NEBRASKA PUBLIC MEDIA
SURVEY OF
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS
AUGUST 2023

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We wanted Nebraska’s volunteer firefighters to be heard. They responded loud and clear.

Beginning in the fall of 2022, Nebraska Public Media committed to a major reporting project focusing on the state’s volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services.

While much has been shared anecdotally, and national surveys have been conducted, there was little data available about conditions in Nebraska. The journalists at Nebraska Public Media wanted a clearer picture of how local fire departments and emergency medical providers felt about the state of their services.

Nebraska Public Media shaped the editorial content of the survey, with advisory input from the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association.

The NSVFA felt an independent survey would be beneficial to help the public understand issues relating to emergency response.

In July 2023, the NSVFA emailed a non-scientific survey to its member departments across the state using the Survey Monkey service. Once the results were tabulated, up to representatives of 257 departments answered some or all of the questions. There are more than 450 volunteer fire departments and districts in Nebraska.

This report provides highlights of the survey and an accounting of the results from all the questions.

Information from the survey was used to inform the television documentary *Working Fires: Volunteer Fire Departments in Crisis*, as well as radio and online news reporting for Nebraska Public Media. All survey results and the program are available at [NebraskaPublicMedia.org/workingfires](http://NebraskaPublicMedia.org/workingfires).

Thank you to all the departments that provided their honest assessments of the state of volunteer firefighting in Nebraska.

Nebraska Public Media News
October 2023
Rank the most challenging issues facing your department this year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unable to recruit new members</td>
<td>41.50%</td>
<td>20.41%</td>
<td>12.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing members are aging</td>
<td>24.49%</td>
<td>35.37%</td>
<td>17.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing frequency and severity of emergency calls</td>
<td>11.56%</td>
<td>8.16%</td>
<td>15.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty meeting mandated training requirements</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>16.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declining financial support</td>
<td>5.44%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>17.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The age of our equipment</td>
<td>5.44%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
<td>12.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support from the community</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
<td>3.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other challenges</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruiting new members for our department is:

- Easy: 5%
- Neither Easy or Difficult: 33%
- Difficult: 62%

Replies 146
If current trends in recruiting and retaining volunteers continue, the quality of service our department provides our community will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay the same</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replies 146

On average, how many members regularly respond to an initial emergency call:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM</td>
<td>07.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 4:00 PM to 12:00 AM</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Midnight to 8:00 AM</td>
<td>08.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replied 226

Rank the reasons you believe someone volunteers for your department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The safety of the community</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family or friends are already involved</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's an exciting activity</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important to volunteer in local activities</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>01.4%</td>
<td>01.4%</td>
<td>03.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rank the reasons you believe people **do not** join your department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much of a time commitment</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much skilled training is required</td>
<td>09.0%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer would not approve</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived risk to personal safety</td>
<td>02.8%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not want exposure to suffering or death</td>
<td>02.1%</td>
<td>04.1%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>01.4%</td>
<td>00.7%</td>
<td>01.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rank the reasons you believe people **quit** your department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Commitment too great</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>07.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of volunteer</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict with department leadership or members</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>08.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath reasons</td>
<td>00.0%</td>
<td>08.4%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty dealing with stressful situations</td>
<td>00.0%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenged by technical skills</td>
<td>00.0%</td>
<td>06.3%</td>
<td>08.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>02.8%</td>
<td>01.4%</td>
<td>00.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What percentage of revenue for your organization is provided by the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxes/local government support</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants/Donations</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing or Payment for Services</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replies 146

To meet the public safety needs of our service area, our department budget:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds our needs</td>
<td>04.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets our needs</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls short of our needs</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replies 146

Over the past five years, demands for our services have:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased</td>
<td>00.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed the same</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replied 146
Looking ahead to the next five years, our department anticipates the risk of fires and EMS calls caused by extreme weather, including wind and drought, will:

- Increase: 75.3%
- Decrease: 00.6%
- Stay the same: 23.9%

When it comes to volunteer fire/rescue services, does your community:

- Fully support the department: 59.6%
- Somewhat support the department: 31.2%
- Do not support the department: 04.2%
- Unaware volunteers provide these services: 05.0%
How would you describe the structure of your volunteer department?

- Fire: 14.8%
- EMS, No Transport: 00.00%
- EMS, With Transport: 03.5%
- Fire & EMS, No Transport: 14.8%
- Fire & EMS, With Transport: 66.9%

Replied 257

How many registered members are a part of your organization?

- Average Number of only firefighters: 22.8
- Number of licensed EMTs or higher classification: 11.8
- Number serving as both firefighters and EMTs: 13.4

Replied 226
Are there any other challenges that your department faces?

