

**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
OF
VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
IN
ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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Abstract

Volunteer fire departments across the country have been feeling the effects of declining membership. Less and less people are joining volunteer fire departments and many experienced members are leaving. This trend is also being experienced by a number of volunteer fire departments located in Erie County, New York, based on a recent survey conducted by the Erie County Volunteer Firemen's Association. The purpose of this paper was to determine what could be done to recruit new volunteers and what could be done to retain current volunteers. An action research method was selected in order to gather sufficient information regarding the volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention programs from across the country. These programs were analyzed to decide which, if any, would be applicable in Erie County. In researching numerous articles and reports, it became apparent that the problem of diminishing volunteers was widespread. A number of fire departments have realized that in order to remain in existence, they must aggressively recruit new members and become more aware of members' needs to retain those members.

A number of creative recruitment and retention programs in use across the country were evaluated. From those programs, a number were selected to be implemented in the Erie County Fire Service, some with only minor modifications. Essentially, Erie County's recruitment and retention programs must become very aggressive in order to provide quality fire protection and emergency medical services to the county residents, or face the consequences of having to drastically increase taxes to subsidize a career fire department.

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INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters is a national problem that could have negative effects on the 30,000 plus volunteer fire departments in the United States. All across our country leaders of volunteer fire departments are concerned about the dwindling number of active members and the effects it has on their organizations; without active volunteer firefighters these fire departments will become nonexistent. These leaders are all asking the same questions. “How do we recruit new members?” “How do we retain our existing members?”

Erie County, New York is not immune to this problem. All the towns and villages located within Erie County have depended on volunteer firefighters since the days of their incorporation. The days of having a waiting list of people to join are over. With the price of homes and taxes increasing in the county and good paying jobs moving out of town, volunteer fire departments within the county have experienced a significant negative impact.

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate what other fire departments across the country are doing with respect to recruitment and retention, and to identify which of these programs may be applicable to Erie County. In order to conduct this study, an action research methodology was selected. Utilizing this methodology allowed a significant amount of data to be gathered and analyzed for its possible implementation within the Erie County Volunteer Fire Departments. The primary focus of the research was to answer the following questions, “What can be done to recruit volunteer fire personnel?” and “What can be done to retain volunteer fire personnel?”

Background And Significance

Economic and social changes in the last decade have caused a decline in the number of volunteer firefighters in America. With the rise of two-income families, people working second jobs, and the need to commute outside of the local area to work is causing a squeeze on people's free time.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, the number of total estimated 1,073,600 volunteer and paid firefighters across America, 807,900 or 75% are volunteer. Statistics, however, indicate a disturbing trend; over the past decade there has been roughly a 5-10% decline in the number of volunteer firefighters (Towle, 1997). With the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing in large suburban areas primarily protected by volunteer fire departments, potential volunteers are driven away, especially younger volunteers. Additional reasons causing difficulty in recruitment and retention include too much time dedicated to fundraising efforts and the steady increase in response calls. Since 1983, the number of emergency calls has risen an average of 48%, with the majority of calls being for emergency medical services or false alarms, thus frustrating volunteers who joined to fight fires (Towle, 1997).

Retention difficulties can be linked to a number of organizational problems such as bad managers, "cliquish" departments, dictatorial leaders, lack of appreciation, poor communications, or the increase in training requirements. In addition, people are too busy pursuing careers or participating in leisure activities to volunteer their time ("Attracting and Holding", 1990).

Another reason may be the combined affect of high death rates; 94 fatalities were recorded in 1997 in the United States (Washburn, 1998). The injury rate, as well, is high; 85,400 firefighters were injured during the 1997 year in the United States (Karter, 1998). In addition, the scare of contracting viruses such as AIDS or Hepatitis may frighten many would be volunteers away. It is evident that between the pressures caused by society, as well as, the pressures caused by the fire fighting occupation people are turning their back on volunteering. The economic cost to this country that would result from a substantial decrease in volunteer firefighters is incomprehensible.

