There have been a number of questions regarding Act 362 (24 hour training). I hope to address many of the questions that have been posed to me. The Act states “Firefighters shall maintain a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours per year of certifiable training meeting the standards of the Arkansas Fire Training Academy (AFA).” This means classes you take or teach, should meet the requirements of the AFA so that a certificate can be issued and a permanent record maintained by AFA.

Instructor qualifications:
A Certified Training Officer (CTO) may teach:

- Introduction to Fire Protection – Firefighter Track Module 1
- Personal Protective Equipment – Firefighter Track Module 2
- School Inspections (NEW)

If a firefighter is an Instructor I and Firefighter II, or Instructor I and has taken the module as well as three years or more experience in the department, he/she may teach the following:

- Firefighter Track Modules 1-6, module 9a and 9b, 13 – 16

In order to teach the First Responder course, the instructor must be a current EMT with some type of methodology class (i.e. CPR Instructor, ITCO, Instructor I Module I etc.).

- Continued on Page 2 -
The classes in modules are set up in 16-hour blocks. When teaching these classes, it may require up to 6 months finishing that module. *There is no requirement that a module be completed in a weekend or a week.*

When a person is ready to teach the class, contact the AFA which will provide the lesson plan and PowerPoint, as well as skill sheets. The lesson plan must be taught as presented and all content covered. However the skill sheets may be completed as the opportunity arises, just check off the skill that has been successfully completed.

If a fire department does not have the personnel to teach the class, the AFA will provide an instructor to your location to teach the class. A minimum of 10 people are required for most classes, however, exceptions will be considered on a class by class basis. No exceptions in the minimum number students will be made if there is a safety issue involved, such as the structure fires and exterior fire attack classes. Coordination with other departments in your area is strongly encouraged and appreciated. For example, if your department is having a PPE class, another department may have firefighters in need of that training.

There are many other courses the instructor can teach. They are handled on a case by case basis. The instructor’s experience in that subject level is reviewed prior to allowing that instructor to teach the class.

If you are a CTO and wish to be Instructor I level, you may take Instructor I Module II (8 hours) also called the bridge program. Upon completing the class, schedule someone through the AFA to watch you do a 20-minute teach and if successful, an Instructor I certificate will be issued. That’s it!!!!!

There is also a concern over in-house training. *Firefighters are not required to come to the Arkansas Fire Academy to get your 24 hours of training.* The classes listed above can all be done at your fire department.

This piece of legislation did not increase your training. The training requirement was always there. Nothing has really changed in regards to your training except that all paperwork must be filed through the AFA to keep records and keep your training transcript updated.

The AFA is funded to train the firefighters of the State of Arkansas, not just the volunteer, not just the paid or combination.. We train the FIREFIGHTERS. Because of that, the paperwork you fill out for classes does several things. It verifies people are actually a member of a fire department. It makes sure they are 18 years old or over. It verifies the student has met prerequisites to the courses they are taking for safety compliance. I know in many cases people consider the paperwork is just something the AFA can make you do, but it actually does serve a purpose for accountability and to protect the departments in the event questions arise regarding firefighter credentials.

There are still many issues that must be addressed by the Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board. There is a lot of misinformation, propaganda and misconstrued information in the field and nothing is official yet except you must have 24 hours of certifiable training each year.

The last piece of misinformation I’d like to address is that the AFA asked this bill be introduced. We did not propose this bill nor did we ask for it, but since it is now law, the AFA will assist with the implementation as required.

We are working on several things through the AFA to make more training available to you. The AFA is a service-based organization. We are here to help you get the training, not to make it hard to get.

I hope this has been of some help to you. If you have any further questions, please call. We’ll do our best to help you.

Thank you and train safely,
Rachel Nix, Director
Arkansas Fire Academy
Personnel Eligible to Teach Courses

Instructors may teach courses for the Arkansas Fire Academy if they qualify in one of the following ways:

1. An instructor may teach all Firefighter Track modules plus other courses upon completion of Instructor I and Firefighter II.

