

Running Head: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in a Combination Fire Department

James G. Sanford

Springfield Fire Department, Springfield, New Jersey

Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotations marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____
James G. Sanford

Table of Contents

Certification Statement.....	2
Abstract	5
Background and Significance.....	7
Literature Review	17
Procedures	24
Limitations and Assumptions	27
Results	28
Figure 1 – SFD Active Volunteer Membership Histogram (1989 to 2013).....	29
Table 1 – SFD Volunteer Retention Demographic (1989 to 2013).....	30
Table 2 – SFD Recruitment Methods (2010 to 2013).....	31
Table 3 – Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey Methods.....	32
Table 4 – Public Survey Respondent Demographics.....	33
Table 5 – Reasons to Volunteer for the Springfield Fire Department.....	34
Discussion	42
Recommendations	47
References	51
Appendix A – SFD Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Policy	54
Appendix B - Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey	59
Appendix C – Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey.....	63
Appendix D – Springfield Former Volunteer Firefighter Feedback Survey	67

Appendix E – Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey Answers73

Appendix F - Springfield Former Volunteer Firefighter Feedback Survey Answers.....76

Abstract

Springfield volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention was examined for the previous 25 years – focusing on volunteer membership statistics, volunteer recruitment methods, and length of volunteer retention. Within its history, the Springfield Fire Department (SFD) has transitioned from a fully volunteer fire company to volunteers supported by career firefighters, then to career firefighters supported by volunteers and now, to almost a wholly career fire department. The problem is the SFD has not been successful in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. The purpose of this research is to determine what improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention methods are possible during the performance period of SFD's Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. The following four research questions were answered: a) What is the success rate of the Springfield Fire Department in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters? b) What is the proclivity of Springfield residents to volunteering as a firefighter? c) How are volunteer recruitment and retention programs implemented by other combination fire departments? d) What volunteer recruitment and retention methods should be integrated in SFD's SAFER grant project? The procedures were based on descriptive research that used data analysis and three survey instruments to establish the basis for recommendations for what SFD recruitment and retention methods should be improved, changed or remain intact. The results found that recruitment methods need to be more systematic, there needs to be an increase in personal promoting and greater retention incentives need to be offered to stimulate volunteer motivation. Recommendations include developing a volunteer firefighter advisory committee and the designation of a membership coordinator.

Keywords: Volunteer, Combination, Recruitment, Retention, SAFER

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention in a Combination Fire Department

The National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program enhances the participant's professional development through a unique series of four graduate and upper-division-baccalaureate equivalent courses. *Executive Leadership* is the fourth year course in the program. One of the skills taught is how to utilize executive-level processes to diagnose what is happening in the organization and take action to tackle the problem.

The topic of volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention became especially relevant in 2010 when the Springfield Volunteer Fire Company No.1 (SVFCo #1) became an inadequate and unsustainable organization. The Township of Springfield amended an ordinance to create one unified fire department of both paid and volunteer members serving under the direct supervision and control of the fire chief. The fire chief applied for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant for volunteer recruitment and retention to provide the necessary funds to rebuild the volunteer division.

The Springfield Fire Department received a SAFER grant award in 2011 and began implementing the recruitment activities. The SAFER grant activities have not increased the number of volunteer firefighters. The problem is the SFD has not been successful in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. The purpose of this research is to determine what improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention methods are possible during the performance period of the SFD's SAFER grant.

Descriptive research will be used to examine SFD volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention performance, to determine public interest in becoming a volunteer firefighter, to identify alternative strategies to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters and to collect feedback

from former SFD volunteer firefighters. The research approach will include reviewing published literature, examining SFD volunteer firefighter membership data and collecting data from three survey instruments to answer the following research questions: a) What is the success rate of the Springfield Fire Department in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters? b) What is the proclivity of the Springfield residents to volunteering as a firefighter? c) How are volunteer recruitment and retention programs implemented by the other combination fire departments? d) What volunteer recruitment and retention methods should be integrated in the Springfield SAFER grant project? The results of this study will be presented and recommendations provided to guide future actions.

Background and Significance

The Springfield Fire Department (SFD) is a career/volunteer combination fire department with an Insurance Service Office (ISO) 4 classification. It provides structural fire suppression, fire code enforcement, first responder medical service, operational level rescue service, operational hazardous materials service and public fire prevention education. The fire department responds from a single station with three engine companies, one ladder company, one medium rescue company and one foam tender. The fire department responds to an average of 1,800 calls per year.

Firefighters and fire officers are certified in accordance with New Jersey Division of Fire Safety regulations and most members are also certified fire inspectors and fire instructors. In addition, all members are certified by the New Jersey Department of Health as Emergency Medical Technicians. The fire department provides specialized training in hazardous materials, flammable liquid firefighting, confined space, and trench rescue. The Springfield Fire

Department responds regionally with a 4,250 gallon foam tender as part of the Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative.

The Springfield Fire Department has 22 sworn career firefighters, two volunteer firefighters and three civilian personnel under the command of a career fire chief. The fire department is organized into four duty tours under the operational management of a career deputy fire chief. Working a 24-hour-on, 72-hour-off schedule, the duty tours are comprised of four career firefighters and occasionally one or two volunteer firefighters supervised by a fire captain. The duty tour staffs the first-due engine with a minimum manning of three career members. In 2013, the Springfield Fire Department handled 93.8% of responses with the on-duty compliment of career personnel. Beyond the on-duty staffing, the SFD recalled off-duty career personnel and volunteer firefighters to provide back-fill station coverage for another 2.9% of responses and upgraded to a full assignment for the remaining 3.3% of responses.

As a combination fire department, Springfield needs volunteer firefighters to serve as force multipliers to keep fire losses at a minimum, effectively handle major emergencies, and provide necessary staffing. Currently, there are two active volunteer firefighters who are able to respond to alarms and support the career members in all facets of the services they provide. Volunteer firefighters are required to perform a minimum of 15 duty hours per month, attended bi-monthly departmental drills and can receive a quarterly stipend for responding to recall incidents. Each volunteer firefighter is assigned to a specific career duty tour for their duty service and training.

The Township of Springfield is a suburban residential community with a moderate amount of light industry and a population of 15,817. The community is located on the northern edge of Union County, New Jersey in an area covering 5.06 square miles. Major highways and roadways

pass through Springfield, including Interstate Route 78, U.S. Route 22, Route 24, and Route 124, as well as County roads 509 and 577 which makes commuting to other parts of New Jersey very convenient. Newark Liberty International Airport is approximately ten miles east of Springfield.

In its 2013 rankings, *New Jersey Monthly* magazine ranked Springfield as the 269th best place to live in New Jersey – down from 85th in 2010. In compiling *New Jersey Monthly* magazine's 2013 Top Towns list, researchers at Leflein Associates, an independent research firm from Ringwood, NJ, considered five categories to represent the quality of life in New Jersey's 514 municipalities: home values, property taxes, crime rate, school performance and lifestyle. (New Jersey Monthly Magazine, 2013) It is uncertain if *New Jersey Monthly's* revised 2011 methodology to more accurately rank the top towns in the Garden State attributed to Springfield's dramatic decline, but it is notable to mention the significant decrease in its ranking.

Understanding the community will provide the necessary information for volunteer firefighter recruitment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the current population is estimated at 15,817 which is an increase of 2.8% since 2000. There are 6,890 housing units at an average density of 8,161.5 people per square mile in residential areas. The racial makeup of the township is 82.5% White, 7.7% Asian, 6.3% African American, 1.8% from other races, and 1.8% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race is 9.5% of the population.

The American Fact Finder (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014) produced the population, demographic and housing estimates for years 2008 to 2012. There are 6,890 households of which 29.6% have children under the age of 18 living in them, 32.3% have individual(s) 65 years and over, 52.2% are married couples living together, 9.5% have a female householder with no

husband present, and 34.7% are non-families. Individuals living alone make up 30.5% of all households. The average household size is 2.32 and the average family size is 2.92.

According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs (2006) regarding volunteer firefighter recruitment, fire departments should be looking for blue collar workers between the ages of nineteen and thirty five years. The Springfield age groups are represented with 21.1% under the age of eighteen, 18.9% from eighteen to thirty five, 21.6% from thirty six to fifty, 20.9% from fifty one to sixty four, and 17.5% who were sixty five years of age or older. The median age was 42.9 years. Gender is 47% male and 53% female.

The educational attainment for the population 25 years and over indicates that nearly 75% of Springfield residents have higher education with 14.9% with some college, 5.8% with an associate's degree, 30.0% with a bachelor's degree and 23.6% with a graduate or professional degree. The median income for a household in the Township is \$73,790, and the median income for a family is \$85,725. Males have a median income of \$55,907 versus \$39,542 for females. The township has a per capita income of \$36,754. About 1.8% of families and 3.1% of the population are below the poverty line, including 1.0% of those under age 18 and 5.8% of those ages 65 or over.

Springfield's housing has changed over the years. In the 1960s, there were major housing developments in the former farm lands. This development boom doubled the township's population. The land developers marketed these developments to New York City outer borough residents who were seeking a suburban community within a reasonable commute to Manhattan.

By the 1990s, single family detached home developments had filled most of the remaining open space. At the turn of the century, the new construction trend shifted to multiple family

housing units -- primarily rental apartments. Former commercial sites began to be re-developed into these high density housing developments.

The residential rental market in Springfield has continued to flourish to the present day. In the 2010 *New Jersey Monthly* magazine's Top High Schools, Springfield's Jonathan Dayton High School ranked 32nd, but more importantly it ranked 1st in its socioeconomic group. (New Jersey Monthly Magazine, 2010) After this school ranking was published, the rental units in Springfield experienced a near 100 percent occupancy rate. If the Springfield School District continues to perform highly in its socioeconomic group, many inner city families will continue to migrate to Springfield's rental properties. The township's population demographics will continue to change, perhaps effecting volunteer recruitment and retention.

The Springfield Fire Department history dates back to 1906. Springfield citizens were very concerned about the possibility of fire after enormity of the San Francisco Great Earthquake and Fire. The township citizens passed a Resolution to create the Springfield Fire District and incorporate the Springfield Volunteer Fire Company #1 (SVFCo #1). The fire district was funded through the sales of fire protection shares at the initial cost of \$2.00 per share. The thirty five charter members acquired a hand drawn hose reel which at times would be pulled by the Morris County Traction Company trolley.

Economic and society conditions have impacted the pool of available volunteer firefighters over the years. In 1929, the Great Depression economically affected most of the volunteer firefighters. Many members left the local businesses to venture into the cities looking for employment. The Springfield Fire District was challenged to maintain its daytime coverage. A small staff of career firefighters was hired to supplement the volunteers. Thereafter, the fire

district was dissolved and the Township Committee established the Springfield Fire Department under the direction of a career fire chief. The new fire department was funded from property taxes in the municipal budget.

During the period from the 1940s into the 1960s, a corps of reserve firefighters was established under the Civil Defense program. These reserve firefighters supplemented the fire department during the wartime manpower shortages of World War II and the Korean War. The members of the reserves were eventually given membership as volunteer firefighters.

During the postwar economic expansion, Springfield experienced high and sustained growth along with full employment. By 1960, the fire department had also expanded its compliment of career firefighters to provide 24 hour 7 day a week staffing of an engine company. The volunteers would staff the additional units for a full assignment response. Career firefighters were only recalled for major fires.

Springfield's traditional volunteer system transitioned to a paid-per-call method in 1972. A clothing allowance stipend was created for volunteer firefighters to reimburse them for their time and expenses when they responded to fire calls. The clothing allowance budget was equal to the salary of one probationary career firefighter. Payments were calculated by the number of incidents and the number of individual responses to determine the cost value per member. The once a year payment occurred in December. During this period, volunteer membership grew to its authorized maximum of 50 firefighters and there was a list of people waiting to join.