With the obstacles of volunteering known, innovative programs must be implemented to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. These same obstacles found nationwide are experienced in Erie County, New York. Geographically, Erie County encompasses 1,034 square miles with 42 square miles making up the City of Buffalo. The population of the county is roughly 695,000 and has remained constant over the last five years. The county boundaries include 88 square miles of shoreline, as well as, densely populated suburbs, rural farming communities, interstate highways, heavy railroad traffic, airports, colleges and universities, shopping malls and industrial complexes. This make up creates a number of hazards for the volunteer fire service to handle.

The Erie County fire service is made up of both paid and volunteer fire departments. There are 3 completely paid departments protecting 3 cities, as well as, 91 completely volunteer fire departments protecting 25 towns, 16 villages and 2 Indian reservations. Currently, there are approximately 4,900 volunteer firefighters serving Erie County from 91 fire departments that function either as independent corporations, municipal fire districts or village fire departments.

Those 91 fire departments operate on a combined budget of roughly \$32.4 million dollars. The Erie County Office of Emergency Services coordinates the fire departments in Erie County.

Fire and emergency medical incidents responded to by volunteer firefighters in Erie County continue to increase at a staggering rate according to the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) publication entitled "*Fire in New York*" (1996). During 1996, volunteers responded to 12,815 suppression responses and 24,000 medical responses for a total of 36,815 responses (OFPC, 1996). Responsibilities such as suppression, EMS response, purchasing, fire prevention and overall administration functions are carried out by the 91 volunteer fire departments. Organized training, fire investigation, as well as, fire and EMS mutual aid are functions of both New York State (OFPC) and the Erie County Office of Emergency Services.

In a 1990 report from Commissioner James P. Keane, Erie County Office of Emergency Services, he detailed the declining volunteer population within Erie County and the cost to replace them with paid personnel. Commissioner Keane states:

The cost of operating a paid fire department is extremely high. Each paid firefighter would cost local taxpayers approximately \$50,000 including salary, pension benefits and other fringes. Assuming that suburban Erie County would need a minimum of 2,000 firefighters to properly man a paid fire department, the cost to county taxpayers would exceed \$100 million. This assumption is predicated on the fact that suburban Erie County's population is twice that of the City of Buffalo which has a 1,000 member paid fire department. Accounting for the large geographic area of suburban and rural Erie County, the 2,000-man figure

is conservative. Therefore, the projected costs of a county fire service for suburban Erie County would far exceed \$100 million (Keane, 1990).

The projected cost of \$100 million in 1990 dollars would equate to \$130 million in 1998 based on a cost of approximately \$65,000 per firefighter. This figure includes salary, pension benefits, insurance, uniforms and turn out gear. As stated earlier, the 1997 cost of \$32.4 million for 4,900 volunteer firefighters saves the county taxpayers roughly \$100,000 per year in tax dollars.

My research was prompted by a 1998 survey conducted by the Erie County Volunteer Firemen's Association (ECVFA) which found that firefighter strength among Erie County's 91 volunteer companies was dwindling and at its lowest level since 1989. The personnel shortage is approaching 30% or 2,100 vacancies in a volunteer force set at 7,400 (Appendix A). Not only is the number of vacancies a concern, there is also a worry that many of the firefighters "on call" are well past their physical prime. Nationally, one in seven firefighters (career and volunteer) are older than 50 according to the National Fire Protection Association. Among Erie County volunteers, it is almost one in three (Appendix A). Clearly, volunteer firefighters in Erie County represent a large cost savings to taxpayers, but with a decreasing and aging number of volunteers, it is imperative that individual fire departments work with the county and state to actively pursue a recruitment and retention program to secure the volunteer service for years to come.