2. An instructor may teach all Firefighter Track modules plus other courses upon completion of Instructor I and have been an active member of the fire department for three years.

Any instructor must have successfully completed a course before teaching that class.

All instructors must be approved by the assistant director of the Fire Academy.

Qualified instructors are not restricted to teach only in their department but may teach for other departments as well.

- Please Note -

Providing Linen

As of July 1, 2007, AFA will no longer provide students with linen on campus. Anyone attending classes and staying in our dorm will now need to bring twin sheets, pillowcases, towels and washcloths. Normal hygiene supplies will continue to be provided by the student. Thank you for your help.
As Chairman of the Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board, I feel it necessary to address several issues and answer questions that have been asked of me.

Since the inception of the current FPSB, we have been given many tasks to accomplish. We are now three boards combined into one. With those duties we advise two agencies as well as working with the 833 monies.

In December, proposals were offered to our board in regards to training programs. None of the proposals would have increased training hours each year. These proposals were an attempt to offer a better-rounded firefighter. A committee was appointed by me to review proposals and report back with information and recommendations. In that same board meeting, the director of the Arkansas Fire Academy asked for a clarification of the training requirements. Because many board members had an opinion, I asked the board if they were in agreement to request an Attorney General’s ruling. The board was in favor. ADEM drafted that request. Before the ruling could be given, a volunteer group asked a representative to sponsor a bill changing the language of the training requirements.

The proposed bill would have been a step back for the Arkansas Fire Service. The training requirement at that time stated: Firefighters shall maintain a minimum of six (6) hours per quarter and at least a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours per year of certifiable training meeting the standards of the Arkansas Fire Training Academy. We didn’t need to change the verbiage to something less than what we already had. The Arkansas Firefighters’ Association, The Professional Firefighters’ Association as well as the Arkansas Association of Fire Chiefs were opposed to the proposed bill. I was opposed to the bill and wanted the bill killed because we were waiting on the Attorney General’s ruling on the current training requirements. That is what the board had asked of me.

The groups present when the bill was initially proposed to the subcommittee, met together privately to discuss what each could live with. Once we left the room, all stated they could live with the amendments. ALL STATED THEY COULD LIVE WITH THE AMENDMENTS.

Within two weeks, the Attorney General’s office sent down a ruling saying the past training requirements were a minimum of 24 hours per year of certifiable training. The two essentially said the same thing. The only thing that was accomplished is we showed the legislation that, again, the fire service could not unite to agree or agree to unite.

That is how Act 362 came about. The above mentioned associations did not ask for the bill to be sponsored. Nor did the Arkansas Fire Academy ask for the bill to be proposed.

No one cares more about the Arkansas Fire Service than I do. I am the chief of a volunteer fire department. I know the stresses that are added to a volunteer department and compliances we are expected to meet. We have a great board and overall those members take their job very seriously and the end result is we will help the Arkansas Fire Service be successful.

We have the training mandate in place and we will do our best to help you meet the requirements. We are working with ADEM as well as the Arkansas Fire Academy to find the least painful or least stressful ways to help you comply. Remember that nothing has changed. The training mandates are still the same. There has not been a drastic increase in training requirements as you have been led to believe. We will make adjustments and make this work. The fire service has always been a group that must adapt and overcome on a minute by minute basis. We will adapt and overcome with this.

One comment I have heard is: The paid departments are trying to shut down the volunteers to get their 833 monies. Hopefully, the above explanation will make it clear, that is not the case.

If you have questions or comments I will attempt to address them. My email is available on the ADEM website.

Thanks for your help and understanding,

Stacey Caplener,
Chairman
Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board

New Faculty and staff at
Arkansas Fire Academy

Camden Office: Christopher Grinder, Instructor

Off Site: No new Faculty or Staff
Frequently asked questions

Question: How can I get record of my training?
Answer: Each person must submit a written request. This is private information and must be requested by the individual.

