

Fire Service Apprenticeship Program



Invest in a national apprenticeship program to address the shortage of firefighters and to make the fire service more diverse and inclusive.

Issue

In recent years there has been a steady decline in the number of firefighters in the nation. This decline is impacting both career and volunteer departments, leaving the communities they serve vulnerable to threats, and increasing the stresses among firefighters and the municipalities. It is imperative that we invest in programs to incentivize individuals to join volunteer and career fire departments.

Impact Areas

Local communities are facing numerous challenges when it comes to staffing local fire departments. The COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, active shooter, and mass casualty events have all contributed to recruitment and retention challenges for career and volunteer fire departments. In addition, increasing emergency call volumes, greater time demands, time-consuming training requirements, aging communities, and the physical and behavioral risks of the occupation create further challenges to fire departments struggling to maintain sufficient staffing levels.

The fire service struggles to recruit and retain women and people of color. The most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2019 reported that 11.6% of career firefighters were Hispanic or Latino, 8.5% were African American, and 1.3% were Asian-Pacific Islanders. Women represent 11% of volunteer firefighters and 5% of career firefighters, according to the NFPA's 2022 "U.S. Fire Department Profile" report based on 2020 data.

The creation of a National Fire Service Apprenticeship program would assist local communities in addressing the shortage of firefighters in both career and volunteer departments and help make the fire service become a more diverse and inclusive vocation. The fire service apprenticeship program should be designed to mirror the Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship and the Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs.

Figure 1. Number of Career Firefighters and Rate per 1,000 People

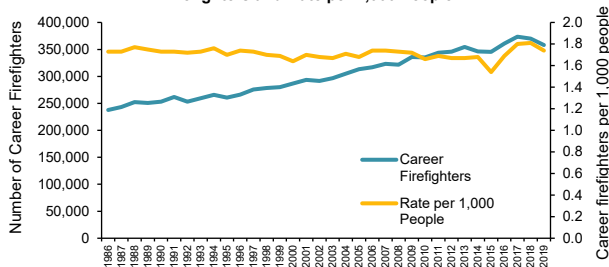
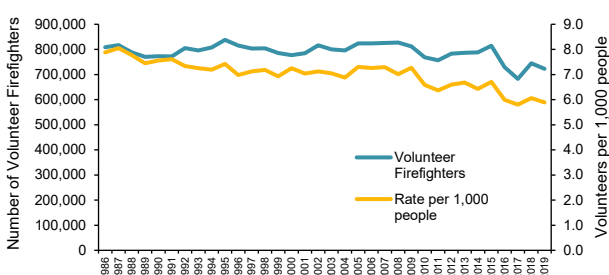


Figure 2. Number of Volunteer Firefighters and Rate per 1,000 People



NFPA. US Fire Department Profile 2019 Rita Fahy, Ben Everts and Gary P. Stein, December 2021. <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Emergency-responders/osfdprofile.pdf>

More Information