- **Lack of support/communication with city government.**
- Having radios that work and getting up repeaters, someone to come work on the towers!
- Just our budget received from taxes/mfo is too low to operate efficiently. Every year we apply for grants for large purchase necessities. Without those grants we would fall way behind with equipment. More state assistance would go a long way at helping volunteer departments obtain and maintain newer, safer, more efficient gear and equipment.
- **Too much to do for existing members. Not everyone does their part to help.**
- Poor training or lack of training to meet the needs to keep members around.
- **Discrimination against the only women, who also happens to have the most qualifications.**
- Initial EMT class is too long. Hard to take initial step to become EMT
- **Too much of a good old boy department.** Bylaws and Constitution only pertain to certain members. Meetings held without members knowing.
- Current members are not active. Younger people inevitably the community not willing to volunteer.
- **Lack of support from local municipality governments** not wanting to spend any money towards fire service but willing to dish it out for anything and everything else for the community.
- Another huge issue is the national registry for EMTs you get people that are interested in doing it and can’t pass the test and they never come back the national registry should not be a standard in the state of Nebraska
- Getting people to show up.
- **Inability to discipline volunteers that do not show up.**
- **Most have no desire for EMS due to difficulty of certification and continuing education time commitments**
- Drama among members
- State allowing advanced EMT makes things confusing.
- Member turnover and burnout.
- The size of the commitment (time and days) required to operate. It’s not just show up when the pagers sound.
- Lack of support from our rural fire board.
- Active members.
- **No standards from State.** We don’t even record or report fires to the state. Why? No management from state. We might as well blow the whistle in town and let anybody help.
- Lack of good training in our area. Lack of ability to have an EMT class in our area where the student doesn’t have to drive an hour one way just to get to a class.
- The reports are too cumbersome. Takes longer than the call.
- Federal and state mandates.
- **No retirement available for dedicated volunteers** for risking their lives for free.
- Members unable to respond because of work responsibilities.
- Other demands on members’ time for community events we’re requested to attend.
- Loss of area due to annexation.
- Cost, time, and increasing level of service for EMS.

**Poor leadership.**

- The VFD training/drill/attendance are overlooked/acceptable. The senior members don't "need" the education while the junior members see you don't have to train to be on the department. Those of us that make the requirements are not familiar with the skill set of those that are not training and are beginning to feel unsafe around the others.
- Having prospective members take a college course for EMT passing the course and the hands on but not being able to pass the national registry exam. Something that means nothing to 95% of our members as they never plan on moving to another state

**Retention.**

- Other agencies, local and state bureaucracy lack of grasp of reality, undereducated, laziness. Societal apathy & cultural change. Those issues are at the root of some of our issues, in my opinion.
- Terrible lack of professionalism, pride and attitude concerning training, equipment and personnel. Incredibly low call attendance by 90% of membership and lack of discipline or communication. Members also routinely respond to emergency incidents in their personal vehicles without equipment or other resources required to respond to the incident.

- Leadership
- People not showing up. Same 6-8 people always going.

**Burnout**

- **No affordable housing in our town.** Younger members can’t afford to buy a house in the area, so they have to move out of the district to find affordable housing.
- extended travel of 60 miles or more for EMS continuing Ed

**Counseling.** Available counseling as some guys have symptoms after an incident and they don’t properly address the issue and it increasingly gets worse.

- Overall attendance to meetings and training. Families are busy with kids’ events and sports.
- 0Too many restrictions by the state DHHS EMS division on firefighters being able to take vital signs.
- Current members are disengaged/don't participate/respond. Names are on the roster for namesake only.
- Disorganized department.
Are there other reasons someone volunteers for your department?

- Social time
- Interested in medical field. Thinking of a career in medical field
- **Building a resume and receiving training to get a full time position somewhere.**
- We can get the volunteers but nobody has time to take EMT or Medic without being paid for their time
- Want it on their resume to get on the paid department. This is the biggest reason we see
- Camaraderie and sense of belonging.
- We have had people join to use the dept. for fundraising for their benefit and others to be an information mule to the rural board members, even when all our meetings are open to public
- **Desire to help others.**
- **If they can fog a mirror, they are in.**
- Career aspirations (becoming full time here or somewhere else).
- Want a shirt
- **Concern about overall society.**
- Some people are just wired by their Creator to serve. Those people are our BEST.
- Prestige.
- Pursue a full-time career in the fire or EMS service.
- To get experience and free training so they have a better chance of getting on a paid department.
- **They were asked.**
- Service to the community.
- To protect their property
- I believe the reasons to volunteer are easy. The question is how we overcome the reasons not to volunteer. We have more volunteers now than we did 30 years ago, but they volunteer fewer hours then they did 30 years ago. Recruits cannot commit the amount of time that they used to.
Are there other reasons people do not join your department?

