Georgina Fire & Rescue in Ontario Uplevels Its Training and Checks

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services composite department in Ontario, Canada, has three stations providing 24/7 coverage for various services, including fire suppression, medical aid response, hazardous materials response, and ice and water rescue response. With 40 full-time and 60 volunteer firefighters, having Vector Solutions' Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver, track and report mission-critical training and Check It to manage their inventory and apparatus checks has been valuable for keeping the department running smoothly.

Deputy Chief Michael Rozario, Training Officer Jeff Attwell, and Jackelyn, Administrative Assistant for Fire Prevention and Training, shared how they leverage Vector Solutions technology to improve accuracy and efficiency at Georgina Fire and Rescue Services.

Making the Switch to a More Efficient and Effective Training Platform

Implementing Vector LMS and Vector Check It at the same time in late 2019 boosted Georgina Fire and Rescue Services' ability to better meet their department's training and asset checks needs. "With Vector LMS, we like the graphics, the dashboard capability, and ease of use. It's customizable. So, we decided to try it."

Managing All Training for Firefighters with Varying Experience and Availability

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services uses the LMS to assign, track, and report on all training for recruits, probationary, full-time, and volunteer firefighters.

There are four training plans firefighters are placed on at Georgina Fire and Rescue Services, depending on their availability, relevant education, and experience:

- New firefighters with minimum NFPA 1001 I/II
- New firefighters with no NFPA 1001 I/II Certification background
- Ongoing Full-time - for career firefighters' continuing education
- Ongoing Volunteer - for volunteer firefighters' continuing education

With so many firefighters with different training needs, using Vector LMS to deliver courses to meet training requirements, track progress, and run progress and completion reports by group has been a great help.

"It's nice that we're able to track firefighter progress and recruit progress through the various courses and notices. It's a very good way to communicate with the entire staff on changes through notifications," said Officer Attwell.

Upleveling Training with Custom SCORM Credentials

Officer Jeff Attwell shared Deputy Rozario's sentiment towards the LMS's customization. He said, "For me, developing SCORM courses for online and blended learning, especially right now with COVID protocols in place in the province, it's been very beneficial." By uploading custom SCORM content, including courses, presentations, tests, and other interactive materials into the LMS, Georgina Fire and Rescue Services can easily create credentials that track progress and trigger notifications as needed when deadlines are approaching.

Jackelyn elaborated on how SCORM credentials are used to track required training. "There are two components to tracking credentials. We're tracking what firefighters are completing throughout the year, six months, or annually, depending on what we're hoping to accomplish and when. We're also tracking Ontario Fire Marshal certifications to ensure various individuals are meeting their certain standards."

Because Ontario Fire Code legislation has its own building code and fire code, Georgina Fire and Rescue Services needed to design their own custom content for their department, which they can easily assign and track with Vector LMS.

Recordkeeping, Repository, and Reminders Help Support Firefighter KPIs

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services utilizes many of the built-in features of the LMS to deliver, track, and report on firefighter trainings, including:

Activities Builder - Adding custom-built activities to credentials helps the department better manage progress and performance. "We use KPIs to see where we are, and tracking credentials is very handy on the platform. I've personally found it really helpful to be able to share credential records with the students to show where they are in a particular course." – Jackelyn

File Center - Using the master repository to house various materials, including policies, training, and other documents, helps improve accountability and standardization. "It's nice that we can create databases and content repositories for everything that we do so that if a standard changes, we can go back and see what the firefighters previously learned and update the content in the LMS to the new standards. It's very easy to make changes." – Training Officer Attwell

Bulletin Board - Customized announcements and quick links to resources right on the firefighters' dashboard enable the department to easily share important information upon login. "The bulletin board is a great feature, where you can add your own links, announcements, and whatever your department wants to highlight. The flexibility to be able to change and modify it to our department needs is nice." – Jackelyn

My Events - Used for notifying various divisions or shifts of scheduled weekly in-house courses and bi-weekly volunteer training through the LMS calendar, tracking who attended, and sending alerts of event changes. "I love the notification feature in the LMS. It's really great to have the ability to notify by email that something has become available and to sign up on the dashboard." – Jackelyn

Meeting Provincial Requirements with Vector Check It

Deputy Rozario shared how Georgina Fire and Rescue Services is using the Check It mobile app to meet requirements for vehicle checks, inspections, etc. "We use Check It to track when people are completing inspections because we get a timestamped notification when it is complete. We also use it for work orders. We've allowed our service vendors access to our system, so when there's a repair, they can see it on the mobile app and go in and make notes right in the system as they complete work," he stated.

"Tracking apparatus, vehicle, and inventory repairs through the app," Deputy Rozario added, "has ensured the department maintains industry standards for its SCBAs and other essential equipment. For example, all SCBAs have been loaded into Check It and firefighters can record their checks and the department can track current and historical records."

With a multitude of tankers, pumpers, aerials, and vehicles across the department's three stations, the recordkeeping functionality of the app has helped significantly. "It's great because each one of our trucks at our three stations has a tablet, so the firefighter can just grab the tablet and complete their required checks. That's been a huge bonus going from a paper-based system to digital. It was a massive improvement," remarked Jackelyn.