

Training Officer Certification Program

Questions and Answers

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Introduction

1. What is a training officer?

For the purposes of certification, a training officer is an individual who develops and evaluates training plans and programs, which include participant evaluation; coordinates the delivery of training; delivers training; and manages the training environment.

2. I deliver training but my primary role is not as a training officer. Will I be able to certify to the standard?

Your duties must include those in the definition of a training officer, and you must meet the recognized job performance standards, and educational/training and job experience requirements.

3. Who is the certifying body and what gives it the authority to certify fire service personnel?

The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal certifies training officers on a voluntary basis to the Ontario Fire Services Training Officer Standards based on the criteria developed by the Certification Council, approved by the Office of the Fire Marshal and agreed to by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (FPPA) provides authority in Part III, clause 9 (2) (d) to the Fire Marshal. Part III, clause 9 (2) (d) states that it is the duty of the Fire Marshal to develop training programs and evaluation systems for persons involved in the provision of fire protection services and to provide programs to improve practices relating to fire protection services.

4. What is the purpose of certification?

Certification formally acknowledges that a training officer in Ontario meets the recognized job performance standards and educational/training and job experience requirements as approved by the Office of the Fire Marshal and agreed to by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

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5. What is the term of training officer certification?

A training officer certificate is valid for five (5) years from the date of issuance and subsequent renewals.

6. Is there a fee for certification?

There is no fee for certification or certification renewal, at this time.

7. Is certification reciprocal with any other jurisdiction?

Other jurisdictions determine their own requirements. It is possible for other jurisdictions to assess the *Ontario Training Officer Certification Program* against their requirements.

8. Where can I get copies of the material?

Information about the *Ontario Training Officer Certification Program* is available through locally conducted information sessions, a brochure and articles in the *Messenger*. Information is also available on the OFM Web site at www.ofm.gov.on.ca on the Ontario Association of Fire Training Officers Web site at www.firetraining.ca or by contacting the OFM Certification Office at 416-325-3142. Can we create a link please?

9. Who is on the Certification Council?

The Council is comprised of stakeholders, including representatives of the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Ontario Fire Service who meet established criteria.

The current Certification Council members are:

Doug Goodings, Chairperson, Office of the Fire Marshal
Lorne Bradt, Firefighter, Lemington
Craig Cunningham, Assistant Chief of Fire Prevention, Toronto
Kevin Foster, Fire Chief, Midland and
representative from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs
Paul Gawlik, Chief Training Officer, Richmond Hill
Mike George, Chief of Inspection Services, Wilmont
Scott Heard, Acting Captain, Vaughan
Shawn LePage, Training Officer, Mississauga
Brian Maltby, Division Chief, Fire Prevention, Brampton
Barry McKinnon, Chief of Emergency Management and
Response, Office of the Fire Marshal
Mike Rozario, Firefighter, Richmond Hill
Jim Sawkins, Fire Chief, Township of Muskoka Lakes
Michael Seth, Fire Chief, Six Nations Fire Department
Ex-officio
Lynne Lofquist, Section Manager,
Academic Standards and Evaluation, Office of the Fire Marshal
Ed Godden, Academic Manager, Ontario Fire College
Leslie Kennedy, Educational Consultant, Office of the Fire Marshal
Secretary

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Uyen Ha, Coordinator/Administrative Assistant,
Office of the Fire Marshal
Sub-committee Members
Rocco Volpe, Training Officer, Richmond Hill
Jeff Weber, Training Officer, Kitchener

10. What is the mandate of the Certification Council?

The mandate of the Council is to develop and recommend to the Professional Standards Setting Body, within the framework of the Professional Standards Process Model, the policies and procedures required for an ongoing, voluntary provincial certification program.

Voluntary Process

11. Is certification voluntary?

Yes.

12. What incentives are there for training officers to pursue certification?

There are number of benefits to certification.

- Certification recognizes training officers as professionals with specialized skills and an ability to provide quality, competent service.
- Certification provides training officers with opportunities to evaluate and document their performance, and compare their skills to each competency and the overall standard.
- Certification acknowledges a training officer's commitment to ongoing training and lifelong learning.
- Certification provides a concrete training path to follow.
- Certification will support the credibility of training officers in the completion of their regular and special activities such as, dealing with litigation.
- Highly motivated people will continue to be attracted to the fire service because of the certification program.

13. If I choose not to become certified, will I still be considered a qualified training officer?

Yes. A lack of certification is only an indication that the individual has not applied for or completed the requirements of certification.

