

Awards and Recognition Programs for the Eastlake Fire Department.

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A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

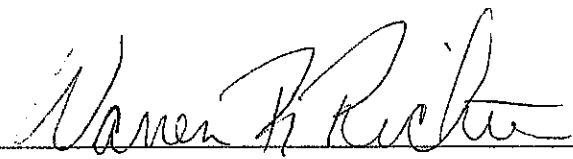
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## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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.
2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



Printed Name:

Warren R Richter

## ABSTRACT

The problem this study addressed was do Awards and Recognition Programs in the fire service offer significant benefits? The purpose of this study was to determine if Eastlake Fire Department would accept and or benefit from an Awards and Recognition Program.

The descriptive research method was used. A survey was distributed to Fire Department members. Data from the questionnaires was tabulated and analyzed to form an opinion regarding an Eastlake Fire Department Awards and Recognition Program. The research questions were designed to answer whether or not the Eastlake Fire Department would accept and or benefit from an Awards and Recognition Program.

The overall research results were positive and the formation of an Awards and Recognition Program is recommended.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

Awards and Recognition Programs have been in place for many years in many different professions. The military has a very extensive awards program that dates back to the formation of organized fighting units. Police officers wear badges and ribbons that denote skill levels as well as individual acts of heroism. Many fire departments also have established Awards and Recognition Programs.

Some fire department organizations feel that programs of this type are a waste of time, money and effort. Their general opinion is that the badge and shoulder patches are the only awards or recognition any firefighter should ever need and that individual awards detract from a "team-oriented" philosophy. Other organizations feel that these programs enhance morale, instill organizational pride and contribute to the positive public image of the fire department.

The Eastlake Fire Department is considering the adoption of an Awards and Recognition Program. The problem this study addresses is: Do award and recognition programs in the fire service offer significant benefits to the organization and the personnel within the organization? The purpose of this study is to determine if department personnel would accept and embrace an Awards and Recognition Program. The research questions this study investigated are as follows.

- Does the Eastlake Fire Department need an Awards and Recognition Program?
- Should length of service awards be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?
- What type of service awards will be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?

- Should decorations be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?
- What type of decorations will be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?
- How will recipients of awards and recognition be nominated?
- Who will decide who will receive awards and recognition?

The descriptive research method was used to gather data. A survey was developed and distributed to all Eastlake Fire Department members seeking opinions regarding the impact that an awards program would have on them personally. Data from the questionnaires was gathered and used to form a general consensus of opinion regarding an Eastlake Fire Department Awards and Recognition Program.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the Eastlake Fire Department would accept and or benefit from an Awards and Recognition Program and to identify the type of awards - if any, should be included in the program. If warranted, an Awards and Recognition Program will be designed and implemented.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will be answered by descriptive research:

1. *Does the Eastlake Fire Department need an Awards and Recognition Program?*
2. *Should decorations be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?*
3. *Should service awards be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?*
4. *What type of decorations will be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?*
5. *What type of service awards will be included in the Awards and Recognition Program?*

6. *How will recipients of awards and recognition be nominated?*
7. *Who will decide who will receive awards and recognition?*

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Eastlake Fire Department serves the city of Eastlake, the village of Timberlake, and the village of Lakeline. The response area is approximately 6.9 square miles with a population of approximately 22,000. The Eastlake Fire Station is located approximately twelve miles east of Cleveland, Ohio on the shores of Lake Erie.

The Eastlake Fire Department was originally formed in 1949 as 35 member Volunteer Fire Department with one 500 gallon per minute Seagraves pumper as their only piece of apparatus. Eastlake became incorporated as a village in 1949 and became a city in 1950. From 1958 until 1969, the fire department staffed the city's two fire stations with one firefighter at each station. These firefighters were used to move apparatus to the scene while additional personnel responded from their homes or places of employment. In 1969, three firefighters manned station number one twenty-four hours per day. At this same time, the Fire Department also assumed responsibility for emergency medical services (EMS). Station number two was no longer staffed but was used for apparatus and equipment storage until its sale in 2005. In 1981, the department became a full-time department.

There are currently twenty-seven full-time shift personnel, one Fire Prevention Officer and the Fire Chief. In over fifty-six years since the departments inception, there has been no fire department Awards and Recognition Program. Some firefighters state the absence of a program to recognize special acts and services is a form of negative reinforcement. Others express the opinion that the only special act or service that a firefighter ever undertakes is the act of putting on the badge and uniform of a firefighter. Everything else is said to be part of the job. Awards and Recognition Programs can be a very positive thing for individuals and their organization. For these programs to be effective, the participants must believe in and support the program.