The New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) is responsible for developing and administering the Fire Fighting Standards for the state's roughly 126,000 career and volunteer firefighters. This includes providing the majority of training from basic firefighter

field courses to advanced operation skills offered at the State's Fire Academy. The OFPC is also responsible for providing certification and technical assistance in the fields of arson investigations, hazardous materials, special rescue operations, basic fire incident reporting, as well as, participating as a sitting member on the State of New York's Fire Prevention and Building Code Council. My position as a Fire Protection Specialist with New York State (OFPC) is to carry out the above functions working as the state liaison to six different county fire coordinators that include 217 fire departments, the majority of them being volunteer. The recruitment and retention problem occurring in Erie County is not unique as the problem can be found in any number of the 62 counties that we serve in the state. As an organization, New York State (OFPC) has an inherent concern with the reduction of volunteer firefighters in the state as they are the main component of our state's mutual aid and fire mobilization plan. Erie County was chosen for this research project as it is one of the five most populated upstate counties that is experiencing recruitment and retention problems.

During the National Fire Academy *Strategic Management of Change Course*, the students were introduced to leading change using the change management model in Module 4. This model is an important tool to implement a successful recruitment and retention program. This would be especially true when attempting to change the culture, as well as, leading change and enlisting political support from 91 individual fire departments. Finally, a tool needs to exist that will measure the effectiveness on how the changes in recruitment and retention have benefited these departments. All of these management skills were part of the *Strategic Management of Change Course*.

Literature Review

The literary review was conducted to examine the findings of others that have dealt with the problem of recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. This literary review was conducted in the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy, as well as, the library located at the New York State Fire Academy. A number of articles and reports relating to successful recruitment and retention programs were available. These articles and reports were the basis of the data gathering for this research project.

Recruitment is certainly a challenge for a growing number of volunteer fire departments. They must attract persons that meet the needs and standards of the department. “Selecting the wrong individual for the job, cost an organization—in time, money, and training” (Marinucci, 1989). A number of fire departments conduct their recruitment through “word-of-mouth” advertising; friends tell friends about the benefits of joining. Some departments carry out planned recruitment drives or place advertisements in local newspapers. One fire department in the State of Virginia has set up a program where a prospective member is given a brochure that briefly describes the department. The individual is invited to the next monthly informational session for a more comprehensive overview (Bush, 1998). This program sets aside a special session where the fire department presents a planned recruitment program instead of just handing out an application and sending the prospective member on their way. Regardless of how the prospective new member is recruited, a background check should always be conducted to verify honesty and the proper credentials needed to do the job. A new recruit should be made aware of all the commitments from the beginning. They must know what is expected of them and likewise of what they could expect from the department. This should be completed immediately

upon joining before personal protective gear is issued for the start of their basic training.

“Outfitting just one firefighter in basic required gear costs a staggering \$2,000 or more” (Snook, Johnston, Olsen, 1998).

Retaining volunteers is just as important as the recruitment. Training officers must keep drills up to date and exciting to retain the interest of the volunteers. While fire departments struggle to recruit and retain volunteers, outside pressures add to the problem such as the escalating cost of homes and property, higher taxes, or volunteers that have to drive outside their communities they protect for employment obligations. This problem is especially true in Erie County, New York. In a May, 1997 article in the *Buffalo News*, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine* entitled “*Tax To The Max*”, property and state taxes paid in Buffalo, New York, were the highest in the nation out of the 106 cities and metropolitan areas surveyed (Turner, 1997). In another article entitled “*Butterflies May Be Free—Volunteers Are Definitely Not*” (Bachman, Windesch, 1996) the authors report:

The cost of replacing a current volunteer force with paid personnel is something that many communities cannot afford to do. In order to assure the continual viability of the volunteer fire service, it is important to explore how to provide adequate benefits to the professional volunteers.

