



# FACT SHEET » RESEARCH

## 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](http://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.

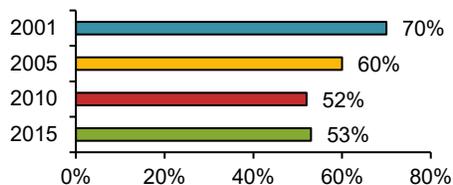
**Volunteer Firefighters:** [NFPA 1720](#) calls for a minimum of four firefighters on-site before starting an interior attack on a structure fire. Roughly four out of five volunteer fire departments respond with four or more firefighters.

### 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:

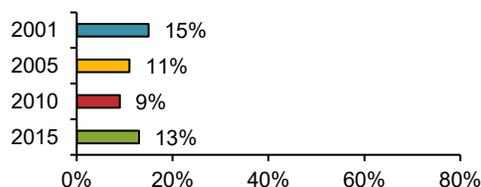
- 53% for self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) compared to 70% in 2001 and 52% in 2010.

Departments Where Not All Firefighters on a Shift Are Equipped with SCBA



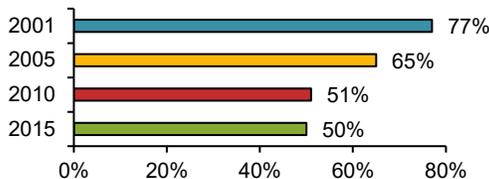
- 13% for personal protective clothing (PPC) compared to 15% in 2001 and 9% in 2010.

Departments Where Not All Firefighters Have Their Own PPC



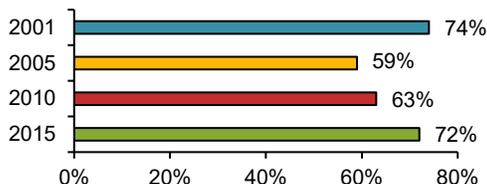
- 50% for portable radios compared to 77% in 2001 and 51% in 2010.

Departments Where Not All Firefighters on a Shift Are Equipped with Radios



- 72% for personal protective clothing (PPC) compared to 74% in 2001 and 63% in 2010.

Departments Where Some PPC Is At Least 10 Years Old



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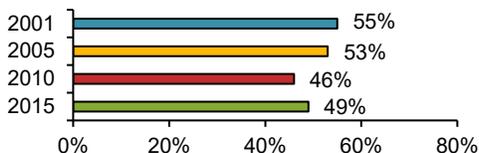
## FACT SHEET » RESEARCH *(continued)*

### 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:

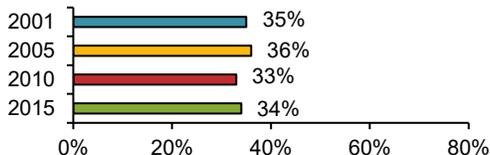
- ▶ 49% for structural firefighting compared to 55% in 2001 and 46% in 2010.

**Size of Need Among All Departments:  
Percent That Provide Structural Firefighting**



- ▶ 34% for emergency medical service (EMS) compared to 35% in 2001 and 33% in 2010.

**Size of Need Among All Departments:  
Percent That Provide EMS**



### 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:

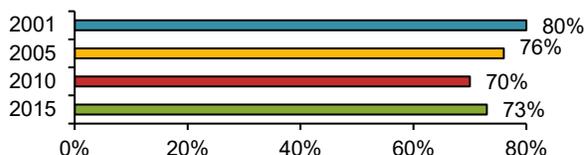
| Program                          | U.S. Population without a Program |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Wildfire Safety Program       | 84%                               |
| 2. Home Fire Sprinkler Education | 74%                               |
| 3. Car Seat Installation         | 70%                               |

### 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.

**Departments Without a Program  
to Maintain Basic Firefighter  
Fitness and Health**



### Stations and Apparatus

Some stations lack specific features that are required by current standards but were not required when stations were constructed.

- ▶ 35% of fire stations do not have backup power for their fire stations.
- ▶ 59% of fire stations do not have exhaust emission control for their fire stations.
- ▶ 43% of the fire stations are over 40 years old.
- ▶ 76% of departments have too few fire stations.

#### Cautions on Interpretation

**Source:** Fourth Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service, NFPA, Research Group, Quincy, MA, November 2016.

**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.

**Source: NFPA Research:** [www.nfpa.org/research](http://www.nfpa.org/research)  
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