Before an Awards and Recognition Program is designed, some questions need to be answered. These questions include; will the participants buy into the program? What type of awards and recognition should be offered? How will participants be chosen to receive awards and recognition? Who will decide who receives awards and recognition? If these questions can be answered, we will begin to understand whether or not an Awards and Recognition Program is needed.

If an Awards and Recognition Program is found to be needed, the type of awards and the procedures to select recipients will be outlined. Research into this subject will determine if an Awards and Recognition Program will be developed. The potential impact this study could have on the Eastlake Fire Department could be significant. Developing a program in order to recognize individual acts that go beyond the normal job description could have an enormous impact on the morale of the Eastlake Fire Department as well as the way we are perceived by citizens for which we serve.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Brunacini (1996) touches on the importance of recognizing exceptional performance of employees. Brunacini includes in appendix A, a copy of the Phoenix Fire Departments Records Of Exceptional Performance, which states its purpose. “ The purpose of this procedure is to establish an additional method for the fire department members to be recognized for exceptional performance.”

Buckman (1998) explores the need to reward volunteer firefighters. Buckman states “Personal recognition, however, is the single most important incentive, and some of the most effective forms of employee recognition cost nothing.” Buckman discusses the need for employee recognition and suggests a tactical seven-step approach to implement an employee recognition program. Buckman discusses employee recognition as it relates to volunteer firefighters but his information may prove beneficial to the entire fire service.

Buchanan (2003) in “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” discusses the ever-changing fire service. What should fire department instructors do about the recruits coming into the service? Many differences of opinion are covered on how recruits should be trained. However, Buchanan does state that recruit’s accomplishments should be celebrated. In comparable contrast, Buchanan states “My graduation walk consisted of a cold jog in the rain back to the house to the applause of the neighbor’s barking dog. What sort of pride does this instill in our recruits for their achievements?”

Hiam (2002) addresses the effect a positive attitude can have on employees. “ A positive, “can-do” attitude is an essential foundation for good performance.” Hiam bases his opinions on information gathered from reading Ken Blanchard’s “The One-Minute Manager” and “Whale Done! The Power of Positive Thinking”.

Hiam (2002) has compiled a list of things that can be done in order to recognize employee performances. Haim states the importance of employee recognition cannot be overlooked. Hiam suggests that entrepreneurs should consider recognition as a central part of their management practices. "Everyday, millions of people throw their hearts into their work. They want to succeed. They want their work to be appreciated and their effort to be recognized. When we remember to take care of these very human needs for recognition and appreciation and the occasional round of applause, we do a great deal to create the vital, energized workplace we need in order to succeed in today's challenging world of business."

Holliday (2004) speaks of motivating company officers. Holiday states a number of different motivators. Rotating assignments, being a coach/advocate, financial incentives, and recognition. Recognition can be applied on a personal level as well as a departmental level.

Kelly (2003) addresses changing work place behavior by way of incentives. Kelly addressed problems in his company by introducing various forms of incentive programs. A Safety Incentive Program, a Waste Reduction Program, as well as others. Kelly speaks of the great success of the incentives and how once these incentives are in place and the goal is achieved, the incentive may be removed with out adverse effects.

Webb (2004) is an article in which the partnership between the fire service and politicians is the focus. Working together with Capital Hill politicians to achieve a common goal is the theme, but what should be done once the goal has been reached is the main point. Webb states "the final element of a successful strategy is the element of recognition." Recognizing the individual following accomplishment is the key to building and maintaining strong partnerships.

at the fire station, by the Shift Commander at roll call. The fire Chief at the fire department received the most support with 42 %.

A list of twelve choices for possible awards was listed for the ninth question. Medal of Honor, (75 % yes) Medal of Valor, (60 % yes) Distinguished Service Medal, (67% yes) Fire Cross, (64 % yes) Fire Chiefs Commendation Medal, (60 % no) Maltese Cross, (57 % no) Star of Life, (53 % no) Firefighter of the Year, (57 % no) Years of Service Award, (64 % yes) Letter of Commendation, (53 % no) Letter of appreciation, (71 %no) and skill/discipline awards, (71 % no).

The final question was a fill in question. Please write down any additional thoughts you may have regarding an Awards and Recognition Program. No new concerns were noted.<sup>2</sup>

Data from the questionnaires was gathered and used to form a general consensus of opinion regarding an Eastlake Fire Department Awards and Recognition Program. A percentage was assigned to each response and a majority opinion obtained.

