Two-Thirds Of Volunteer Firefighters Report Their Department Is Underfunded

Contributed by Ipsos
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Four in Five Spend Their Own Money Purchasing Supplies or Equipment for their Department

Two thirds (64%) of volunteer firefighters report that their department does not have sufficient funds to sustain all areas in which it operates, according to a recent Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Duracell, a leading manufacturer of high-performing alkaline batteries.

The situation seems particularly critical in the South, where 70% of volunteer firefighters believe their departments do not receive enough funds. In addition, the survey shows that fire chiefs, are also more likely than other volunteer firefighters to believe their department is underfunded (80%).

Using their Own Money
The survey shows that over four in five (86%) volunteer firefighters dip into their own pockets to purchase supplies and/or equipment for their department. The numbers are spread almost evenly across the Northeast (84%), Midwest (84%), South (89%) and West (87%).

Of those who report using their own money, eight in ten (80%) dispense over $100 a year; including more than half (55%) who say they spend $101 to $500, 17% who spend $501 to $1,000, and 8% who spend more than $1,000 a year.

Overall, volunteer firefighters in the Northeast (73%) are less likely than those in the South (86%) and the West (86%) to report they spend over $100 of their own money.

Volunteer Firefighters While Working Full-Time
In addition to spending their own money, most volunteer firefighters also spend a lot of their time in the fire department. Six in ten (59%) report to volunteer over 10 hours a week, including 24% who volunteer over 20 hours a week.

However, when they are not serving their community, most volunteer firefighters also have a full-time job; with 63% of them reporting that in addition to being a firefighter, they work over 40 hours a week in their paid profession. An additional 21% report to work 21 to 40 hours a week, while just a small proportion are either retired (10%) or work under 20 hours a week (3%).

Tough Hours
Most volunteer firefighters say they are most often call into action in the evening and wee hours of the morning; as 64% of them report that the most common time of the day they are called upon to serve is between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. â€“ this includes half of all respondents (51%) who report to be called on duty between 6 p.m. and midnight, and 13% who report they are most often called between midnight and 6 a.m.

In contrast, only a quarter of all respondents (25%) report being called to serve most often during the day, including 19% who say they are most frequently called between noon and 6.p.m., and just 6% who report being called during the 6 a.m. and noon.

These are some of the findings of an online Ipsos poll conducted January 4 - 11, 2011. For the survey, a national sample of 533 volunteer firefighters from the National Volunteer Fire Council was interviewed online.

A probability sample of 533 respondents, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/-4.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been had the entire population of volunteer firefighters in the United States been polled.

All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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