

# DOES YOUR FIREGROUND PERFORMANCE MEASURE UP?

## Evaluate & improve performance with Blue Card’s FREE After-Action Review System.

BY CHRIS STEWART  
B SHIFTER BUCKSLIP, Oct. 15, 2024

At Blue Card, we are constantly trying to make ourselves better. The latest addition to our improvement loop is our new After-Action Review system, an innovative platform we debuted at the 2024 Blue Card Hazard-Zone Conference earlier this month. The AAR system allows instructors and departments to measure their real-world performance against Blue Card’s incident command standards. As we all know, positive incident command performance improves fireground decision-making, actions and safety as we care for Mrs. Smith. This program allows departments to evaluate how their members apply Blue Card protocols on scene. Simply, it answers the question, “How are we doing?”

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ID	Incident No.	Address	Overall Rating	Date	Revised	Action
123084	1234567890	818 E Osborn Rd	63%	Aug 28, 2024 13:53	Oct 02, 2024	 
124653	1234	123 Bad Ass Drive	65%	Sep 24, 2024 08:10	Oct 01, 2024	 
124759	1234	911 Main Street	100%	Sep 25, 2024 13:30	Sep 27, 2024	 
124850	WDOF-0827240034	10625 Glendale Road	55%	Aug 27, 2024 05:13	Sep 27, 2024	 
124942	1234567890 Tutorial	911 Main Street	76%	Sep 28, 2024 13:33	Oct 02, 2024	 
125081	HZ Conference	223 Bruce	88%	Sep 26, 2024 11:30	Oct 04, 2024	 
125831	91919	618 N Central Av	0%	Oct 07, 2024 22:30	Oct 08, 2024	 

Showing 1 to 7 of 7 entries

Previous 1 Next

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The AAR system enables departments to evaluate incident command proficiency and connect performance to overall outcomes.

### Assess Individual & Group Performance over the Short and Long-Term

A department’s certified Blue Card trainers will use this tool internally to evaluate individual and collective performance at real-life events. These assessments can reinforce an effective training program or drive specific improvements. Departments can further use this platform to evaluate command training evolutions on the drill ground or in a command training center and for any process requiring assessment, such as promotions.

With this system, Blue Card instructors can enter drill or incident information into the AAR system to produce a standard evaluation grade.

Continued

After Action Incident Report Admin

Incident #: HZ Conference

Department: Shift

Incident Number: HZ Conference

Date: 09/26/2024

Time: 11:30 AM

Address: 223 Bruce

Initial Dispatch Information

Battalion / District: Battalion 1

Shift: A Shift

Initial Response Resources: F3 M

Units Responding: E4,E1,E201,E8,E14,R4,R204,T1,B1,B5

Building Type: Residential

Building Details: Enter building details

Dispatch Information Enroute: PD states house fire

Choose File: no file selected

Close Save Changes

**A department's certified Blue Card trainers will use the system internally to evaluate individual and collective performance at real-life events**

The graded fields include all Blue Card incident command benchmarks, beginning with the initial radio report, follow-up report, incident assignments, transfer of command, and standard fireground communication. The system can also evaluate strategic shifts and mayday communications and management—basically, all the components necessary when executing the 8 Functions of Command.

After Action Incident Report Admin

Initial incident action plan (IAP) - Location

Communicated side or floor of initial actions but not both

Notes: A/B corner, What floor?

Initial incident action plan (IAP) - Objectives

Select option: Fire Control and Primary Search

Fire Control

Primary Search

Fire Control and Primary Search

Other

Strategy

No objective(s) communicated

Select option: Defensive

Notes:

Resource Determination

Close Delete Save Changes

**The graded fields include all Blue Card incident command benchmarks.**

Connected to the graded fields is a tool to add and edit incident audio to provide clear context for the report's graded information. This tool allows an entire incident audio file to be stored and then broken into pieces to demonstrate all the Blue Card communications in a consistent, measurable way.

We had two goals when developing this system:

- 1) It needed to be firefighter-friendly.
  - 2) It needed to be able to change or influence fireground behavior.
- We believe we have accomplished this; however, we are in a constant state of fixing ourselves and will evaluate user feedback to make prompt adjustments continually.

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This reporting system is a value-added component to being a Blue Card department and instructor. There is zero added cost to use the system and store incident evaluations.

