill 5 into law. The Clearcreek Fire District was then faced with the challenge of changing how personnel performance appraisals would be conducted. Currently, bargaining unit members (Firefighters, Lieutenants and Captains) receive step and/or annual raises that are specified in their contracts and part-time personnel receive blanket raises as awarded by the Township trustees. However, with the passage of Senate Bill 5 in the Ohio Legislature and the signing of it into law by Governor John Kasich, pay raises would no longer be automatic but must be merit-based.

Therefore, the Fire District would need to design and implement a new employee performance management system that is job specific to each classification within the organization. This, in turn, will become the bases for determining pay raises for individuals. *The problem this study will address is that the current employee performance management system at Clearcreek Fire District is not structured to allow for determination of merit-based pay.*

The Township currently uses a generic personnel appraisal form. All departments within the township, including Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Road, Zoning and Administration, share this same form. This form does not focus on specific job duties as they relate to any particular profession.

With the current system in place, annual appraisals do not affect how each individual's raises are determined. Once the organization would be required to make the switch to performance-based raises, this appraisal system would be obsolete since the appraisal categories are not specific to each job classification. This would require establishing performance guidelines and a rating system that are job specific within each classification.

The desired effect of any performance-based appraisal system is ultimately to improve employee performance. Employees that are challenged to meet or exceed expectations are more likely to do so knowing they will be rewarded by a wage increase, monetary bonus, or some other type of incentive.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe an employee performance management system that meets the needs of the organization and provides the criteria needed to determine merit-based pay. This information will be used to develop a model “Employee Performance Management System” that can be used by not just the Clearcreek Fire District but also any fire service organization. Of course, it would need to be modified to fit each department’s needs.

Initially, the need to implement this type of system was due to the passage of Ohio Senate Bill 5, which was passed by the Ohio legislature. Therefore, all public employers would be required to base their employee’s pay raises on merit. Most of these employers have contracts or bargaining agreements with the employees that already spell out how raises are to be administered, usually by seniority. Therefore, before raises could be given after SB5, employers must have an employee performance management system in place to guide supervisors to effectively evaluate their subordinates.

This research will be accomplished by using action research methodology.

Research Questions

The research questions this study will investigate are:

1. *What criteria are required for an effective appraisal process?*
2. *What are the resources needed to develop and implement a performance review system?*
3. *How will the job specific performance guidelines and rating system be developed?*
4. *How will the new system be implemented by the organization?*

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Clearcreek Township is located in Warren County in the southwestern quadrant of Ohio between Dayton and Cincinnati. It is bordered by Franklin Township and the City of Franklin to the west, Turtle Creek Township and the City of Lebanon to the south, Wayne Township to the east and Montgomery County to the north.

“In 1982, the City of Springboro and Clearcreek Township joined to form the Clearcreek Fire District (CCFD). Previously, township residents had been served for decades by the volunteer Springboro Fire Company, which was dissolved when the Clearcreek Fire District was created.” (Oda, 2011)

In 1991, the CCFD transitioned from a part-time & volunteer department to a combination fulltime and part-time department.

Currently, the Clearcreek Fire District is a combination department consisting of forty-two (42) fulltime and 41 part time personnel operating out of three fire stations. The department serves the City of Springboro (2010 Population 17,409) as well as the unincorporated area of Clearcreek Township (2010 Population 30,702) in Warren County Ohio. We also cover a small portion in Montgomery County that was annexed into the City of Springboro. The Fire District is responsible for approximately 50 square miles of response area.

The department performs all functions related to fire suppression; emergency medical services, up to and including paramedic level response and transportation. In addition, the department also provides fire safety inspections, public education and arson investigations through the Fire and Life Safety Services Division. The Training and Safety Services Division is responsible for all departmental training. The Operations Division consists of a three-platoon system that works on a 24/48 schedule that is divided into three shifts. Each shift consists of a Battalion Captain (Shift Commander), three Lieutenants and up to 14 Fire Fighters.

As per the 2009 Clearcreek Township Employee Handbook (pp 38 & 39), a performance appraisal is completed on every township employee annually by their immediate supervisor. Probationary employees receive appraisals at six months and one year during their first year. The Lieutenants on each shift perform six or more performance appraisals per year with the Captains performing three per year.

The “Performance Appraisal” form currently used by the CCFD has been in use for approximately three years. The form is a generic, non-specific job description form that is also used by the Clearcreek Township Police Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Road Department, Zoning Department as well as the Administration. This form uses a Graphic Rating Scale type rating system where the supervisor rates the employee in several different areas. The rating categories are: Exceptional, Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Below Expectations, and Needs Improvement. Each employee is rated in the following criteria: Quality of Work, Productivity, Technical Knowledge, Communication, Leadership/Supervisory Management Skills (Applies to Department Heads only), Interpersonal Skills, Approach to Work, and Quantity of Work. Each element is rated and averaged out to determine what the Overall Performance Rating is using the categories mentioned above.

There is no policy in place that actually outlines how this form is to be used. The Personnel Handbook states:

“During the performance review, your supervisor will meet with you and explain how well you have performed according to the job standards that have been set for your position. This includes pointing out items in which you have excelled as well as areas of performance that need improvement.

Your supervisor will review the evaluation with you and then forward it through the chain of command to the Assistant Administrator's Office where it becomes a part of your permanent personnel record."

At no time does it give any type of guidance to supervisors how to perform these performance appraisals effectively.

With the passage of Ohio Senate Bill 5, public employee raises in Ohio were required to be merit-based. The existing employee performance management system in effect at CCFD is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Law since the appraisal form is not job specific for firefighters and EMTs.

The Bargaining Agreement in effect at the time SB5 was passed between the Clearcreek Fire Fighters Local 4207 and the Clearcreek Township Trustees expired December 31, 2011. If a new pay package had not been negotiated before SB5 was in effect, the Township would have been forced to begin issuing raises based on some type of merit system. Therefore, it was recognized the Department should consider attempting to be prepared for this possibility by implementing an employee performance management system standard.

The potential impact this study could have on the Clearcreek Fire District is having a more job specific method of measuring and documenting the performance of CCFD firefighters will enable management to determine which employees will be eligible to get a raise. It could also enable personnel to develop individually as well as contribute more effectively to the success of the organization. Revising the CCFD employee performance management system could lead to a positive impact on the department as a whole because fire personnel will have the ability to be more effective in responding to the organization's demands.

With the recent hiring of twelve new fulltime firefighters and one new fulltime lieutenant, essentially doubling our fulltime staffing, more personnel than ever will be directly affected by the results of their annual performance appraisals. This, along with the requirements under SB5, made it a perfect time to seriously consider updating the CCFD employee performance management system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this research project was done by reading previously conducted research that was published regarding public employee appraisal systems as well as books and other literature from the private sector to get a more rounded perspective. The CCFD currently has a generic performance appraisal form but no employee performance management system. Therefore, all the literature material reviewed will be used to narrow the scope to the stated research problem and to only what would meet the intent of this research.

It is the responsibility of the organization to set job-related goals and standards for each employee's performance, regularly observe and document their performance as they relate to these goals and standards, meet with the employees periodically to discuss their performance and perhaps redefine their goals, and then conduct their annual formal performance appraisal. (DelPo, 2007).

According to (Kirkpatrick, 2006), "In order to get improved performance from appraisal and coaching, a continuous process is necessary." This would start with clarifying what is expected of the employee, followed by appraising performance and discussing the results in personal interviews. Once the interview is completed, then it would be time to develop a performance improvement plan. This process would be repeated on a time schedule (quarterly, semi-annually, annually) with an emphasis on on-the-job coaching in between appraisals.

(Willing, 2010) says that there are fire departments out there that believe performance evaluations are so limited in value that they have stopped using them completely. She also says that there are departments that continue to use them but only out of necessity. This may be directly related to a lack of training, openness, and follow-up.

In some cases, officers do the best they can, but performance evaluations are still inadequate because the system currently in place is poorly designed or not applicable to the type of work firefighters do. In this situation, it is necessary to change the system, which is a daunting task and beyond the scope of any individual fire officer. Still, if the system is not working, it is the duty of an officer to say so and to be engaged in making it better.

