

It's a New Day in the Firehouse / Governing Magazine

Here's the link to an article from the September 2018 issue of "Governing" magazine, "It's a New Day in the Firehouse. The article provides an overview of just some of the major challenges and changes in the American fire service.

These are not especially new topics, especially for those fire service leaders who have been attending the Critical Issues Briefings and the Fire Leadership Challenge (co-sponsored by the DFPC, CPFF & CSFC), but an article in Governing magazine brings these issues to attention of the appointed and elected leaders of our local and state governments

RESPONSE REALITY:

"Our recruiting pamphlets for fire departments show people fighting fires in their bunker gear or pulling people out of vehicles," says Thomas Jenkins, past IAFC President and the fire chief in Rogers, Ark. "But the first thousand calls in a firefighter's career may not involve any of those things. We save exponentially more people in emergency medical care. But we don't do a good job educating people about what it is."

SALARY & BENEFITS:

There are several other reasons why recruiting and retention have grown more difficult. One is that the financial payoffs and benefits are not as attractive for salaried firefighters as they once did.

STAFFING:

Among cities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000, 80 percent do not meet the four-fighters-per-engine NFPA standard.

RECRUITING & RETAINING IS NOT JUST A VOLUNTEER PROBLEM:

The unavoidable truth, says Jenkins, "is that we have a very legitimate recruitment and retention problem for full-time fire departments. Almost every department is seeing a decrease in people testing and applying to be firefighters." The situation only promises to get worse as a wave of baby boom firefighters retires over the next several years. Part of the problem is convincing candidates to sign up for the intense lifestyle of fire service.

<http://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-firefighters-firehouse.html>

There are many nuances to the challenges facing the American fire service and while the article does a good overview, it does not begin to address the answers to the vexing issues it identifies. Those answers are buried within each of the nearly 30,000 individual fire departments spread across our nation. 30,000 individual fire departments which each make individual decisions about everything about their fire department and it their decision to answer, or not answer, these challenges.

Garry