For questions seven and eight, some responses indicated more than one selection. The final question was an open opinion question and was used as gauge to weigh whether or not more questions needed to be presented and analyzed.

The statistical analyses of the data gathered clearly shows that an awards and recognition program is a viable option that would be supported by the members of the fire department. The type of awards that would be utilized were clearly defined.

### **Definition of Terms**

Medal of Honor. The Medal of Honor is the highest award presented to an Eastlake Firefighter. It may be awarded to any active firefighter for acts of personal bravery, while engaged in emergency mitigation, considered to be so far above and beyond the call of duty so as

to clearly distinguish the individual, and which involves an incontestable risk of life. (EFD, 2005).

Medal of Valor. The medal of valor is awarded to a member who performs a personal act in a courageous manner in the protection of life or lives while engaged in emergency mitigation of an incident, which if not performed, would not be considered a dereliction of duty. (EFD, 2005).

Distinguished Service Medal. The Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to a member who has distinguished themselves by exceptional service and/or performance above and beyond the normal call of duty. (EFD, 2005).

Fire Cross. The Fire Cross may be awarded to an active firefighter, who, in the line of duty, receives a significant injury that may require hospitalization. (EFD, 2005).

Fire Chiefs Commendation Medal. The Fire Chiefs Commendation Medal is awarded to a member who performs recognizable acts of exceptional service in an emergency or non-emergency situation. (EFD, 2005).

Maltese Cross Award. The Maltese Cross is awarded to a member who is successful in the act of saving a life through heroic acts on the fire ground. (EFD, 2005).

Star of Life Award. The star of life is awarded to a member who is successful in the act of saving a life through medical intervention. (EFD, 2005).

Firefighter of the Year Award. Awarded to the Fire Department member whose overall performance for the preceding year has done the most to promote a positive image and/or improve the Eastlake Fire Department. (EFD, 2005).

## RESULTS

The Eastlake Fire Department was the subject of a study for an Awards and Recognition Program for their fire department. This study was based on 29 survey forms sent out to the Eastlake Fire Department members. Of the 29 forms distributed, 28 were received back. One member had been off work with an injury during the time the survey was taken. The survey contained six “yes” or “no” questions, two multiple-choice questions, twelve possible forms of awards or recognition, and a fill-in area for any additional comments or opinions. A copy of the questionnaire can be found under appendix one. This study addressed the specific needs of the Eastlake Fire Department and its individual members.

**Table 1**

*Awards and recognition survey results*

Question	Answers			
	Y	N	NA	%
1. Should there be a program?	20	8	0	71%Y
2. Should there be decorations?	20	5	1	71%Y
3. Should there be skills/service awards?	16	11	1	57%Y
4. Will a program improve morale?	11	14	3	50%N
5. Will a program improve public image?	11	12	5	42%N
6. Will a program detract from team concept?	7	19	2	67%N
7. Who will select recipients?	11	FD officers		39%
	11	Awards committee		39%
8. Who will present awards and where?	12	FD Chief @ FD		42%

**Table 2***Types of awards and recognition*

	Y	N	%
Medal of Honor	21	7	75%Y
Medal of Valor	17	11	60%Y
Distinguished Service Medal	19	9	67%Y
Fire cross	18	10	64%Y
Fire Chiefs Commendation Medal	11	17	60%N
Maltese Cross Award	12	16	57%N
Star of Life	13	15	53%N
Firefighter of the Year	12	16	57%N
Years of Service Award	18	10	64%Y
Letter of Commendation	13	15	53%N
Letter of Appreciation	8	20	71%N
Skill/Discipline awards	8	20	71%N

*\* Recommended Awards and recognition*

## DISCUSSION

Results from the survey which was designed to be Eastlake Fire Department specific strongly suggest that the members of the Eastlake Fire Department would support an Awards and Recognition Program. 71% of those surveyed stated that they felt the Eastlake Fire Department should have an Awards and Recognition Program. A majority of members also stated that decorations 71% and service awards 57% should be included in the program. However, 50% of those surveyed did not feel that a program would improve department morale. Further, more than 42% of those surveyed felt that a program would not improve the department's public image. As for raising concerns about the firefighter's individuality and a program interfering with our team oriented philosophy, the surveyed showed that 67% believed this not to be of concern. When it came to who should select the recipients of awards, there was a tie between fire department officers and a committee - both receiving 39%. The chief of the fire department was chosen with 42% to be the presenter of awards and that these presentations should take place in the fire department. Awards to be included in the program are those that received 50% or more on the survey. The awards that were selected are as follows. The Medal of Honor 75%, The medal of Valor 60%, The Distinguished Service Medal 67%, The Fire Cross 64%, and years of service awards 64%. The information gathered from the survey suggests that an Awards and Recognition Program would be greatly accepted at the Eastlake Fire Department. The analysis suggests that both the members of the department as well as the citizens for which they serve would benefit from such a program. The information gathered also tells us what type of awards would be accepted in the program as well as which awards would not be accepted. Based on the research



