

Northern Virginia Fire & Rescue

Leadership Development Institute



2023 Session Information

Introduction

The Northern Virginia Fire and Rescue Department's Leadership Development Institute (LDI) provides unique and important leadership training for company-level and command officers. Many fire service programs focus specifically on the strategies and tactics of firefighting, but a majority of any officer's time is spent interacting with the members and citizens while in the firehouse, rather than on the incident scene. Leadership, management and communication skills are both an art and a science that have to be taught in the fire service, just as they are taught in the military. This program combines the art and science of leadership, as well as management techniques and skills, taught by national level speakers from within and outside the fire service. We provide not only education and knowledge, but specific methods to implement what the student has learned. This unique training environment provides opportunities to practice in a non-threatening setting with feedback from recognized fire and rescue leaders. This combination of instruction and implementation is what makes this experience distinct.

Programs

The LDI offers two programs, the Company Officer Leadership Program (Company) and the Command Officer Leadership and Management Program (Command). Both are six-day residency programs where students are required to stay on campus for the duration of the program. Students are selected on a competitive basis by their department and are recommended for the program by their Fire Chiefs. The programs are designed to be challenging to the students, with minimal down-time. Students are required to attend all portions of the program; no tardiness is allowed. Students are engaged throughout the day, typically starting in the early morning hours and ending late at night. The schedule mimics daily life in the firehouse by obliging the officer to manage multiple tasks throughout the day including PT, meal times, education, networking, some aspects of fatigue and still handle personnel issues calmly. This approach is designed to keep students slightly "off-balance" throughout the week, which in turn permits them to challenge their normal routines and ways of thinking. A primary goal of the program is to encourage cross-organizational communication and networking.

Company Officer Leadership Program

Leadership through Empowerment, Encouragement, and Excellence

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The target audience for the Company program is future or acting company officers as well as existing company officers, preferably within 1-2 years of experience. These students will reflect upon their experience working as subordinates or in a junior leadership role and apply the lessons learned at LDI to determine which leadership methods are a good fit for them. This experience informs their initial understanding of effective leadership. The focus of this program is direct leadership: work procedures, standards, group cohesion, norms, individual motivation, individual/small group task-oriented perspectives and dynamics.

Command Officer Leadership Program

The target audience for the Command program is future or acting command officers as well as existing command officers within 1-2 years of experience. Command officers are typically charged with leading and managing multiple companies or organizational initiatives. The focus of this program is organizational leadership: leadership climate, organizational culture, policies, changes, systems and processes.

Summary

Both LDI programs are intended to open and challenge the minds of the participants, to teach them concepts and skills, allow them to practice, and then to go forth and mentor others. Leaders with additional years of experience in their rank will also benefit from new skills and approaches to practicing the art of leadership, mentorship, and management, and are highly encouraged to apply as well.

October 16-21, 2023 will be the tenth session of the company officer program and the eighth session of the command officer program. On our tenth anniversary the LDI will have accumulated an alumni roster in excess of five-hundred graduates. We welcome applications from career and volunteer fire/rescue personnel from jurisdictions inside and outside of the Metropolitan Washington COG. Our program is fortunate to have benefited from the numerous perspectives of students and staff from across the Mid-Atlantic region. Please visit the Institute's website address at <https://www.nvers.org/fireems/LDI> for additional information and to download a student application.

We look forward to another year of enhancing the knowledge base and abilities of fire/rescue leaders in the region!

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