

Many American Fire Departments Lack Critical Resources

(NAPS)—Here's a statistic that may surprise you: A fire breaks out in a home or business every 45 seconds in the U.S. During these emergencies, communities count on their fire departments to provide critical lifesaving services.

Firefighters, however, also respond to critical medical emergencies and natural disasters, prepare for the unexpected calamity and offer critical education and fire prevention. Unfortunately, budget constraints are forcing many fire departments to scale back, or even eliminate, lifesaving equipment, critical education programs and personnel.

In a recent survey of fire chiefs conducted by Fireman's Fund Insurance Company (FFIC), nearly one-third said their current budgets don't cover their core needs fully. More importantly, 62 percent believe this shortfall hurts the ability to protect their communities.

"Fire and emergencies occur every day and a lack of resources simply costs lives," contends Fire Chief David Wall of Morrow, Ga. "Both financial and community support are crucial for fire departments to ensure that they have the most up-to-date equipment, technology and training to keep communities safe."

Many firefighters rely increasingly on fundraising and donations. Corporate public-private partnerships such as Fireman's Fund HeritageSM, which provides grants to fire departments in the communities where the company does business, are beginning to provide underfunded fire departments with the resources and equipment they need.

When asked what resources they would add with adequate funds, fire

What Firefighters Say They Need



30% said budgets do not cover core needs.

19% said lack of budget affected ability to protect community.

47% want support in the form of homes kept of fire hazards.

39% said new trucks and Thermal Imaging Cameras were needed.

SOURCE: Fireman's Fund Insurance Company 2004 Survey of Fire Chiefs



chiefs most frequently identified firefighter training, in-school education, community fire-prevention programs and better equipment. Chief Wall says citizens can help the fire department by taking an active role in fire prevention.

FFIC has joined forces with the Burn Institute, a non-profit health agency that seeks to reduce burn injuries and deaths through fire and burn-prevention education, to create new ways to help families learn about fire and burn prevention. These include an interactive home-escape plan that parents can create online and a kid-friendly quiz to teach children about fire and burn prevention. Both tools are available on the organization's Web site, www.burninstitute.org.

Darryl Siry, executive director of Fireman's Fund Heritage, emphasizes the necessity to support firefighters: "It is clear the core needs of firefighters aren't being met in many communities. It's our responsibility to assist our firefighters by ensuring their safety and the safety of our communities."