While many departments explore different ways to retain volunteers, there is little data on how successful they are. The implementation of length of service award programs are in use across the country to help retain membership. One department in New York State saw recruitment increase, as well as, retainment of members, when they started an awards program for volunteers to collect when they retire, “*Recruit and Retain: A Strategy For Volunteer Fire*

Departments” (Costigan, 1991). Length of service award programs may be successful in one community, but not in another. Aside from the high startup cost, it appears to retain members for a couple of years or does not interest the younger members that are 30 years away from collecting benefits. In an August, 1998 article in the *Buffalo News* entitled “*Manpower Shortage*” a local volunteer fire chief states,

Most of the service award programs turned out to be a quick fix. A lot of guys who had left the fire service came back long enough to qualify, then it was out the door again. Worse, the promise of pension money in the distant future has done little to spur the recruitment of young firefighters. Balance a few hundred dollars a month at age 62 or 65 against the time and training demanded by a 20 or 30-year career in the volunteer fire service and it’s no contest (Dawson, 1998).

Recognition is also an important part of the volunteer fire service. There are numerous ways that fire departments can recognize their members for the service they perform. This requires thoughtful consideration on the part of the department to determine what sort of recognition is best suited for its membership. Fire officials that are looking for suggestions in regards to recognition, should review “*Recruiting, Training and Maintaining Volunteer Firefighters*” (Snook, Johnston, Olson, 1998). In this book, the authors suggest many programs regarding effective recognition. Review of others’ findings have convinced this author that the problem of recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters continues throughout many areas of the United States, as well as, in Erie County, New York.

PROCEDURES

The procedures the author utilized for this action research project were observation, investigation, research, personal interview and evaluation. The observation began in Erie County, whereby it became apparent that the volunteer fire departments were experiencing some difficulty in recruiting and retaining new members. After some preliminary investigation, it became evident, with hard data available, that recruitment and retention was a problem with a number of the 91 fire departments. Additional investigation through articles, reports from fire service books and trade journals revealed that recruitment and retention of volunteers is a national problem. Researching the articles and reports from these same fire service books and trade journals revealed a number of innovative programs implemented in various fire departments throughout the country. A personal interview was conducted on November 25, 1998, with Mr. James H. Muy, Erie County Coordinator of Fire Training to enlighten the author on how Erie County plans to address the recruitment and retention problem. Finally, an evaluation of all this information was needed to determine which program, if any, would be beneficial to implement in Erie County.

Both the research and personal interviews, however, were limited to only one large county in New York State that is protected primarily by volunteer fire departments. The author could have broadened the scope of this research project and looked at other counties of similar composition not only in New York State, but also across the United States to determine patterns of similarity in relation to the problems experienced in Erie County.

RESULTS

The author's research was conducted at the National Fire Academy Learning Resource Center, as well as, New York State's Fire Academy Library. At these two locations, various articles were uncovered from across the country of fire departments meeting the challenge of diminishing numbers of volunteers by implementing successful recruitment and retention programs. Some of these programs are similar in their approach, while others are quite unique. All of the programs have a common denominator; increase membership.

In the Pound Ridge Fire Department located in Westchester County, New York, the fire department approached the high cost of housing and the declining number of volunteers able to afford housing, by purchasing a three bedroom house close to the firehouse and renting it out to these volunteer firefighters at a reduced rate. At least one of the firefighters participating in this program must be scheduled to cover a shift at the firehouse (IAFC, 1992).

A fire department in Long Island, New York, took a different approach to recruiting younger volunteers. In a *Newsday* article from April, 1994 entitled "*Fire fighting for College Tuition*" the Southampton Fire Department discovered that the median age of their firefighters was around 45 years old. The village started offering its firefighters a total of \$20,000 in tuition aid for the fiscal year beginning April 1. This aid can be utilized at any college. To qualify for the scholarship, a volunteer firefighter must be in good standing for one year, reporting to at least the minimum required drills and fires (Freedman, 1994).