In the late 1980's, volunteer firefighter responses became less regular and predictable, so career firefighters were recalled to supplement full assignment responses. The volunteers continued to provide back-fill station coverage and dispatching. By the mid-1990s, career

firefighters were eventually recalled for all calls. In 1998, the fire department started a first responder medical program to support the volunteer first aid squad with their staffing shortages. During this ten year period, the fire department call volume increased from approximately 500 to 1,400 incidents per year.

Based on the increasing demand for fire and emergency medical services, the Township hired the consulting firm TriData Corporation, from Arlington, Virginia, to provide a fire department management study in 2001. TriData evaluated staffing, response times, demand levels, community risk, and trends in service demands for the future. The report, "Fire Department Management Study: Springfield, NJ," indicated the immediate need for hiring an additional 12 firefighters, raising the minimum on-duty staffing to four firefighters, purchasing a 100 foot quint fire apparatus, and establishing a comprehensive volunteer recruitment program. The Township took no action to hire any new career firefighters until the Insurance Service Office (ISO) reduced the fire department's public protection classification in 2004. The Springfield Fire Department's rating fell to Class 10, which indicated that the fire protection did not meet ISO's minimum criteria of being able to respond with at least four firefighters.

One of the primary volunteer retention benefits has been the path to a career position. Over the years, volunteers have been given hiring preferences ranging from awarding volunteer firefighter service-credit points, to making direct appointments to the career department. There are several hiring preferences that are permitted under New Jersey Statute – Title 40A and the municipality can choose which preferences to apply, if any. The Township has been sued several times for hiring practices by volunteers who felt they were unfairly passed over. In most cases, the Township's decisions were upheld by the courts. In 2008, SVFCo#1 attempted to have the

Township codify that career appointments shall first be made from its volunteer members. A couple of motivated volunteers used the public forum to try to advance the initiative but were not successful.

The key element in hiring preferences for volunteers has been a person's designation as an active member. It had been the sole authority of the SVFCo#1 membership committee to determine the eligibility of all members based on the performance of duties, call percentages, drill attendance and meeting participation. In 2010, the three person membership committee sought to dismiss a majority of the membership for failing to maintain the minimum 30% call percentage and 60% drill attendance. Under the SVFCo#1 by-laws, the fire chief had no authority to change the minimum requirements or overturn the dismissals. The fire chief reviewed the by-laws and found authority to grant temporary leaves of absence. This action would allow members to remain with an inactive status while a by-laws amendment could be enacted to adjust the "active status" requirements. The membership committee agreed to consider solutions for the membership problems.

Several months passed without any action from the membership committee; all the while, the majority of volunteer firefighters were unable to serve the fire department because of their inactive status. The Township determined that the SVFCo#1 had become an inadequate and unsustainable organization. Township Resolution #2010-75 was approved to disassociate from SVFCo #1. This resolution did not disband the volunteer fire company; it simply meant the Township would no longer utilize SVFCo#1 for fire protection. The SVFCo#1 did not own any fire equipment or facilities – so essentially the action was a lock-out. The members of the

SVFCo#1 could not respond to any incidents, could not participate in any fire training and their access cards to fire headquarters were disabled.

The governing body amended the Township General Ordinance 2-41 Fire Department to create one unified fire department consisting of both paid and volunteer members serving under the direct supervision and control of the fire chief. The ordinance further codified that career appointments shall first be made from its volunteer members. The fire chief created a volunteer firefighter recruitment, retention and compensation policy (Appendix A). The SVFCo#1 members were invited to make application to the Springfield Fire Department.

Reviewing that, TriData Corporation (2001) reported that the SFD had relied almost entirely on word of mouth to recruit new volunteer firefighters -- citing that, this limited approach will net only a limited number of new members each year. (p. 8) SFD followed their recommendation to expand its recruitment beyond word of mouth and utilize a wide variety of media to reach as many citizens as possible. (p. 8) Secondly, the SFD attempted another strategy to increase daytime volunteer coverage by removing the residency requirements for people who worked in Springfield. (p. 9) Thirdly, the SFD implemented the “duty shift” recommendation where volunteers would work around their schedules to commit specific periods of time to run calls. (p. 9)

There were 10 applications to the newly unified fire department. The new applicants were processed to the same standards as a career member for initial appointment. The candidates underwent a criminal background investigation and were interviewed by the fire chief. The candidates were then drug tested, underwent a mental fitness examination and medically

examined using the NFPA 1582 standard. The cost for the pre-appointment testing was \$1,300.00 per candidate. Seven of the ten candidates were approved as volunteer firefighters.

Due severe budget constraints starting in 2009 the replacement of career firefighters was prohibited. Therefore, additional volunteer firefighters were needed to enhance the capabilities of the department. The Springfield Fire Department applied for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant. After two grant application attempts, Springfield was awarded a four year volunteer recruitment and retention grant for \$168,800.00. The goal of the grant was to increase volunteer membership to 24 members to adequately comply with NFPA 1720. In order to achieve this goal, the fire department would need to recruit two new members every quarter and retain 60% of the volunteer firefighters throughout the performance period.

Based on the recruitment and retention quarterly reports submitted to the Department of Homeland Security, the Springfield Fire Department has not met its recruitment goals and the total operational staffing of volunteer firefighters fell by 75%. There is sufficient evidence to justify this study from the past, present and probable future impact on the Springfield Fire Department's operational effectiveness.

The goal of the *Executive Leadership* course is to develop the Executive Fire Officer's "ability to conceptualize and employ the key processes used by effective executive-level managers." (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012, p. ix) This applied research paper directly utilizes executive-level processes to diagnose what is happening in the organization and take action to tackle the problem of the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program in Springfield, New Jersey. This study will provide the analysis necessary for amending SAFER

grant activities to enhance SFD staffing deployment. The result will be the improvement of the SFD's capability to achieve the United States Fire Administration's third goal: "Improve the fire and emergency services' capability for response to and recovery from all hazards." (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2014)

Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review of applicable literature, documents, course materials, websites, studies and reports was conducted in an attempt to identify known information about volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention. The findings of others have identified volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention strategies and techniques, and established leadership guides and best practices models. A summary of those findings will be presented for their influence on this project. The merging of these sources provided the necessary basis for the four research questions to determine improvements to Springfield's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program in a combination fire department.

Fire/EMS chief and author, Fred Crosby, stressed the importance of both the career and volunteer members in his combination department. In a departmental communication, Crosby wrote, "Hanover's system depends on volunteers. This will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. The loss of volunteers is contrary to the interests of the department and the county." (Windisch & Crosby, 2008, p. 10) It is the opinion of Johnson, Olsen, & Buckman III (2006) that a combination paid/volunteer fire department is the most cost effective way to provide fire protection in a small to medium-sized community. (p. 13) According to Windisch and Crosby (2008), the transition to a combination fire department generally occurs "when the number of responses exceeds approximately 750 within a calendar year." (p. 2) Windisch and

Crosby (2008) further suggest that “combination fire departments provide a higher level of service and decrease the workloads on volunteers, which may in turn increase volunteering within the department.” (p. 8)

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (2005) discuss in *The red ribbon report: Leading the transition in volunteer and combination fire departments* that dashboards may be used to monitor organizational performance and progress, such as average volunteer retention rate; average annual recruitment and associated demographics; average call per volunteer; and controlling the cost of recruiting, hiring and training new personnel. (p. 8) The decline in the number of volunteers is a two-faceted problem. It stems both from difficulties in retaining current volunteers as well as problems with recruiting new volunteers. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 9) Weak retention rates often indicate a problem with an organization and diminish the level and quality of service to the public. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2006, p. 14)

According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs (2005), volunteer staffing deficits can be related to changes in business policies regarding employees leaving the workplace; the number of volunteers who are employed outside their response areas; a lack of understanding by corporate managers of the community’s needs; a tight labor market; or “even member apathy”. (p. 4) In the Northeast, the problem has been exacerbated by the decline in manufacturing industries. Blue-collar employees have traditionally been the heart of volunteer departments in many communities. (Gruson, 1987) Snook et al. (2006) point out that volunteer firefighters come

from all “walks of life”, but suggest that the majority of the force should be made up of blue collar workers who are accustomed to “getting their hands dirty.” (p. 34)

Windisch and Crosby (2008) agree that in today’s workplace, it can be difficult for volunteers to justify leaving the workplace to answer a non-life-threatening call. (p. 3) TriData Corporation (2001) cited in its fire department management study for Springfield that some volunteer/combination departments rely on “duty shifts”, which limits the time demand on the volunteer, and can also “guarantee” minimum staffing coverage for a time period. These duty shifts are typically attractive to “white collar” volunteers. (p. 9)

According to Snook et al., (2006), marketing is important for volunteer recruitment and retention. They explain that there are four basic ways to market: advertising, publicity, promoting and personal selling. (p. 36) “Too often marketing is the missing tool in the Fire Chief’s toolbox with the result being a deficiency in recruitment, retention and fund raising.” (Snook, Johnson, Olsen, & Buckman III, 2006, p. 37) Snook et al. (2006) believe it is “vital to understand” the four step process for marketing a volunteer fire department. The four questions in the process are:

1) What do you have? 2) What do you need? 3) Who has what you need? 4) How do you get what you need? (p. 38)

In the TriData study, the Springfield Fire Department was advised against relying entirely on word-of-mouth to recruit new volunteer firefighters. This approach will net only a limited number of new members each year. (TriData Corporation, 2001, p. 8) For the most part, the contacts made by volunteers and supporters is sporadic, unplanned and happenstance. This is

spontaneous personal selling, and it is difficult to measure or control. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 41)

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (2004) discuss in *The blue ribbon report: A call for action: Preserving and improving the future of the volunteer fire service* the need for partnerships with civic organizations and local businesses to integrate the fire department into the local community. (p. 14) People who are actively involved in service groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Elks, the Eagles, the Rotary Club, etc. have already demonstrated their desire and ability to get involved within the community. (Snook et al., 2006, pp. 32-33)

The primary reason people volunteer has always been, and will remain to be, “the desire of the individual to meet their personal human needs.” (Snook et al., 2006, p. 28) Snook et al. (2006) supports that volunteer fire departments can provide these basic needs: a sense of belonging; achievement; economic security; increased responsibility; self-respect; understanding; challenge; recognition; reward; growth and development; and the need to have fun and enjoy one’s environment. (p. 27)

Windisch and Crosby (2008) identified the types of people who volunteer in combination fire and EMS departments. They are young, just out of school, and looking to start a career in the fire and EMS service; mid-career with a family; and retired, but do not want to slow down. (p. 10)

In order to motivate people to volunteer, we must understand volunteers. Reasons given for volunteering: I want to help; gain experience; thought I would enjoy it; popular activity in my town; friends talked me into it; the thrill of it; I wanted to help people; like working under pressure; my father was a

firefighter; community service; camaraderie; training opportunities; help keep taxes down; and social aspects. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 94)

Snook et al. (2006) further claimed that people will be motivated to help the community, helping a fellow person in need, possibly saving a life, become a paid firefighter, knows a firefighter personally, or experienced a fire and want to protect others from its effects. (p. 27)

When recruiting volunteer firefighters, the fire department will spend approximately \$4,000 per person in orienting, equipping and training those recruits. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 9) Snook et al. (2006) found that most departments running 40 to 160 hour recruit programs experience about a 50% drop-out rate. (p. 33) After recruit graduation, Snook et al. (2006) advise that volunteer activity plateauing normally occurs within three to four months and usually continues for approximately nine to twelve months. (p. 110) A volunteer will normally reach a plateau at a level where they and their families are comfortable. This will be an activities level which provides the volunteer with the participation that was expected and desired, but yet doesn't interfere with the rest of their life to the point it causes significant problems. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 110) According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs (2005), family considerations such as, two-job parents, two-earner households, and more competition for personal and family have impacted the decline in the numbers of volunteer firefighters. (p. 1)

Retention of high-performing personnel is necessary to the success of any organization. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2006, p. 14) It is estimated that the national average of volunteer firefighters is approximately four years per person, per department. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 9) A community's age profile can be an indicator of

problems ahead. The age factor in your community profile is revealed by data showing who is moving in and moving out. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2005, p. 3) There is a need for younger members to do the hard work, but that pool of volunteers has been on a steady decline. Younger volunteers with families find it more difficult to find the time to volunteer. (Windisch & Crosby, 2008, p. 5) There's no easy way to sell and keep volunteers. There are no shortcuts to success. Bowling leagues, television, civic organizations, and various local activities all stand as potential competitors. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 29)

The frequency of alarms and service utilized by your community is probably the most important factor in recruiting and maintaining volunteer firefighters as it relates to meeting their individual needs. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 14) A volunteer who is called upon more than expected, or is called upon more times than they can afford to respond, will ultimately be faced with a problem just as serious as the volunteer who is not getting enough activity. (Snook et al., 2006, pp. 14-15) It was always considered asking a lot of volunteers to have them support paid crews and assist in handling major alarms. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 5) Volunteers burn-out occurs when a volunteer is involved to the point where it is no longer enjoyable. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 101)

From a neighboring fire department, Summit Firefighter Matt Klapper was featured in a January 8, 2014 article of *The Pennsylvania Gazette* for balancing his dual existence between work and fire service.

