

Press Release

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

PHOENIX (May 29, 2009) – The current economic crisis is negatively impacting fire departments in the state of Arizona, according to a comprehensive national survey of firefighters sponsored by Fireman's Fund Insurance Company. The survey attracted nearly 9,500 fire departments or 30 percent of departments in the country, including 109 fire departments in Arizona.

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

- Three-quarters of all fire departments believe staffing, recruitment and retention is at least somewhat challenging in the current economic climate.
- Seventy-two percent say insufficient gear is at least somewhat challenging and 74 percent state old/outdated gear is at least somewhat challenging.
- Fifty-nine percent of departments have had to increase fundraising efforts and/or grant writing because of budget cutbacks.
- Six in ten departments have delayed replacing equipment and three-quarters have delayed purchasing new equipment.
- Forty-three percent of departments do not have adequate training when it comes to hazardous materials incidents.

"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 Jeff Piechura, Northwest Fire District Fire Chief, and Chairman of the Arizona Fire Services Institute. "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 Arizona."

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 all career and volunteer firefighters. Nearly 17,500 firefighters participated, 61 percent of which hold the rank of fire official (chief, captain or lieutenant). Full results can be found at www.firemansfund.com/firesurvey.

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Not all Arizona findings were grim:

- Seventy-five percent of fire departments have adequate extrication equipment needed to safely and quickly remove injured people from a vehicle crash.
- Eighty-two percent of departments 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.

“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 issued 23 grants to Arizona fire departments, totaling \$183,144.

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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Media Relations contact: Suzanne Meraz, Fireman’s Fund, (415) 899-3647.

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