The State of New Jersey during 1994 held a statewide conference on recruitment and retention. Representatives from the state's 21 counties took their concerns to the New Jersey State Fire Safety Commission and the Governor. After presenting their ideas, it was given

sponsorship and placed under the Commissioner's Public Education Advisory Council. The first step was to set up a toll-free hot line 24-hours per day (1-800-FIRE-LINE) manned by the State's Division of Fire Safety. The telephone numbers and names of individuals who called the hot line were passed on to the emergency service organization closest to them. The committee next focused on ways to educate the public about the need for volunteers and make them aware of the hot line number. What resulted was a professionally packaged campaign entitled "*What if no one answered the call?*" The committee promoted the campaign through road signs, restaurant tray liners, posters, pamphlets and videos. The committee was able to sign on sponsorships from large corporations such as *United Parcel Services* for delivery of the material, *Marcal Paper Mills* for printing, and *Prudential Insurance* for funding the video. The video is a 12-minute professionally produced video geared toward high school students and was distributed to every public, private and parochial school in the state to be used in class. Additional copies of the video were mailed to fire departments and public libraries across the state. According to Edward Cohn, Committee Chairman, in an article from the Spring, 1997 edition of *National Fire & Rescue Magazine*. Mr. Cohn states,

We saw the pending crisis in the fire service. We needed to address that and to bring all emergency services into the 21st century. Mr. Cohn further states that that meant focusing on the youth of today. They are the future of emergency services. If we ignore them and don't try to instill in them a sense of civic responsibility and volunteerism, then all our lives are in danger. The article continues on stating that 2,500 calls came into the hot line and since the material is so generic, it can be used in any state with just a few alterations. In fact, a

number of states contacted this New Jersey Committee on adopting their program (Towle, 1997).

In one county fire department in the state of Maryland, the Prince George's County Fire Department created a work-study course in conjunction with the Board of Education. It allows students to enter a fire service curriculum during their junior year of high school. Half days are spent in classrooms at the Fire Academy, taking the same courses that are presented to career firefighters. In the second year of the program, the students actually work out of the fire stations training and responding to emergency incidents. Upon graduation, these students are certified as Emergency Medical Technicians and meet the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association 1001, Firefighter Professional Qualifications. Many of these students volunteer at their neighborhood stations and some continue on as career firefighters (Estepp, 1986). Another unique twist to PGFD's recruitment efforts is a bounty program. Each active volunteer receives a \$50 savings bond for each new member they recruit. The fire company with the most new members also receives a \$500 savings bond to be used for the benefit of all of its members. The newly recruited member must remain in the system for at least one year and complete the required training for the prizes to be awarded (Estepp, 1986).

Information showing how everyday normal people such as your neighbor can contribute to an increase in volunteerism. The Loudoun County Fire Rescue Commission Volunteer Retention and Recruitment Committee, located in Loudoun County, Virginia, provides as part of their recruitment campaign, a poster showing how your neighbor may be leading two lives. These posters are placed in restaurants, stores and other common public areas, as well as, mailed

throughout the county. They instill pride and retain current members, but also attract other everyday normal people who feel that they could volunteer (Appendix B).

As part of the National Fire Academy Volunteer Incentive Program Leadership and Administration Course, a generic questionnaire is provided to be used by volunteer emergency service organizations to gauge what the volunteers within the organization think about the organization, their jobs and their supervision (Appendix C). This questionnaire could be used as a retention tool to find out what problems exist in the organization and so that changes/corrections can be made as a direct result from the data received.

The results of the personal interview are as follows:

Research Question: How does Erie County plan to address the recruitment and retention problems?

James H. Mui, Coordinator of Training for Erie County Office of Emergency Services stated,

That Erie County has requested funds in its 1999 budget to initiate a part-time position within the Office of Emergency Services to coordinate a recruitment drive throughout the county. Also, funds have been requested in the 1999 budget to conduct a countywide recruitment drive. This time instead of a shotgun approach, the county would target specific problem areas within the county and request matching funds from those towns most in need to assist with the recruitment drive. Another area that we would like to explore, would be mass marketing of the recruitment drive in supermarkets and on billboards depicting county residents that are also volunteers. I also think that an Ad-hoc committee

of business leaders, politicians and fire department officials should be formed to study why fire department are not working and what can be done to rectify the situation such as combination departments or consolidation.