Chief among Klapper's gifts, apparently, is the ability to live two (at least) lives simultaneously. For the past 14 years, Klapper has worked for [Cory] Booker, starting as a volunteer, then as a policy advisor, chief policy advisor,

campaign policy director, and now as the senior advisor to New Jersey's first-ever African-American US Senator. During that time, he earned his undergraduate degree from Penn and a law degree from Yale University. Oh, and he also completed the perhaps-even-more stringent (and certainly more physically taxing) requirements to become a full-time firefighter in New Jersey—a journey that included volunteering as a firefighter for more than eight years, as well as serving with an ambulance squad. (Feldman, 2014) “I don’t get much sleep,” Klapper admits, but aside from that, the two jobs balance each other perfectly, he adds. “I’m able to hit a re-set button and ground myself at the firehouse. It’s the difference between doing good versus hoping you’re doing good. It’s hard to beat that direct feedback loop.”

Many Springfield career firefighters have been volunteers for Springfield or other communities indicating a successful pathway to employment. According to research, Corporation for National and Community Service (2013) provides evidence of correlation between volunteering and finding employment. Prior research has shown that volunteering can increase a person’s social connections (social capital) and skill sets (human capital), two factors related to employment outcomes. In addition, some workers may see volunteering as a possible entry route into an organization. (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2013)

Enhanced staffing deployment as a combination system can capitalize on both the stability of a paid system and the manpower of the volunteer system during a major emergency, providing greater depth of staffing. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2005, p. 11) The underlying philosophy of a combination system is improved service at a reduced cost. A combination

department needs to be recognized for its value as a cost avoidance tool that reduces the need for employing full-time career firefighters. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2005, p. 13)

Combination fire departments are difficult to manage because career and volunteer firefighters often have different institutional interests. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 10)

The career and volunteer cultures seemed to conflict. (Windisch & Crosby, 2008, p. 10)

The structural distrust the volunteer and career groups have for each other might be more tolerable if each group did not work with each other, but they usually do. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 10) The conflicts in a combination department can lead to unproductive involvement by the local government that sees itself as legally and often politically responsible for resolving the conflict. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 10)

Procedures

The procedures used for this applied research project were based on descriptive methods to determine the current situation, to report the characteristics of the community and fire department, to describe opinions and attitudes regarding firefighters volunteering, and to identify alternative strategies to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. Descriptive research methods utilized archived record searches and survey results to answer the four research questions. Benchmarking was used to compare the SFD's practices and performance against those of others. It seeks to identify standards, or "best practices," to apply in measuring and improving performance. (Management Analysis & Development, 2014) The objectives of benchmarking are 1) to determine what and where improvements are called for 2) to analyze how other organizations achieve their high performance levels and 3) to use this information to improve performance. (Luthra, 2014a)

First, Springfield's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention performance was examined for the period 1989 to 2013. Springfield Fire Department volunteer member data was extracted from various departmental archival records and SAFER grant performance reports. A volunteer firefighter demographic profile was created to determine age and gender, marital status, residency and housing status. Recruitment and retention program performance was measured by the annual volunteer membership, average annual recruitment and the average volunteer retention rate.

Second, Springfield public opinion towards volunteering as a firefighter was identified through an on-line survey instrument. The literature review of related studies, reports, leadership guides and best practices models were used to create the Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey (Appendix B). The objective is to determine public opinion from Springfield residents regarding volunteer firefighting and their likelihood of volunteering. The goal of the survey was to determine what future actions are required to improve volunteer recruitment efforts with a no-obligation, public survey.

Using on-line survey instruments, the survey was released to the public in *The Patriot Times* newspaper (traditional media), posted on the Springfield Fire Department's Facebook page and Twitter account (social media), and posted on the Township of Springfield's webpage (internet posting). A unique web-link for each broadcast method was created to track the source of the survey response. After initial survey responses were limited, a direct personal appeal was made to a community professional networking group for assistance to increase the survey's reach. Additionally, the Springfield Fire Department community notification system was used to send Nixle Connect e-mails to Springfield subscribers. Ultimately, the survey yielded only 37

completed responses from the 7,500 copies of *The Patriot Times* delivered, 900 social media views, 160 webpage views, 900 professional networking contacts and 2,606 community notification e-mails.

Third, the volunteer recruitment and retention methods of other combination fire departments were explored. The literature review of related studies, reports, leadership guides and best practices models were used to create the Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey (Appendix C). A sample of fire and EMS agencies were asked to provide an overall general impression of their volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention programs. Based on overall satisfaction, the methods employed to increase volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention were compared to the SFD approaches. Using an on-line survey instrument, an anonymous survey was provided to the 87 active members and 42 retired members of the New Jersey Career Fire Chiefs' Association, 31 active members of the Union County Fire Chief's Association, and 160 National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program participants. The survey request yielded 62 completed responses out of the 320 solicited.

And fourth, the literature review of related studies, reports, leadership guides and best practices models were used to create the Springfield Former Volunteer Firefighter Feedback Survey (Appendix C). In the past, former Springfield volunteer firefighters were not given an opportunity for an exit interview. The objective was to collect feedback from the former volunteers to assess what recruitment and retention methods should be improved, changed or remain intact. The goal of the survey was to determine what future actions are required to reduce volunteer turnover, increase participation and provide a stable volunteer firefighting force that enhances the capabilities of the SFD. Unknowing the reasons for volunteer separation, it was

stated that survey participation was not an offer of re-instatement. Former volunteers were invited to re-apply under the current recruitment system. The survey request yielded 11 completed responses out of the 37 solicited.

Using the findings of Springfield's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention performance, Springfield's public opinion towards volunteering as a firefighter, volunteer recruitment and retention methods of other combination fire departments, and feedback from Springfield's former volunteers, this applied research project will identify the strategies that can lead to the successful development of a stable volunteer firefighting force using Springfield's SAFER grant. This benchmarking analysis will provide a guide for future actions. Further evaluative research may be needed to measure the key indicators of successful recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

Limitations and Assumptions

The recruitment and retention methods of volunteer firefighters have already been established through the findings of others. This study examines the possible methods of volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention during Springfield's remaining SAFER grant performance period as well as methods that can be sustained in the future. This study recognizes that there are different types of volunteer firefighting organizational structures, but has placed an emphasis on combination fire and EMS agencies.

The custody of volunteer firefighter records was divided between the Springfield Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and the Springfield Fire Department. Accurate and complete records are essential for descriptive research to provide a detailed observation of Springfield's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention performance. Since the disassociation between the

Township and SVFCo#1, there were many missing and incomplete records. Overall, the record collection was difficult and time consuming.

The fragmented records were compiled and organized in worksheets. The worksheets were reviewed by past and present members to assist with filling in missing information. As with all personal sources, the information may be unverified. For academic purposes, personal recollections may not be an acceptable source for research projects which may be rejected by some professors. This study was aware of this research caution and attempted to verify the accuracy of the information as much as possible.

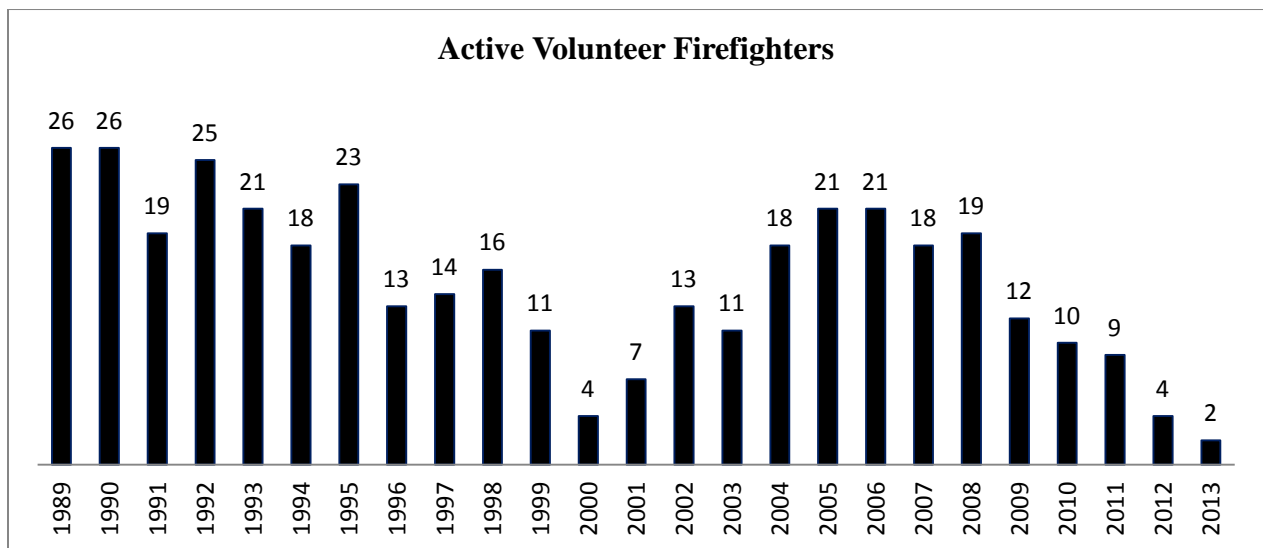
Results

Question #1: What is the success rate of the Springfield Fire Department in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters? A descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the past volunteer recruitment and retention performance extracted from various departmental archival records and SAFER grant performance reports. This analysis provided an understanding of the volunteer retention during the past 25 years and the volunteer recruitment during last three years.

During the past 25 years, the Springfield Fire Department has appointed 88 volunteer firefighters. An active volunteer firefighter histogram (Figure 1) was created to provide a graphical representation of the membership trends during a period of time. Starting in 1989, the SVFCo#1 had 26 members. During the period 1989 to 2000, volunteer membership declined by 84% and dropped to only four members. Nearly half of the decline can be attributed to 11 volunteers being hired as career firefighters. From 2001 to 2006, the SVFCo#1 rebounded to 21 members. This membership growth occurred despite the fact that seven of the recruited volunteers were hired as career firefighters. A second decline in the number of volunteer

firefighters from 2007 to the present leaves the SFD with a roster of two members, representing a 90% loss. Unlike the previous trends, the hiring of three volunteers appears to be less of a factor. The 2010 disassociation with SVFCo#1 did not impact the data because 10 of 12 the former members were replaced.

