

Position Bid System

Finding

The department's "bid" process policy contributes to personnel resource management problems and organizational and functional instability.

Discussion

Departmental policy permits uniformed personnel up through Captain (organized under Local 1014) to routinely bid in or out of most positions after a one-year assignment period (in two cases, i.e., when an individual is recently hired or promoted, he is required to remain in a position only through his probationary period of six months). Such bids are based on seniority only. This policy has a detrimental effect on functions which require specialized knowledge or skills that are not directly related to firefighting, e.g., fire prevention inspections, dispatching, construction, plan checking, etc. The unchecked movement of personnel makes quality training and the development of expertise almost impossible to achieve. We found that it takes a year or more of training to achieve expertise in specialized assignments. The present bidding process also contributes to ineffective management because the movement of personnel is not always determined by sound management needs, but, instead, by the personal needs and ambitions of employees. At the same time, productivity is lowered because an employee on a special assignment generally transfers out before he can achieve a significant degree of expertise.

This rapid and relatively constant employee movement has overextended supervision capabilities, affected morale, and has given the specialized knowledge assignments a negative image. For example, we found