14. If I choose not to become certified, even though my fire department commits to the certification program, can I continue to be a training officer?

Yes. Certification is not a means of determining who shall participate in the practice or profession of firefighting and its related activities.

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15. If a fire department commits to the training and certification process, must every new training officer hired after June 1, 2005 apply for certification?

No. However, the documentation of training and ability to perform to standards is a legitimate, valuable process for fire departments to follow. Because certification is a voluntary process, training officers may or may not choose to apply for certification, even though they meet the criteria.

16. Can a fire department make certification mandatory?

Certification is a voluntary process. Any move toward mandatory certification would be a local matter.

Eligibility

17. Who is eligible for training officer certification?

One route to certification has been designed for all candidates employed as training officers in an Ontario municipal fire department as of May 31, 2005 who wish to pursue certification through the 'Window of Opportunity.'

The regular route is designed for those employed as training officers in an Ontario municipal fire department after May 31, 2005.

18. What do I have to do to be certified?

Certification is based on the candidate's ability to:

- a) Meet established educational/training qualifications
- b) Provide proof of current employment in a municipal fire department in Ontario
- c) Meet job experience requirements
- d) Demonstrate competence to the standard

19. Why is there a requirement for two years of experience?

This is the minimum amount of time a training officer would need to complete the academic and job experience requirements.

20. If a fire chief applies for training officer certification, who signs the Application for Certification?

The person to whom the chief reports would sign the Application for Certification.

21. What happens if there is a gap in service?

To qualify for certification and certification renewal, a training officer must demonstrate continuous job experience in a municipal fire department in Ontario. Continuous is defined by government Human Resources, as having a break in employment of not

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greater than thirteen (13) weeks. Extenuating circumstances will be considered on an individual basis, by the Certification Council.

22. If I become certified while employed in one department and with no break in employment, move to another department, do I lose my certification?

No. Individuals are certified. You take your certification with you. That is why it is important to keep your own records of your educational/training and job experience achievements.

23. What if I want to be certified but my department has not committed to the training and certification process?

To ensure access to certification for all Ontario training officers, accessibility for individuals (training officers whose department is not participating in the certification program) has been determined. Training officers in this circumstance are encouraged to write to the Certification Council. Access to the system will be determined on an individual basis.

24. Can training officers hired from other provinces or countries use their years of experience toward certification?

Possibly. However, they would still be required to complete the process for certification and demonstrate their ability to:

- a) Meet established educational/training qualifications
- b) Provide proof of current employment in a municipal fire department in Ontario
- c) Meet job experience requirements
- d) Demonstrate competence to the current standard

25. I am a certified NFPA training officer. Does that qualify me for Ontario training officer certification?

No, not automatically because the Ontario program is to the Ontario Fire Services standards and because the Ontario program has a job experience requirement. However, you may be eligible for academic credit.

26. If I am part way through one certification program, for example, company officer, change roles and start another certification program, for example, training officer, can I get credit for the completed components of one program toward the other.

You may be eligible for academic credit because some *Company Officer Diploma Program* courses are required to meet the academic requirement in the 'Window'. However, credit for on-the-job performance cannot be given because each certification program is based on the standards for that role.

Educational Component

27. How should I track my educational/training activities?

We recommend the use of the *O AFC Professional Development Profile Record for Fire Service Personnel* for documenting not only your education/training activities but also a number of other career related issues. It is available for download from the O AFC website at www.OAFC.on.ca. Can we create a link please?

28. How does a candidate fulfill the educational/training requirement?

Regular Route

Training Officers employed after May 31, 2005 are eligible to certify through the regular route. The academic component of the regular route is the Ontario Fire College *Training Officer Diploma Program*, which consists of two components:

1. A certificate in Adult Education from a College of Applied Arts and Technology. Because training officers are expected to have significant knowledge and skills in adult education theory in order to perform their roles, the community college diploma ensures achievement of the theory learning outcomes they need.
2. Successful completion of applied course credits offered by the Ontario Fire College. These course credits cover the practical or applied learning outcomes required by training officers.

Those who successfully complete both components will be awarded an Ontario Fire College Training Officer Diploma.

Training officers may be eligible for advanced standing towards the academic requirement for certification, based on courses or programs they completed in the past. On-the-job experience may also qualify toward advanced standing. Determinations of how much, if any, advanced standing to grant will be made by both the community colleges and the Ontario Fire College.