Figure 1 – SFD Active Volunteer Membership Histogram (1989 to 2013)



The average volunteer retention rate of the Springfield Fire Department for the period 1989 to 2013 is 2.46 years. A demographic profile (Table 1) was created to identify any factors relating to volunteer firefighter retention. These factors were residency, age, marital status, and housing situation. Springfield residents maintain volunteer firefighter membership 33% longer than non-residents, typically at least two years. The largest age group was 21 to 35 years old and it also had the highest volunteer firefighter retention. However, the 36 to 50 year old members typically served at least two years. While single members were the largest group, married volunteers averaged a slightly higher retention. The most significant retention factor appeared to

be housing status. Volunteers who owned their residences served 52% longer than members living with family. The number of members “living at home” is double than that of homeowners.

Table 1 – SFD Volunteer Retention Demographic (1989 to 2013)

	Percentage of Group	Average Retention	Mode Retention
Residency:			
Resident	56%	2.75 years	2 years
Non-resident	44%	2.06 years	1 year
Age:			
Less than 21 years old	23%	2.29 years	1 year
21 to 35 years old	64%	2.59 years	1 year
36 to 50 years old	13%	2.55 years	2 years
Marital Status:			
Single	76%	2.41 years	1 year
Married	24%	2.64 years	2 years
Housing Situation:			
Owner	29%	2.90 years	2 years
Renter	6%	1.70 years	1 year
Living with family	65%	1.91 years	1 year

In 2010, the recruitment of volunteer firefighters became the responsibility of the fire chief who logged the sources of recruitment leads. Based on the membership application logs, the successful recruitment methods (Table 2) can be identified. During the past three years, there were 53 leads generated and 21 membership applications submitted which resulted in the appointment of 12 new volunteer firefighters. There were eight methods available for recruitment: 1) membership hotline through the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety’s 800-FIRELINE program 2) direct mail brochures 3) the SFD Facebook page 4) open house events at fire headquarters 5) articles in the *Patriot Times* community newspaper 6) message board in front of fire headquarters 7) Township of Springfield’s website and 8) word of mouth throughout the community. The “word of mouth” method was the highest recorded method for generating leads,

receiving membership applications and recruiting volunteers. The only other method that resulted in recruiting one member was an open house event at fire headquarters.

Table 2 – SFD Recruitment Methods (2010 to 2013)

Methods	Leads	Applications	Appointments
800-FIRELINE	0	0	0
Brochure	4	1	0
SFD Facebook	4	1	0
Open House	4	1	1
Patriot Times Articles	4	0	0
SFD Message Board	4	1	0
Township Website	1	0	0
Word of Mouth	32	17	11
TOTALS	53	21	12

Question #2: What is the proclivity of the Springfield residents to volunteering as a firefighter? Using the survey results from the Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey (Appendix B), the community's opinions and attitudes regarding volunteer firefighting could be described. These factors could influence possible improvements to the recruitment strategies in the Springfield SAFER project. The invitation to participate in the survey was communicated through 1) traditional media 2) social media 3) internet posting 4) networking and 5) community broadcasting. The survey's sample group represents respondents who choose to voluntarily complete the on-line questionnaire. The initial questions determined the demographics of the respondents. The subsequent questions flowed through the four life areas: personal motivations, community involvement, employer consent and family support. The survey concludes by asking

if the person would consider volunteering for the Springfield Fire Department and gave space to provide contact information.

For a period of four months, the survey was open to the estimated 12,500 residents over the age of 18. Each of the survey broadcast methods was tracked using its unique web-links and is exhibited in the public volunteer firefighter recruitment survey methods chart (Table 2).

Originally, the survey was released through social media, traditional media and a website posting. After the initial six weeks, there were only 15 responses of which 14 were tracked to Facebook. Seeking to increase survey participation, the Nixel Connect notification system was used to broadcast a community e-mail message. Additionally, the research project was described to several community networking groups and they were asked to help improve volunteer firefighter recruitment survey responses.

Table 3 – Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey Methods

Methods	Audience Size	Responses	Leads
SFD Facebook	1,635	10	2
Patriot Times Articles	7,500	0	0
Township Website	160	1	0
Networking Groups	900	9	0
Nixel Connect	2,606	17	4

The reader is cautioned not to interpret the limited survey participation results as an indicator that Springfield residents are not inclined to be volunteer firefighters. This weak

response cannot be evaluated using the research methods previously indicated. It is unknown if a different survey instrument could have provided a better confidence level.

Based on the data collected, a demographic profile (Table 4) was created for the survey respondents to be used for describing any comparisons to the SFD volunteer retention demographic (Table 1). The survey was completed largely by males (83.7%). The largest age group reporting was older than 50 years (40.5%). It is noted that married persons (78.4%) is the second largest sample group. Homeowners (82.7%) primarily represent the sample group.

Table 4 – Public Survey Respondent Demographics

	Responses	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	31	83.7%
Female	6	16.3%
Age:		
18 to 20 years old	0	0.0%
21 to 35 years old	10	27.0%
36 to 50 years old	12	32.4%
More than 50 years old	15	40.5%
Marital Status:		
Married	29	78.4%
Single	8	21.6%
Housing Status:		
Owner	31	82.7%
Renter	3	9.6%
Living with family	3	9.6%
Number of children under age 17 in household		
None	18	48.6%
1	8	21.6%
2	10	27.0%
3	1	2.7%
4	0	0.0%

When asked to choose the reason(s) that would provide encouragement to volunteer with the Springfield Fire Department, thirty respondents provided the following motivation(s) as illustrated in Table 5 – Reasons to Volunteer for the Springfield Fire Department.

Table 5 – Reasons to Volunteer for the Springfield Fire Department

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Potential career	13	43.3%
Community pride	12	40.0%
Help keep taxes low	7	23.3%
Interest in the fire service	17	56.7%
Death and financial relief benefits	5	16.7%
Public recognition	2	6.7%
Excitement and danger	1	3.3%
Interest in public service	13	43.3%
Family member in fire service	3	10.0%
Retention Stipend	3	10.0%
Uniforms	2	6.7%
Enjoy teamwork	11	36.7%
Know a firefighter	8	26.7%
Looks good on resume	1	3.3%
Enjoy helping people	19	63.3%
Influenced by the reputation of the Springfield Fire Department	5	16.7%
Experienced a fire or emergency in my family	0	0.0%

Social characteristics chosen were selected to identify complimentary or competing factors towards volunteering as a firefighter. The sample group reported their employment status: 70.3% working full-time, 16.2 % reported working part-time, 5.4% looking for work, and 8.1% retired. Those employed described their current occupation. The top three occupations were management (26.7%), sales (13.3%) and construction (10.0%). When asked how much free time they have each week, 56.8% answered 0 to 10 hours, 32.4% answered 11 to 20 hours and 10.8% answered more than 20 hours. When asked about volunteering for any organizations, 58.3% reported

belonging to community organizations. There were 14 different organizations identified that varied from philanthropic, service oriented, and professional associations to clubs. There were a few responses indicating other fire and EMS involvement in contiguous communities.

When asked if their employer would approve of volunteer firefighter service, respondents felt that their employer would strongly approve (27.3%), would approve (12.1%), would not care (30.3%), would disapprove (9.1%), would strongly disapprove (9.1%) or they would not seek approval (12.1%). When asked if their family would approve of volunteer firefighter service, respondents felt that their families would strongly approve (27.8%), would approve (36.1%), would not care (13.9%), would disapprove (9.3%), would strongly disapprove (5.6%) or they would not seek approval (8.3%).

Finally, the participants were asked if they would consider volunteering for the Springfield Fire Department. Sixty percent indicated that they would not consider volunteering and 40% would consider volunteering. From the group who “would consider” volunteering, six respondents provided their contact information for follow-up communication. The six leads were sent the current SFD volunteer firefighter recruitment brochure and one person submitted an application for membership.

Question #3: How are volunteer recruitment and retention programs implemented by other combination fire departments? Using the survey results from the Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey (Appendix B), the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention methods of other combination fire and EMS organizations could be described for the comparison of the SFD’s practices and performance. The purpose is to identify successful

recruitment and retention approaches that will reinforce the current SFD's efforts or indicate the need to change the SAFER grant project activities.

Using an on-line survey instrument, a sample group of executive officers was asked to provide an overall impression of their agency's volunteer recruitment and retention performance, share any identified challenges and note the presence of any volunteer firefighter membership trends. A list of recruitment activities and retention incentives was collected. Finally, the reasons for volunteer attrition were surveyed. There were some detailed comments (Appendix E) provided by some respondents.

The departments surveyed were 53.23% career (full-time personnel comprising 85% or greater), 35.48% combination (personnel comprising of less than 85% career or less than 85% volunteer) and 11.29% volunteer (volunteer personnel comprising 85% or greater). The high survey participation by career departments is attributed to more Executive Fire Officer Participants from fully career fire departments. There were 18 survey participants from fully career departments with no volunteer firefighters. The number of responses per question varied from 16 to 53 responses with an average of 40 answers.

The surveyed departments primarily used traditional volunteers living in their communities (69.23%) and shift volunteers for designed periods (25.64%). Non-emergency volunteers were identified in 20.51% agencies surveyed. The call demands for volunteer firefighters varied greatly, from less than 50 to more than 750 calls per year. When asked their satisfaction with their organization's volunteer recruitment and retention, 43.59% were dissatisfied and 38.46% were satisfied to certain degrees. The challenges of volunteer firefighter programs faced by the surveyed agencies were: the lack of availability of volunteers (66.67%), increased volunteer

turnover (55.56%), historically inadequate recruitment efforts (36.11%), lack of supervision of volunteer programs and members (36.11%), and poor relations between career and volunteer members (36.11%). Additionally, two survey respondents added that housing was too expensive for volunteers to stay in the community.

When asked about how volunteer firefighters are recruited, the membership coordinator role was present in 45.28% agencies. In agencies with a volunteer membership coordinator, the role was performed as part of other assigned duties in 87.5%. The use of census data to identify segments of their population more likely to volunteer was only found in eight percent of the surveyed agencies. The surveyed fire and EMS agency volunteer firefighter recruitment activities were tallied and ranked:

1. Word of mouth from current firefighters
2. Open house at the fire station
3. Activities through the local high school
4. Advertising in local newspaper
5. Use of posters or banners throughout the community
6. Use of social media
7. Advertising on local cable access channel
8. Activities through local college

When asked about the trends in volunteering, 42.22% reported the number of volunteer firefighters decreased, 37.78% stayed the same and 20% increased volunteer membership. The agencies reporting an increase believe this to be attributed to new volunteers looking for career

opportunity and experience (62.5%) and their increased volunteer recruitment efforts (37.5%). A cadet program was identified in 18% of the surveyed agencies and one third reported that the cadet program was successful in achieving the recruitment and retention goals. A number of respondents to the survey commented that their cadet programs produced many quality firefighters who were hired a career firefighters. One survey respondent cautions that their cadets often leave shortly after finishing high school.

The volunteer incentives survey answers were examined and 12 agencies reported extreme and moderate satisfaction with the results of their volunteer recruitment and retention program. Overall, the number of incentives offered by each “satisfied” agency was very abundant. The list of SFD incentives was compared to these agencies. It was identified that the SFD did not provide college reimbursement, length of service program, service awards, social events, scholarships or tax credits. One survey respondent indicated their creation of a “volunteer labor management committee” which meets monthly to understand and stimulate motivation.

