

# The InfoGram



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## PA: force of 300,000 firefighters down to 38,000 in 40 years

[Pennsylvania had around 300,000 volunteer firefighters in the 1970s. Those numbers plummeted to 38,000 in the past 40 years.](#) Ninety percent of departments in Pennsylvania are volunteer, and it has the highest number of volunteer firefighters in the country. As one state representative said “We’re in a crisis right now.”

Volunteer departments across the country are in a crisis. Seventy percent of firefighters in the United States are volunteers, and national volunteer numbers have been going down steadily for years. With fewer people staffing departments and fewer people committing to the hours of training required for volunteer duty, communities and citizens are more vulnerable.

We have an aging volunteer workforce, higher costs to communities as they hire full- and part-time staff, longer response times and more mutual aid calls, and an ongoing struggle to find funding for equipment that keeps increasing in price. Departments face an uphill struggle and some states, like Pennsylvania, are investigating ways to bolster the volunteer force and reduce costs to departments, such as:

- Offering tuition reimbursement and college credit for student volunteers.
- Removing regulatory barriers to encourage agencies to combine.
- Providing free background checks through the state police.
- Proposing incentives to employers for allowing employees to leave work for a call.

At the local level, departments need to re-think their recruitment methods, their target audience, and they need to get creative. Gone are the days you could rely on people coming in the doors looking for excitement. Many departments do have successful recruiting campaigns; some are successful only because they are *not* following the old “best practices” for volunteer recruitment.

Some departments have gone so far as to hire marketing specialists because, as one specialist stated, [“This is a sales job.”](#)

Your department will have to use psychology to sell recruitment efforts. For example, our society now has a distinct lack of personal connection, something people of all ages are realizing they miss. Fire departments offer fellowship and service to the community. This can fill that void, but you have to get people in the door and show them what you have to offer.

The National Volunteer Fire Council created the program [“Make Me a Firefighter”](#) to help departments meet these challenges. [“10 Tips to Drive Volunteer Firefighter & EMS Recruitment in 2018”](#) suggests modern marketing strategies and social media tips. The internet is full of modern volunteer firefighter recruitment ideas. Just know the problem will not be fixed overnight; consistency is the key to long-term growth.

(Source: Various)

## Free training for rural and tribal first responders at RuralTraining.org

The [Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium](#) (RDPC) offers rural and tribal first responders training and tools needed to better address community emergencies.

### Highlights

**PA: force of 300,000 firefighters down to 38,000 in 40 years**

**Free training for rural and tribal first responders at RuralTraining.org**

**Fire Prevention Education Team Digital Library**

**National Critical Functions Workshop**



U.S. Fire Administration

The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.

Rural departments face different challenges than urban departments and sometimes struggle to find the resources or budget to hold quality training for their personnel.

All RDPC training is certified by the Department of Homeland Security and available to rural and tribal departments tuition-free. The [course catalog](#) offers both instructor-led and web-based programs based on identified needs as determined through a regular national survey of rural stakeholders. Examples of offerings:

- Testing an Emergency Operations Plan in a Rural EOC.
- Mass Fatalities Planning & Response for Rural Communities.
- Rural Isolation and Quarantine for Public Health and Healthcare Professionals.
- Port and Vessel Security for Public Safety and Maritime Personnel.

Over 85,000 first responders have received training from RDPC since 2005. Interested departments can request a course through this online form. Check the [current training schedule and map](#) to see if there are already courses scheduled in your area.

(Source: [RPDC](#))

## Fire Prevention Education Team Digital Library

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) recently launched the [Fire Prevention Education Team Digital Library](#).

This new resource is full of wildland fire prevention and education materials for all audiences. The library collection is searchable and includes slide shows, printable signs, handouts and other public education tools on topics such as fire safe use of chainsaws, target shooting safety, wildfire arson and extinguishing campfires.

This is a valuable resource for groups working for better fire safety in wildfire areas. New resources will be added in the future, please check back.

(Source: [NWCG](#))

## National Critical Functions Workshop

The [Law Enforcement Cyber Center](#) (LECC) is a national resource developed to build the capacity of justice and public safety agencies to prevent, investigate, prosecute and respond to cyber threats and cybercrimes. LECC hosts collections of information specific to chiefs of police, officers and prosecutors.

The NW3C is holding the no-cost webinar "[Law Enforcement Cyber Center: A Valuable Resource for Investigators](#)" on Thursday, December 13, 2018, from 1-2:30 p.m. Eastern. It will review the website and the many valuable resources available.

Developed as a collaborative project by the National White Collar Crime Center, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Police Executive Research Forum. It is funded through the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

(Source: [LECC](#))

The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC). For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit [www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac) or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or [emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov).

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