To be as objective and consistent as possible in the appraisal process, the appraisal form or instrument created by an agency should be one that could be used for all employees of the same job category. After the instrument has been designed, training will be required on how to administer it. (Hosea, 2004).

According to (Crawford, 2003), inexperienced and untrained evaluators lead to errors. In the fire service, an inexperienced evaluator is usually a result of personnel simply not receiving the proper training for assessing the criteria in an appraisal. How many departments offer formal training in performance evaluations and task assessment? Additionally, the reporting supervisor may not have the ability to evaluate a subordinate because of his own inexperience when dealing with situations that may be out of his scope of expertise. This was seen frequently when fire services across the country were assuming emergency medical service (EMS) provider roles. Some departments instituted EMS supervisors and other measures to ensure that personnel adhered to proper procedures at the scene of a medical emergency.

(Edwards, 2005) states: In order to have an effective performance appraisal system program, it is essential that the evaluators and those being evaluated be well aware of the different elements of the system and how they are to be implemented in the context of the department.

SB5 did not survive the referendum to reverse the passed legislation. However, it is still very possible that administrators will be required to make “performance” the only basis for

employees' progression through the salary schedule through future legislation. (Arnett, 2011) This will require a paradigm shift in thinking as an organization. Fire departments, as well as other public service entities, are quite used to and happy with the current step raise type system. It is easy to manage and seems to be fair on the surface since it is based strictly on years of service.

According to (Hosea, 2004) there have been some court decisions that emphasized appraisals should be measured against any preexisting standards, objectives, or other specific job requirements; they should include identifiable criteria that are quantifiable; they cannot be solely based on a supervisor's observations; and supportive evidence must be documented. Employees want to and should know how well they are doing their job and it is the manager's responsibility to tell them. Therefore, the manager must evaluate their performance and communicate the results of the appraisal to them. This should be a regular and ongoing process. Supervisors should be consistently communicating this information and not waiting until the annual appraisal interview to do it. (Kirkpatrick, 2006).

So, how does the Fire District take this information and translate it into a document that will enable the fire chief and township administrator / assistant administrator to decide how much of a merit or performance-based raise each individual employee will receive?

Well, first there must be a decision made whether the current "system" will meet the department's future needs or if a new system needs to be developed. Currently, annual appraisals are done at or near each individual's anniversary date. The immediate supervisor fills out the document, a meeting is held with the employee to go over the results, and then the form is forwarded up the chain-of-command and to the individual's personnel file.

There are several appraisal methods available to use. However, according to Lawler (2000), most methods or systems do not motivate or even guide the performance development of

individuals; in fact, sometimes they wind up causing conflict between the raters and their subordinates. This can then lead to dissatisfaction as well as dysfunctional behaviors. He also says that these dysfunctions are showing up more when the performance appraisals are tied to merit (performance)-based pay systems.

There are several types and styles of performance appraisal systems currently in use in both the private and public sector. The decision was made to look at four of the most common appraisal methods, based on the research conducted: Graphic Rating Scale, Essay, 360-Degree Feedback and Management by Objectives (MBO).

The Graphic Rating Scale is one of the oldest and most widely used assessment tools. This may be because it is popular with supervisors due to being simple and easy to use. (Edwards, 2005). This instrument requires an evaluator to indicate the degree to which an employee demonstrates a particular trait, behavior, or performance result. (HR Management website, 2011) This type of assessment tool usually rates each employee characteristic as poor, fair, average, good, or excellent. Another variation may be needs improvement, below expectation, meets expectation, exceeds expectation, or exceptional. Each of these ratings usually has a corresponding number value (i.e., poor = 1, fair = 2, etc.). Therefore, 1s and 2s are below average and must be corrected immediately; 4s and 5s are above average and the supervisor must be able to justify these ratings. Therefore, 3s (good or meets expectation) is the most common rating since there is no justification needed. The greatest advantage of this rating system is that it is structured and standardized. It is also easy to develop and has a relatively low development and usage cost, as well as a reasonably high rater and rate acceptance. (HR Management website, 2011)

According to the HR Management website, rating scales should have the following characteristics to be considered acceptable:

1. Performance dimensions should be clearly defined.
2. Scales should be behaviorally based allowing the rater to be able to support all ratings with objective, observable evidence.
3. Avoid abstract trait names i.e., “loyalty”, “honesty”, and “integrity” unless they can be defined in terms of observable behaviors.
4. Points on each scaled dimension should be brief, unambiguous, and relevant to the dimension being rated.

In the Essay Method, the supervisor will prepare a written statement about the employee that describes specific strengths and weaknesses in job performance and perhaps suggest ways to improve in the identified problem areas. An advantage of this method is that it is much less structured than the rating scale method. The supervisor is free to express himself, which becomes a very open-ended and flexible process.

Disadvantages of this rating system are that it lacks standardization, can be time-consuming, difficult to administer, and more demanding. It may also be very subjective. (Archer North, 2011).

360-Degree Feedback appraisals allow for input from several sources. During the appraisal period, employees with whom the evaluated employee has daily contact would complete appraisals for that employee, regardless of rank. For example, his captain, fellow shift officers and several fire fighters that he has daily contact with would evaluate a lieutenant.

This type of system can be tailored to suit the needs of the department. As an example, smaller departments may want to consider having the entire department evaluate chiefs and other officers, whereas larger departments may need to keep the appraisals on a shift or battalion level.

The real key to 360-degree feedback is anonymity. This may be best accomplished by using a computer entered simple checkbox appraisal form. This gives the added benefit of receiving appraisals from all around the employee, not just from his immediate supervisor. Employees may find the process fairer than traditional appraisals with the feeling that their opinions do matter.

The 360-degree appraisal is not a perfect system. Certain questions such as: What will these appraisals be used for? Will they be used for probationary employees? Will they be used for promotional purposes? Will they be used for employee self-improvement? These questions must be answered before an organization attempts to implement this system. Another question that should be addressed is whether this system is best suited for personal development as opposed to promotional or financial purposes. (Swinhart, 2008)

“Management by Objectives is a system that features an agreement between the supervisor and the employee on the objectives for a particular period and a review of how well the objectives were achieved”, (Edwards 2005, p.151). Once an objective has been agreed upon, the employee will usually perform a self-audit to help them identify the skills needed to achieve the objective (Archer North, 2011). In addition, this appraisal system incorporates the SMART format. SMART is an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time specific:

Specific – The performance objective needs to specify clearly defined expected results.

Measurable – The performance objective should specify how to measure success (i.e., provide a verifiable standard for evaluation).

Achievable – The performance objective should be within your control and not overly dependent on outside factors. You should be rated only on work for which you are responsible.

Relevant – The performance objective should have a direct and obvious link to your job, the manager’s objectives, the work unit’s goals, and to important organizational goals. It should

be job-specific and focus on work important to the organization's success. You can ensure this linkage by including a "source" in your performance objective.

Time specific – The performance objective should specify a timeframe associated with production of the products or service. Such timeframes help clarify performance expectations and ensure the work is done in a timely manner. Timeframes can be within a certain period of time or by a certain date and must be within the performance cycle. (DCIPS, 2009).

Appraising employees is a largely subjective process and is therefore vulnerable to unintentional biases and errors. Some examples of these are:

Leniency or Severity – This is where a supervisor will tend to rate subordinates either higher or lower than their actual work performance. Leniency reduces conflict because a positive appraisal is likely to make it a more pleasant experience and avoids confrontation.

Some supervisors tend to lean in the opposite direction and rate all their employees with "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory." Some supervisors think that this will motivate their subordinates to work harder. This may be due to a lack of training in preparing performance appraisals with newer supervisors.

Personal Bias – This is an appraisal error that happens when the supervisor's perspective skews the appraisal in a way that the classified job knowledge, skills, and abilities are not appropriately evaluated. Supervisors must not let an appraisal be slanted by race, color, religion, gender, age, or disability.

Recency – The subordinate is evaluated only on incidents that occurred in the last few weeks rather than on all of the events that occurred throughout the appraisal period in this

appraisal error. This method tends to make subordinates tend to be on their best behavior in the weeks leading up to their appraisal.

Central Tendency – This occurs when a supervisor tends to rate a subordinate in the middle of the range of a rating scale for all dimensions of work performance. This type of appraisal provides little value to the subordinate or the appraisal process.