The survey participants were asked for the primary reasons that volunteer firefighters leave their agency using their exit interviews or other feedback. The reasons for leaving were ranked:

1. Family and employment obligations
2. Hired as a career firefighter
3. Training requirements have become too difficult
4. Too many certifications, standards and mandates for volunteer personnel
5. Not adequately compensated for their contribution
6. Not adequately recognized for their contribution
7. Lack of quality activities for volunteers to perform

8. Community demographics have changed
9. Responses have become too great
10. Wasn't hired as a career firefighter

Additional respondents' comments supported the increase in family obligations requiring older volunteer to take second jobs. Secondly, one survey respondent indicated that the younger volunteers provide about 2 years of service before they are hired as career firefighters.

Question #4: What volunteer recruitment and retention methods should be integrated in the Springfield SAFER grant project? Using the survey results from the Springfield Former Volunteer Firefighter Feedback Survey (Appendix D), feedback was collected to assess what recruitment and retention methods should be improved, changed or remain intact. The goal was to collect opinions and attitudes normally found in exit interviews to reduce volunteer firefighter turnover and increase participation. Locating former volunteers was challenging as their separation with the SFD was often the result of disconnection. Those former members located were from the more recently separated volunteer firefighters and could represent a more current description of the environment.

Using an on-line survey instrument, former SFD volunteer firefighters were asked to provide a reflection of their priorities, motivations, and satisfaction through their volunteer experience. Challenges to volunteer retention were identified along with a list of reasons for leaving the SFD. The survey was e-mailed and response to the survey was anonymous to ensure an honest personal view. The survey request yielded 11 completed responses out of the 37 solicited. Higher survey participation could have provided a better results confidence level. The

value in this survey instrument was found in the detailed comments (Appendix F) provided by some respondents.

The former Springfield volunteer firefighters were asked to rank the four major life areas in terms of importance in their lives. The life areas were ranked:

1. Family
2. Personal
3. Professional
4. Community

When asked if their families approved of their service as volunteer firefighters, the group reported strongly approved (81.82%) and approved (18.18%). When asked if their employers approved of their service as a volunteer firefighter, the group reported strongly approved (18.18%), approved (27.27%), didn't care (36.36%) and disapproved (18.18%). A number of respondents to the survey commented that their employers discouraging non-work priorities. One survey respondent implied that routine calls (non-fires) during work hours were not acceptable. When asked if being a volunteer firefighter interfered with their family, work or other obligations, the group believed that serving affected them often (54.55%), sometimes (18.18%) and seldom (17.27%).

The surveyed former volunteers felt that their volunteer work was extremely meaningful (27.27%) very meaningful (36.36%), moderately meaningful (27.27%) and slightly meaningful (9.09%). In the comments, there was one former member who felt the volunteer's role was crucial for the SFD, but another respondent reported a lack of opportunities to contribute and felt under-utilized. The level of appreciation felt by the former volunteers was: very appreciated

(27.27%), moderately appreciated (27.27%), slightly appreciated (18.18%) and not at all appreciated (27.27%).

When former volunteers were asked why they volunteered, the top responses were: 1) Become a career firefighter 2) I want to help 3) Thought I would enjoy it. The group's expectations for achievement, self-respect, challenges and making a difference were met. However, their sense of belonging, feeling needed and having efforts recognized was low. When asked what turned them "on" as volunteer firefighters, good training and good equipment ranked highest. Conversely, what turned them "off" were career members' attitudes, favoritism, lack of recognition and poor communications. Despite these "turn offs," it was generally reported that volunteer members found it easy to get along with career members and other volunteers with a few exceptions. These exceptions were reported by two survey respondents who commented upon the tension between those volunteers looking to become career firefighters and those who "just wanted to help out".

When asked about the certain rights given to SFD volunteer firefighters, the group unanimously reported the right to receive training and continuing education. Training sessions were rated extremely useful (27.27%), very useful (27.27%), moderately useful (27.27%) and slightly useful (18.18%). When specifically asked about the drills conducted by career members, the group believed that those drills were: poorly planned (9.09%), passively accepted (9.09%), not systematic (18.18%), acceptable (54.55%) and comprehensive (9.09%). It was noted in the answer comments that the quality of the drills depended on the instructor and the level of preparation.

When asked about the factors that contributed to the volunteer firefighter leaving the SFD, the answers were broadly spread across all the choices. The factors that were reported slightly more often were: increased family obligations, increased work obligations, no longer enjoyable and unable to maintain call percentages. Sixty percent felt that the Springfield Fire Department offers enough benefits and incentives to volunteer firefighters. When asked how likely they were to recommend the SFD to others as a place to volunteer, the surveyed former members would be: extremely likely (9.09%), very likely (27.27%), moderately likely (36.36%) and slightly likely (18.18%), and not at all likely (9.09%). Throughout the survey comments, there was an expressed frustration that volunteers were not given the opportunity to perform firefighting duties which would have provided a validation for the time spent training.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine what improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention methods are possible during the performance period of the SFD's Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant. As a combination fire department, Springfield needs volunteer firefighters to serve as force multipliers to keep fire losses at a minimum, effectively handle major emergencies, and provide necessary staffing. Economic and social conditions have impacted the fire department's pool of available volunteers over the years. Within its history, the SFD has transitioned from a fully volunteer fire company to volunteers supported by career firefighters, then to career firefighters supported by volunteers and now, to almost a wholly career fire department. The topic of volunteer recruitment and retention became especially relevant with the 2010 Springfield Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 disassociation.

This research project began with examining Springfield's volunteer firefighter records for the past 25 years. The SFD has appointed 88 volunteers during this period with an average retention rate of 2.46 years. The SFD falls below the International Association of Fire Chiefs (2006) estimated national average of four years per firefighter. The lower-than-average retention rate can be attributed to the hiring of 34 volunteers by the SFD and other police, fire and EMS agencies. Another factor to the low retention rate is some notable volunteer firefighter turnover shortly after recruit graduation. Although not fully explainable in this situation, Snook et al. (2006) advise that "volunteer activity plateauing normally occurs within three to four months and usually continues for approximately nine to twelve months." (p.110)

In order to motivate people to volunteer, we must understand volunteers. (Snook et al., 2006, p.94) A demographic profile was created to describe the SFD volunteer firefighter. Looking at the SFD Volunteer Retention Demographic (Table 1) for best retention potential, the preferred candidate should be a township homeowner, married and between the ages 21 and 35. According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs (2006) regarding volunteer firefighter recruitment, fire departments should be looking for blue collar workers between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five years.

During the period 2010 to 2013, the SFD used the four ways of marketing as described by Snook et al. (2006): advertising, publicity, promoting and personal selling. (p.36) The SFD diversified approaches to volunteer recruitment included: a membership hotline, brochures, social media, open houses, traditional media, billboards, internet and word-of-mouth. Based on the results in Table 2 - SFD Recruitment Methods, the "word-of-mouth" was the highest recorded method for generating leads, receiving membership applications and recruiting

volunteers. This result is contrary to the TriData (2001) study which advised against relying on word-of-mouth because it only nets a limited number of new members each year. (p. 8)

It is the researcher's interpretation that personal selling in the "word-of-mouth" method cannot be minimized. "Word-of-mouth" marketing is defined as an oral or written recommendation by a satisfied customer to a prospective customer of a good or service. (Luthra, 2014b) As found in the Table 5 - Reasons to Volunteer for the Springfield Fire Department, the reputation of the SFD was shown to have an effect on its ability to recruit. The researcher interprets that the SFD's reputation is similar to the development of a persona within an organization. That persona can transform to the perception that the public has of the fire department. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 38) Therefore, "word-of-mouth" should not be considered solely the firefighters recruiting for themselves, but also what the community says about the fire department.

One of the key procedures in this research project was the Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey (Appendix B) which benchmarked the marketing capabilities of the SFD. While soliciting the public survey, the SFD's volunteer firefighter recruitment program was publicized on a weekly basis. The perseverance to gather survey responses can be comparable to the efforts needed to maintain a continuous volunteer firefighter recruitment program. Based on Table 3 – Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey Methods, an interpretation can be made that systematic methods of targeted messaging are more effective than passive methods of posting materials. The low number of survey responses may indicate one of three things:

- 1) Springfield residents do not like completing surveys
- 2) Available marketing methods did not work effectively or
- 3) Springfield residents are not motivated to be volunteer firefighters.

Understanding the community provides the necessary information for volunteer firefighter recruitment. Compared to the best retention potential from the SFD volunteer firefighter demographics (Table 1), it looked promising that married homeowners took the most interest in the public volunteer firefighter recruitment survey. The main traits of those responding to the public survey were that they were: males, working full-time, primarily in “white collar” professions with a low amount of “free time”. There was also strong support by families and employers present for volunteer firefighting. This group compares to the former SFD volunteers with their attraction to helping people, interest in the fire service and consideration of the SFD for potential career.

The Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey results provided a comparison of the SFD to other agencies. The fire service has entered into a very competitive evolutionary cycle. Public demands continue to increase while dollars shrink, placing even more pressure on the modern fire service manager. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 16) The SFD shares most of the same challenges: the lack of available volunteers, increased volunteer turnover, historically inadequate recruitment efforts, the lack of supervision of the volunteer program and members, and poor relations between career and volunteer members.

The present SFD recruitment activities should be considered modestly comprehensive. When compared to the more successful surveyed agencies, the SFD lacked some of the higher ranked recruitment methods such as, activities with the local high school, advertising on the local cable access channel and activities through the local college. The SFD does not have a cadet program. Only 18% of surveyed agencies had a cadet program, and only a few could attribute the achievement of recruitment and retention goals to their cadet programs. Snook et al. (2006)

believe that cadet programs are cost effective, but should be considered a low priority. This was supported by a survey respondent who reported that their cadets leave shortly after finishing high school.

Further, the SFD does not have a volunteer membership coordinator. The SFD fire chief has taken on the duties of the former SVFCo#1 membership committee. Based on the literature review, every fire department with volunteers needs to assign a volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator has the responsibility to plan, organize and coordinate the recruiting, training and maintenance of the volunteer force. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 35) However important, less than half of the surveyed agencies had a volunteer membership coordinator and the role was primarily part of other duties.

The SFD presently offers nominal retention incentives beyond hiring preference and a quarterly retention payment. When compared to the more successful agencies surveyed, the SFD lacked some of the more comprehensive incentives such as, college reimbursement, a length of service program, service awards, social events, scholarships or tax credits. Social events and recognition awards were formerly provided by the SVFCo#1. The key is not so much what the incentives include or entail, but more important, how meaningful it is to the volunteer. (Snook et al., 2006, p. 107)

Another of the key procedures in this research paper was the Springfield Volunteer Former Firefighter Feedback Survey (Appendix D) which can be used to assess what SFD recruitment and retention methods should be improved, changed or remain intact. The former SFD volunteer firefighters were asked to rank the four major life areas in terms of importance in their lives.

1) Family 2) Personal 3) Professional and 4) Community. It is unsure if the SFD was considered

a professional or community life area. Therefore, it can be assumed that SFD's best expectation is ranking third in this priority list. Snook et al. (2006) refer to bowling leagues, television, civic organizations, and various local activities all standing as potential competitors. Younger volunteers with families find it more difficult to find the time to volunteer. (Windisch & Crosby, 2008, p. 5)

Most former volunteer firefighters reported that their volunteer work was meaningful. There were conflicting feelings found in the survey comments that the volunteer role was crucial to the SFD which was counter by the feeling of being under-utilized. Throughout the survey personal comments, there were several expressed frustrations that volunteers were not given the opportunity to perform firefighting duties, and that using their firefighting skills would have validated the time spent training. These frustrations may be attributed to the fact that on-duty career crews handle 93.8% of all incidents.