'Window of Opportunity' June 1, 2005 – June 1, 2008

Candidates employed as training officers in municipal fire departments in Ontario as of May 31, 2005 when certification was introduced are required to meet the following academic requirement.

- OFM *Trainer/Facilitator Course*
- CO 101 *Legislation/Standards* or equivalent
- CO 201 *Leadership and Communication Theory* or equivalent
- CO 202 *Practical Communications and Supervision* or equivalent
- OFC Applied Program Development course and Applied Course Delivery course or equivalents

29. Why is a community college certificate needed to meet the academic requirement?

Training officers are expected to have significant knowledge and skills in adult education theory and practice, in order to perform their roles. The learning outcomes identified by

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training officers as the basis of their academic program include many outcomes directly related to adult education.

Early in the design of the training officer academic program, it was jointly recognized by the OAF/OFM partnership that most Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology offered certificate programs in adult education, which likely included most of the adult education learning outcomes. An analysis of community college adult education certificate programs validated that most of them matched at least 75% of the training officer learning outcomes.

Because these programs could be accessed across the province through the community college system, it was not deemed appropriate for the Ontario Fire College to develop courses that would duplicate this content. Therefore, a certificate in adult education from a community college became one part of the academic component of training officer certification.

30. How long will it take to achieve a college certificate on a full-time/part-time basis?

The certificate programs in adult education offered by community colleges vary in number of courses from five to eight. Time to complete the certificate will vary for individual training officers based on the college they attend and the mode of study they choose (part-time, full-time, e-learning or traditional). For a training officer completing one course per semester, it would be possible to complete some certificates in two years.

31. Is training available from the colleges by distance education and/or on the Internet?

Yes. Certificates in adult education can be earned via OntarioLearn, which is an e-learning system operated by a consortium of all the Ontario community colleges. Some certificate programs also have courses, which are offered via distance education.

Part of the planning process of the academic component of *Training Officer Certification Program* included assessing the accessibility of adult education certificate programs across the province. Because individuals can access OntarioLearn through any of the community colleges, it met the criterion for accessibility, regardless of geographical location. It also provides individual students with some flexibility in terms of when they participate in the courses.

32. Will the Ontario Fire College be offering any of the required courses in partnership with the colleges but at the OFC?

No arrangements are confirmed, but the OFC is discussing with community colleges the possibility of offering courses in the adult education certificate program on the OFC campus in "intensive mode." This approach would allow students to attend the courses at the Fire College in one-week blocks. If this approach is confirmed, course dates and registration procedures would be announced to training officers.

33. There are differences in the programs offered at colleges across Ontario. Are they all acceptable? Is one better than the other?

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All community college certificate programs in adult education have been assessed for their match to the training officer learning outcomes. Nearly all programs have been found to match the learning outcomes. A summary chart of all the matching community college programs can be accessed from the OFM web site. Can we create a link please?

In some programs, it is necessary to take specific optional courses to achieve the match to the learning outcomes. Specific information on which optional courses to take in each program is also available on the OFM web site. Can we create a link please?

34. Terrorism and hazardous materials awareness are pertinent to the training officer role. Where can I access this information?

There is an excellent self-study course *Terrorism/Hazardous Materials Awareness for Fire Responders in Ontario: Self-Study* on the OFM web site www.ofm.gov.on.ca. Can we create a link please?

Job Experience Component

35. At what point in the certification process is the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document completed?

It is expected that skills listed in the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document will be performed within the job experience component. Performance of skills may **not** predate the date of release of the revised *Ontario Fire Services Training Officer Standards* – fall 2003. The fire chief and the candidate's supervisor sign off the document provided that:

- ✓ The completion of the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document reflects performance of skills
- ✓ The sign off is by an immediate supervisor
- ✓ Required supporting documentation is included where required

36. Who verifies that I have performed a competency to standard?

Your direct supervisor signs off some competencies. If s/he has not witnessed you performing a competency, a decision may be based on outcome and/or peer evaluation. Other competencies require your supervisor's sign-off as well as supporting documentation such as a sample needs assessment, lesson plan or evaluation form. Your supervisor, the fire chief and you must sign the form and be accountable.

37. What if I do not get an 'on-the-job' opportunity to perform all the skills/performance objectives in the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document?

It is your responsibility to maintain a log of the training and related duties you perform. You must seek out your supervisor to sign off your *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document. It is also your responsibility,

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while working within the policies and procedures of your department, to seek out the opportunities you need to complete the job experience component.