Frame of Reference – In this appraisal error, the subordinate is evaluated based on the supervisor's personal ideals rather than the established classified job standards.

Halo and Horn Effect – This is where a supervisor may only concentrate on one aspect of a subordinate's performance, which may be exceptionally good or bad, and apply that perception across the board to all areas of their work performance.

Contrast Effect – This appraisal error may occur when the supervisor compares the performance of one subordinate with the performance of another subordinate instead of against the established classified job standards. (NFPA, 2010)

Once a decision is made on what the performance standards for each identified position will be and what type(s) of appraisal system(s) will be used by the organization, all supervisors will need to receive training on how to understand and properly implement the selected performance appraisal system.

The literature review was helpful in identifying the types of appraisal systems that were being used in the private sector as well as the public sector. It also made it abundantly clear that just changing the type of form used would not make a successful performance appraisal system. The literature also suggested that a combination of appraisal system types might be more beneficial to the individual as well as the organization since it would give a more global view of the employee relative to the needs of the organization.

In order to ensure objectivity, the appraisal form(s) should be developed using a set of standards that measure job performance against department job descriptions, policies and procedures. These measurements would then be used to gauge what type of raise or incentive an employee would receive based on predetermined criteria.

Since lack of training was identified as one of the biggest concerns among supervisors, training would be required to assist supervisors in understanding the pros and cons of the different assessment tools as well as how to identify and prevent unintentional biases and errors. This training should help to reduce the stress felt by supervisors while at the same time increasing their proficiency in the appraisal process. Through this process, performance appraisals should become more accurate and personnel feedback should be more realistic regarding their performance. This should then encourage personnel to correct, improve, or stay-the-course with their individual performance in their job classification.

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this research project was to create a new employee performance management system at Clearcreek Fire District that would satisfy the requirements of Ohio Senate Bill 5. This system will need to obtain the information required to properly evaluate and reward employee performance.

The procedures used in this research project consisted of extensive literature review to obtain the most recent information regarding the types of performance appraisals being used today. Research of both public and private sector organizations was attempted to get a more balanced perspective on this issue. This information was gathered using the Internet; published books, articles, and reports; a review of performance appraisals from CCFD and other organizations; and questionnaires.

An inter-department survey was conducted as well as surveying other fire departments in and around Warren County. The purpose of the internal survey was to find out if the members were satisfied with the current system and if not, which type of system they would most likely support. The purpose of the external survey was to find out what type of, if any, performance appraisal system was being used as well as if the members were satisfied with that system. The external survey also asked which type of system those members would most likely support.

Examples of research conducted by others were used to develop survey instruments to gather the information needed to answer the following research questions:

1. What criteria are required for an effective appraisal process?
2. What are the resources needed to develop and implement a performance review system?
3. How will the job specific performance guidelines and rating system be developed?
4. How will the new system be implemented by the organization?

The survey was distributed to three target audiences:

The first survey, “Clearcreek Fire District Firefighter Performance Appraisal Survey” (Appendix 1), was distributed via email to sixty career and part-time fire fighters of the Clearcreek Fire District. This group was chosen to gather information regarding their opinion of the current performance appraisal system as well as to get their thoughts on how the process could be improved.

The second survey, “Clearcreek Fire District Officers Performance Appraisal Survey”, (Appendix 2), was distributed via email to sixteen Clearcreek Fire District Officers. This group was chosen to get their perspective as supervisors regarding their use of the current performance appraisal system and to solicit information on how it might be improved.

The third survey, “Warren County and Surrounding Counties Fire Department Survey”, (Appendix 3), was distributed via email to nine Warren County and surrounding County fire departments fire chiefs, representing approximately 275 personnel. These chiefs were asked to forward the survey to their personnel. This group was chosen to gain a perspective of the performance appraisal systems currently being used by other departments in the area.

Definition of Terms

360-Degree Feedback. Performance-appraisal data collected from 'all around' an employee; his or her peers, subordinates, supervisors, and sometimes, from internal and external customers. Its main objective usually is to assess training and development needs and to provide competence-related information for succession planning, not promotion or pay increase. Also called multi-rater assessment, multi-source assessment, or multi-source feedback.

(Businessdirectory.com, 01 June 2012)

Criterion. A standard of judgment or criticism; a rule or principle for evaluating or testing something. (Dictionary.com Unabridged, 01 June 2012)

Essay Appraisal Method. The essay method involves an evaluator's written report appraising an employee's performance, usually in terms of job behaviors and/or results. The subject of an essay appraisal is often justification of pay, promotion, or termination decisions, but essays can be used for developmental purposes as well. (Explorehr.org, 01 June 2012)

Graphic Rating Scale. A technique for evaluating the performance of an employee that can be used as part of the formal appraisal process. It involves listing the desirable traits that the jobholder should possess (e.g. integrity, drive, reliability, etc.) and rating (on a 5–7 point scale) each employee for each of these traits. These trait scores can then be aggregated into overall performance scores. (Encyclopedia.com, 01 June 2012)

Management by Objectives. Management by objectives (MBO) is a process of defining objectives within an organization so that management and employees agree to the objectives and understand what they need to do in the organization. (Wikipedia.org, 01 June 2012)

Limitations of the Study

In November 2011 the voters in the State of Ohio took a referendum vote and defeated the law created in Senate Bill 5 through State Issue 2. Therefore, this ARP was refocused to determine if merit pay is considered beneficial to Ohio firefighters and their organizations.

The availability of research material regarding performance evaluations and/or merit-based pay in the Fire Service seems to be very limited. The majority of the literature review was from the private sector.

There was also no way to verify if the external fire department survey actually reached all the intended targeted personnel since the surveys were sent to the fire chiefs with the intent that they would forward them to all their personnel.

RESULTS

The results of this research project were compiled from information gathered from extensive literature review, survey instruments distributed to internal CCFD Firefighters and Officers, as well as survey instruments that were distributed to external fire department personnel in surrounding communities.

Sixty internal firefighter surveys were distributed via email. Of those, twenty-eight were viewed, eighteen were started, and sixteen were completed. (See Table 1.1)

Sixteen internal fire officer surveys were distributed via email. Of those, twelve were viewed, eleven were started, and ten were completed. (See Table 1.2)

External surveys were distributed to nine area department chiefs via email, with the understanding that they would forward them to all their firefighting personnel. This would amount to approximately 275 total personnel. Of those, forty were viewed, twenty-four were started, and eighteen were completed. (See Table 1.3)

There is no evidence that the results of any of the completed surveys were tainted.

This information was used to answer the following questions: What criteria are required for an effective appraisal process? What are the resources needed to develop and implement a performance review system? How will the job specific performance guidelines and rating system be developed? How will the new system be implemented by the organization?

In answering question one: “What criteria are required for an effective appraisal process?”, (Delpo, 2007) said it is the responsibility of the organization to set job-related goals and standards for each employee’s performance, regularly observe and document their performance as they relate to these goals and standards, meet with the employees periodically to discuss their performance and perhaps redefine their goals, and then conduct their annual formal performance appraisal.

According to (Kirkpatrick, 2006), “In order to get improved performance from appraisal and coaching, a continuous process is necessary.” This would start with clarifying what is expected of the employee, followed by appraising performance and discussing the results in personal interviews. Once the interview is completed, then it would be time to develop a performance improvement plan. This process would be repeated on a time schedule (quarterly, semi-annually, annually) with an emphasis on on-the-job coaching in between appraisals.

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents agreed that a performance appraisal system should objectively measure all dimensions from the job description for each classification of employee. Supervisors also believed that a revised performance appraisal form that included knowledge, skills and abilities from the firefighter/officer job description would assist them in performing a more accurate and detailed performance appraisal.

To answer question two: “What are the resources needed to develop and implement a performance review system?”, (Hosea, 2004) says to be as objective and consistent as possible in the appraisal process, the appraisal form or instrument created by an agency should be one that could be used for all employees of the same job category. After the instrument has been designed, training will be required on how to administer it. Additionally, (Crawford, 2003) advised that inexperienced and untrained evaluators lead to errors. In the fire service, an inexperienced evaluator is usually a result of personnel simply not receiving the proper training for assessing the criteria in an appraisal.

