New Mexico State Fire Marshals Office Leading the Way to Complete, Accurate, and Accessible Firefighter Training and Certification Records

Randy Varela, State Fire Marshal for New Mexico and Austin Meuli, the Interim Deputy Fire Marshal for the New Mexico Firefighters Training Academy, have been talking with other Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) leaders about creating a single comprehensive data repository for all firefighter certification and training in New Mexico.

But the question that keeps popping up is … how?

What Is the Training And Certification Data Fragmentation Problem?

Currently, the New Mexico Firefighters Training Academy only tracks training required for certification, but not on-shift training that firefighter's complete at their local departments. The Academy often gets requests from local fire departments for training records to compile a complete history of a member's training profile. With no single, centralized repository for training and certification records, firefighter skill documentation is fragmented across local and state departments.
This causes challenges for:

Firefighters who want a complete history of their training and certification when they move to another department and apply for reciprocity.

Fire departments who need to provide a comprehensive training report to ISO assessors for maximum points and funding (in New Mexico, fire departments are funded based on their ISO classification).

Training officers who are responsible for tracking their members' training to validate compliance and plan future training to meet the needs of their crew.

Training officers who are responsible for providing training and certification reports for department and city leaders' planning and budgeting needs, as well as public records requests which can be critical in litigation cases.

State leaders need to assess and plan for public safety and emergency response budgets and resourcing for their state.

How Is New Mexico Addressing These Challenges?

New Mexico Fire Academy is one of the founding partners to leverage AgencyConnect to help solve this firefighter training and certification fragmentation problem. The how question that state leaders have been discussing is answered with AgencyConnect, a new solution that automates time-consuming training and certification management and provides a single repository across state certifying authorities, training academies, and local departments. Since the New Mexico Fire Academy already uses the Acadis® Academy Automation solution and thousands of firefighters in New Mexico use TargetSolutions to track and manage all their local department training, AgencyConnect will connect the two systems, creating the single training and certification repository for firefighters in New Mexico.

New Mexico Leads the way with AgencyConnect

The New Mexico State Fire Marshals Office has been instrumental in bringing this progressive solution to New Mexico, which will be one of the first states in the nation to solve this fundamental issue with training and certification records. Interim Deputy Fire Marshal Austin Meuli said, "If a local fire department training officer contacts me to get the student training and certification records for one of their members and I could pull up everything he has done at the Academy, plus all of the training completed at his local department with AgencyConnect, it would save us all a ton of time."

In New Mexico where fire departments receive funding based on ISO points, the ISO Training Tracker in TargetSolutions helps local departments by categorizing structural firefighter training into the correct 'bucket' to maximize every hour of relevant training and ISO points to get the best rating. "If we can consolidate everything to one database," said Mr. Meuli, "when a fire department is coming up for their next ISO assessment, they can get all their training records from the past three years, whatever they need, all in one place."

Acadis Academy Automation
Reduces Administrative Time By 30%

The New Mexico Firefighters Training Academy made some significant improvements in 2019 when they implemented Acadis® Academy Automation to help streamline and improve their academy operations. With approximately 4,000 first responders being trained each year by the Academy's permanent staff and adjunct instructors, there are a lot of logistics to manage. In addition to training students from the 400+ fire departments in the state, many students also come from other states, Indian Nations, the private sector, and Mexico. During the busiest training months, which are April through September, the Academy conducts anywhere from 40 to 60 classes a month.

Since implementing Acadis Academy Automation to schedule, register, and manage instructors, students, resources, and training operations—including online testing—the Academy has been able to reduce their administrative time by about 30%. Previous processes included manually going in and checking for prerequisites, enrolling students individually, and no ability for students to instantly access their test results.

Students are also able to log in to the Acadis portal to access their training and certification records, which can range from courses in basic fire suppression, technical rescue, hazardous materials, and terrorist response, to instructor qualifications, business management, and advanced management for chief officers. The self-serve portal has drastically cut down the time that the Academy used to spend answering phone calls and emailing certificates and training records to local departments.

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