The Certification Council has determined that up to 5% (three competencies maximum) that are currently designated "A" (actual) for demonstration on-the-job may be approved by the Certification Council for demonstration in simulated circumstances. The fire chief shall submit to the Certification Office a letter outlining the rationale for requesting this and describing the simulations that will be used.

38. How should I record my training activities?

We recommend using OAFCA *Professional Development Profile Record for Fire Service Personnel* for this purpose. It is available for download on the OAFCA website at www.OAFCA.on.ca. Can we create a link please?

39. Can full-time training officers who volunteer in other departments use experiences from both departments to complete the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document?

Yes. They can use experiences from both departments provided both fire chiefs agree to this process and both are willing to sign the Submission for Certification.

40. Can time spent seconded to a training officer role be counted towards certification?

Yes, provided it was after the fall of 2003 when the revised *Ontario Fire Services Training Officer Standards* were issued.

41. What happens if a training officer does not successfully complete the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document?

This is an internal issue. It is hoped that following assessment, the training officer and his/her supervisor would review the document. Together, they should develop a training plan and seek opportunities for the training officer to perform on-the-job.

42. How long do I have to complete the qualification process?

In the 'Window of Opportunity,' you have three years from the date of implementation (June 1, 2005.) Training officers certifying through the regular route have up to five years to complete the process through the regular route.

43. What if the time frame for completion of the certification process is nearly over and I have not had an opportunity to perform a particular job competency?

Some skills can only be signed off if you have performed them to standard on-the-job. On-the-job is defined as, 'while working in the training officer role developing training plans and learning materials, coordinating and delivering training programs, managing the training environment, assessing student performance, and evaluating ongoing programs.'

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However, for some other skills, approved simulated situations can be created for you. Your supervisor must sign you off.

44. What if the time frame expires before I complete the qualifying process?

You could submit a letter, through your fire department, to the Certification Council requesting consideration because of extenuating circumstances. Identify the reasons for not completing the process and the time required to complete it.

Existing Training Officers ('Window of Opportunity')

45. What do existing training officers have to do to become certified?

Existing training officers must meet the academic and job experience requirements. A three-year 'Window of Opportunity' exists from June 1, 2005 to June 1, 2008 for all staff employed as training officers in a municipal fire department in Ontario as of May 31, 2005. Options exist for achieving academic equivalency.

See the answer to question 28 under the 'Window of Opportunity.'

Successful completion of the academic requirement is followed by the completion of the *Job Experience Requirement Demonstration of Competence to the Standards* document and application for certification.

46. What is different about the 'Window of Opportunity?'

In the 'Window of Opportunity,' training officers are being given credit for their years of experience, and alternate ways of completing the academic requirement are offered.

47. How long do I have to complete the qualification process?

In the 'Window of Opportunity,' you have three years from the date of implementation (June 1, 2005.)

48. Can an out-of-province training officer hired in Ontario after May 31, 2005 access the 'Window of Opportunity?'

No, because the purpose of the 'Window of Opportunity' is to acknowledge the experience of Ontario training officers. To access it, you must have been a training officer in a municipal fire department in the province of Ontario prior to June 1, 2005.

Renewal and Revocation

49. What do I have to do to renew certification?

The model for certification renewal will be developed based on the following guiding principles:

- Continuous employment in a municipal fire department in Ontario
- Documented ongoing training
- Proof of demonstrated competence to the current standard

50. Can training officer certification qualify towards firefighter/company officer/fire prevention officer certification renewal?

You may be eligible for academic credit because some *Company Officer Diploma Program* courses are required to meet the academic requirement in the 'Window'. However, credit for on-the-job performance cannot be given because each certification program is based on the standards for that role.

51. What happens if my certification lapses?

In the event that certification is lapsed over ninety (90) days, the candidate will need to reapply and requalify based on current competencies. The Certification Council will determine the requirements.

52. Can certification be suspended, revoked or denied?

Yes. The Fire Marshal, on the recommendation of the Certification Council, may suspend, revoke or deny certification to any fire service personnel when it is found that the individual:

- i. Has knowingly made a material misrepresentation of any information required for certification
- ii. Has knowingly by any means of false pretense, deception, fraud or cheating obtained documents or certification
- iii. Has knowingly by any means of false pretense, deception, fraud or cheating obtained documents or certification for another individual
- iv. Fails to meet minimum requirements for any required test or examination forming part of the certification process