

STUDY OF
THE
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
OF
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
IN
CONNECTICUT

October 1988

COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL
294 Colony Street
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

This report is intended to address the problems being experienced within the volunteer fire departments of Connecticut. It does not, nor should it be applied to, the operations or staffing levels of fire departments whose employees are covered by collective bargaining agreements.

It is assumed that wherever this report recommends or suggests that an incentive, a benefit, or a privilege is to be provided to volunteer firefighters, that a minimum standard of activity or participation on the part of the firefighter is prerequisite. The minimum standard of activity should be established by the organization granting the incentive, benefit or privilege. It should include participation at emergencies, at training sessions, and at other fire department functions.

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SUMMARY

At the request of the General Assembly's Public Safety Committee, the Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control undertook the project of surveying the health of volunteering within Connecticut's Volunteer Fire Departments.

The Commission enlisted the aid of a select group of individuals to assist in the study. This Advisory Committee expanded and enhanced the Commission knowledge of the issues facing volunteer firefighters.

The Commission circulated two questionnaires to all of the fire departments in the State. One hundred volunteer firefighters were also surveyed. The Advisory Committee analyzed the data from all three sources. They identified eight issues or problems that are impacting the volunteer fire service. They also identified potential solutions and forwarded them to the Commission in the form of recommendations.

The recommendations are practical in nature and require both state and local government involvement in order to be successful.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the data accumulated during three surveys made by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, research into similar projects and a review of literature on the subject. It also contains a series of recommendations which may alleviate the recruiting problems being experienced by volunteer fire departments.

The intent of the study was to determine the status or health of volunteer firefighting forces in the State of Connecticut.

BACKGROUND

Senator Reginald J. Smith, Senate Republican Leader, requested that the Legislature's Public Safety Committee formulate legislation that would establish a Blue Ribbon Commission on Volunteer Firefighters. The purpose of this Commission would be to study methods of retaining and promoting volunteer fire departments.

The Co-chairperson of the Public Safety Committee, Senator Marie A. Herbst, instructed the already existing, Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to study the health of the volunteer fire departments in Connecticut. Specifically, the Commission was to determine what problems, if any, volunteer fire departments are having in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

The Commission on Fire Prevention and Control instructed the State Fire Administrator to proceed with the study.

To broaden its expertise, the Commission elected to form an Advisory Committee to assist with the study. Representatives from each of the County Firemen's Associations, the Legislature's Public Safety Committee, the State's Departments of Health Services, Insurance, and Labor, the Governor's Council on Voluntary Action, the Fire Service Legislative Representative, and the National Volunteer Fire Council, were brought together to work on the project.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Identifying the Problem

In order to identify if a problem existed, a questionnaire was developed and sent to every fire department in the state. Fifty-eight per cent of the volunteer fire departments returned the questionnaire providing a very good data base for evaluation. (see: Appendix "A")

A second questionnaire was mailed to the volunteer fire departments. This instrument was intended to ascertain when and why shortages of volunteer firefighters were occurring. The return rate for this questionnaire was also very high, 40%. (see: Appendix "B")

A third questionnaire was mailed to one hundred, randomly selected, volunteer firefighters. It was designed to obtain a volunteer firefighter's perspective of the problem. The return rate was 31%. (see: Appendix "C")

Several magazine articles were located. Three reports of significance were also researched. These reports by the Governor's Council on Voluntary Action, the National Volunteer

Fire Council and the Academy of Fire Science - State of New York added to the pool of information being formulated for this study. (see: Appendix "D")

Evaluate the Problem

All of the information which was gathered indicated that the volunteer fire departments in Connecticut felt that they were, or will be, experiencing shortages of volunteer firefighters.

These shortages are most evident at daytime alarms, training sessions and small fires.

The next step was to determine why these shortages were occurring. The questionnaires provided the information needed to answer that question. The most frequently cited reasons were: members work out of town, new members can not afford to live in town, and members only respond to serious alarms. In addition, the firefighters questionnaire cited two other causes: members feel unappreciated and that there are too many training regulations.