   The following information should be included:

1. Name
2. Social Security Number
3. Where the transcript is to be sent
4. Signature of the student

Question: Must an application be submitted for each class prior to the class being taught?
Answer: Yes, this provides us with the number to expect for the class, current biographical information, and allows us to check prerequisites.

Question: If I get a certificate that the name is not spelled correctly, can I get this corrected?
Answer: Yes, we attempt to get the name correctly but often paperwork is not submitted with the names written so as to be easily read and mistakes are made. Carefully print the name on the certificate and mail it back to the academy and a correct certificate will be returned. If the certificate contains an IFSAC seal special concerns must be met therefore we will need to have a phone number to call if we have questions.

Question: Are the certificates mailed to the department or the individual student?
Answer: They are mailed to the department therefore it is vital that we have updated information such as name of the fire chief and address of the department.

Question: How can I find information on Wildland Certification and Haz Mat Certification?
Answer: Wildland information is obtained from the Arkansas Forestry Commission (501-679-3581)
Haz Mat information is obtained from ADEM (501-730-9790)

Question: How can I get a schedule of classes?
Answer: Information is placed on Fire Mail on an on-going basis. If you are not receiving Fire Mail call your e-mail address to the Fire Academy and you will receive the information.

Question: How can I receive information about Firefighter Standards class?
Answer: Information is available on the website at:
http://www.sautech.edu/afa_entry.html

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Class Attendance

Over the past several years the classes conducted by the Arkansas Fire Academy have been on a steady increase. While this increase is great for the fire service and communities as well as the fire academy, there have been a few problems with students not showing up for the class. Whenever a person sends in an application for a class it is understood under some instances that the applicant may have to miss the class. If the student is not able to attend, the fire academy should be notified in advance; if this is not possible the applicant must call the academy and give a legitimate reason for not attending the class. If this notification is not completed, the applicant will be put on probation for a period of one year and will not be able to attend any fire academy classes for that time. Hopefully this will help in making sure that the minimum numbers required for classes are met and the fire academy can better serve the firefighters of the state of Arkansas.

After the fire mail was sent out that included the article on class attendance there have been a few questions that have come up. Whenever a class request is sent in and the minimum number of students has sent in their applications an instructor is assigned to that class. Some classes have to have at least 10 people to safely conduct the course and students have driven 3 or 4 hours to attend a class only to be told that class has been postponed due to lack of participation. These no show applicants do not directly affect the academy, but it affects the other students that choose to show up for class. It is not the intention of the fire academy to check every applicant that does not show up, but only those that continue to make a habit of signing up for classes and not attending. Your notification of cancellation will help us to notify your fellow firefighters of possible postponement and prevent any undue hardships to them.

Thanks,
Assistant Director, James Rubow

Paperwork, Paperwork, Paperwork!

Many of the issues concerning paperwork that have plagued the Fire Academy for many years are disappearing as policies and procedures are being set in place and the local training officers are adhering to these policies. As these policies are met, the quality of our records improves and the fire departments and firefighters of the State of Arkansas are better served. Our goal is to serve the State of Arkansas and meet the training needs of firefighters and fire departments. We cannot meet these goals without the help of the local training officers and departments.

However, we are still having departments and training officers that are not practicing good procedures for enrolling and reporting of classes taught. Applications must be received at the office in Camden no later than two weeks before the class. Often these are faxed to the office. At times the fax machine may malfunction and the fax is missed. It would be good for the person who is faxing the application to call and verify that the fax has been received.

Classes are to be requested and approved prior to teaching. Course request forms can be downloaded from the AFA website (www.sautech.edu/academics/Arkansas Fire Academy/AFA forms or by contacting Kilatha Steelman (870-574-1521). Once the date has been set for a class it can not be changed unless the change is cleared with either James Rubow, Assistant Director or Kilatha Steelman. This will give all students who have made application to attend the class an opportunity to be notified of the change.