The results indicate that recruitment of new members and retaining existing members takes much more then handing out an application or giving a pat on the back. The results clearly showed that programs such as providing low-cost housing, recruiting young members from local high schools, providing college tuition assistance, setting up statewide and countywide recruitment programs or providing self-evaluation forms to improve your organization indicate that a much more proactive position is being pursued.

DISCUSSION

The answer to the central research questions, “What can be done to recruit volunteers?” and “What can be done to retain volunteers?” seems to have a common denominator—people. Recruitment is based upon encouraging new people to join, while retention is keeping people in the firehouse. While this sounds easy, it can become a very complex issue.

Based upon the research, a substantial amount of evidence was provided showing that fire departments across the country are experiencing problems in regards to recruitment and retention. The research also substantiated that the same problems occurring in Erie County can be found in a number of other fire departments that rely on volunteers.

Based on the study results and the findings in the literature review, numerous types of retention programs utilized across the country are the direct results of problems discussed in the literature review. For example, the high cost of housing and having a fire department providing

low cost accommodations, or lack of young people joining and having recruitment programs geared directly at high school students.

The author feels that a number of fire departments are developing and utilizing new and creative ways to recruit and retain volunteers instead of just relying on “word of mouth” advertising. If fire departments are interested in utilizing any of these programs, they should contact their local State Fire Academy or Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy for the extensive amount of information available on this topic.

Volunteer fire departments in Erie County must take a hard look at their organizations. The survey conducted by the Erie County Volunteer Firemen’s Association clearly indicates that they must concentrate their efforts on a solid recruitment program, find more incentives to keep their members and not be afraid to investigate organizations on the outside for assistance with a formal recruitment and retention program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though much information has been generated by the research, any program adopted from other jurisdictions should be customized for Erie County. The Erie County Office of Emergency Service appears to be on the right track regarding recruitment and retention. Funding a part-time position for recruitment creates a year-round effort as opposed to addressing the problem only when a survey indicates recruitment problems. The person holding this position should form a committee with a member from each of the 91 departments involved so that it becomes a unified effort. The suggestion of having business and political leaders serving on the committee is an excellent idea. These people bring valuable insight and experience to the table

for discussion. In addition, the loss of volunteers has a direct impact on taxes paid; issues that every businessperson and politician knows well.

Once formed, the committee should look at every individual fire department and gather up-to-date information not only to target the recruitment and retention efforts, but also to have the information should consolidation become an issue. In a county the size of Erie, are 91 volunteer departments with a combined budget of \$32.4 million dollars necessary? Could money be saved by reducing duplicated apparatus needs, fire stations, and maintenance yet provide an influx of needed personnel? Along these lines, some of the busier fire departments should consider contracting with private emergency medical providers thus freeing up members to focus on fire fighting.

This committee with its countywide representation, should pursue property tax reductions or possibly medical insurance coverage as a way to retain membership. With the volunteer force of 5,000-7,000 this could be a strong grass roots organization and would still be cheaper for municipalities than funding a career department. In addition, the committee should look at the number of other programs described in this research paper that are in use across the country. For example, the State of New Jersey's , "*What if no one answered the call?*" program which could be easily adapted and address a number of the problems in Erie County, especially the reduction in young new firefighters. Another program with merit is in Loudon County, Virginia in which recruitment posters depicting neighbors as volunteers are used. This type of advertisement has instilled pride in current members, as well as, attracting individuals who want to give back to their community and believe that "If they can do it, so can I."

The members of this committee should report to the county executive on a quarterly basis regarding the status of the recruitment and retention programs. Also, individuals from this organization should send key members to conferences and/or to the National Fire Academy VIP Program to keep abreast of new, effective recruitment and retention programs that are in use across the country.

The timeline to implement this program should be one year. During the first quarter, the committee should be formed and funding secured. During the second quarter, the survey should be conducted. The third quarter would consist of analysis of the survey results and formation of a plan of action. The fourth quarter would promote the changes or programs to the fire departments and public, as well as, secure any additional funding. Implementation of the changes and program would follow after approval was received. After the initial year, a continuous monitoring program will need to be implemented to determine which programs have had a greater positive effect on the overall goal of increasing recruitment and retention efforts.