The survey results revealed that initial training, as well as occasional continuing education, should be conducted for supervisors to develop their performance appraisal skills. One of the goals of this training would be to encourage consistency among supervisors.

When answering question three: “How will the job specific performance guidelines and rating system be developed?”, (Hosea, 2004) identifies that to be as objective and consistent as possible in the appraisal process, the appraisal form or instrument created by an agency should be one that could be used for all employees of the same job category. (Edwards, 2005) says that in order to have an effective performance appraisal system program, it is essential that the evaluators and those being evaluated be well aware of the different elements of the system and how they are to be implemented in the context of the department.

According to (Hosea, 2004) there have been some court decisions that emphasized appraisals should be measured against any preexisting standards, objectives, or other specific job requirements; they should include identifiable criteria that are quantifiable; they cannot be solely based on a supervisor’s observations; and supportive evidence must be documented. Employees want to and should know how well they are doing their job and it is the manager’s responsibility to tell them. Therefore, the manager must evaluate their performance and communicate the results of the appraisal to them. This should be a regular and ongoing process. Supervisors should be consistently communicating this information and not waiting until the annual appraisal interview to do it. (Kirkpatrick, 2006).

The results of the survey instruments were used to answer question four: “How will the new system be implemented by the organization?” The system currently in use was mandated by the Assistant Administrator and is a generic appraisal form that is used for all Clearcreek Township personnel. No training on these forms and/or the appraisal system has ever been offered to supervisors. Therefore, each supervisor had only his or her previous experience or perhaps coaching from another supervisor to guide him or her.

When observing the results of the external fire department survey, it was noted that most organizations do not have written policies or guidelines on how and when performance appraisals are to be conducted. They also have had no formal performance appraisal training program in place and the majority has had no performance appraisal training in their department at all.

It was also noted that the majority of departments do not establish or determine the criteria used for the evaluation of personnel. However, most departments use job descriptions as part of their system. Most departments use some type of graphic rating scale system that was developed internally. The results were split evenly across the respondents (Yes, No, Unsure) when asked if a representation of department members was involved in the development of their performance appraisal system.

The new Clearcreek Fire district Appraisal System shall be implemented through both external and internal training (initial and supplemental); creating new policies/procedures and/or updating current policies/procedures; creating new appraisal forms for each job classification; starting a QA/QI (peer review) process to ensure objectiveness and consistency.

Table 1.1

Clearcreek Fire District

Firefighter Performance Appraisal Survey Results

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	A performance appraisal should be conducted on each employee.	5 33.33%	9 60%	1 6.67%	0	0
2	A performance appraisal should benefit the employee by providing him/her with feedback and be a positive experience for career growth.	6 42.86%	8 57.14%	0	0	0
3	A performance appraisal should provide the employee with goals for his/her career planning and development.	5 33.33%	9 60%	0	1 6.67%	0
		Every 3 Months	Every 6 Months	Every 12 Months	Every 24 Months	Other
4	How often should performance appraisals be administered?	1 6.67%	1 6.67%	12 80%	1 6.67%	0
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	Each employee should receive a self-evaluation form for completion prior to the formal performance appraisal and review with their supervisor.	2 13.33%	6 40%	4 26.67%	3 20%	0
6	Employees should benefit from peer reviews as a part of the performance appraisal process.	1 6.67%	11 73.33%	1 6.67%	1 6.67%	1 6.67%
7	A performance appraisal system should objectively measure all dimensions from the job description for each classification of employee.	5 33.33%	10 66.67%	0	0	0

		3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	Other	
8	Feedback should be given to the employee every:	1 6.67%	10 66.67%	4 26.67%	0	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9	The current performance appraisal process clearly defines the criteria by which I am evaluated.	0	9 60%	3 20%	2 13.33%	1 6.67%
10	I am satisfied that our current performance appraisal form and process accurately measures employee performance.	0	8 53.33%	1 6.67%	4 26.67%	2 13.33%
11	In the past, my performance has been accurately reflected by performance appraisals.	0	10 66.67%	1 6.67%	3 20%	1 6.67%
12	The performance appraisal currently used effectively evaluates my performance-based on my position's job description.	0	10 66.67%	1 6.67%	2 13.33%	2 13.33%
13	Currently, the individual(s) performing the appraisal(s) is/are more subjective (opinion) than objective (performance based).	2 13.33%	7 46.67%	4 26.67%	2 13.33%	0
14	14. My supervisor rates all employees "average" rather than low or high to prevent controversy among employees.	1 6.67%	9 60%	4 26.67%	1 6.67%	0
15	My performance appraisal would be similar if my evaluation was done by a supervisor from another shift (evaluations are consistent among all supervisors).	0	4 26.67%	5 33.33%	5 33.33%	1 6.67%
16	The performance appraisal is an important tool to assist in my professional development.	1 6.67%	13 86.67%	0	1 6.67%	0
17	Physical fitness and proficiency testing should become part of the performance appraisal process.	2 13.33%	9 60%	1 6.67%	3 20%	0

18	If completed properly, pay raises should be associated with performance appraisals (Merit Pay).	1 6.67%	5 33.33%	4 26.67%	4 26.67%	1 6.67%
19	If completed properly, non-monetary incentives (i.e., station/truck assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) should be associated with performance appraisals.	2 13.33%	10 66.67%	1 6.67%	2 13.33%	0
20	In addition to contract language and applicable laws, promotions should be associated with performance appraisals.	4 26.67%	7 46.67%	2 13.33%	2 13.33%	0
21	How long have you been in the fire service?	0-6 Months 0	6-12 Months 0	1-5 Years 5 33.33%	6-10 Years 6 40%	11-15 Years 3 20%
		16-20 Years 0	21-25 Years 1 6.67%	25+ Years 0		

Table 1.2

Clearcreek Fire District						
Fire Officer Performance Appraisal Survey Results						
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	A performance appraisal should benefit the employee by providing him/her with feedback and be a positive experience for career growth.	6 60%	4 40%	0	0	0
2	A performance appraisal should provide the employee with goals for his/her career planning and development.	4 40%	6 60%	0	0	0
		Every 3 Months	Every 6 Months	Every 12 Months	Every 24 Months	Other
3	How often should performance appraisals be administered?	0	2 20%	7 70%	0	1 10%
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	Each employee should receive a self-evaluation form for completion prior to the formal performance appraisal and review with their supervisor.	1 10%	7 70%	1 10%	1 10%	0
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	Do you believe that the current performance appraisal form is accurate in evaluating the skills, knowledge, and abilities of firefighters and officers?	0	4 40%	2 20%	4 40%	0
		Yes	No			
6	Do you believe that a more detailed and accurate performance appraisal form that included actual firefighter/officer job activities including knowledge, skills and abilities would assist you in performing a more objective performance appraisal?	8 80%	2 20%			

	Yes	No
7		
As a supervisor, do you believe the current performance appraisal system is useful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of those you are evaluating?	8 80%	2 20%

	Yes	No
8		
As a supervisor, do you believe effective and accurate performance appraisals are important in developing effective firefighters/officers?	9 90%	1 10%

	Yes	No
9		
Do you believe a more detailed and accurate performance appraisal that included actual firefighter/officer job activities and technical skills would improve performance?	9 90%	1 10%

	Yes	No
10		
Do you believe a revised performance appraisal form that included knowledge, skills and abilities from the firefighter/officer job description would assist you in performing a more accurate and detailed performance appraisal?	8 80%	2 20%

	Yes	No
11		
Have you, as a supervisor, ever had any formal (classroom environment) training or instruction on how to properly perform a performance appraisal?	5 50%	5 50%

	Yes	No
12		
Have you, as a supervisor, ever had any formal (classroom environment) training or instruction on how to properly complete the current performance appraisal form?	0	10 100%

