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*Firefighter Thermal Exposure Workshop:
Protective Clothing, Tactics, and Fire
Service PPE Training Procedures
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Voices From the Field

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My comments are from the firefighters who don't get a chance to attend this conference. These are the individuals who have to live with the deliberations of this type of meeting. These are voices of students who attend the seminars on occupational safety and health looking for answers. I have asked these individuals what they need to develop an understanding of PPE and administer a viable program within their departments.

Their comments and concerns are valid and are as follows. Their biggest concern is understanding what is required of them by law and by standards, understanding how these laws and standards came about, plus which laws and standards are mandatory and which are voluntary.

The diversion within our profession itself is awesome. You have full paid, part paid, volunteer, union and non union departments. You have a host of varying political entities that regulate our profession. You have a host of varying political entities that regulate our professional. You have city managers, city councils, mayors, commissioners, and a variety of the above in combination. You have regulated and non-regulated OSHA states. You have states that require NFPA compliant PPE and some that don't address protective clothing for firefighters.

It's noted that we have consensus standard writing organizations that can't agree on what is needed for firefighters safety, yet write them. I constantly hear groups say we are committed to firefighters safety and look towards your best interest. Yet when the fire service asks for certain PPE criteria protocols they vote opposite our profession's point of view many times due to perceived or real fiscal potentials. Concepts are being twisted and manipulated that affect our PPE. As the battle for better understanding rages with in our profession and points of view differ in the standards arena, what can we do to help the rank and file provide the best PPE training? In an attempt to provide some guidance I have developed the following flow chart. (exhibit 1)

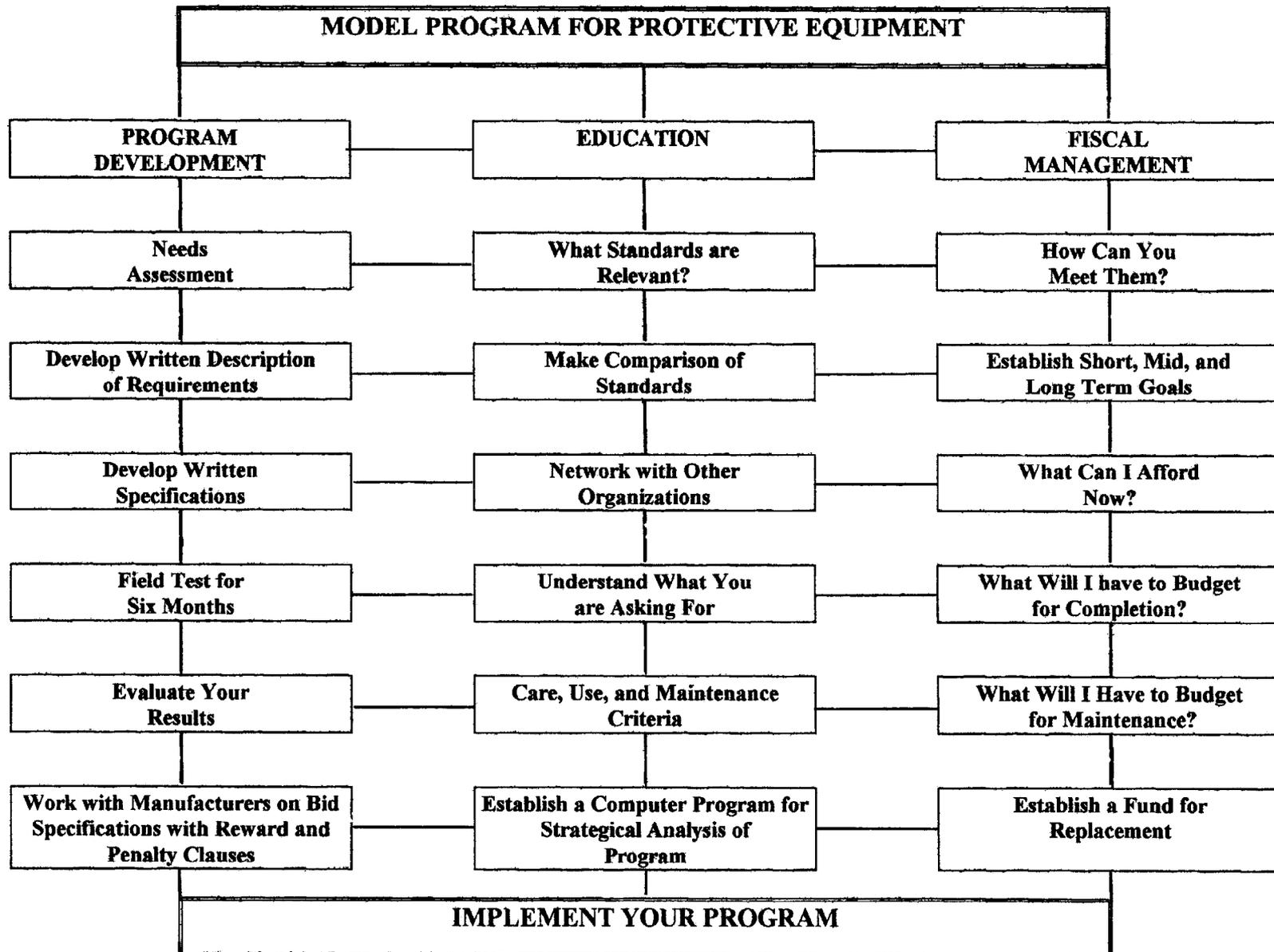
The overhead demonstrated a procedural system that could be adopted. It also denoted a variance between standard organizations. All things being equal is there a difference between a house fire in Seattle, Phoenix, Miami, Boston, London, Tokyo or Moscow? If the answer is no, which I believe it is, then why aren't we all training our firefighters the same philosophy?

I would suggest politics, money and relatively narrow points of view are reflective in this dilemma. While we are trying to decide and establish a laundry list for a cure the firefighter is still waiting. This slide was developed in 1979 by a presidential committee I was privileged to serve on. We have worked on 95% of these issues, yet we still haven't moved to completion.

I find it totally amazing that we would never contemplate having a firefighter used as a driver of the apparatus without hours of training and testing. We, on the other hand, issue firefighters PE with

no formal training on its limitation or maintenance and say go to work. Something is missing in this type of scenario.

NFPA and OSHA standards require training on PPE, however, there are no model guidelines available. The closest useful tool is OSHA 1910.132 Appendix B, which most departments don't even know exists and it is tailored, as usual, more toward industry than our profession. We need a good assessment training protocol to adequately evaluate what we presently utilize. We have defined our environment, now give us the tools to truly evaluate our needs for present and future design and training.



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