Literature research found these factors to be reasonable and usual.

The data was presented to the Advisory Committee for analysis. They created a list of eight issues that was presented to the Commission.

Identify Issues and Solutions

The Advisory Committee went on to developing solutions which impact or address each of the identified issues. These were forwarded to the Commission for adoption.

Issues and Solutions as Identified by the Advisory Committee

1. Members Work Out of Town
 - recruit new volunteers from workers in town
 - release employees from work (state, local and industry)

One of the most significant reasons for shortages of volunteers during daytime hours (the hours of the greatest shortage) results from volunteer firefighters working out of town.

The State, as a "local" employer should release workers who are

volunteer firefighters to fight fires. This is not always done at the present time.

Other local private employers should be encouraged to release employees who are volunteer firefighters to fight fires. Incentives and recognition from the state and local government would help in this effort.

Local volunteer fire departments should seek out persons who are available during daytime hours. Special recruiting and training schedules are needed to convert these available individuals into volunteer firefighters.

2. Affordable Housing

- state subsidized mortgages
- bunking-in
- state built housing on state land

A substantial number of respondents and Advisory Committee members agreed that affordable housing is a major cause of the volunteer firefighter shortage. Many communities in the state are experiencing housing costs which exclude young persons from residing and volunteering in the community. Obviously, this issue is not particular to the volunteer firefighter shortage.

An effective solution can be implemented by the local volunteer fire department. Living space can be created within the fire station. Generally, this means adding a sleeping area. Kitchen, bathroom and living areas usually are already in place. This action provides the volunteer fire department with the immediate access to those in residence. It provides those in residence with a place to live while they save enough money to take up residence in the community. The increased activity at the firehouse will also encourage other firefighters to visit the firehouse more often.

The Advisory Committee also suggested that the State of Connecticut partially subsidize the mortgages of volunteer firefighters in exchange for their service to the community.

The Advisory Committee's final suggestion on the issue of affordable housing was to have the State of Connecticut, in cooperation with the local municipality, utilize state land and/or buildings for volunteer firefighter housing.

3. Alarms Which Turn Out To Be False

- smoke detector installation and performance regulations

- platooning

This issue is one of an excess number of alarms which turn out to be false. Often they are caused by malfunctioning smoke detector systems and institutional alarms.

This issue may be minimized by reducing the number of alarms which turn out to be false because of an improperly designed and/or installed smoke detector systems. The regulations which govern these systems should be clarified to aid in compliance.

It may be wise to "platoon" the membership to spread out the workload. Under this system, the membership is divided into platoons, squads, or shifts. Then, calls, either certain types of calls or calls during certain hours of day, can be assigned to a specific platoon. Platooning, however, requires a significant number of volunteer firefighters.

4. Alarm response
- selective assignments

The Advisory Committee indicated that certain types of alarms were receiving poor response from the volunteers. Fires in trash dumpsters are frequent and require few firefighters. The volunteers hear about this kind of fire and they stay at home.

The solution may involve the platooning of personnel. (see: #3, above)

5. Incentives
- college tuition
- pension
- recognition
- life insurance
- family involvement program
- recreational facilities passes
- business discounts
- credit volunteer service toward career employment
- circuit breaker tax

The Advisory Committee acknowledged that there is a lack of sufficient incentives for volunteer firefighters.

They suggested the following as potential solutions:

College tuition reimbursement - At the present time, National Guardsmen receive free college tuition in Connecticut's state-owned facilities of higher education. A similar situation

could be created for volunteer firefighters.

Pensions - The State and its municipalities should consider the establishment of pension programs for volunteer firefighters.

Enhanced recognition - The Advisory Committee felt that the efforts of Connecticut's volunteer firefighters must receive added recognition. One specific suggestion was to redesign the motor vehicle license plate so that it is readily recognized by the general public.

Life insurance - Local volunteer fire departments should consider providing their members with a life insurance policy.