There appears to be three distinct groups within the SFD: career firefighters, volunteers who want to be career firefighters and members looking to contribute solely as volunteer firefighters. The structural distrust the volunteer and career groups have for each other might be more tolerable if each group did not work with each other, but they usually do. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 10) When SFD volunteers are called, they are working alongside off-duty career firefighters. Combination fire departments are difficult to manage because career and volunteer firefighters often have different institutional interests. (International Association of Fire Chiefs, 2004, p. 10)

Recommendations

The purpose of this applied research project is to determine what improvements can be made to the SFD's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program during the SAFER grant and if the methods can be sustained into the future. The SFD volunteer firefighter membership data analysis and three survey instruments established the basis for recommendations for what SFD recruitment and retention methods should be improved, changed or remain intact. The following are recommendations for the Springfield Fire Department volunteer recruitment and retention program and methods to be considered for amending SAFER grant activities:

- This applied research project should be reviewed with the Springfield Public Safety Subcommittee, SFD fire officers and representatives from the career firefighters' union. It is important for the stakeholders to understand that the Springfield Fire Department needs volunteer firefighters to serve as force multipliers to keep fire losses at a minimum, effectively handle major emergencies and assist in providing staffing for an adequate fire and emergency response.
- The fire chief should establish the vision, goals and guiding principles for the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program. All members of the fire department should become familiar with the recruitment methods, application requirements and the retention incentives. This will ensure that volunteer firefighter inquires will receive the proper information.
- An interim volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention advisory committee should be created. The committee should be comprised of township administration; fire administration; career firefighters; current and former volunteer firefighters; and

community partners. A volunteer membership coordinator should be selected from the advisory committee to manage the program.

- The SFD recruitment methods should be used more systematically. Instead of passively posting recruitment materials, there should be more personal recruiting efforts at public events, school activities, and through civic group involvement.
- When a sufficient number of volunteer firefighters are established, the Springfield Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 should be invited back by the Township in a support role to stimulate volunteer motivation through social events, service awards and community activities. The group can begin fundraising to support volunteer firefighter incentive programs.
- The SFD Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Policy (Appendix A) should remain intact and continue to maintain the standards for the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program. It should be reviewed on a periodic basis by the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention advisory committee to ensure the SFD is able to achieve and maintain an active volunteer firefighting force.

This applied research project realizes that the economic and societal conditions in Springfield are not within the control of the SFD. There may not be enough residents with the time or desire for Springfield to return to an organization with career firefighters supported by a large compliment of volunteer firefighters. The department could also take the approach of recruiting highly motivated volunteer firefighters looking for a career. While these recruits will not be lifelong volunteers, they can be trained to the SFD standards and provide two to three years of dependable volunteer service.

References

- Corporation for National and Community Service. (2013). *Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment Report*. Retrieved January 7, 2013, from Corporation for National and Community Service: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/research-and-reports/volunteering-pathway-employment-report>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2014, January 13). *USFA: Strategic Plan*. Retrieved from U.S. Fire Administration: <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/about/strategic/>
- Feldman, K. L. (2014, January 8). <http://thepenngazette.com/putting-out-fires/>. Retrieved January 10, 2014, from The Pennsylvania Gazette: <http://thepenngazette.com/putting-out-fires/>
- Gruson, L. (1987, April 19). *Ranks of Volunteer Firefighters Thinned by Changing Society*. Retrieved from NYTimes.com: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/19/us/ranks-of-volunteer-firefighters-thinned-by-changing-society.html?src=pm>
- International Association of Fire Chiefs. (2004). *The blue ribbon report: Preserving and improving the future of the volunteer fire service*. Fairfax, VA: International Association of Fire Chiefs.
- International Association of Fire Chiefs. (2005). *The red ribbon report: Leading the transition in volunteer and combination fire departments*. Fairfax, VA: International Association of Fire Chiefs.

International Association of Fire Chiefs. (2006). *The white ribbon report: Keeping the lights on, the trucks running and the volunteers responding*. Fairfax, VA: International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Luthra, V. (2014a, January 17). *What is benchmarking? definition and meaning*. Retrieved from Business Dictionary: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/benchmarking.html>

Luthra, V. (2014b, January 27). *What is word of mouth marketing? definition and meaning*. Retrieved from Business Dictionary: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/word-of-mouth-marketing.html>

Management Analysis & Development. (2014, January 17). *What is Benchmarking?* Retrieved from Management Analysis & Development: <http://www.mad.state.mn.us/benchmarking>

New Jersey Monthly Magazine. (2013, August 16). *Best Places to Live in New Jersey 2013*. Retrieved December 26, 2013, from NJ and Best of New Jersey - Restaurants, Events, Doctors, Schools. Top High Schools: http://njmonthly.com/articles/towns_and_schools/bestplacestolive/best-places-to-live-in-new-jersey-2013.html

New Jersey Monthly Magazine. (2010, August 16). *New Jersey Top High Schools 2010*. Retrieved December 26, 2013, from New Jersey Monthly: http://njmonthly.com/articles/towns_and_schools/highschoolrankings/top-high-schools-2010.html

Snook, J. W., Johnson, J. D., Olsen, D. C., & Buckman III, J. M. (2006). *Recruiting, training, and maintaining volunteer firefighters* (Third ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Barlett Publishers, Inc.

TriData Corporation. (2001). *Fire Department Management Study: Springfield, NJ*. Arlington, VA: TriData Corporation.

U.S. Department of Commerce. (2014, January 24). *American FactFinder - Results*. Retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau:
http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2012). *Executive Leadership* (6th ed.). Emmittsburg, MD: Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Windisch, F. C., & Crosby, F. C. (2008). *A leadership guide for combination fire departments*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Barlett Publishers.

Appendix A – SFD Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Policy**PURPOSE**

This directive provides the standards for recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. The standards specify the criteria to achieve and maintain active status as a volunteer firefighter with the Springfield Fire Department.

SCOPE

Under the provisions of the Fire Manual, this general order establishes policy, procedures and regulations which shall govern the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. This directive applies to membership status in relation to Township Code and New Jersey Statutes regarding firefighter appointments and certain eligibilities granted therein.

POLICY**1. Recruitment Requirements:**

- a. Eligibility
 - i. Age: 18+
 - ii. Education: High School Diploma
 - iii. Residency: Springfield
- b. Completed and notarized application
- c. Criminal background check
- d. Interview with the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief
- e. Substance abuse screening
- f. Psychological fitness examination
- g. Medical fitness examination as per NFPA 1582 Standard
- h. Recommendation by the Public Safety Sub-Committee
- i. Appointment by Governing Body
- j. Non-Mandatory application to the New Jersey Firemen's Association

2. Retention Requirements:

- a. Training:
 - i. Successful completion of NJ Division of Fire Safety Firefighter 1 & 2 certification within one (1) year after appointment.
 - ii. Twenty two (22) scheduled bi-monthly volunteer drills.
 1. Conducted on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 1900 hours.
 2. No more than three (3) consecutive missed drills.
Note: Members attending approved training will be given attendance credit for the drill.

- iii. Within the probationary year, successful completion of *SFD Directive #10-01 Volunteer Member Riding and Driving Requirements* to become a 4th Rider. (See Volunteer Firefighter Qualifications)

b. Service:

- i. Members will be assigned to a Duty Tour reporting to Tour Commander.
 - ii. Fifteen (15) hours of duty service per month.
 - 1. Scheduled in advance in a minimum block of two (2) hours.
 - 2. Response to Fire Alerts may be substituted for duty service credited at one (1) hour minimum and then credited for each additional at one-half (1/2) hour thereafter.
 - iii. Quarterly duty service average is calculated by the sum of the duty hours divided by three (3) which corresponds to the three-month period in the calendar quarter.
- c. Meetings:** Scheduled quarterly in January, April, August and October to review the activities of the previous quarter and set goals for the current period.

3. Compensation:

a. Stipend eligibility:

- i. Maintained minimum service Retention Requirements (Section 2).
- ii. Response to 25% of Station Coverage, Full Box Alarms and Signal 11 incidents.

b. Stipend payment :

- i. \$1,000.00 per calendar quarter.
- ii. Payable in the following month.

4. Membership Status:

Each Volunteer Firefighter shall have their participation reviewed on a quarterly basis.

a. Active Status

- i. Active status service credit, in reference to Township Code 2-42.11 eligibility, begins when the Volunteer Firefighter meets the NJ Division of Fire Safety - Firefighter 1 certification requirements.
- ii. The quarterly duty service average shall meet the Retention Requirements (Section 2).
- iii. Training credit shall be granted towards the duty service requirement for any training courses found in *SFD Directive #12-01 Promotional Class Matrix*.

b. Provisional Status (Active)

- i. The previous quarterly duty service average has not met the Retention Requirements (Section 2).
- ii. *Letter of Improvement* shall be issued.

- v. Active members injured during duty service shall be placed on Duty Injury Leave.
 - 1. Firefighters who are on Duty Injury Leave may not participate in incident responses, work details and in training involving physical exertion. EXCEPTION: A modified duty assignment may require restricting physical activity and/or modifying duty hours to accommodate an employee's illness/injury as reported by the treating physician.
 - 2. Duty Injury Leave shall not cause a break in service time.
- vi. Members returning from a Leave of Absence may need to re-qualify to the standards set in *SFD Directive #10-01 – Volunteer Member Riding and Driving Requirement*.

5. Volunteer Firefighter Qualifications:

Each Volunteer Firefighter is required to complete the training in accordance to *SFD Directive #10-01 – Volunteer Member Riding and Driving Requirements*. The member's riding status will be reflected on his/her helmet shield. A departmental memo reflecting their change in status will be posted. The following number system will be used:

P = Indicates volunteer member is Probationary – Member is currently attending the Firefighter 1 & 2 Program or has not completed the required departmental training to respond on an emergency response.

4 = Indicates the volunteer member may serve as a “4th” rider on an emergency response.

3 = Indicates the volunteer member may serve as a “3rd” Rider on an emergency response.

2 = Indicates the volunteer member is certified apparatus driver*.

1 = Indicates the volunteer member may serve as a Company Officer.

* Any member may qualify as a driver for a specific piece of apparatus. Once qualified, the Volunteer Firefighter shall have their name posted in fire dispatch.

6. Volunteer Firefighter Service Credit Points Toward Career Appointment

- a. As per N.J.S.A. 40A:14-9, service credit points can be awarded to qualified firefighters having served for at least two (2) years next proceeding and appointment to a paid position.
- b. SFD Officers will provide written evaluations of qualified volunteer firefighters to measure: Mastery of Skills & Job Knowledge, Communication, Dependability,

Career Development, Self-Confidence, Customer Service, Safety, Role Model, Experience, Seniority and Judgment.

- c. The ratings shall be applied to a schedule awarding between 3 and 10 service credits points to the candidate's passing examination score.

7. Resignation

- a. Active members in good standing may offer their resignation from the Department with written notice to the Fire Chief.
- b. All Department property shall immediately be returned to the Fire Chief.
- c. The Township will take the action necessary under the law to recover Department equipment without delay.

8. Termination

- a. Any volunteer member terminated shall be removed from the Department roster and notice sent to the Springfield Firemen's Relief Association.
- b. All Department property shall immediately be returned to the Fire Chief.
- c. The Township will take the action necessary under the law to recover Department equipment without delay.

REFERENCES

- Township Code 2-42.10 Appointment of Paid Members to the Fire Division
- Township Code 2-42.11 Appointment of Volunteer Members to the Fire Division
- N.J.S.A. 40A:14-44. Appointment of volunteer firemen or other persons to a part-paid fire department
- N.J.S.A. 40A:14-45. Service credits and conditions upon appointments to paid or part-paid fire departments

Appendix B - Public Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Survey

Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

Which category below includes your age?

