United States Fire Service Needs Assessment

There has been substantial progress in reducing many fire department needs, although more remains to be done. In nearly every area of need, the smaller the community, the greater the need.

Access the full national report and other outreach products at www.nfpa.org/needsassessment

Staffing

Career Firefighters: NFPA 1710 requires NFPA 1710 at least four career firefighters per engine or pumper. The 2015 survey showed a 9–25 percentage point increase in the number of departments assigning fewer than four firefighters per apparatus.

Volunteer Firefighters: NFPA 1720 calls for a minimum of four firefighters on-site before starting an interior attack on a structure fire. Roughly four out of five volunteer fire departments respond with four or more firefighters.

Protective Equipment and Clothing

In 2015, the percentage of departments without enough equipment to outfit all personnel (or all personnel on a shift, as appropriate) was:

- 53% for self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) compared to 70% in 2001 and 52% in 2010.
- 13% for personal protective clothing (PPC) compared to 15% in 2001 and 9% in 2010.
- 50% for portable radios compared to 77% in 2001 and 51% in 2010.
- 72% for personal protective clothing (PPC) compared to 74% in 2001 and 63% in 2010.

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Training
In many fire departments, not all involved personnel have been formally trained in their emergency response duties. Size of need among all departments: percent that perform structural firefighting and EMS need for training was:
- 49% for structural firefighting compared to 55% in 2001 and 46% in 2010.
- 34% for emergency medical service (EMS) compared to 35% in 2001 and 33% in 2010.

Fitness and Health
Many fire departments offer no programs to maintain basic firefighter fitness and health. In 2015 the percentage of departments with no such program was:
- 73% compared to 80% in 2001 and 70% in 2010.
- 80% of departments do not have a behavioral health program.

Community Risk Reduction
Three-quarters of all departments, or more than half the U.S. population, do not have a hazard mitigation planning risk assessment.

The top three programs or prevention activities ranked in order of need according to population protected are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>U.S. Population without a Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Wildfire Safety Program</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Home Fire Sprinkler Education</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Car Seat Installation</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Cautions on Interpretation
Response Rate: Overall, the response rate was 19% with a range of 11% response for fire departments protecting populations less than 2500 to 82% response rate for fire departments protecting populations greater than 500,000.
Trends: Some fire departments that responded in 2015 had not responded in previous years, while some that did not respond had responded in an earlier survey. Consequently, this fact sheet estimates overall fire department needs, but not the needs of an identical group over time because the survey responses did not come from exactly the same fire departments for prior surveys.
Overall Statistic: Due to the high number of fire departments protecting small communities, the overall projected statistic reported in this fact sheet is weighted heavily to data reported by smaller fire departments.

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