Family involvement program - Considering the vast amounts of time that volunteers spend away from their families, it would be helpful for the volunteer fire department to sponsor activities which involve family members.

Recreational facilities passes - The State and municipalities could provide free or discounted access to recreational facilities such as swimming pools, museums, parks and campgrounds.

Business discounts - Local volunteer fire officials should arrange for discounts for their members who shop at local merchants.

Credit for volunteer service - Many volunteer firefighters aspire to career employment in a paid fire department. It would be an incentive to volunteers if they were able to receive credit for their volunteer activities when applying for a career position. This may be done in a manner similar to a veteran's preference system.

The State should consider applying a circuit breaker tax to volunteer firefighters.

6. Mandatory Requirements

- training OSHA/NFPA/EMS
- specialized units
- monitor legislation
- monetary issue

The Advisory Committee cited various mandatory requirements as issues that were causing problems for volunteer fire departments. Training, emergency medical, OSHA and NFPA regulations were

specifically mentioned.

The Advisory Committee suggested that volunteer fire departments establish specialized units to deal with assignments such as emergency medical services and hazardous materials emergencies. These special units could receive the necessary training without necessarily cross-training as volunteer firefighters.

The Advisory Committee also suggested that legislation be monitored so that new regulations can be assessed prior to implementation.

The Advisory Committee also noted that these same issues sometimes cause monetary problems for the volunteer fire department.

7. Personnel Pool

- eliminate fires
- utilize municipal employees
- recruitment campaigns (state and local)
- campaign to release workers
- recruiting from non-traditional pools

The Advisory Committee recognizes that the pool of personnel from which to recruit volunteers has shrunk.

One solution is to eliminate or reduce the number of fires to which a volunteer fire department must respond. The most effective method to reduce fire losses is through comprehensive sprinkler/smoke detector programs.

The municipality, as an employer, should be tapped as a source of volunteer firefighters.

An extensive recruitment campaign conducted by the State and by local governments to recruit volunteers may be productive.

The State and local governments should also encourage local employers to release volunteer firefighters to perform emergency services. This may require the State to provide clear Workers' Compensation guidelines and incentives without impacting upon existing laws.

The local volunteer fire department must review their present recruitment strategies. They must identify non-traditional personnel pools and recruit them.

8. Municipal Workers' Compensation
- municipality should provide to employee

Occasionally, a career (paid) firefighter from a municipality is injured while performing volunteer firefighting duties for the municipality in which the firefighter resides. There should be no question with whom the Workers' Compensation claim should be filed. The municipality with which the volunteer is associated should pay the claim.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is intended to address the problems being experienced within the volunteer fire departments of Connecticut. It does not, nor should it be applied to, the operations or staffing levels of fire departments whose employees are covered by collective bargaining agreements.

It is assumed that wherever this report recommends or suggests that an incentive, a benefit, or a privilege is to be provided to volunteer firefighters, that a minimum standard of activity or participation on the part of the firefighter is prerequisite. The minimum standard of activity should be established by the organization granting the incentive, benefit or privilege. It should include participation at emergencies, at training sessions, and at other fire department functions.

The Commission on Fire Prevention and Control recommends the following actions to aid in the reduction of the shortage of volunteer firefighters in the State of Connecticut.

A. State and/or Local Government

A-1. Fire Sprinkler/Smoke Detector Program

An effective means of reducing the loss of life and property due to fires is the use of fire sprinklers in connection with smoke detector systems. Life loss and injuries can be reduced by at least 80%. Property losses can be cut by 50% or more. Fire suppression forces will find fires which may be smaller and easier to extinguish.

Although, Connecticut presently requires fire sprinklers in several types of buildings, the biggest areas of danger are

unprotected. Residential properties account for the vast majority of fire deaths and injuries. Connecticut's sprinkler laws should be extended to cover all properties in which people live, work or congregate. Until this type of state legislation is enacted, local municipalities should consider an ordinance to accomplish the same end. Any ordinance should be based upon national codes and standards and be approved by the Bureau of the State Fire Marshal.