The screenshot displays the Blue Card AAR (After Action Review) system interface. At the top, it shows the incident number 'HZ Conference', the date '223 Bruce Sep 26, 2024', and the 'Overall Score: 88%'. The interface is divided into several sections: 'Incident #1: HZ Conference' on the left, 'Battalion / District' (Battalion 1) in the top center, 'Shift' (A Shift) in the top right, 'Initial Response Resources' (E4, E1, E201, E8, E14, R4, R204, T1, B1, B5) in the center, 'Building Type' (Residential) in the center, 'Dispatch Information Enroute' (PD states house fire) in the center, '911 Call Audio' (with a play button and a progress bar) in the center, 'Dispatch Audio' (with a play button and a progress bar) in the center, 'CAD Dispatch Notes' (with a play button) in the center, and 'Tracking Worksheet' (with a play button) in the center. The bottom of the interface includes contact information for Across the Street Productions.

**This tool allows an entire incident audio file to be stored and then broken into pieces to demonstrate all the Blue Card communications in a consistent, measurable way. Users can also upload the initial 911 call audio as well as dispatch audio.**

### Data Collection Reveals Training & Performance Trends

By collecting data over time, the AAR system enables departments to evaluate incident command proficiency and connect performance to overall outcomes. This is critical to the Blue Card ethos, "standard conditions direct standard actions to create standard outcomes." The system encourages continuous improvement, ensuring that departments learn from incidents to enhance operational effectiveness. Departments can spot patterns and get a clearer picture of skills and performance. An effective measurement tool, built on core principles like the Eight Functions of Command and the Strategic Decision-Making Model, is crucial for consistent performance tracking. Without one, evaluation is difficult and inconsistent.

The data, accessible only to individual departments and Blue Card, paints a detailed picture that spans weeks, months and years. It can validate the effectiveness of our training systems and personnel or identify training gaps. Departments can generate presentations and shareable reports for individuals or groups, creating historical views highlighting strengths and defining areas needing improvement. Reports can include incident audio, video, photos and documents. All imported public data is stored securely on Blue Card servers, except for video; the AAR platform will allow departments to link web-based videos from external sources to the AAR system.

The system is compatible with WAV audio files. The most common external video sources are YouTube or other cloud-based storage systems such as Dropbox or Microsoft OneDrive.

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### It Will Help Us Improve, Too

Blue Card exists in a state of continual improvement. The cumulative data collected through the AAR system will empower us to measure our training and certification program, compelling changes if necessary and inspiring new products to serve our customers better. This program will become a key component of our own review and revision process, driving the evolution of the standards and training we offer.

**As management guru Peter Drucker aptly stated,  
“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”**

**A**n IC’s performance is a clear indication of a department’s training systems and personnel. Objectively analyzing their performance provides valuable insights that can either verify or challenge a training program’s efficacy. Ultimately, the primary goal is to enhance fireground decision-making, actions and safety, with the IC playing the greatest role in achieving these outcomes. The AAR system helps our ICs evolve and improve and allows trainers to refine the Blue Card system, ensuring a consistent and thorough review and revision process.

Join us for a Blue Card instructor meeting and webinar Oct. 30 at 1 p.m. EDT. We’ll demonstrate how to use the After Action Review feature—available to all certified Blue Card instructors—to gather key data, enhance your department’s training, and drive continuous improvement. Discover how to unlock the full potential of this invaluable resource. **If you have a question, submit it live or via or email [johnvance@bshifter.com](mailto:johnvance@bshifter.com).**

Date: October 30, 2024

Meeting Times:

- Eastern Daylight Time (EDT): 1 p.m.
- Central Daylight Time (CDT): Noon
- Mountain Daylight Time (MDT): 11 a.m.
- Pacific Daylight Time (PDT): 10 a.m.

**CLICK HERE TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT.** If you can’t attend the live event, don’t worry—we’ll send you a link to the recorded meeting. Remember, registration is required to receive the link. **BS**



*Chris Stewart was hired by the Phoenix Fire Department in 1991. He spent much of his career as a firefighter and company officer working on busy engine companies. As a chief officer, he worked across many divisions of the PFD. Chris retired from the department in September 2022 and is now a lead instructor for the Blue Card Hazard-Zone Incident Command Training & Certification Program. He serves on the technical panel for UL-FSRI’s “Study of Coordinated Fire Attack Utilizing Acquired Structures.” He has been appointed to represent Blue Card on the NFPA 1700 Technical Committee, “Fundamentals of Fire Control Within a Structure Utilizing Fire Dynamics.” In November 2022, Chris was appointed deputy chief of the Rio Verde Fire District, where he leads the operational response, training and customer service efforts for the fire district in this growing community. Chris is married to his high school sweetheart and has two sons attending Arizona State University.*