Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VIII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the concepts of certification and accreditation by Pro Board and IFSAC.
2. Identify courses accredited by your state training agency.
3. Identity other state and non-state agencies with accredited courses.
4. Compare and contrast the “pros” and “cons” of the Pro Board and IFSAC accreditation process.
5. Analyze service positions for which professional credentialing is offered.

Reading Assignment


Unit Lesson

This unit allows the students to become more familiar with Pro Board Fire Service Professional Qualifications System – International Accreditation for Fire Service Organizations. These two systems may be the most commonly used for international accreditation in regards to fire service training.

These two systems are commonly used by fire departments as part of their professional development program. Professional development is a key to helping personnel achieve their full potential.

Opinions may vary as to the value and overall benefits of affiliation with these two systems.

In some jurisdictions, the fire service was introduced to what many thought at the time as "big brother". The item, third party program validation, was a big question. With the introduction of IFSAC, the questions included who, what, why? The who is the International Fire Service Accreditation Council. The what is the validation of program delivery confirming subject matter meets or exceeds subject matter knowledge requirements of a particular NFPA standard. Why, because the oversight by a third party lends itself to insuring that training agencies and students do not collaborate during the testing phase.

Challenges with any credentialing process sometimes requires changes to a standard process of delivery for both training facilities and students. These are overcome by education of all stakeholders, and phased in steps where possible. From the perspective of a Fire Chief, third party validation can only provide additional protection when reviewed as part of liability management. The ability of a Chief to say my employee meets a level of "national" standards, or the ability for a training facility to defend the training program as meting a national standard provides great comfort.

With the introduction of Pro Board, the first question that may come to mind is, why the need for a second, third party validation oversight? The answer provided to some jurisdictions was that Pro Board is recognized more by no fire service entities, where IFSAC is readily recognized amongst fire service entities. The virtue of dual third party validation allows recognition by greater numbers of entities. The value when either or both third party validations are granted or accepted, is a larger pool of possible candidates for positions within a fire organization.
Recently, the challenge to the volunteer fire organization has been that IFSAC and Pro Board have diligently required the strict following of the NFPA standard when the requirement of a specific level of training (prerequisite) be acquired prior the next level. This has been very much an issue for courses such as NFPA 1021 Fire Officer which requires NFPA 1001-I/II first. Volunteer fire organizations which liked the third party oversight, now sometimes feel shut out from advanced levels of training.

Third party oversight is not designed to restrict access to programs, but to insure the quality of the program, and also require students attending advanced programs to hold cognitive and psychomotor skills needed to perform in the skill level of the program they are placed in (Personal Communications, Fire Chief Marshall Robinson).

Another organization that provides professional credentialing for certain fire service positions is the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE). This organization promotes the continuous quality improvement of fire and emergency service agencies that serve communities worldwide by providing training and career resource information. As a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation, CPSE supports and encourages agencies and personnel to meet international performance standards through various programs and the work of two commissions: the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) and the Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC).

CPSE serves as the governing body for the organizations that offer accreditation, education, and credentialing services to first responder and fire service industry professionals and agencies.

CPSE’s Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) assists emergency services officers in their professional development by providing officers with guidance on career planning through participation in the Professional Designation Program.

CPC offers several designations, including Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Chief EMS Officer (CEMSO), Chief Training Officer (CTO), Fire Marshal (FM), and Fire Officer (FO). CPC developed these designations using a model that looks at the "whole" officer. Achieving the designation requires a strong educational background; diverse participation in emergency services at the local, state, and national level; and demonstrated involvement in the broader community, all validated by emergency services peers.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard addresses the chief officer’s role using professional development in the following standard.

- 1021-6.2.7

How students can apply this lesson to their department:

- Talk with your department’s training officer about certifications available for various positions in your department.
- Review your options for obtaining designations through the CPSE.

References

https://www.publicsafetyexcellence.org/professional-credentialing/about-credentialing-cpc.aspx

Suggested Reading

Center for Public Safety Excellence
http://www.publicsafetyexcellence.org/

Key Terms

Refer to the key terms within the Pro Board website.