- **Fire service EMS is not for everyone.** Some think you have to do both in our combined department, or must become an EMT or FF one certified
- Busy life these days with school activities and life in general
- The younger generation does not have the same commitment as older generation. They want to be compensated and not work for free.
- Some is political. Can't overcome something that happened in the past and holds a grudge.
- **Family commitment creates the lack of time** and family activity is more important than volunteering.
- Too big of time commitment. People are busy and families are more demanding on the home front then they used to be.
- People say "they don't have time."
- People do not want to volunteer to do anything anymore.
- Time commitment is the biggest obstacle. We have more volunteers then in the past, with fewer members responding.
- Inflation and property taxes are making people get second and thirds jobs, cutting any time for fire dept.
- Younger generation are online types that do not care for face-to-face interactions.
- **Employers are not allowing them to leave for calls.**
- Certain people that already members
- **Extreme time away from family activities.**
- Personnel conflicts and lack of credible leadership
- Former members discourage potential new members.
- It's "beneath" them.
- **Problem with other members on the department.**
- Politics involved.
- Quality of "old" equipment.
- Too many demands on their time already.
- **Absolutely no compensation everyone is short of money!**
- Poor leadership
- Rampant societal selfishness.
- Poor communication and community relations/engagement. And overall lack of understanding to the matter.
- Jobs located in small town make it tough to make calls during the day.
- Young families starting out.
- Poor department image and personnel issues.
- No time for it.
- Lack of young people in our area.
- **Good ol' boys club perception.**
- Family are involved in a lot of different activities.
• Lack of support from the rural board for paying for training in advance. They want the members to pay for it out of their own pockets and then they will reimburse them. Especially in the EMS department.
• Department does not have a positive perception in the community.

Are there other reasons you believe people quit your department?

• **Move away from the area is the biggest reason members leave.**
• Were corrected about something they did and got feelings hurt.
• Husbands don't like it when wives gone. Mother's don't want to leave their small children to go on a call.
• Poor leadership or just tired of the good old boys club mentality.
• Tired of certain community members controlling the authority positions.
• Keeping non-qualified members in positions of power to make sure things run in their favor.
• Moving to other towns.
• **Leadership is horrible.** If you don’t kiss but or agree with the majority you’re labeled as the problem. Leadership allows to choose to look the other way. Leadership only enforces rules to center members.
• People are selfish.
• Move from the area.
• **They are not in it for the right reasons** and therefore quickly stop showing up for meetings, trainings, and calls.
• Moved out of the district.
• Only 2-3 people will do the reports on the computer because they are time consuming and difficult.
• **Don't want to train or meet any the requirements.**
• It is an "honor" to die while on the VFD. There are 70+ year-olds falling in and out of vehicles and not going to trainings.
• Change in priorities in life. Or move out of the area.
• Personal life changes, leaving the community due to employment changes.
• **Fear of liability.**
• Drinking.
• Moving out of area.
• **Just plain out BURNED OUT**
• We have had several young, well-trained FF/EMTs leave the department due to our community's lack of affordable housing. The cost of living is too high and they can't afford to live with our fire district.
• Good old boy system. Lack of fairness from leadership.
• Kids activities. World too busy. Personal time value.
• People seem to move more often than in years past.
• Lack of discipline or reprimand when someone acts out of line.
What do you want your community to know about your organization?

- We are grateful for their support.
- **The members sacrifice everything they can, but it is not sustainable for long term planning.**
- We need younger members.
- That's we don't charge for our service and we rely on donations.
- **We are there for them 24/7.**
- We have a great group of selfless people. They are always willing to leave the comfort of their civilian life to put their lives at risk to assist someone in a crisis without a second thought, and often without receiving much gratitude.
- We are struggling and need more help.
- **That our fire and EMS are separate.**
- EMS is not tax-based.
- Dedicated
- We need their help and support.
- Our door is always open and encourage people to stop and ask questions anytime.
- We are always looking for new members.
- Everybody can volunteer.
- (Membership) is low and we need more volunteers.
- We would welcome new members. We will be getting a new ambulance soon.
- We need daytime help and could use new people on the fire board.
- **Change needs to happen! Before there’s a tragedy!**
- That we do the best we can.
- That they are very lucky to have a dedicated well-funded fire and EMS service.
- The department is working hard to continue to provide service and improve that service.
- They lack a lot of skills, training is minimal at most. They’re not who they perceive themselves to be. Very backstabbing group. Doesn’t like to play well with others when it comes to mutual aid. Very slandering about other departments.
- Aging group needing new younger members.
- We need new young members.
- Our organization is in good shape for the most part.
- We need EMTs
- **We need help or we will go paid.**
- We need help and support from the city and community members to get the job done.
- We don’t ask for much but we are constantly being questioned on why we need to upgrade equipment so we can provide better services.
- That we need more volunteers to respond or there will be a time when we will not have a sufficient number to respond when an emergency happens.
- Grateful
- **Too many non-emergency calls**
• **We are overrun with calls and are tired of doing fundraising.**
  • We are healthy and growing and need continued support
  • It is a very small fraction of what it used to be. If it were not for the career side, our volunteer department would no longer exist. At this rate, I do not see my volunteer department lasting another 15 years.
  • Need more that want to volunteer.

