



Supporting Those Who Serve

Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet

- Volunteers are critical to our nation's fire and emergency services. 69% (or 786,150) of firefighters in the U.S. are volunteers. These volunteers save communities \$140 billion annually.
- However, the number of volunteers has declined by about 12% since 1984. During the same timeframe, call volume has nearly tripled, largely due to the increase in EMS calls. In 2013, there were over 31 million calls to local fire departments.
- The volunteer fire service is an aging population. Since 2000, there has been a 14.9 percent drop in the number of firefighters under the age of 40 in communities with 2,500 or fewer residents. Communities this size rely almost entirely on volunteers.
- There are many reasons for these trends, including:
 - increased time demands placed on firefighters and EMTs
 - more rigorous training requirements
 - proliferation of two-income families whose members have less available time
 - younger people moving out of smaller communities for better job opportunities
- The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) was awarded a Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant from FEMA to conduct a nationwide recruitment and retention campaign. Fully launching on Dec. 1, 2015, this is the first national campaign of its kind.
 - The 'Make Me A Firefighter' campaign helps departments reach potential volunteers as well as raise awareness among the public of the need for volunteers.
 - NVFC research found that there is considerable interest in volunteering as responders among Millennials (18-34 year olds), women, and minority populations, but these remain largely untapped audiences in the volunteer fire service. Lack of awareness is a key obstacle.
 - Among Millennials, 44% have at least some interest in volunteering as a firefighter or EMT.
 - 41% of survey respondents did not know if their department used volunteers and 79% did not know if their department was seeking volunteers.
 - Departments can go to portal.nvfc.org to register with the campaign, post their volunteer opportunities, and access customizable recruitment tools and training.
 - The public can go to www.MakeMeAFirefighter.org to find volunteer opportunities and connect with their local fire/EMS department.