

## Press Release

### **Economic Crisis Impacts Georgia Fire Departments, According to a New National Survey Sponsored by Fireman's Fund Insurance Company**

ATLANTA (May 19, 2009) – The current economic crisis is negatively impacting fire departments in the state of Georgia, 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 203 fire departments in Georgia.

*"Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey"* found that, in Georgia, the top three challenges facing fire departments today are:

- 1- Sixty-three percent of departments do not have protective equipment for all personnel to respond to wildland fires.
- 2- Sixty-three percent of departments do not have protective equipment for all personnel to respond to a hazardous materials incident and 65 percent of those without it state that they need it.
- 3- One-third of Georgia fire departments do not have adequate extrication equipment needed to safely and quickly remove injured people from a vehicle crash.

The 50 participating departments in the Atlanta metro area also face key issues:

1. Eighty-two percent of departments find staffing/recruitment/retention at least somewhat challenging.
2. Three-fourths of departments find insufficient and old/outdated equipment/apparatus at least somewhat challenging.
3. About one-third of departments agreed that they have had to or are planning on cutting back on staffing because of the economic crisis.
4. Forty-four percent of departments have had to increase fundraising efforts and/or grant writing because of budget cutbacks.

"When you consider that firefighters are the first responders to nearly every fire, medical emergency, and natural or man-made disaster in our local communities, it is imperative that we have adequate funding to ensure we keep our communities safe," said Georgia Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine. "This study is extremely valuable for both its depth and scope – one that effectively shows the needs of today's fire service in communities across the country and particularly here in Georgia."

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. Nearly 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](http://www.firemansfund.com/firesurvey).

"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 focused 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 past five years, Fireman's Fund has issued 53 grants to Georgia Fire Departments, totaling \$1,050,166.

### **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](http://www.firemansfund.com).

### **About Ipsos Public Affairs**

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