

## Press Release

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

NOVATO, Calif. (May 19, 2009) – The current economic crisis in the United States is negatively impacting fire departments across the country, according to a new, 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.

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

- 1- Lack of budget;
- 2- Old or outdated equipment, gear and apparatus;
- 3- Staffing, recruiting and retaining qualified firefighters.

In addition:

- More than half of all fire departments said the poor economy meant they had to increase fundraising efforts or grant writing due to budget cutbacks.
- 55 percent strongly agree or agree with the statement, "If the economic situation continues for another 12 months, it will negatively affect our ability to serve our community."

"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 Chief Larry J. Grorud, president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. "This study helps to show the needs of today's fire service in communities across the country."

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. About 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). An executive summary by Ipsos is available at <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/pressrelease.cfm?id=4392>.

Among the findings:

- One out of four fire departments do not have adequate extrication equipment needed to safely and quickly remove injured people from a vehicle crash.
- Seventy-six percent of departments do not believe their organization is adequately trained to deal with terrorism or weapons of mass destruction.
- Fifty-seven percent of all volunteer departments (70 percent of all U.S. fire departments) are losing volunteers who need to look for other jobs.
- Fifty-two percent of departments do not feel they are adequately trained to handle hazardous material incidents. One-third of departments don't have and need protective equipment for all fire personnel to respond to hazardous materials incidents.
- Only 50 percent of departments have protective equipment for all personnel to respond to wildland fires.
- Thirteen percent of responding departments don't have at least one thermal imaging camera, considered a critical tool to identify hot spots and locate injured or sleeping persons in a burning building. Only 41 percent of fire departments have at least one per engine company.

Not all the findings were grim – many firefighters had positive information to convey about their departments:

- Despite the current economic crisis, only 17 percent of fire departments felt the quality of service they provide has declined.
- Ninety percent of fire departments believe they have adequate training for structural fires.
- Sixty-two percent are confident in their fire service organizations' disaster response capabilities.

"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.

**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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