

Press Release

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

CHICAGO (May 28, 2009) – The current economic crisis is negatively impacting Illinois fire departments, 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 460 fire departments in Illinois.

"Supporting Safer Communities: A National Firefighter Survey" found that, specifically in Illinois, the top challenges facing fire departments today are budget; staffing, recruitment and retention; and old or outdated equipment, gear and apparatus.

Other key findings:

- Sixty-six percent agree/strongly agree they have delayed purchasing new equipment.
- Sixty-two percent of departments agree/strongly agree they have delayed in replacing equipment.
- More than half of departments (51%) have had to increase fund-raising efforts and/or grant writing because of budget cutbacks.
- Half (50%) of volunteer and combination departments are losing volunteers who need to look for other jobs or sources of income.

"When you consider that firefighters are the first responders to nearly every fire, medical emergency, and natural or man-made disaster, it is imperative that we have adequate funding to ensure we keep our communities safe," said U.S. Rep. Judy Biggert (13th District – Illinois), a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus. "These men and women put their lives on the line for us every day, and we should support them with the same dedication with which they serve the public."

"As someone who is familiar with grant-writing and fund-raising, I am very concerned about having adequate funds to purchase the life-saving equipment that can get the job done," said Lemont Fire Chief Carl Churolo. "In Lemont, for example, we have auto-extrication equipment but some of the new car models present situations where we just don't have the power we need to get the people out fast in an emergency. This is just one example of where we need help."

Rep. Biggert and Chief Churolo will address these issues at a 2:30 p.m. news conference today at the Lemont Fire Station, demonstrating the hydraulic

extrication tool used to safely and quickly remove injured people from a vehicle crash.

The firefighter 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.

Not all Illinois findings were grim:

- Ninety-two percent of departments have a thermal imaging camera, considered a critical tool to identify hot spots and locate injured or sleeping persons in a burning building.
- Ninety-three percent of departments have hydraulic extrication equipment, but to Chief Churolo's point, only 69 percent are confident that they have the extrication equipment they need to extract accident victims in a timely manner.

"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.

In the last five years, Fireman's Fund has directed nearly 100 grants to Illinois fire departments, totaling \$1.6 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.

About Ipsos Public Affairs

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