

Press Release

California Budget Crisis Impacts State Fire Departments, According to a New National Survey Sponsored by Fireman's Fund Insurance Company

NOVATO, Calif. (May 18, 2009) – The current economic crisis is negatively impacting fire departments in California, according to a comprehensive national survey of firefighters sponsored by Fireman's Fund Insurance Company. The study attracted nearly 9,500 fire departments or 30 percent of departments in the country, including 412 fire departments in California.

"Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey" found that the top challenges facing California fire departments today are:

- Seventy percent of departments agree that if the economic situation continues for another 12 months it will negatively affect their ability to serve their communities.
- Fifty-seven of the volunteer departments (which represent 56 percent of all fire departments in the state of California) agree with the statement that they are losing volunteers who need to look for other jobs or sources of income.
- Fifty-four percent of departments have increased their fundraising efforts and/or grant writing because of budget cutbacks.
- More than one-third of departments agree that they are planning or have had to cut back on staffing.
- Nearly one-quarter (22 percent) of departments do not have the adequate extrication equipment needed to safely and quickly remove injured people from a vehicle crash.

"Firefighters – volunteer, paid or a combination of both – are the first responders to nearly every fire, medical emergency, and natural or man-made disaster in our local communities. In these tough economic times with service demands increasing, it is imperative that we have adequate funding to ensure we keep our communities safe," said Chief Bruce H. Varner, fire chief of the Santa Rosa, Calif. fire department.

The study was conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs based in New York, and was available online for six weeks from mid-February to March 31, 2009 to any career and volunteer firefighters, regardless of geography, rank or size of their community. More than 17,500 firefighters from nearly 9,500 departments participated, 61 percent of which hold the rank of fire official (chief, captain or lieutenant). These findings are based on data at the department level rather than

on all respondents. When multiple firefighters from the same fire service organization responded to the survey, the first individual to respond was selected on behalf of that department. Full results can be found at www.firemansfund.com/firesurvey.

Not all California findings were grim:

- When it comes to wildland fires, only nine percent of the departments in the state do not have equipment for all personnel to respond to wildland fires and feel prepared to respond to wildfires.

“As a company, Fireman’s Fund believes it is extremely important to raise awareness of the needs of local fire departments,” said Chuck Kavitsky, chairman of Fireman’s Fund. “Supporting the fire service means safer communities. That is why we have dedicated our philanthropic giving to directing grants to fire departments throughout the country.”

Fireman’s Fund Insurance Company’s nationwide philanthropic program is designed to provide needed equipment, training and educational tools to local fire departments. Since 2004, Fireman’s Fund has issued grants to more than 1,100 different departments totaling more than \$21 million. Independent insurance agencies that sell Fireman’s Fund products are able to direct these grants to support fire stations in their communities.

Over the last five years, Fireman’s Fund has issued 350 grants to California fire departments, totaling more than \$6.5 million.

About Fireman’s Fund

Fireman’s Fund Insurance Company is a premier property and casualty insurance company providing personal and commercial insurance products nationwide. It is rated 'AA-' by Standard & Poor’s Rating Services. Founded in 1863 with a mission to support firefighters, Fireman’s Fund continues this effort today through its national philanthropic efforts. Fireman’s Fund is a member of the Allianz Group (NYSE: AZ), one of the world’s largest providers of insurance and other financial services. For more information, visit www.firemansfund.com.

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