



# Minnesota State Volunteer Firefighters Association Inc.

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## MSVFA

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## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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**The Minnesota State Volunteer Firefighters Association (MSVFA) is honored to announce acceptance of a four year SAFER Grant application for the purpose of studying Recruitment & Retention issues of Volunteer Firefighters in the state of Minnesota.**

The MN Fire Service is at a staffing crisis point affecting our volunteer fire service. The loss of tenured experienced fire department members is crippling fire departments ability to effectively and safely perform fire suppression and rescue operations. Without new tools to attract and retain quality firefighters, community's firefighting and rescue services are in jeopardy. We need to explore the reasons why some choose to leave the fire service in order to improve our retention rate. We also need to explore the reasons why citizens choose not to volunteer in order to improve our recruitment strategies.

Risk reduction for the community and volunteer firefighters will occur if we improve the experience base of our volunteer members. This will have a positive impact of safer fire ground operations, better staffing levels and faster emergency response times due to higher numbers of members that respond during emergency calls. An additional impact is to also improve mutual and auto-aid responses for the communities.

This grant will allow the MSVFA to provide support to communities statewide so they can continue to provide this critical volunteer service to their community. Additionally, the success of this program would be shared as a model for other fire departments throughout the country.

The MSVFA's plan is to use this grant project to gather and analyze data, create educational and marketing tools to be distributed to all fire departments with education for improved marketing of the fire department to the community to successfully recruit and retain firefighters. This project will enhance a fire departments ability to attain minimum NFPA 1720 24 hour staffing, thus assuring that the volunteer fire departments will have adequate protection for fire and all hazards related incidents.

Currently, the initial cost of hiring a volunteer and the first year training is approximately \$3,600. This cost includes: physical agility testing, medical examination, background check, EMS training and examination, Minnesota Firefighter I and FF II training and examination and uniform cost. As of now, one of every four new firefighters does not finish this first year. On average after the second year the current turn-over rate is at 50 %. Not only is there a human resource loss, but also a training investment loss of more than \$3,600. This turn over rate is one of the main reasons our volunteer fire departments will not be able to continue in its primary mission to protect the community from the dangers of fire and to provide rescue and medical services to the people of the community.

Unfortunately, our states current retention rate is unacceptable. Some of our departments are experiencing losing one out of every two rookie firefighters after just two years and only one out of every three rookie firefighters is still on the department after just four years. If this trend continues, the volunteer fire department's continued service to the community on a volunteer basis is very doubtful.

The entire population of the State of Minnesota will directly benefit by this program as well as all volunteer fire departments. By having more firefighters available for initial call in these small jurisdictions, and secondly having more experienced firefighters available, we will positively impact firefighter safety because of the pure numbers. Any firefighter who has to respond with less than adequate staffing on an emergency call is at increased risk. In the last few years we have had two firefighter fatalities on highway incidents involving relatively small fires so even small minor incidents can present major safety concerns for the firefighters. Any program that can increase the number of experienced firefighters available anywhere in our state will make our overall response more efficient and safer.