

Firefighter Recruitment and Retention



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Purpose of this Presentation

- Understand the realities of change in our communities and volunteers
- Consider why people volunteer
- Considerations for recruitment/retention
- Facilitate discussion by those present on strategies to assist each other in recruiting volunteer staff

The Faces of the Volunteer Fire Service



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Challenges Abound

- Smaller centers are losing population to larger regional centers
- Less than 20% of Alberta's population lives in rural communities
- People are traveling further from their community to work
- Employers are less able/willing to release workers for volunteer work
- The younger workforce is differently motivated than previous generations

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Challenges Abound

- The average age of residents in smaller communities is increasing
- Younger folks are off to the larger cities to gain employment
- Farm income has dropped resulting in financial pressures on municipalities and their fire departments

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Challenges Abound

- Increasing requirements for training, record keeping and OH&S compliance
- More of a focus on quality of life issues
- We are competing with many others for people

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Recognizing and understanding the unique challenges that face you is only half the battle.

Development of a viable strategy to address those challenges is really what we are employed to do!

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The Reality is.....

- While many communities are struggling to find volunteers, some have waiting lists.
- The small community (15,000 or less) is absolutely dependent on volunteer-part paid staffing for emergency services.

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So Who really volunteers?

- Married people are most likely to volunteer
- Volunteer rates increase with education levels
- Higher income levels increase volunteerism
- People 35-54 make up the largest volunteer group (15-24 is second)

So Who really volunteers?

- Average number of hours volunteered-162, up from 149 hours in 1997
- Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of volunteer hours comes from $\frac{1}{4}$ of the volunteers
- Most volunteers volunteer often

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Stats Canada

Why Do People Volunteer

1. Contribute to a cause they believe in.
2. Put their skills and experience to use.
3. Improve job opportunities or explore personal strengths.

Why don't they volunteer and/or stay?

1. Don't have enough time.
2. Unable to commit year round.
3. "Not personally invited".
4. Can't commit to the schedules/structure of the organization.
5. Volunteer burnout.

Volunteer Development Cycle

- Step 1: Planning
 - Mission and mandate
 - Involvement/engagement of volunteers in the process
 - Needs assessment
 - Policies and procedures
 - Screening process

Volunteer Development Cycle

- Step 2: Recruitment and Selection
 - Who
 - Why
 - When
 - Right person for the right job
 - Get to know your volunteers
 - Matching recruits to tasks and organizational needs

Volunteer Development Cycle

- Step 3: Orientation and Training
 - Assigning tasks
 - Provide volunteers with appropriate
 - tools,
 - resources,
 - information and
 - training

Volunteer Development Cycle

- Step 4: Supervision and Evaluation
 - Ongoing monitoring and support.
 - Performance assessment

Volunteer Development Cycle

- Step 5: Recognition and Motivation
 - Thank the volunteers
 - Honour the volunteers

Recruiting Checklist

- Make sure your group reflects the community.
- Look for skills, not names
- Appeal to individuals interests.
- Consider the stepping stone approach.
- Define the task/function clearly.
- Encourage active members to share the recruiting role.
- Use time effectively- can't waste time.
- Market the group effectively.

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What Now

- AEMA and the AFCA have activated a Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Taskforce to look at the issues and identify solutions.
- Leon Smallboy has agreed to assist in this work.
- Will be talking to you over the next few months to gain your insights.

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Websites that may help...

- If you Google “volunteerism” on a Canada only search you get 113,000 sites. There is tons of information out there.
- Good sites include:
 - www.volunteer.ca
 - www.nonprofitscan.ca for info on research
 - www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca

Discussion

- What strategies are being used right now in your area that seem to be working?
- Are there opportunities to share recruiting resources/programs?