- Less than 21 years old
- 21 to 35 years old
- 36 to 50 years old
- More than 50 years old

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- High school degree or equivalent
- Technical school degree/certification
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree

Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

What is your housing situation?

- Homeowner
- Renter
- Living with relatives

How many children age 17 or younger live in your household?

- None
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4

Are you currently serving or have served in the United States military?

- Yes
 - No
- If yes, which branch?

Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- Employed, working 1-39 hours per week
- Employed, working 40 or more hours per week
- Not employed, looking for work
- Not employed, NOT looking for work
- Retired
- Disabled, not able to work

Which of the following best describes your current occupation?

- Healthcare Support Occupations
- Construction and Extraction Occupations
- Legal Occupations
- Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- Protective Service Occupations
- Computer and Mathematical Occupations
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
- Architecture and Engineering Occupations
- Production Occupations
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations
- Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations
- Education, Training, and Library Occupations
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
- Personal Care and Service Occupations
- Business and Financial Operations Occupations
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations
- Community and Social Service Occupations
- Sales and Related Occupations
- Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations
- Management Occupations
- Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations
- Other (please specify)

How much free time do you have each week?

- 0 to 10 hours
- 11 to 20 hours
- More than 20 hours

Do you volunteer for any organizations?

- Yes
 - No
- If yes, which organizations?

Please choose the reason(s) that would encourage you to volunteer for the Springfield Fire Department? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Potential career | <input type="radio"/> Uniforms |
| <input type="radio"/> Community pride | <input type="radio"/> Enjoy teamwork |
| <input type="radio"/> Help keep taxes low | <input type="radio"/> Know a firefighter |
| <input type="radio"/> Interest in the fire service | <input type="radio"/> Looks good on resume |
| <input type="radio"/> Death and financial relief benefits | <input type="radio"/> Enjoy helping people |
| <input type="radio"/> Public recognition | <input type="radio"/> Influenced by reputation of the Springfield Fire Department |
| <input type="radio"/> Excitement and danger | <input type="radio"/> Experienced a fire or emergency in my family |
| <input type="radio"/> Interest in public service | |
| <input type="radio"/> Family member in the fire service | |
| <input type="radio"/> Retention stipend | |

Would your employer approve of your service as a volunteer firefighter?

- Would strongly approve
- Would approve
- Wouldn't care
- Would disapprove
- Would strongly disapprove
- I wouldn't seek approval

Would your family approve of your service as a volunteer firefighter?

- Would strongly approve
- Would approve
- Wouldn't care
- Would disapprove
- Would strongly disapprove
- I wouldn't seek approval

Would you consider volunteering for the Springfield Fire Department?

- Yes
- No

If you are interested in volunteering, at what telephone number or email address would you like to be contacted?

Appendix C – Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey

1. How is your department organized?
 - Career (Full-time personnel comprising 85% or greater)
 - Combination (Personnel comprising less than 85% career or less than 85% volunteer/paid-on-call)
 - Volunteer (Volunteer personnel comprising 85% or greater)

2. Overall, are you satisfied with the results of your department's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention program?
 - Extremely satisfied
 - Moderately satisfied
 - Slightly satisfied
 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - Slightly dissatisfied
 - Moderately dissatisfied
 - Extremely dissatisfied
 - Other

3. What types of volunteers do you have? (Check all the apply)
 - Traditional (Volunteers who live in the community)
 - Student interns (Volunteer receiving college credit for their service)
 - Resident volunteers (Volunteer who live at the fire station)
 - Shift volunteers (Volunteers who stay at the fire station for a designated period)
 - Per diem employees
 - EMS only volunteers
 - Fire suppression only volunteers
 - Non-emergency volunteers (CERT, Fire Corps, etc.)
 - Cadets
 - Other

4. What challenges your volunteer firefighter program?

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Historically inadequate recruitment efforts○ Increased volunteer turnover○ Government regulations○ They're not trained well enough (competency)○ Lack of supervision of volunteer programs and members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lack of public information about volunteer program○ Poor relations between paid and volunteer○ Lack of training for volunteers○ Poor public image○ Lack of quality control○ Lack of availability of volunteers○ Other
--	---

Running Head: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

5. Does your department have a volunteer membership coordinator?
 - Yes, as a primary role
 - Yes, as part of other assigned duties
 - No
 - Other

6. Does your department have a cadet program?
 - Yes, it's successful in achieving our volunteer recruitment and retention goals
 - Yes, but it's not successful in achieving our volunteer recruitment and retention goals
 - No
 - Other

7. What are your incentives for volunteer firefighters?
 - Billboard with names showing appreciation
 - College reimbursement
 - Employee assistance
 - Expense reimbursement
 - Hiring preferences
 - Housing assistance
 - Gas money
 - Gift certificates
 - Good training facilities
 - Injury insurance
 - Jackets/sweatshirts/t-shirts/hats
 - Length of service program
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Medical insurance
 - Modern apparatus/equipment
 - Money for newborns
 - Physical exams/screening
 - Safety equipment
 - Scanners/pagers
 - Service awards
 - Social events
 - Scholarships
 - Subscription to trade journals
 - Tax credits
 - Training opportunities
 - Travel expenses to attend meetings
 - Trip to National Fire Academy
 - Uniforms
 - Vehicles for officers
 - Weight room
 - Other

8. How many times are your volunteer firefighters called to respond in a calendar year?
 - 0 to 49
 - 50 to 99
 - 100 to 349
 - 350 to 749
 - Greater than 750

9. From an exit interview or other feedback, what are the primary reasons given for your firefighters leaving the department? (Check all that apply)

- Community demographics have changed
- Family and employment obligations
- Hired as a career firefighter
- Lack of quality activities for volunteers to perform
- Not adequately compensated for their contribution
- Not adequately recognized for their contribution
- Responses have become too great
- Too many certifications, standards, and mandates for volunteer personnel
- Training requirement have become too difficult
- Wasn't hired as a career firefighter
- Other

10. If the total number of volunteers has increased. Why? (Check all that apply)

- New volunteers looking for career opportunity and experience
- Opening up more volunteer opportunities such as non-emergency response
- New community enthusiasm to volunteer
- Increased volunteer recruitment efforts
- Other

11. Over the past five years, has the number of volunteer firefighters in your department increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

- Increased
- Decreased
- Stayed the same

12. Does your fire department use census information such as the demographics of your community when recruiting new members?

- Yes
- No
- Other

13. When recruiting for volunteer firefighters, what type of recruitment activities do you conduct to recruit new candidates?

- Activities through the local college
- Activities through the local high school
- Advertising on local cable access channel
- Advertising in local newspaper
- Open house at the fire station
- Use of posters or banners throughout the community
- Use of social media
- Word of mouth from current firefighters
- Other

14. What processes are you currently implementing to attract and recruit compete and dependable volunteer firefighters?

Appendix D – Springfield Former Volunteer Firefighter Feedback Survey

Springfield Fire Chief James Sanford is completing his fourth year of studies in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. Each EFO student must complete an Applied Research Project that relates to their organizations and their communities. Chief Sanford is researching what improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention methods are possible.

This survey is created by and reflects the personal work of James Sanford for his participation in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. The terms, concepts and questions expressed by this survey do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Township of Springfield. The results of the survey are for academic research purposes only.

The goal of this applied research is to determine what improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention methods are possible during the performance period of Springfield's Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant. Response to this survey is anonymous to ensure an honest personal view.

Survey participation should not be considered an offer of re-reinstatement. Former members are invited to re-apply under the current recruitment system.

Please like us on www.facebook.com/SpringfieldFireDepartment and follow us on Twitter @Springfield_FD

Thank you for your participation.

1. Of these four life areas, please rank them in terms of importance in your life. (Imagine that you are at the end of your life and looking back at the most important things to you.)

- Community
- Family
- Personal
- Professional

2. Why did you volunteer?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> I want to help | <input type="radio"/> Community service |
| <input type="radio"/> Gain experience | <input type="radio"/> Camaraderie |
| <input type="radio"/> Thought I would enjoy it | <input type="radio"/> Training opportunities |
| <input type="radio"/> Popular activity in my town | <input type="radio"/> Help keep taxes down |
| <input type="radio"/> Friends talked me into it | <input type="radio"/> Social aspects |
| <input type="radio"/> The thrill of it | <input type="radio"/> Become a career firefighter |
| <input type="radio"/> I wanted to help people | <input type="radio"/> Experienced an emergency in my own family |
| <input type="radio"/> Like working under pressure | <input type="radio"/> Other (please explain) |
| <input type="radio"/> My father was a firefighter | |

3. What year did you join the Springfield Fire Department?

4. Did your family approve of your service as a volunteer firefighter?
 - Strongly approved
 - Approved
 - Didn't care
 - Disapproved
 - Strongly disapproved
 - Other (please explain)

5. Did your employer approve of your service as a volunteer firefighter?
 - Strongly approved
 - Approved
 - Didn't care
 - Disapproved
 - Strongly disapproved
 - Other (please explain)

6. How often did being a volunteer firefighter interfere with your family, work or other obligations?
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Seldom
 - Never
 - Other (please explain)

7. How meaningful was the volunteer work you did for the Springfield Fire Department?
 - Extremely meaningful
 - Very meaningful
 - Moderately meaningful
 - Slightly meaningful
 - Not at all meaningful
 - Other (please explain)

8. How easy was it to get along with other volunteers at the Springfield Fire Department?
 - Extremely easy
 - Very easy
 - Moderately easy

- Slightly easy
- Not at all easy
- Other (please explain)

9. How easy was it to get along with the career members at the Springfield Fire Department?

- Extremely easy
- Very easy
- Moderately easy
- Slightly easy
- Not at all easy
- Other (please explain)

10. How appreciated did you feel?

- Extremely appreciated
- Very appreciated
- Moderately appreciated
- Slightly appreciated
- Not at all appreciated
- Other (please explain)

11. How likely are you to recommend the Springfield Fire Department to others as a place to volunteer?

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Not at all likely
- Other (please explain)

12. What expectation from your volunteer service was met?

- Sense of belonging
- Achievement
- Economic security
- Freedom of fear
- Love and affection
- Self-respect
- Understanding
- Challenge
- Reward
- Making a difference

- Building skills
- Feeling needed
- Efforts recognized
- Simply having fun
- Other (please explain)

13. How would you describe the volunteer drills conducted by the career members?

- Poorly planned
- Passively accepted
- Not systematic
- Acceptable
- Comprehensive
- Other (please explain)

14. How useful were the volunteer training sessions at the Springfield Fire Department?

- Extremely useful
- Very useful
- Moderately useful
- Slightly useful
- Not at all useful
- Other (please explain)

15. As a volunteer firefighter, I was given the following rights.

- To be treated as a co-worker
- To be given suitable assignments
- To know as much as possible about the organization
- To receive training
- To receive continuing education
- To receive timely feedback
- To be given sound guidance and direction
- To be given opportunities for advancement and varied experience
- To be heard
- To be recognized
- To be appreciated for contributions
- Other (please explain)

16. As a volunteer firefighter, I was “turned off” by...

- Poor communication
- Not appreciated
- Lack of recognition
- Favoritism
- Lack of responsibilities
- Absence of standards
- Lack of support
- Lack of programmed responses
- Career members' attitudes
- Poor training
- Other (please explain)

17. As a volunteer firefighter, I was “turned on” by ...

- Appreciation of job well done
- Recognition and reward
- Personal satisfaction
- Challenging work
- Good training
- Firefighting activity
- Support from administration and career personnel
- New members
- Positive attitudes
- Doing a good jib
- Adequate funding
- Good equipment
- Meaningful incentives
- Other (please explain)

18. Does the Springfield Fire Department offer enough benefits and incentives to volunteer firefighters?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please explain)

19. Factors that contributed to you leaving the Springfield Fire Department.

- Dismissed
- Increased community obligations
- Increased family obligations
- Increased personal obligations
- Increased work obligations
- Personal needs unfulfilled
- Personality conflicts
- Too much time required
- Too many rules and regulations
- Moved away
- New Job
- No career firefighter opportunities
- No longer enjoyable
- Not enough firefighting activities
- Unable to maintain call percentages
- Unable to maintain training requirements
- Other (please explain)

20. Are there any additional comments you would like to share?

Appendix E – Fire and EMS Agency Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Survey Answers

Question 3: What types of volunteers do you have?