A-2. Aggressive Fire Prevention Program

Fire prevention programs can reduce the number of fire incidents. Home inspections that identify and correct fire hazards will prevent fires from starting.

State and local government should aggressively campaign for fire prevention through demonstrations, exhibits, media announcements and inspections.

A-3. Recruitment Campaign

A-3a. State government should develop a multi-media recruitment campaign to attract persons to the volunteer fire department. This recruitment package would contain video tape messages, radio messages and print media text. State and local volunteer fire officials should distribute these packets to media representatives for maximum coverage and exposure.

A-3b. State government should develop a promotional campaign which encourages employers to release employees who are volunteer firefighters to respond to fires. Local volunteer fire officials should follow-up this promotional effort by personally meeting with employers.

A-4. Recreational Facilities Passes

State and local government should provide volunteer firefighters with free passes to recreational facilities.

B. State Government

B-1. Resources for Daytime Volunteer Firefighters

Traditionally, volunteer firefighter programs, especially training, has been centered on evenings and weekends. Daytime volunteer firefighters are the hardest to come by and most

difficult to recruit. This is further complicated by a lack of training resources and services for the daytime volunteer firefighter. State sponsored training and resources should be made more accessible to this important group of individuals.

B-2. Release State Workers to Fight Fires

Statutory authority already exists to permit state agencies to release employees who are volunteer firefighters to fight fires (Ref: CGS 5-249). The State, as an employer, should set an example by being liberal with this provision. It is difficult to convince the private employer to release volunteer firefighters from work when the State does not routinely provide this service to the community.

B-3. Redesign License Plate

The State should redesign the motor vehicle license plate for volunteer firefighters so that it provides definite recognition with the general public.

C. Local Government

C-1. Recruit From Non-Traditional Pools of Personnel

Local government officials should identify pools of personnel which are available to assist the fire department during daytime hours.

C-1a. Municipal Employees - Can be trained and utilized for firefighting purposes notwithstanding any charter, ordinance or bargaining agreement. This may necessitate an agreement between the volunteer fire department and the municipality. These employees may already be volunteer firefighters in the community where they reside.

C-1b. Local private employers - Convince private employers that it is in their best interest to support their volunteer fire department. Private employers may be more willing to release employees who are volunteer firefighters to fight fires if the employees are only called for bona fide emergencies. This may require the adoption of a method of selectively dispatching these employees.

C-1c. Senior citizens - While senior citizens may not be interested in actual firefighting duty, they may be willing to do

inspections, administrative work, and day care duties.

C-1d. Housekeepers - When day care services are available at the fire station, housekeepers may be willing to assist the volunteer fire department during the day.

C-1e. These daytime recruiting programs could be implemented by an individual whose sole purpose it is to recruit and coordinate daytime volunteers. This person may be a retired managerial-type person.

C-2 Affordable Housing

C-2a. The local volunteer fire department should develop a bunking-in program to provide housing for volunteer firefighters who would not otherwise live in town.

C-2b. The local volunteer fire department should consider purchasing real estate and renting it to its members.

C-3. Too Many Alarms Which Are Found To Be False

C-3a. Establish a selective response program or platooning system to limit the number of alarms that a volunteer firefighter must answer.

C-4. Incentives

C-4a. Local volunteer fire departments should sponsor various local recognition programs to highlight the activities of the volunteers. People want to be part of active and proud organizations.

C-4b. Local volunteer fire departments should develop family involvement programs; picnics, stress management, ladies and children auxiliaries, etc.

C-5. Mandatory Requirements

Cross-training individuals to do volunteer firefighting, hazardous materials handling, emergency medical service, rescue, etc., requires an enormous commitment. It may, in fact, be impossible to cross-train a volunteer firefighter to do all of these specialized functions. Consider developing special teams to handle these specific functions.