conducted, the likelihood of a successful Awards and Recognition program for the Eastlake Fire Department is high.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is the recommendation of this author that the Eastlake Fire Department adopt an Awards and Recognition Program based on the data collected. The Awards and Recognition Program should be constructed in sop format and to include the Medal of Honor, the Medal of Valor, The Distinguished Service Medal, the Fire Cross, and Years of Service Awards. All of these awards were approved by fire department personal by more then 50%. Fire department officers and a selection committee or a combination of both should conduct selection of receiving members. When an individual member receives an award the fire chief at the fire department should present it. A sample SOP is included in appendix 3.

## REFERENCES

- Brunacini, Alan V. (1996). *Essentials Of Fire Department Customer Service*.
- Buckman, John M. (1998). Rewarding Volunteers. *Fire Engineering*.
- Buchanan, Eddie. (2003). O Brother, Where Art Thou? *Fire Engineering*.
- Haim, Alex. (2002). Leading in the Splash Zone. *Entrepreneur*.
- Haim, Alex. (2002). Employee Recognition: Why It Matters. *Entrepreneur*.
- Holliday, Scott. (2004) Motivating Company Officers. *Fire Engineering*.
- Kelly, Kevin. (2003) Getting What You Pay For. *Fortune*.
- Webb, Bill. (2003) Capital Hill Success: Start By Building Partnerships and Saying "Thanks"  
*Firehouse Magazine*.

## APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY

The following is a survey regarding an Awards and Recognition Program for the Eastlake Fire Department. Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability and return to BC Richter. The information gathered from this survey will help shape an Awards and Recognition Program that is well suited for the Eastlake Fire Department. Thank you.

1. Do you feel the Eastlake Fire Department should have an Awards and Recognition Program?  
 yes  
 no
2. Do you feel decorations for duties performed above and beyond the call should be included in the Eastlake Fire Department Awards and Recognition Program?  
 yes  
 no
3. Do you feel service awards for skills obtained and time served should be included in the Eastlake Fire Department Awards and Recognition Program?  
 yes  
 no
4. Do you feel an Awards and Recognition Program would improve the morale within the Eastlake Fire Department?  
 Yes  
 No

5. Do you feel an Awards and Recognition Program would improve the public image of the fire department?
- Yes
- No
6. Do you feel an Awards and Recognition Program would detract from our "team oriented" philosophy?
- Yes
- No
7. If an awards program is implemented, who do you feel should determine who receives an award?
- The Fire Chief
- Fire Department Officers
- An Awards Committee
- Departmental Vote
8. If an awards program is implemented, the awards should be presented:
- At a City Council meeting by the Mayor
- By the Chief at a City Council Meeting
- By the Chief at the Fire Station
- By the Shift Commander at roll call
9. Please indicate with an X which of the following awards should be included in the Eastlake Fire Department Awards and Recognition Program.

**\_\_\_ Medal of Honor**

The Medal of Honor is the highest award presented to an Eastlake Firefighter. It may be awarded to any active firefighter for acts of personal bravery, while engaged in emergency mitigation, considered to be so far above and beyond the call of duty so as to clearly distinguish the individual, and which involves an incontestable risk of life.

**\_\_\_ Medal of Valor**

The medal of valor is awarded to a member who performs a personal act in a courageous manner in the protection of life or lives while engaged in emergency mitigation of an incident, which if not performed, would not be considered a dereliction of duty.

**\_\_\_ Distinguished Service Medal**

The Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to a member who has distinguished themselves by exceptional service and/or performance above and beyond the normal call of duty.

**\_\_\_ Fire Cross**

The Fire Cross may be awarded to an active firefighter, who, in the line of duty, receives a significant injury that may require hospitalization.

**\_\_\_ Fire Chiefs Commendation Medal**

The Fire Chiefs Commendation Medal is awarded to a member who performs recognizable acts of exceptional service in an emergency or non-emergency situation.

\_\_\_ **Maltese Cross Award**

The Maltese Cross is awarded to a member who is successful in the act of saving a life through heroic acts on the fire ground.

\_\_\_ **Star of Life Award**

The star of life is awarded to a member who is successful in the act of saving a life through medical intervention.