- We don't have volunteers, anymore. Division could use volunteers in the system, but doesn't because we don't have a recruitment program. The division is OK with being under-staffed, much to my dismay. I am not the boss.

Question 4: What challenges your volunteer firefighter program?

- Chief refuses to admit that scratched incidents by volunteers are a problem, volunteer officers will answer calls even though engine never gets out it won't count as a scratched call, two different departments under 1 name, volunteers held to completely different operational standards as paid staff.
- Housing is too expensive for volunteers to stay in the area.
- Lots of EMS - no fires to gain experience.
- Very high cost of housing in my community.

Question 6: Does your department have a cadet program?

- We do not have a cadet program but we work closely with the public high school supporting a fire and EMS program for junior and seniors. We have hired at least one person who completed this program as a high school student.
- We have a Fire Service Explorer Program from which we have hired several individuals. They typically make good employees as they already have an understanding of the job requirements.
- Explorer program has yielded many solid members but they often leave shortly after finishing high school.

Question 7: What are your incentives for volunteer firefighters?

- Our part-time personnel are paid on call and are represented by a union with a bargaining agreement. The agreement includes hourly minimums for call back pay, stipend pay to be on on-call, educational reimbursement and incentive pay for responding to a certain amount of calls per year.

Question 9: From an exit interview or other feedback, what are the primary reasons given for your firefighters leaving the department?

- Normally it is because they are upset with other volunteers and/or their supervisor.
- Either firefighter moves out of town past the radius for remaining on the department or they become policemen/women or firefighters. They may have also taken on more family responsibility such as second job and do not have the time to dedicate to the department any longer. They are informed they are welcome to come back to the department when they feel it is possible.
- We tend to throw out firefighters that do not meet their requirements, especially the first year.
- Our more mature volunteers understandably have personal/professional responsibilities outside of the fire service which limit their ability to fulfill our volunteer requirements (they have bills to pay and families to take care of). Our younger volunteers are less tethered with outside responsibilities and, for the most part, they are here to get their "toe in the door" of the fire service. Generally, the younger folks provide about 2 years of volunteer service to us after which either they are hired by us or another agency.
- Poor leadership

Question 10: If the total number of volunteers has increased. Why? (Check all that apply)

- A lot of members end up having friends join and members' sons join as explorers and then come on the company if they do not go away to college
- Increases are cyclic but do often occur during drives
- The poor economy and the amount of laid off firefighters

Question 14: What processes are you currently implementing to attract and recruit compete and dependable volunteer firefighters?

- We created a volunteer labor management committee that meets monthly. We are trying to figure out what motivates our members and or encourages them to volunteer. No new programs have been implemented
- Our explorer program is always bringing in new members - it normally has a waiting list. We only keep 15 explorers on at any one time. Since we started program over 15 years ago we have taken on at least 15 members in the fire department.

- Extensively training members, providing a professional image, one that serves the people and not individuals, good leadership that is properly trained to lead.
- The recruits go through a hiring process like career employees. Physical, background checks, blood work. If they pass, then they are placed in a recruit class for basic firefighting. Once that is complete and they passed they are then considered a volunteer.
- Free parking passes. Looking into swim club passes as well.
- Prior to being accepted for attendance of our 2 month volunteer academy, prospective volunteers must successfully complete the departments JRPAT, pass an oral board, pass a written general knowledge exam with 80% or above, and complete a 24 hour evaluation ride with each of our 3 shifts. After successful completion of the volunteer academy volunteers are on probationary status for 6 months during which time they must successfully complete a probationary firefighter task book.
- We perform comprehensive background investigations on all volunteer candidates and have a pre-determined set of criteria that are automatic exclusion criteria based on the background investigation. Our standards are very demanding for our volunteer firefighters however we seem to be able to maintain a cadre of about 500 volunteers (certified to respond) County-Wide. We are a county fire department with 31 stations serving over 540,000 people and are one of the largest combination fire departments in America. I offer that as perspective and context of the answers above.

Appendix F - Springfield Former Volunteer Firefighter Feedback Survey Answers

Question 5: Did your employer approve of your service as a volunteer firefighter?

- I didn't hide that I was a volunteer firefighter, but didn't mention much either as I don't think they cared. Also, I didn't want it to be thought of something that would distract from my work. Large corporations generally do not want their resources having other non-family priorities. The attitude was that as long as it didn't interfere during work hours or with my performance, it was no problem.
- My supervisor didn't want me standing by in headquarters. I could only go for actually fires.
- I used to be permitted to leave work for fire calls during the day. Then, the new school superintendent changed that.

Question 6: How often did being a volunteer firefighter interfere with your family, work or other obligations?

- There is a serious time commitment, which for me, was during non-work hours. Which means it's more time away from family. Something I was prepared to do prior to committing and understood well.

Question 7: How meaningful was the volunteer work you did for the Springfield Fire Department?

- I think the role that the volunteers played at SFD was crucial....and it's even more important now as every town in NJ is expected to do more with less.
- It was not very often during my tenure that volunteers were utilized to the benefit of the department. It did happen and I am proud to have lent a hand when needed or asked, but there weren't many opportunities to do so.

Question 8: How easy was it to get along with the other volunteers at the Springfield Fire Department?

- There was always a bit of tension with the volunteers that wanted to become paid FF and the rest of us that just wanted to do it to help out.
- First few years were no problem. Last few years were very difficult because of the issue of the hiring, legal actions undertaken by other volunteers, and the poor relationship with the town. This did occur all under the previous Chief.

Question 9: How easy was it to get along with the career members at the Springfield Fire Department?

- In the past, 1995-2003, there was a very small group of FF and Captains that valued the volunteers. In my opinion, the rest could care less if we were there or not.
- Most were very nice
- Career members were generally easy to get along with. There were some really great folks that I admire to this day. There were also some examples of terrible leadership that was clearly evident throughout the ranks. By the last year or so, many of the worst were out of the department and near the time I left, I felt the career members were in a good state.

Question 11: How likely are you to recommend the Springfield Fire Department to others as a place to volunteer?

- Times are different now. The leadership is better and I feel it's a better environment for a volunteer.
- The general issue (during my tenure) was the inability to meaningfully contribute. It was well known that volunteers were NOT encouraged to ride to calls. Because of a false sense that if volunteers became a noticeable presence, the town may decide a smaller or same size career force would be needed. It was a really unfortunate attitude that was the toughest part of volunteering. If a call went out to career and volunteers, it was well-known that any career members would go out first. Volunteers only got an opportunity when really large calls or many multiple calls occurred. I would say, at best, I went out on a call for 1 out of 25 responses. And I lived 5 houses away so no one outside the department could get there faster.

Question 13: How would you describe the volunteer drills conducted by the career members?

- It depended by the Captain on duty and sometimes the training chief.
- The training was comprehensive, but inconsistent at times. It depended on who gave the training and how prepared that individual was. Generally the training was good, but frustrating that the skills were not often used for lack of being able to participate.

Question 16: As volunteer firefighter, I was "turned-off" by....

- In the past, the attitudes were very bad. The career guys cannot look upon the volunteers as a career threat. They are there to help. But having said that...standards need to be put in place to prevent the SVFD from becoming a training ground for other departments.

- Largest issue for me was the inability to meaningfully contribute. This is followed by the poor professionalism I very often saw amongst the career department (generally at the Captain rank or below). Coming from a military background, I had expectations of a similar working environment when it was described to me as a 'para military' organization during my initial interview. What I observed and experienced was an organization where many of the career members had poor attitudes about the job, each other, the FD leadership, and the town leadership. In my opinion, it was really dysfunctional. There were some notable exceptions that made me proud to still be part of the organization, but it was the exception more than the norm

Question 18: Does the Springfield Fire Department offer enough benefits and incentives to volunteer firefighters?

- The stipend is nice but not enough to balance work, family and being a volunteer.
- I never wanted any benefits or incentives other than being part of a strong organization that was well trained, led, and served the community. I always appreciated the events held at the department when all members got together like a Holiday gathering or Town Open House - real highlights.

Question 19: Factors that contributed to you leaving Springfield Fire Department?

- With working in NYC and having young children, making the calls was proving to be problematic. Perhaps having less strict parameters may help membership.
- The year I left (2011?) was a strange one in the department - the volunteer organization was disbanded by the township. However, I think I had left or was going to leave regardless. Primarily, I was greatly disheartened by the inability to contribute during calls. Any type of calls. I would have been thrilled to contribute to fire alarms going off...just to validate the time spent on training and responding to calls. However, after a bunch of years and realizing that 95% of the time, I would sit in dispatch with the other volunteers, why was it worth getting up in the middle of the night or missing time with family to respond to calls? Career firefighters at times would indicate volunteers didn't have the experience or requirements - but at the time there was no formal communication or tracking of requirements. And it was impossible to gain meaningful experience if volunteers couldn't regularly ride. I once suggested volunteers be allowed to join an overnight or weekend shift a few times a month (with no compensation) and it was thoroughly discouraged/struck down. Besides all that, it was a terrible environment within the volunteer organization itself stemming from a lot of paranoia and legal proceedings that were occurring. It all became un-enjoyable and not fulfilling. It would be fair to mention too that I had an almost 1 year work assignment (2009 into 2010) that had me travel most of that time, so I was basically unable to participate in meetings or training during that time.

Question 20: Are there any additional comments you would like to share?

- I would be happy to assist the SFD Chief Sanford in brainstorming how to increase the volunteer ranks. It is a very rewarding experience in a very demanding area. I loved being a volunteer back in 1995-2000 and would welcome returning. Leadership has changed for the better and there seems to be a better framework now as most senior firefighters and captains were former volunteers themselves. Collectively, we can make it work. We will all be forced to do more with less and volunteerism plays a big role with that. The SVFD needs good leadership. Look at what solid leadership has brought to the SFD under Chief Sanford. The SFD was marred in scandal and just a sense of mistrust years back, not anymore. That same sense of leadership and "no-nonsense" needs to be the backbone of the SVFD. Once the community sees that, the membership will rise dramatically and prove to assist the SFD and the township of Springfield.
- The Springfield fire department was good place to volunteer. The career department made you feel like a brother unlike other career departments that I joined that didn't work out for me.
- Springfield's FD is a difficult environment because of the hybrid career/volunteer approach. It created an environment at conflict quite often. In my view, it would require dedication/commitment from ALL Career Officers to make it work well. Captains should all work to get volunteers on calls. Allow volunteers to sign-up for 8 or 12 hour shifts 1-3 times a month. It would be easy to schedule and better to mandate as a volunteer requirement. Talk to other towns with a volunteer/career mix and see what works well and what doesn't. Create a mentor program. I think Springfield's approach during my tenure captured many of the 'what doesn't work' approach. I've heard things are very different now which I'm hopeful is true and wish all the very best. It is a good department and can be great with proper commitment from all members. The petty drama I very often saw in the (mostly lower) ranks has to be squashed by all Officers. I truly look back though with fondness and appreciate the goodwill and fellowship I received. I no longer live in Springfield and miss many of the friendly faces from the FD.