

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**November 15, 2007**

### **Greenfield Township – Referenced in National Fire Administration Report on Recruitment and Retentions.**

Greenfield Twp, PA 11/15/07 – The U.S. Fire Administration revised a report on the efforts and needs of the fire service to recruit and retain more fire fighters in the country. The report, *Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services, Challenges and Solutions*, published by the U.S. Fire Administration was released in May of 2007. As part of the report Greenfield Township Fire Chief, Fred Bales is quoted within the body of the report, concerning the decline in the emergency services volunteers and the impact such a decline has on fire fighter safety.

“In 2004, Pennsylvania experienced 17 line-of-duty deaths, the most of any State in the country. At the same time, Pennsylvania has two-thirds fewer firefighters than it did 30 years ago. Many have questioned if the lower number of members have been a cause for some of the deaths. Chief Fred Bales of the Greenfield Township Fire Department has stated that fewer personnel on the fireground can force firefighters to do the work of two or more people in emergency situations. Pennsylvania Fire Commissioner Ed Mann reports that 9 of the 17 deaths were caused by heart attacks. He further commented that it is possible some of those nine were working too hard to make up for a lack of firefighters.”

Several key points were noted in the report including:

- “Although the recruitment and retention challenges continue to grow, some volunteer organizations maintain good membership while others continue to function with reduced numbers. Those organizations that seek solutions and adapt to our changing personnel environment are successful.”
- “The surge in the number of two-income families since the early 1970s has meant that people have very little time to volunteer. Time is spent at work, with the children, and maintaining the house. Spare time is an anomaly today. The little time people do find to volunteer is often too little to allow them to become active in the fire service.”
- “The consensus of fire chiefs from across the country is that the public’s expectations of the fire department are greater today than in years past. The public expects the fire department to provide assistance for emergencies that include fires, fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, broken water pipes, natural gas leaks, medical emergencies, vehicle accidents, hazardous materials spills, mysterious odors, structural collapse, extrications, water rescue, and even bomb threats or terrorist incidents. When the public calls for assistance in any of these situations, the fire department must be ready to respond.”

Another area that was a focus of the report includes the increase in actual call volumes:

- “During the same time in which the number of volunteers has declined, the volunteer fire service has had to contend with an increase in the volume of emergency calls due to the lack of education on when to call 9-1-1. The NFPA reports that fire department call volumes increase at varying rates depending on the community. This means that volunteer fire departments have to do more with fewer people, and that the overall demands on individual volunteers have increased.”
- “The public has not only grown to expect a wider range of services from the fire department, but also has grown to rely more heavily on the fire department. A greater reliance translates into more calls. For example, in years past when someone broke an arm he/she would have a relative or neighbor drive him/her to the hospital. Today, people often call for an ambulance instead.”

The report is available to residents of the United States, at no charge through the USFA Website at <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/applications/publications>.