\_\_\_ **Firefighter of the Year Award**

Awarded to the Fire Department member whose overall performance for the preceding year has done the most to promote a positive image and/or improve the Eastlake Fire Department.

\_\_\_ **Years of Service Award**

Awarded at the completion of every five years of continuous Department service. It is automatically awarded for recognition of an individual's commitment through service to the citizens of the City of Eastlake.

\_\_\_ **Letter of commendation**

Written document recording a meritorious act, awarded by any EFD chief officer.

\_\_\_ **Letter of appreciation**

Written document recording a meritorious act, awarded by any EFD line officer.

\_\_\_ **Skill/Discipline Awards**

Awarded to departmental personnel for individual acquired skills and disciplines

\_\_\_ *Auto extrication*

\_\_\_ *Technical rescue*

- \_\_\_ *Dive Rescue*
- \_\_\_ *Arson investigator*
- \_\_\_ *Public safety inspector*
- \_\_\_ *Public Education*
- \_\_\_ *Hazardous Materials*
- \_\_\_ *Fire training instructor*
- \_\_\_ *EMS training instructor*

10. Please write down any additional thoughts you may have regarding an Awards and Recognition Program.

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**APPENDIX 2 – LETTER TO SHIFT COMMANDERS**

Attached you will find a survey form for a research project concerning an Awards and Recognition Program for the Eastlake Fire Department. Please have your personnel fill the survey out during roll call and return it to BC Richter no later than 03/11/05. Everyone's input is needed and valued. I thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

WRR

**APPENDIX 3 – SAMPLE SOP****1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To establish a program to recognize Fire Department personnel for acts of bravery/heroism, line-of-duty injury, exceptionally distinguished service, and exceptional performance of normal duties.
- 1.2 To recognize personnel for continuous Department service to the citizens of the City of Eastlake.

**2.0 DIVISIONS AFFECTED**

- 2.1 All Fire Department personnel.

**3.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

- 3.1 All Officers sworn and acting are responsible to ensure that personnel under their command are familiar with this policy.
- 3.2 All personnel are authorized and encouraged to nominate individuals for recognition.

#### 4.0 **POLICY**

4.1 It shall be the policy of the Fire Department to nominate and select individuals who perform their duties in an exemplary manner and to publicly recognize their achievements.

4.2 The awards Program shall consist of the following awards in order of merit

- A. **Medal of Honor:** The Medal of Honor is the highest award presented to an Eastlake Firefighter. It may be awarded to any active firefighter for acts of personal bravery, while engaged in emergency mitigation, considered to be so far above and beyond the call of duty so as to clearly distinguish the individual, and which involves an incontestable risk of life
  
- B. **Medal of Valor:** The medal of valor is awarded to a member who performs a personal act in a courageous manner in the protection of life or lives while engaged in emergency mitigation of a incident, which if not performed, would not be considered a dereliction of duty.
  
- C. **Distinguished Service Medal:** The Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to a member who has distinguished themselves by exceptional service and/or performance above and beyond the normal call of duty.

- D. **Fire Cross:** The Fire Cross may be awarded to an active firefighter, who, in the line of duty, receives a significant injury which may require hospitalization.
- E. **Service Award:** Awarded at the completion of every five years of continuous Department service. It is automatically awarded for recognition of an individual's commitment through service to the citizens of the City of Eastlake.
- 4.3 All Fire Department personnel, regardless of rank or job classification are authorized and encouraged to nominate individuals for recognition. Nominations may be for performance while on duty, or off-duty performing a fire/EMS function.
- 4.4 Written nominations and recommendations shall be forwarded to the Chief and then to the Awards Committee.
- 4.5 Medal of Honor, Medal of Valor, Distinguished Service Award, and Fire Cross nominations should be submitted within sixty (60) days of the act/incident or project completion for which the member is nominated. Firefighter of the Year Nominations will be solicited in December of each year.

4.6 Awards Committee

- A. Fire Chief
- B. Three Battalion Chiefs
- C. Senior Lieutenant.
- D. Senior Firefighter.

4.7 Members of the Awards Committee shall serve for an indefinite period of time.

4.8 The Awards Committee shall determine what, if any, awards are granted. Except for the Medal of Honor, all awards shall be granted by a majority vote of those members present. Awarding the Medal of Honor requires a unanimous vote of all members of the Awards Committee.

4.9 Membership on the Awards Committee is voluntary, except for the Fire Chief and the Battalion Chiefs.

4.10 If one or more of the voluntary positions on the Awards Committee is/are not filled, the remaining members shall determine granting of awards.