

Missouri Division of Fire Safety – Training and Certification Unit

Written by Kim Becker, Deputy Chief

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Missouri State Statute RSMo 320.202 states the State Fire Marshal and the Division of Fire Safety shall be responsible for “the voluntary training of firefighters, investigators, inspectors, and public or private employees or volunteers in the field of emergency response, rescue, fire prevention or preparedness and establishing and maintaining a voluntary training and certification program based upon nationally recognized standards.”

The Division of Fire Safety’s Training and Certification Unit serves as the state’s certification authority and establishes minimum curriculum requirements in accordance with NFPA Professional Qualification Standards. Through the Missouri Fire Safety Advisory Board and the Fire Education Commission, the Division’s Training and Certification Unit works closely with local government agencies, universities, colleges, academies and other training entities in the development and/or delivery of training programs which meet the specific certification requirements for first responder personnel.

Due to recent economic events and the elimination of state general revenue support for first responder training, the Division’s Training and Certification Unit evaluated various means for all departments in the state to train their personnel at either no cost or minimal cost to the local entity. Using existing staff and internal resources, the Division has been developing and providing curriculum since 1989 and we will continue to do so to meet the needs of Missouri’s fire service. Curriculum packages are available at no cost to departments with qualified instructors and include student manuals, practical skills and Powerpoint presentations on CD for the Basic Fire Fighter, Fire Fighter I & II and the Fire Officer I & II courses. No state training funds are used in the development or distribution of these courses.

Since the reduction in state funding for training first responders, the Division has included Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations to the list of available approved classes when delivered as part of the Fire Fighter I and II course. Required curriculum for these courses is the IFSTA Essentials of Fire Fighting and Fire Department Operations, Fifth Edition resource kit and text books which are purchased by the local entity. These resources are also used for the Fire Fighter I and II course. Fire Service Instructor I and II have also been added to the list of available approved classes as courses the Division has approved for local delivery. Curriculum requirement for this course is the IFSTA Fire and Emergency Services Instructor, Seventh Edition resource kit and text books purchased by the local entity. The Division provides approved practical skill sheets required for all levels of certification in an electronic format at no

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charge.

Using these approved resources, departments, colleges and academies throughout the State are currently conducting 17 Basic Fire Fighter deliveries, 62 Fire Fighter I and II courses, 15 Fire Officer I and II courses, and 17 Fire Service Instructor I and II courses. As with all certification-related courses, instructors must meet certain criteria and course registration and approval is required. Please see the Division's website at <http://www.dfs.dps.mo.gov/dfstrainin g.htm> for more information.

There are multiple benefits to this delivery mechanism established by the Division. First, NO state training funds are used in the delivery of these courses. Additionally, by entities delivering these courses at the local level student minimum enrollment is waived, courses can be scheduled to meet the local needs and scheduling requirements as well as departments and qualified instructors have control of their own training environment.

The Division also understands not all departments have the resources to deliver courses locally and therefore the Division does contract with various training vendors through a competitive bid process as required by the Missouri Office of Administration. RSMo 320.094 establishes the fire education fund which derives funding from the Division's Fireworks Licensing program per RSMo. 320.111. This fund, generates approximately \$160,000 annually and is housed within the Division of Fire Safety's budget, to provide training and continuing education to firefighters in this state in cooperation with community colleges, colleges, regional training facilities, fire and emergency services training entities and universities of this state. Contracted courses must meet specific criteria for delivery as set forth by the Missouri Fire Safety Advisory Board, Fire Education Commission and the Division and be available to any and all first responders throughout the state. For Fiscal Year 2011 the Division of Fire Safety, with the approval of the Missouri Fire Safety Advisory Board and the Fire Education Commission, contracted with eight vendors to provide training for the state's first responders.

The Division also works directly with 11 Community Colleges and Career Centers, 7 Secondary Education Programs and 7 Fire Department-affiliated Academies to provide training to first responders at the regional or local level.

For more than 25 years the Division has delivered the Fire Inspector and Fire Investigator courses due to the expertise of our staff. These 45-hour courses are delivered at the Division Headquarters and include lecture as well as the required practical skill evaluations for certification. We will continue our commitment to these programs at NO cost to the students and using NO contracted training funds.

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For a complete list of training partners, or for information about how your department can obtain training curriculum contact the Division of Fire Safety's Training and Certification Unit at (573)522-2426.