



Recruitment and Retention

Tip of the Month

#1 of 50

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers in the 21st Century

Do you have enough members? Are they the right members? Do you have jobs that need to be done, and no one on the staff can do them? Are you losing more people than you have joining each year? If so, you are not alone! Recruitment and retention has become the major concern of the volunteer emergency response community in America. The numbers tell the story. Only a decade ago, there were over one million volunteer firefighters. These numbers have dropped to just 800,000, and the bleeding continues. For some time, the United States Fire Administration has had a document available regarding recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. However, as time goes on, you must change how you approach recruiting and retaining members. Recognizing this, the USFA provided a grant to the National Volunteer Fire Council to revise the referenced document, create an educational program and provide training to America's fire service. Based upon research conducted, training was conducted in twelve venues. The research resulted in three key "findings statements" that you must understand before approaching the issues of recruitment and retention.

1. Recruitment and retention are local problems.

– The needs, leadership, and challenges are all local.

2. Recruitment is MARKETING, and you must market ALL THE TIME.

– A needs assessment is critical to making sure you invest your time appropriately.

3. You need to know what your members want as benefits before you choose incentives.

In addition, leadership emerged as a prominent issue as to why people stay or leave. Leadership was characterized as an art, a science, and a style. Good leadership adds a third dimension, and involves going beyond doing things the way they've always been done. It was found that effective leaders look beyond the numbers and set the direction for the organization. They integrate doing business with the whys, whats, wheres, hows, and whens. This will be continued in the next "Tip of the Month".

Credit: Jenaway, William F., Ph.D., Recruitment and Retention for 21st Century Emergency Services. VFIS News, Volume 7 Number 2 pages 1-2

Additional information on this topic can be found at: www.becomeapafirefighter.com
www.responderhelp.com; www.nvfc.org or call 1-800-ASK-NVFC (275-6832).

Need help for your Recruitment & Retention program. The FASP (through a SAFER Grant) provides consultative services to help you with recruiting and retaining members. For help, look for a contact us through the FASP website <http://pafirefighters.org/contact-us/> with your email and needs.