		Yes	No			
13	Do you believe you, as well as the organization, would benefit from a formal performance appraisal training program?	9 90%	1 10%			
		Annually	Every 2 Years	Every 3 Years	Other	
14	15. Once all supervisors have received this initial training, how often should such a class be given so that they can keep up on current trends regarding performance appraisals?	2 20%	3 30%	2 20%	3 30%	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	Would you agree that employees would benefit from peer reviews as a part of the performance appraisal process?	2 20%	6 60%	2 20%	0	0
		3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	Other	
16	Feedback should be given to the employee every:	0	4 40%	3 30%	3 30%	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17	The current performance appraisal process clearly defines the criteria by which I am evaluated.	0	7 70%	0	3 30%	0
18	I am satisfied that our current performance appraisal form and process accurately measures employee performance.	0	5 50%	2 20%	3 30%	0
		Yes	No			
19	Do you think the current performance appraisal system would be more meaningful to the employee and effective at improving performance, if rewards (i.e., station/truck assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) were provided when ratings are above or well above expectations?	4 40%	6 60%			

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20	Pay raises should be associated with performance appraisals (Merit Pay).	0	5 50%	0	2 20%	3 30%
21	Non-monetary incentives (i.e., station/truck assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) should be associated with performance appraisals.	0	5 50%	2 20%	3 30%	0
22	In addition to contract language and applicable laws, promotions should be associated with performance appraisals.	0	7 70%	3 30%	0	0
23	How long have you been in the fire service?	0-6 Months 0	6-12 Months 0	1-5 Years 0	6-10 Years 0	11-15 Years 5 50%
		16-20 Years 3 30%	21-25 Years 2 20%	25+ Years 0		

Table 1.3

External Fire Department							
Performance Appraisal Survey Results							
		Career	Volunteer/ Part-time	Combination			
1	Which of the following best describes your department?	4 26.67%	1 6.67%	10 66.67%			
2	What is the population of the area your department serves?	10,000 & Below 1 6.67%	10,001-25,000 6 40%	25,001-50,000 6 40%	50,001-75,000 2 13.33%	75,001-100,000 0	
3	What is the number of Fire / EMS personnel in your department?	0-25 0	26-50 3 21.43%	51-75 2 14.29%	76-100 7 50%	101+ 2 14.29%	
4	How long have you been in the fire service?	0-3 Months 0	3-6 Months 0	6-12 Months 0	1-5 Years 1 6.67%	6-10 Years 1 6.67%	
		11-15 Years 3 20%	16-20 Years 1 6.67%	21-25 Years 3 20%	25+ Years 6 40%		
5	What is your current rank / classification?	Firefighter/EMT 1 6.67%	Firefighter/Medic 2 13.33%	Lieutenant 4 26.67%	Captain 2 13.33%	Batt. Chief 1 6.67%	Chief 5 33.34%
6	Does your department work under a collective bargaining agreement?	Yes 15 100%	No 0				
7	Does your department conduct performance appraisals on each of your employees?	Yes 6 40%	No 9 60%				
8	If so, how often are they performed?	Monthly 0	Quarterly 0	Semi-Annually 0	Annually 4 40%	Other 6 60% None or N/A	
9	How long has the current performance appraisal system been in use by your department?	0-5 Years 3 27.27%	6-10 Years 2 18.18%	10+ Years 1 9.09%	Other 5 45.45% N/A		

10	Is firefighter pay tied to the performance appraisal process?	Yes 1 6.67%	No 14 93.33%	Unsure 0
11	Are any non-monetary incentives (i.e., station/apparatus assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) tied to the performance appraisal process?	Yes 1 6.67%	No 13 86.67%	Unsure 1 6.67%
12	If so, what information is used to determine whether an employee will receive a raise or non-monetary incentive as well as how much the raise/incentive will be?	Career 0	Part-Time 2 11.11% Bonuses for exceptional job performance	
13	Are promotions tied to the performance appraisal process?	Yes 1 6.67%	No 11 73.33%	Unsure 3 20%
14	If so, what information contained within the performance appraisal is used to assist in determining whether an employee will receive a promotion?	1 1 5.56% It is one of many things considered during promotional processes.	2 17 94.44% N/A	
15	Are performance appraisal results used to help determine employee education and training needs?	Yes 3 20%	No 12 80%	Unsure 0
16	Who is responsible for conducting employee performance appraisals?	Supervisor 6 33.33%	N/A 2 11.11%	No Answer 10 55.56%

		Yes	No	Unsure		
17	Does your department have written policies or guidelines on how and when performance appraisals are to be conducted?	5 33.33%	7 46.67%	3 20%		
		Yes	No	Unsure		
18	Is there some type of formal performance appraisal training program in place at your department?	3 20%	11 73.33%	1 6.67%		
		1	2	3	4	
19	If yes, please describe what type of program your department is using in the space provided below:	Military System	N/A	Limited introductory training for new supervisors	Unknown	
		Yes	No	Other		
20	And if so, does the training include how to conduct actions such as coaching, counseling, remediation, rewards, discipline, or performance improvement plans?	2 16.67%	10 83.33%	0		
		Never	Initial only	Annually	Biannually	Other
21	How often is performance appraisal training conducted in your department?	6 40%	4 26.67%	1 6.67%	0	4 26.67% Not done in 3+ years, As warranted, When the Chief decides it's time, Quarterly
		Yes	No	Unsure		
22	Does your department establish/determine the criteria used for the evaluation of personnel?	3 21.43%	8 57.14%	3 21.43%		
		Yes	No	Unsure		
23	Does your department use job descriptions as part of the performance appraisal system?	6 42.86%	5 35.71%	3 21.43%		

	Yes	No	Unsure
24	9	3	1
Does your department's performance appraisal process give the employee an opportunity to put his/her comments on the appraisal form?	69.23%	23.08%	7.69%

	Rate	Rank	MBO	360-Degree
25	5	0	1	0
What type(s) of performance appraisal instrument(s) is/are being used by your department? (Select all that apply)	41.67%		8.33%	
	Self Assessment	Essay	Other	
	1	2	3	
	8.33%	16.67%	25%	None, N/A

	Yes	No	Unsure
26	2	4	7
Do all departments (police, road, parks, etc.) under your governing body use the same performance appraisal form?	15.38%	30.77%	53.85%

	Department Developed	Acquired from another Department	Purchased by Department	Developed/ Purchased by H.R.	Other
27	4	0	0	0	6
How was your current appraisal system developed?	40%				60%
					Generic Form, Unknown, None, N/A, City Hall form

	Yes	No	Unsure
28	3	3	3
If your performance appraisal system was developed by your department, was a representation of department members involved in the development?	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%

	Yes	No
29 Do you consider the time and effort put into the performance appraisal process to be beneficial to the employees and the organization?	11 84.62%	2 15.38%

DISCUSSION

This research project was selected because the Ohio Legislature had recently passed SB5, part of which would have required public sector organizations to institute merit-based pay for their employees. Since the vast majority of career and combination fire departments in the state, including Clearcreek, did not have merit pay systems in place, this would have required a change in our performance appraisal system.

The research conducted confirmed the idea that the current performance appraisal system being used at Clearcreek Fire District is not suitable to use as a tool to determine merit-based pay for its firefighters and officers. According to (Hosea, 2004), to be as objective and consistent as possible in the appraisal process, the appraisal form or instrument created by an agency should be one that could be used for all employees of the same job category.

The research confirmed that a majority of those surveyed had not received any training in conducting performance appraisals or that the training was inadequate. According to (Crawford, 2003), inexperienced and untrained evaluators lead to errors. They also had not received any training on the appraisal form itself. (Edwards, 2005) states: In order to have an effective performance appraisal system program, it is essential that the evaluators and those being evaluated be well aware of the different elements of the system and how they are to be implemented in the context of the department. Lack of training was, by far, the greatest concern of those supervisors surveyed: 100% of CCFD officers have not received any formal training on how to properly complete the current performance appraisal form and 90% of them believe they and the organization would benefit from a formal performance appraisal training program. 73% of external fire department respondents surveyed said there is no type of formal performance appraisal training program in place at their departments.

The majority of those surveyed believe that job descriptions should be used as part of the performance appraisal process: CCFD Firefighters – 67%; CCFD Officers – 90%. According to (Hosea, 2004) there have been some court decisions that emphasized appraisals should be measured against any preexisting standards, objectives, or other specific job requirements; they should include identifiable criteria that are quantifiable; they cannot be solely based on a supervisor's observations; and supportive evidence must be documented.

The information obtained through this research process has shown that there is not much literature available regarding performance appraisal systems that address merit-based pay in the public sector. The research was, however, helpful in answering the listed research questions.