C-6. Mutual Aid

Improved mutual aid agreements may provide additional volunteer firefighters at the scene of emergencies. Consider the establishment of mutual aid agreements which automatically dispatch neighboring volunteer fire departments to an emergency scene during low staffing hours.

C-7. Re-recruitment

Local volunteer fire department officials should begin re-recruiting past members of their fire department. This pool of personnel may be already trained and willing to participate once again. This strategy may be especially effective after the volunteer fire department undergoes substantial changes in leadership, policies, or organizational structure.

Other Considerations

The Commission on Fire Prevention and Control recognizes that many issues impact upon the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. This report makes specific recommendations to State and Local governments to help alleviate the shortages of volunteer firefighters in Connecticut.

The Commission sees the issue of affordable housing as one which impacts many more groups of people besides volunteer firefighters. As affordable housing is addressed in a statewide context, volunteer firefighters should be considered as one of the groups impacted. The Commission merely wishes to highlight the affordable housing issue for volunteer firefighters. Recommendations may be forthcoming as the statewide strategy for affordable housing is articulated.

The Commission is not prepared to make a recommendation on the question of tuition assistance for volunteer firefighter higher education costs. While this type of a program may indeed provide volunteer firefighters with an additional incentive to serve their communities, it is a very complex issue. The Commission suggests that local volunteer fire departments establish their own programs and guidelines for volunteer firefighter higher education tuition assistance.

APPENDIX A

Statistical Summary QUESTIONNAIRE #1
Volunteer Firefighter Survey

158 Volunteer Fire Departments responded to the survey. This represents 58% of all of the volunteer fire departments. Those not responding, 42%, may be experiencing sufficient staffing.

Question #8

Do you have a shortage of volunteers?

Yes	No
116	42

Question #9

Do you have a shortage of volunteers at the scene of emergencies?

Yes	No
104	53

Note: 41 commented that their shortage occurred during the daytime hours.

Question #10

Do you predict that you will have a shortage of volunteers?

30 of those that answered "No" to Questions 8 and 9 indicated that they expected to have a shortage.

Question #11

When?

Responses ranged from "Next Year" to 1998.

The average response was a projection of 5 years before a shortage occurs.

Question #12

Do you want the State of Connecticut to help you in recruiting and retaining volunteers?

One hundred twenty-two said "Yes" and twenty said "No".

Question #13

What kind of help do you want?

There were numerous responses to this question. Clearly, those responding to the questionnaire wish to receive funds from the State. The top vote getters were:

1. Property Tax Relief	46	Votes
2. State Funded Pension Program	41	"
3. Public Relations Campaign	33	"
4. Campaign to Encourage Work Release	10	"

APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE # 2

7/88

NAME of FIRE DEPARTMENT ...<268 questionnaires mailed to FD w/vol
NAME of FIRE CHIEF.....<108 returned...40% return rate.....
PERSON FILLING OUT QUESTIONNAIRE
ADDRESS ,
PHONE

NUMBER of VOLUNTEERS TOTAL:22-407.. ACTIVE:22-175. OTHER:0-
NUMBER of CAREER TOTAL: 0-72.... 309

Number of alarms for each of the last five years:
Range 15-3400 Generally have increased by 8-12%, some decreased

AVERAGE number of volunteers responding to an alarm:
Range 2-68 Decreased by about 2%, many stayed unchanged, no trend

We are experiencing shortages of volunteers ...
at meetings.....yes 37%
at training sessions.....yes 58%
at daytime alarms.....yes 87%
at nighttime alarms.....yes 14%
at small fires.....yes 51%
at large fires.....yes 13%
at rescue calls.....yes 18%
at medical calls.....yes 27%
at haz mat calls.....yes 25%
at social functions.....yes 26%
at fund raisers.....yes 44%

We believe we are experiencing shortages because:

-members work out of town.....yes 81%
-new members can not afford to live in town.....yes 54%
-too much time required for meetings.....yes 11%
-too much time required for training.....yes 44%
-too much time required for emergency operations..yes 39%
-too many alarms.....yes 14%
-not enough alarms.....yes 21%
-too many small (nuisance) fires.....yes 31%
-members feel unappreciated.....yes 31%

-can't get out of work to answer alarms.....yes 44%
-members only respond to serious alarms.....yes 52%

Does the town, municipality or fire district provide money for:

-equipment?.....yes 89% Amount: \$.....
-fire department operations?.....yes 92% Amount: \$.....
-firefighter protective equipment?.yes 87% Amount: \$.....
-social events?.....yes 11% Amount: \$.....
-insurances?.....yes 86% Amount: \$.....

Is the fire department budget a "line item" in the town budget?
yes 71% Amount: \$.....

APPENDIX C
 STATISTICAL SUMMARY
 FIREFIGHTER QUESTIONNAIRE
 VOLUNTEERISM STUDY

Return rate of 31%, 95 questionnaires distributed.

Are you a volunteer firefighter? yes no (circle one) years.

 Active member years. Social member years.

All but one reported that they were presently active. Years of service ranged from 3 - 31 years.

Years of Service x
 x x x
 x x x x x
 x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x
 Years 3 4 5 6 7 9 10 12 13 14 17 18 20 21 22 31

When you were an active volunteer firefighter:

How many alarms per month did you answer? Range 3-40

 Generally answered 50% of FD calls:

How many alarms per month did your fire department have?

 Range 4-100; in two cases where FD alarms were above 40/month (83-100) the individual's response to alarms did not exceed 15 calls per month.

How many hours per month did you spend on training?hours.

 Range 3 -25

Training Hours/Month
 x
 x x x x
 x x x x x x x
 x x x x x x x x x x x x
 Hours 3 4 5 6 8 9 10 12 15 20 25

How many hours per month did you spend on fund raising?hours.

 Range 0 - 10

Fund Raising Hours/Month
 x
 x x
 x x
 x x
 x x
 x x x x
 x x x x

Hours x x x x x x x
 0 1 2 4 6 8 10

How many hours per month did you spend at meetings?hours.
 Range 1 - 25

Meeting Hours/Month

 x
 x
 x
 x
 x x x
 x x x
 x x x x x
 Hours x x x x x x x x x
 1 2 3 4 5 8 10 16 25

How many hours per month did you spend on other F.D.business?....hrs.
 Range 0 - 80

Other FD Business Hours/Month

 x
 x x x
 x x x x x x
 x x x x x x x x x x x x x
 Hours 0 2 3 4 5 6 8 10 12 15 16 20 80

TOTAL Time Hours/Month
 Range 7 -101

 x
 x x x x x
 Hours 7 10 12 13 14 15 17 18 20 22 24 29 38 52 71 101

RATE AS CAUSES FOR DECLINE
 OF VOLUNTEER ENROLLMENT

Rate on a scale from 1 to 5; 1 being little cause and 5 being major cause.

	little			major
	1	2	3	4
Conflict with fire department leaders.....	13	9	1	3
Work out of town.....	8	4	7	6

Too much time required for meetings.....	15	7	6	2	0
Too much time required for training.....	10	9	5	3	3
Too much time required for emergency operations.....	17	9	3	1	0
Too many alarms.....	23	4	1	0	1
Not enough alarms.....	12	4	6	6	1
Conflict with other members.....	9	9	5	4	3
Too many small (nuisance) fires.....	20	6	2	1	0
Can not afford to live in town.....	6	2	4	7	11
Feel unappreciated.....	9	8	4	3	6
Firefighting is too dangerous.....	17	8	1	4	1
Too much work.....	9	7	7	7	0
Can't get out of work to respond to emergencies.....	8	8	6	4	4
Training regulations.....	9	7	5	4	5
Safety regulations.....	12	5	7	2	4

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF NEW YORK STATE STUDY

The Commission's staff has reviewed a report that the State of New York did on the subject. Their report indicated that the following are the major concerns of New York's fire departments:

1. Declining enrollment in volunteer departments
2. Limited time volunteers can spend volunteering
3. Increased training requirements
4. Need for retention incentive program
5. OSHA equipment requirements are causing financial hardships
6. Inability to obtain liability insurance
7. Cost of automotive insurance
8. Cost of borrowing money
9. Increased awareness of dangers of firefighting

They cited the following problems:

1. Personnel not available during daytime hours
2. Dual employment in a household cuts into hours available for volunteering
3. The fire house is no longer the focal point of the community
4. Recruitment and retention programs may not eliminate the daytime shortage of firefighters
5. Many departments are having problems remaining financially solvent

The New York committee made the following recommendation:

TOWN-WIDE OR COUNTY-WIDE FIRE DEPARTMENTS WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE OPERATIONAL ADVANTAGES OVER SEVERAL SMALLER INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS.

1. Ability to provide incentive for membership
 - a. tax reductions
 - b. longevity award program
 - c. less competition for new members
 - d. uniform training
 - e. tuition assistance in return for services rendered
 - f. meal allowance for those bunking in or on duty during meal time
2. Greater purchasing power

- a. quantity purchases of supplies and equipment
- b. fleet insurance policies
- c. larger deductible on liability insurance
- 3. Greater bonding power
- 4. Ability to construct a broader tax base
- 5. Centralized administration of training, maintenance, investigation, recordkeeping and communication
- 6. Speciality units
 - a. SCUBA divers
 - b. hazardous materials
 - c. public education
 - d. ice rescue
 - e. video/photo unit

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF TYPE OF INFORMATION THAT CAN BE FURNISHED TO LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Recruiting & Retaining Volunteer Firefighters

Options for Local Fire Departments

Local fire departments which are faced with a shortage of volunteer firefighters may wish to consider the following as possible remedies to the problem.

1. Develop a system to keep or retain the volunteers that you already have.

Provide adequate insurance coverages to protect your firefighters against loss of income, medical bills, lawsuits, loss of personal property, etc.

Provide a financial income for the operations of the fire department which will relieve the firefighters from having to conduct fund raising activities.

Provide adequate safety devices and personal protective equipment for each firefighter.

Provide the operational and firefighting equipment needed by the firefighters to do their job.

Provide your firefighters with education about communicable diseases.

2. During recruitment campaigns expand the search beyond the usual pools of candidates.

Fire department ancillary functions may be staffed with persons who may not be willing to volunteer as a firefighter. Recruiting non-firefighting volunteers to perform these functions will free up the time of the personnel who strictly fight fires. These functions may include: fund raising, office administration, maintenance, forms and records management, public fire education, communications, inspections, child care for daytime responders, etc.

Expand recruitment pools to include high school and

college students, senior citizens, and minorities. Locate these pools of candidates through schools, senior centers, and church groups.

3. Distinguish between fire and emergency medical training.

Establish separate job descriptions for firefighters and emergency medical responder so that volunteer personnel who wish to function as only one type of volunteer can do so. Eliminate the requirements for cross-training as both an emergency medical responder and a firefighter.

4. Reduce the number of responses by that a volunteer fire department is required to make through an aggressive community awareness campaign.

The establishment of a residential fire sprinkler program will cut the number of serious fires and the need for volunteer firefighters.

A comprehensive fire prevention program can reduce the number of fires within a given jurisdiction.

6. Utilize the resources and personnel from neighboring departments.

Improved mutual aid agreements can provide additional resources and personnel to fire departments which are experiencing shortages at the scene of emergencies.

7. Consider consolidating smaller fire departments and districts into town-wide and/or county-wide fire protection districts.

8. Establish a position and employ a full-time manager for the volunteer fire department.

The person in this position would be available to operate a full-time recruitment and retention program for the department thus assuring the department of a full roster of personnel. The person may be assigned other duties such as fund raising, record keeping, etc.

9. Employ daytime drivers to get the fire apparatus to the scene of an emergency.