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Complete the questionnaire based on your own department.

This questionnaire assesses where your organization is and where it needs to be in terms of motivational climate. To know where we need to go, an assessment must be done. This questionnaire is the first step in this process.

This questionnaire can be taken home and used by VESO leadership to gauge what the volunteers within the organization think about the organization, their jobs, and their supervision. (Two questionnaires are provided.)

Organization assessment helps VESO leaders to uncover problem areas within the organization and decide on strategies to solve them.

1. Do you think that our department offers you the chance to have the kind of volunteer job that you will want in the future?

Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure ____

2. To what extent are you made to feel that you are really a part of our department.

Not at All __ To a Small Degree __ To a Large Degree __ In Every Way Possible __

3. To what extent have you made social friendships with people you have met through volunteering in our department?

Not at All __ To a Small Degree __ To a Large Degree __ In Every Way Possible __

4. How do you feel about the appearance of our department's stations?

Proud __ Satisfied __ Neutral __ Somewhat Dissatisfied __ Embarrassed __

5. How do you feel about the appearance of our fire apparatus?

Proud __ Satisfied __ Neutral __ Somewhat Dissatisfied __ Embarrassed __

6. How do you feel about our department's image with the public at large?

Proud __ Satisfied __ Neutral __ Somewhat Dissatisfied __ Embarrassed __

7. When you first volunteered, how well were our department's policies explained to you?

Very Well __ Adequately __ Not Altogether Sure __ Not Adequately __

8. Do you think that there is sufficient opportunity for advancement in our department?

Much ___ Some ___ Little ___ No Opportunity ___
Not Interested in Advancing ___

9. When you were first contacted, did the people who talked with you about the department and the opportunities within it describe them fairly and honestly?

Yes ___ No ___ Unclear ___

10. How do you feel about the department's training program?

Highly Beneficial ___ Of Some Value ___ Of Little Value ___ There is no Benefit ___

11. Does the department keep you informed about its activities and plans?

Always ___ Usually ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___

12. How often do you get involved in planning and decisionmaking in our agency?

Always ___ Usually ___ Sometimes ___ Seldom ___ Never ___

13. How do you feel when you tell people that you are a member of this volunteer fire department?

Proud _____ Good _____ Just a Place to be _____ Embarrassed _____

14. To what extent do you understand just what work you are supposed to do and what your duties are?

Fairly Poor Understanding ___ Fairly Good Understanding ___ Clear Understanding ___

15. Do you find the work assigned to you challenging and interesting?

Sometimes ___ Usually ___ Always ___

16. In general, how well do you like your present position?

Like it Very Much ___ I am Satisfied With it ___ I Neither Like Nor Dislike it ___
I Dislike it ___

17. If you were to start again, do you feel you would volunteer for our department?

Yes _____ No _____

RETENTION

18. Do the officers on the job set a good example in their own work habits?

All of Them ___ Most of Them ___ Some of Them ___ None of Them Do ___

19. When you want information or help on a difficult problem, how likely are you to get the help you need? I get:

Very Little Help ___ Fairly Good Help ___ All the Help I Need ___

20. Are you encouraged to offer ideas and suggestions for new or better ways of doing things?

All the Time ___ Sometimes ___ Often ___ Rarely ___ Not at All ___

21. Do you think that your personal problems would be given adequate attention if you brought them to an officer's attention?

Substantial Attention ___ Some Attention ___ Little Attention ___ No Attention ___

22. When you are given new duties and responsibilities, how well are they explained?

Well Explained ___ Adequately Explained ___ Partially Explained ___
Not Satisfactorily ___

23. How do you feel about the officer-firefighter interaction?

Excellent ___ Good ___ OK ___ Poor ___ Not Applicable ___

24. Please tell us any way in which we can improve our VESO (Use extra sheets if necessary.)