Transitioning from the current performance appraisal system to one that is performance-based will definitely be challenging for the Clearcreek Fire District. The easiest thing to do would be to continue what we are doing now because that is what we are accustomed to and firefighters are known to be resistant to change. However, I do not believe this would benefit the employees or the organization.

A performance-based appraisal system, once implemented, should have positive effects on the organization because employees should be more highly motivated to achieve the highest scores possible.

Employees should be able to better gauge how they measure up to the organization's standards through this process. They would also have the opportunity to excel by exceeding these standards and perhaps receive a better raise or some type of incentive based on their appraisal scores.

Supervisors would also tend to take their appraisal responsibilities more seriously since their scores would directly affect their subordinates' ability to earn a raise or other type of incentive. Proper training would be critical to ensure supervisors are evaluating personnel against

a set of standards rather than relying on their personal opinions. They would also need to ensure they stay away from any types of rating errors.

There will be a learning curve associated with the transition. However, once all personnel have had an opportunity to go through the process they should see the value associated with rewarding those personnel that go above and beyond the “normal” expectations of their particular job classification.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the research conducted, the following recommendations are being presented to address the problem that the current employee performance management system at Clearcreek Fire District is not structured to allow for determination of merit-based pay. The implementation of these recommendations should address the purpose of this applied research project, to identify and describe an employee performance management system that meets the needs of the organization and provides the criteria needed to determine merit-based pay.

The Clearcreek Fire District should establish a task force of personnel that includes members from all ranks within the department to evaluate the current performance appraisal system.

The research identified that the current appraisal form, although thorough within its individual elements, is not sufficient for evaluating firefighters due to their unique job expectations. Elements of job descriptions should be incorporated into the appraisal form itself. This will become even more important if the organization makes the transition to merit-based pay.

Personnel task force involvement in the development of the system should have the benefit of increasing the likelihood of it being accepted by the membership of the organization.

There should also be an evaluation of the current rating system in use. This system has supervisors rating personnel as exceptional, exceeds expectations, meets expectations, below expectations, and needs improvement. The goal of this evaluation would be to address any concerns identified in both the surveys conducted and the literature review process. The biggest concern identified was the tendency of supervisors to centralize their ratings throughout the performance appraisal in an effort to reduce or prevent conflict.

Consider incorporating additional appraisal systems (i.e., 360-Degree Feedback, Management by Objectives) to develop a more rounded and subjective performance appraisal system. Two of the problems identified in the literature review process as well as in the surveys were that appraisers tend to be more subjective and the incidence of rater errors is more common when using the Graphic Rating Scale system alone.

Once the system is developed, some type of formal training should be implemented for all personnel that will be conducting performance appraisals. Both the literature review and the survey process identified lack of training as a significant concern. Since Clearcreek Township has no formal human resources department, this training should be done by a credible outside agency.

It is recommended that a period of twelve months be utilized to plan for issues that relate to the policy development, financial impact and training that this system would require to be successful. See [Appendix 5](#) for the Clearcreek Fire District Personnel Performance Appraisals draft document. A similar document titled, “Stow Fire Department Performance Appraisal Program” was used as a template with the permission of the author (Metz, 2012).

As the statement of the problem indicated, the current employee performance management system at Clearcreek Fire District is not structured to allow for determination of merit-based pay. Based upon this research, the author believes that by implementing a merit-based employee performance management system, the CCFD can benefit in the areas of improved efficiency, effectiveness, supervision, and morale of the organization. The improvement in these elements will be a direct result of rewarding those personnel that excel which, in turn, should motivate others to do the same.

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APPENDIX 1 – CLEARCREEK TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTER**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SURVEY****Clearcreek Fire District****Firefighter Performance Appraisal Survey**

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by marking what you believe is the most correct answer.

1. A performance appraisal should be conducted on each employee.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

2. A performance appraisal should benefit the employee by providing him/her with feedback and be a positive experience for career growth.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

3. A performance appraisal should provide the employee with goals for his/her career planning and development.
 - Agree
 - Disagree

4. How often should performance appraisals be administered?
 - Every 3 months
 - Every 6 months
 - Every 12 months
 - Every 24 months
 - Other _____

5. Each employee should receive a self-evaluation form for completion prior to the formal performance appraisal and review with their supervisor.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

6. Employees should benefit from peer reviews as a part of the performance appraisal process.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

7. A performance appraisal system should objectively measure all dimensions from the job description for each classification of employee.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

8. Feedback should be given to the employee every:
 - 3 Months
 - 6 Months
 - 12 Months
 - Other _____

9. The current performance appraisal process clearly defines the criteria by which I am evaluated.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

10. I am satisfied that our current performance appraisal form and process accurately measures employee performance.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
11. In the past, my performance has been accurately reflected by performance appraisals.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
12. The performance appraisal currently used effectively evaluates my performance-based on my position's job description.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
13. Currently, the individual(s) performing the appraisal(s) is/are more subjective (opinion) than objective (performance based).
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
14. My supervisor rates all employees "average" rather than low or high to prevent controversy among employees.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

15. My performance appraisal would be similar if my evaluation was done by a supervisor from another shift (evaluations are consistent among all supervisors).
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
16. The performance appraisal is an important tool to assist in my professional development.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
17. Physical fitness and proficiency testing should become part of the performance appraisal process.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
18. If completed properly, pay raises should be associated with performance appraisals (Merit Pay).
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

19. If completed properly, non-monetary incentives (i.e., station/truck assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) should be associated with performance appraisals.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. In addition to contract language and applicable laws, promotions should be associated with performance appraisals.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

21. How long have you been in the fire service?

- 0 – 6 months
- 6 – 12 months
- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- 16 – 20 years
- 21 – 25 years
- 25+ years

APPENDIX 2 – CLEARCREEK TOWNSHIP FIRE OFFICER**PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SURVEY****Clearcreek Fire District****Fire Officer Performance Appraisal Survey**

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by marking what you believe is the most correct answer.

1. A performance appraisal should benefit the employee by providing him/her with feedback and be a positive experience for career growth.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

2. A performance appraisal should provide the employee with goals for his/her career planning and development.
 - Agree
 - Disagree

3. How often should performance appraisals be administered?
 - Every 3 months
 - Every 6 months
 - Every 12 months
 - Every 24 months
 - Other _____

4. Each employee should receive a self-evaluation form for completion prior to the formal performance appraisal and review with their supervisor.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

5. Do you believe that the current performance appraisal form is accurate in evaluating the skills, knowledge, and abilities of firefighters and officers?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

6. Do you believe that a more detailed and accurate performance appraisal form that included actual firefighter/officer job activities including knowledge, skills and abilities would assist you in performing a more objective performance appraisal?
 - Yes
 - No

7. As a supervisor, do you believe the current performance appraisal system is useful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of those you are evaluating?
 - Yes
 - No

8. As a supervisor, do you believe effective and accurate performance appraisals are important in developing effective firefighters/officers?
 - Yes
 - No

9. Do you believe a more detailed and accurate performance appraisal that included actual firefighter/officer job activities and technical skills would improve performance?
 - Yes
 - No

10. Do you believe a revised performance appraisal form that included knowledge, skills and abilities from the firefighter/officer job description would assist you in performing a more accurate and detailed performance appraisal?
- Yes
 - No
11. Have you, as a supervisor, ever had any formal (classroom environment) training or instruction on how to properly perform a performance appraisal?
- Yes
 - No
12. Have you, as a supervisor, ever had any formal (classroom environment) training or instruction on how to properly complete the current performance appraisal form?
- Yes
 - No
13. Do you believe you, as well as the organization, would benefit from a formal performance appraisal training program?
- Yes
 - No
14. If not, why? _____
15. Once all supervisors have received this initial training, how often should such a class be given so that they can keep up on current trends regarding performance appraisals?
- Annually
 - Every two years
 - Every three years
 - Other _____
16. Would you agree that employees would benefit from peer reviews as a part of the performance appraisal process?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Unsure
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

17. Feedback should be given to the employee every:

- 3 Months
- 6 Months
- 12 Months
- Other _____

18. The current performance appraisal process clearly defines the criteria by which I am evaluated.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. I am satisfied that our current performance appraisal form and process accurately measures employee performance.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

20. Do you think the current performance appraisal system would be more meaningful to the employee and effective at improving performance, if rewards (i.e., station/truck assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) were provided when ratings are above or well above expectations?