Prerequisites are being check for ALL applications. If the applicant does not meet the requirements, the application will be rejected and the applicant will be notified either by phone or mail. Credit will not be received for the class if the applicant does not meet this requirement—even if they take the class! The classes are developed to teach in a sequence that builds on other classes; therefore, these prerequisites must be met. The Firefighter Track Module Program is developed for the firefighter to have the option of testing for Firefighter I and II and receive IFSAC certification upon completion of the first 17 modules. If the student has not completed all the necessary training, this testing can not be done.

Class rosters are to be sent in to the Camden office no later than two weeks after the completion of the class. The information will be entered when it is received. This will ensure the proper information is in the database when we check prerequisites for future classes and enable our staff to issue certificates in a timely matter.
What is a certified firefighter?

Am I a certified firefighter?

Over the years there have been some misconceptions about what being a certified firefighter means in the state. When a certain group of firefighters was asked this question the immediate response was “you have to have Firefighter I and or II.” Yet when another group was asked the same question their immediate response was “that you have taken Intro to Fire Protection, Personal Protective Equipment and Wildland firefighting classes”. So, who is correct?

To find the answer to this question one must go to the Arkansas Code for clarification and also look at what the National Fire Protection Association says regarding the matter. First, AR Code 20-22-805 creates the Office of Fire Protection Services and put it under the supervision of the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (A.D.E.M.) The Director of the Office of Fire Protection Services has as their responsibilities to carry out administrative functioning and directives of the Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board.

AR Code 20-22-806 deals with the Certification and Classification of Fire Departments. As most of you know, fire departments in the state apply for annual certification and classification from the Director of the Office of Fire Protection Services. If the department meets the requirements of the AR Fire Protection Services Board, then the Office Fire Protections Services will certify the department as having met the requirements. Part of the firefighter’s requirement under this section of the AR Code is that firefighters shall maintain a minimum of six (6) hours per quarter and at least a minimum of twenty-four (24) hours per year of certifiable training meeting the standards of the Arkansas Fire Training Academy. Certifiable training by the AR Fire Training Academy simply means the training must meet at least a portion of the adopted standards, which now reflects the training tracks recently adopted by the fire academy.

Part of the requirements of the Office of Fire Protection Services for fire departments to become certified is the requirement that a certain percentage of the fire department personnel must have successfully completed the Intro to Fire Protection (Intro), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and wildland firefighting courses. Completing this requirement makes the department eligible for certification but does not make the individual a certified firefighter.

AR Code 12-13-201 establishes the legal founding of the Arkansas Fire Training Academy. AR Code 20-22-811 establishes mandatory training certification requirements for full-time entry-level firefighters. This code also states that the AR Fire Training Academy shall utilize the NFPA 1001: Minimum Standard for Firefighter Personnel, as the standard for which certification will be based. Further, the AR Code states that “The academy shall be the certifying agency for fire service personnel”.

NFPA describes a Firefighter I (according to the 1001 Standard) as one that has demonstrated the knowledge and skills to function as an integral member of a fire-fighting team under direct supervision in hazardous conditions. The standard further describes a Firefighter II as one who has demonstrated the skills and depth of knowledge for function under general supervision. So, if your department is making interior attacks, team members should be certified at the Firefighter I or II level if you want to comply with the intent of the NFPA 1001 Minimum Standard. The firefighter track recently adopted by the Academy allows personnel to take a series of modules (1-17) that eventually covers all the material required to sit for the Firefighter I & II certification exams.
ATTN: All Fire Departments

AFA wants to ensure that our Firewatch newsletter reaches all fire departments within the state. In order to maintain an accurate mailing list, we need your assistance. Please check the mailing label on this newsletter and advise us if your department has any changes with regard to the mailing address and the fire chief’s name. Please contact Sarah Hixson at Arkansas Fire Academy at (870) 574-1521 or e-mail at shixson@sautech.edu with any corrections.