- Yes
- No

21. Pay raises should be associated with performance appraisals (Merit Pay).

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

22. Non-monetary incentives (i.e., station/truck assignments, awards/recognition, additional paid time off, etc.) should be associated with performance appraisals.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

23. In addition to contract language and applicable laws, promotions should be associated with performance appraisals.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

24. How long have you been in the fire service?

- 0 – 6 months
- 6 – 12 months
- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- 16 – 20 years
- 21 – 25 years
- 25+ years

25. What is your current rank/classification? _____

APPENDIX 3 – EXTERNAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE**APPRAISAL SURVEY****Employee Performance Appraisal Questionnaire**

My name is Dan Swords. I am a Lieutenant with Clearcreek Fire District in Warren County. As part of the Ohio Fire Executive Program I am completing an Applied Research Project. Part of my research consists of collecting data from members of fire departments to find out what type of performance appraisal is used at their department. Please read each question and mark the most correct response. Thank you for your valuable time and input.

1. Which of the following best describes your department?
 - Career
 - Volunteer/Part-time
 - Combination

2. What is the population of the area your department serves?
 - 10,000 and below
 - 10,001 – 25,000
 - 25,001 – 50,000
 - 50,001 – 75,000
 - 75,001 – 100,000
 - Over 100,000

3. What is the number of fire/EMS personnel in your department? _____

4. How long have you been in the fire service?
- 0 – 3 months
 - 3 – 6 months
 - 6 – 12 months
 - 1 – 5 years
 - 6 – 10 years
 - 11 – 15 years
 - 16 – 20 years
 - 21 – 25 years
 - 25+ years
5. What is your current rank/classification? _____
6. Does your department work under a collective bargaining agreement?
- Yes
 - No
7. Does your department conduct performance appraisals on each of your employees?
- Yes
 - No
8. If so, how often are they performed?
- Monthly
 - Quarterly
 - Semi-Annually
 - Annually
 - Other (Please specify) _____

9. How long has the current performance appraisal system been in use by your department?
- 0-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 10+ years
 - Other (Please specify) _____
10. Is firefighter pay tied to the performance appraisal process (Merit-based pay system)?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
11. Are any non-monetary incentives tied to the performance appraisal process?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
12. If so, what information is used to determine whether an employee will receive a raise or non-monetary incentive as well as how much the raise/incentive will be?
-
-
-
-
13. Are promotions tied to the performance appraisal process?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

14. If so, what information contained within the performance appraisal is used to assist in determining whether an employee will receive a promotion?

15. Are performance appraisal results used to help determine employee education and training needs?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

16. Who is responsible for conducting employee performance appraisals?

17. Does your department have written policies or guidelines on how and when performance appraisals are to be conducted?

- Yes
- No

18. Is there some type of formal performance appraisal training program in place at your department?

- Yes
- No

19. If yes, please describe what type of program your department is using in the space below:

20. And if so, does the training include how to conduct actions such as coaching, counseling, remediation, rewards, discipline, or performance improvement plans?

- Yes
- No
- Other (Please specify) _____

21. How often is performance appraisal training conducted in your department?

- Never
- Initial
- Annually
- Biannually
- Other (Please specify) _____

22. Does your department establish/determine the criteria used for the evaluation of personnel?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

23. Does your department use job descriptions as part of the performance appraisal system?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
24. Does your department's performance appraisal process give the employee an opportunity to put his/her comments into the appraisal form?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
25. What type(s) of performance appraisal instrument(s) is/are being used by your department? Check all that apply.
- Rate (numerical, descriptive, graphic scale)
 - Rank (employee ranked against other employees)
 - MBO (Management by Objective – objectives set and reviewed for each member)
 - 360-Degree (multiple raters are used to rate each employee)
 - Employee Self Assessment
 - Essay (narrative format)
 - Other (Please specify) _____
26. Do all departments (police, road, parks, etc.) under your governing body use the same performance appraisal form?
- Yes
 - No

27. How was your current appraisal instrument developed?
- Department developed
 - Acquired from another department
 - Purchased by department
 - Developed/purchased by H.R.
 - Other (Please specify) _____
28. If your performance appraisal system was developed by your department, was a representation of department members involved in the development?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
29. Do you consider the time and effort put into the performance appraisal process to be beneficial to the employees and the organization?
- Yes
 - No
30. If not, why?
-

APPENDIX 4 – CLEARCREEK TOWNSHIP PERFORMANCE

APPRAISAL FORM



Clearcreek Township
Performance Appraisal

Employee Name:	Department: Fire
Title:	Hire Date:
Appraisal Period:	Date of Appraisal:

DEFINITION OF RATINGS

EXCEPTIONAL (5): Consistently meets and exceeds all relevant performance standards. Provides leadership, fosters teamwork, is highly productive, innovative, responsive and generates top-quality work. Active in university or educational, professional and/or community groups.

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS (4): Consistently meets and often exceeds all relevant performance standards. Shows initiative and versatility, works collaboratively, has strong technical and interpersonal skills or has achieved significant improvement in these areas.

MEETS EXPECTATIONS (3): Meets all relevant performance standards. May be used for someone new or in training if performance meets expectations of that level.

BELOW EXPECTATIONS (2): Sometimes meets the performance standards. Seldom exceeds and often falls short of the desired results. Performance has declined significantly, or employee has not sustained adequate improvement, as required, since the last performance review.

NEEDS IMPROVEMENTS (1): Consistently falls short of performance standards.

Describe the employee’s contributions and professional strengths or weaknesses in each of the eight (8) performance categories below

CRITERIA AND PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

QUALITY OF WORK (Manner in which the employee completes job assignments)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrates Competence In Required Job Skill And Knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Shows Accuracy, Clarity, Consistency And Thoroughness In Work	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Gives Feedback For Continuous Improvement Of Work Product	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Demonstrates Understanding And Mastery Of Process, Methods, Systems And Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Measures Decisions With The Department, Employees And Township’s Satisfaction In Mind	<input type="checkbox"/>					
		<input type="checkbox"/>				

Comments:

With Supervisors		<input type="checkbox"/>				
With The Community		<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gets Involved And Goes Beyond Their Assigned Role	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Demonstrates Effectiveness Of Expression In Individual Or Group Situation	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Commitment To The Township's Success	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Comments:

APPROACH TO WORK (Characteristics the employee demonstrates while performing job assignments)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Actively Seeks Ways To Streamline Processes	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Open to New Ideas And Approaches	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Planning And Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Flexible / Adaptable	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Follows Instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Seeks Additional Training And Development	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Comments

QUANTITY OF WORK (Employee's success in producing the required amount of work)	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Priority Setting	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Amount Of Work Completed	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Work Completed On Schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Comments:

Overall Performance Rating

<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Below Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds Expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceptional
Work performance is inadequate and inferior to the standards of performance required for the position. Performance at this level cannot be allowed to continue.	Work performance does not consistently meet the standards of performance for the position. Serious effort is needed to improve performance.	Work performance consistently meets the standards of performance for the position.	Work performance is consistently above the standard of performance for the position.	Work performance is consistently superior to the standards required for the job.

Comments:

Employee's Comments: _____

Employee's Signature

Date

Supervisor's Signature

Date

Comments: _____

Assistant Administrator / Safety Director Signature

Date

APPENDIX 5 – CLEARCREEK FIRE DISTRICT PERFORMANCE

APPRAISAL DRAFT POLICY

Clearcreek Fire District

General Operating Guideline 4.3

PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

ISSUE DATE: TBD EFFECTIVE DATE: TBD

ISSUED BY: Robert Kidd, Fire Chief

DISTRIBUTION: DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

4.3 Personnel Performance Appraisals

- A. The **purpose** of the Clearcreek Fire District Performance Appraisal System is to evaluate and discuss performance, establish goals and objectives, and guide the career development of our employees to achieve the greatest benefit for the employees, the organization, and the community we serve.
- B. At Clearcreek Fire District, it is our desire to provide an environment that encourages our employees to strive for and reach their full potential. To this end, we will endeavor to provide the tools and resources needed to be successful. As an organization, we want to encourage, accept and reward creative thinking and exceptional performance. It is our goal to provide employees with a fair and honest appraisal of their performance and to assist them in establishing and achieving their career goals through an objective based performance appraisal system.
- C. The performance appraisal form will be formatted to consist of the following six sections:
1. Performance Objectives

2. Additional Contributions
3. Performance Goals
4. Performance Planning
5. Comments
6. Signatures

D. The appraisal process will begin with the establishment of **Performance Objectives**. These objectives will be chosen by a representative committee of department members based on specific job descriptions, recognized standards and current fire service trends and literature. This segment of the performance appraisal will represent 80% of the employee's total appraisal score. Each of these objectives must meet the S.M.A.R.T. criteria:

1. **Specific**– The performance objective needs to specify clearly defined expected results.
2. **Measurable**– The performance objective should specify how to measure success (i.e., provide a verifiable standard for appraisal).
3. **Achievable**– The performance objective should be within your control and not overly dependent on outside factors. You should be rated only on work for which you are responsible.
4. **Relevant**– The performance objective should have a direct and obvious link to your job, the manager's objectives, the work unit's goals, and to important organizational goals. It should be job-specific and focus on work important to the organization's success. You can ensure this linkage by including a "source" in your performance objective.

5. **Time Specific**– The performance objective should specify a timeframe associated with benchmarks or expectations. Such timeframes help clarify performance expectations and ensure the work is done in a timely manner. Timeframes can be within a certain period of time or by a certain date and must be within the performance cycle.
- E. Once the objectives are established, a point value will be assigned and rating criteria will be determined for each objective. Some criteria will be rated by Achieved or Not Achieved. For example: criteria dealing with annual departmental skill proficiencies such as Fire Apparatus Operations (FAO) and Aerial Tower Operations (ATO) would fall into this category. This information will be tracked through the Training and Life Safety Services Captain and will be available through a request for a written report.
- F. Other objectives such as Training Attendance may be broken down into categories. For example: if this objective is worth a maximum of 3 points, a member would have to complete 90% or more to get all of the points. If the member completes 80-90% they would receive 2 points, and completion of 75-80% would get the member 1 point. Less than 75% completion would not be acceptable. Again, this information will be available through a request for a written report through the Training and Life Safety Services Captain.
- G. Disciplinary Actions should also be a part of this section. This section should reflect whether discipline was given, and to what degree, throughout the appraisal period. If disciplinary action is taken at any time throughout the appraisal period, the employee should lose points in this section. If none, then the employee will receive maximum credit.

- H. Each position within the department will have criteria that are applicable to their duties. Expectations for firefighters are different from those for Lieutenants and Captains and this should be reflected in the performance appraisal process.
- I. Officers will be evaluated not only on their personal performance, but the overall performance of their crew(s) or shift as well. Completion of reports, how well they handle problems, completing performance appraisals, turnout times, overall completion of training, and achievement of departmental proficiencies should be addressed in the officer appraisals. These same criteria will apply to Administrative staff, as well.
- J. The **Additional Contributions** section is designed to recognize employees for exceeding minimum expectations, regardless of rank. Twenty additional points will be achievable through this section. Their officers, other members, other township or city employees, or community members can recognize members for notable achievements. It is up to each supervisor to assign the point value for recognition. There are to be no point deductions in this section, only positive recognition. Categories, for example, may include areas such as:
- A. Outstanding Performance
 - B. Training / Career Development
 - C. Special Projects / Contributions
 - D. Community Involvement
 - E. Customer Service
 - F. Awards
- K. For example if an employee completes 100% of the annual training or successfully completes a Fire Officer Program, they would be eligible for additional points under the Training / Career Development category. A member singled out for exceptional

customer service would receive additional points under the Customer Service category. Members who are recognized for outstanding STEMI care, Annual EMS or Fire Fighter Award, or who perform a rescue would receive additional points under Outstanding Performance. Officers whose shift performs above expectations will be recognized as well.

- L. The **Performance Goals** section will require the employee to set two goals for the upcoming appraisal period. It will be mandatory that each member list two goals. The goals must meet the same criteria as the Performance Objectives. The goals, for example, may address career development goals such as completing a Fire Officer or Fire Inspector class or achieving a greater point total under the Performance Objective section by improving performance.
- M. The **Performance Planning** section should include a general plan along with a time schedule for achievement of the goals. This section is designed for the employee and their supervisor to work together for success. The employee needs to drive this portion with the support of their supervisor.
- N. The **Comments** section is just that. The employee, the supervisor, or both may add comments.
- O. The **Signature** section requires the employee and supervisor to each sign and date the appraisal.
- P. Once the appraisal forms are designed and approved, all supervisors and acting supervisors shall be trained. Each member will be given a copy of the form and rating criteria so that they can clearly understand what criteria will be used, and how it will be scored.

Q. The initial training shall be conducted by an approved outside resource and shall include the following:

1. How elements of individual job descriptions were included and how to rate personnel on the listed criteria.
2. A comprehensive overview of the types of rating systems listed below that shall be included in the document:
 - a. The **Graphic Rating Scale** is one of the oldest and most widely used assessment tools and is the system we are used to using. The greatest advantage of this rating system is that it is structured and standardized.
 - b. In the **Essay Method**, the supervisor will prepare a written statement about the employee that describes specific strengths and weaknesses in job performance and perhaps suggest ways to improve in the identified problem areas. This method will be appropriate in any comments areas located within the form.
 - c. **360-Degree Feedback** appraisals allow for input from several sources. During the appraisal period, employees with whom the evaluated employee has daily contact would complete appraisals for that employee, regardless of rank.
 - d. **Management by Objectives** is a system that features an agreement between the supervisor and the employee on the objectives for a particular period and a review of how well the objectives were achieved. Once an objective has been agreed upon, the employee will usually perform a self-audit to help them identify the skills needed to achieve the objective.

3. An explanation of the terms and definitions associated with common unintentional biases and rating errors that should be avoided, i.e:
 - a. **Leniency or Severity** – This is where a supervisor will tend to rate subordinates either higher or lower than their actual work performance. Leniency reduces conflict because a positive appraisal is likely to make it a more pleasant experience and avoids confrontation.
 - b. **Personal Bias** – This appraisal error happens when the supervisor’s perspective skews the appraisal in a way that the classified job knowledge, skills, and abilities are not appropriately evaluated.
 - c. **Recency** – The subordinate is evaluated only on incidents that occurred in the last few weeks rather than on all of the events that occurred throughout the appraisal period in this appraisal error. This method tends to make subordinates tend to be on their best behavior in the weeks leading up to their appraisal.
 - d. **Central Tendency** – This occurs when a supervisor tends to rate a subordinate in the middle of the range of a rating scale for all dimensions of work performance. This type of appraisal provides little value to the subordinate or the appraisal process.
 - e. **Frame of Reference** – In this appraisal error, the subordinate is evaluated based on the supervisor’s personal ideals rather than the established classified job standards.
 - f. **Halo and Horn Effect** – This is where a supervisor may only concentrate on one aspect of a subordinate’s performance, which may be exceptionally

good or bad, and apply that perception across the board to all areas of their work performance.

- g. **Contrast Effect** – this is an appraisal error that may occur when the supervisor compares the performance of one subordinate with the performance of another subordinate instead of against the established classified job standards.

- R. After the initial training is completed, all newly promoted officers and those acting officers eligible for promotion shall receive the initial training as needed. Additionally, all supervisors shall receive continuing education in performance appraisals at least every two years.
- S. The Performance Appraisal is a formal process. It requires that each supervisor document employee performance throughout the appraisal period. They should also be provided with the appropriate data to fairly and honestly evaluate each employee assigned to them. Each supervisor will complete the Performance Appraisal form, and set aside time to meet with each employee to discuss their Performance Appraisal, set goals and formulate a plan for success.
- T. This process is not a substitute for the day-to-day management of employees. Supervisors are expected to continually evaluate personnel and intervene in any situation that is detrimental to employee performance. This process is intended to provide a tool for evaluating performance and assisting in employee and organizational development. This process should yield no surprises to the employee and should never be used to demean or disgrace an employee.