• **All support is greatly appreciated.**
  • That we are helpful in an emergency and to call 911 instead of driving themselves or loved one to the hospital.
  • We do a good job for the community and surrounding areas.
  • We need more young volunteers to join our dept. Our number of volunteers is the lowest it has ever been!!!
  • Staffed by volunteers. We have a large high-income population that is not aware of the structure of EMS/Fire services.
  • Ready to serve at all times.
  • **It’s cheaper to support volunteers than to have to fund a paid department.**
  • We need more people
  • That we need people to step up to the plate and volunteer their time to the organization.
  • We appreciate their continued support.

• **We are ready to adapt and overcome any and all obstacles.**
  • Everything. No one comes to meetings to learn what we do or need.
  • We need more members
  • That we are always in demand for additional assistance. EMS is not an essential service. You get what you pay for!
  • Short on volunteers and stressed.
  • Good luck
  • We need volunteers who are willing to become licensed EMT’s. The public needs to know that our ambulance service is a separate entity from our fire department entirely.
  • We are in need of volunteer EMS. Training is first hurdle, then the national test.
  • Fire Dept. is fine.

• **Our department will not be around in 10 years as is.**
  • We are family and friends dedicated to the community and put the community first.
  • Lack of new members
  • **We leave our paying jobs to help those in need.** We enjoy doing, but we need more funding and volunteers to lessen the load on the members that we do have.
  • That we are always in need of volunteers.

• **It takes all of us to be protected.** If we as people are not willing to be smart and do our part it will not matter what level the responders are who show up.
  • What the department is about and how we serve the community
  • The status of the department. The people, time, risk, commitment.

• **We are in good shape.**
  • We need more volunteers to maintain services.
• Going through restructuring. Having to get EMS now as previous provider is not providing the service anymore.
• **We are getting to spread out for calls within our county and beyond.**
• That we have a commitment to serve even as the call numbers increase.
• Everything is good but there is a great need for daytime EMS.
• That we are volunteers. And there is no one else
• That it is a commitment of our time and our families time.
• Reliable.
• We need EMT’s.
• That each department works very hard to make sure that they are protecting life and property and it takes funding to make sure we have the resources needed to keep everyone safe and ourselves safe in time of need
• **We are here for them.**
• Could use some volunteers.
• We need more volunteers.
• We are here to serve and respond to any emergencies.
• We believe we have overwhelming support.
• **We’re in great shape and preparing for the future.**
• **How old and outdated our equipment and trucks are.**
• We are there for you, continue to support us, give us some more grace, let us put our jobs on hold and help others because someday it might be you. Come join us
• We’re always looking for more volunteers.
• Need more funding.
• They require support both from volunteers and the community.
• The need for volunteers.
• We do the best we can with the resources we have.
• We are volunteer and we need more people.
• Current funding does not come close to meeting our needs for operating and replacing equipment.
• We depend greatly on volunteers, even with FT staff
• We are thin in numbers but we will always do our best to protect our community.
• **Our call volume keeps going up, and we keep getting older.** We need more new members through the door. I would guess our average age of volunteer is 38-40.
• That we are there for them.
• We need you.
• Need more members!
• We are very appreciative of all of their support!!
• We are getting older and eventually won’t be there anymore.
• We do not get any compensation.
• **Failing building space and lack of support from city hall/governing body.**
• Space. Trucks and Ambulances are getting bigger and the space is the same we had in the 60’s. Can’t find places to train.
• Our department appreciates their support and they are always there to help the department out.
• Ready and willing at any time to be there.
• We always need more people.
• The amount of volunteer hours dedicated to their safety and how expensive it is to run a volunteer fire/rescue dept.
• **We rely on volunteers and ZERO tax dollars.**
• It takes a community effort to continue providing an ambulance service in our town.
• That it is strong!
• **If young people don't step up there won't be a volunteer dept.**
• We need help.
• The public needs to know just how bad the staffing issues are when it comes to the volunteer fire department. We are responding to more calls every year while our membership declines.
• That we need more volunteers.
• We are always looking for willing and able people to become part of our family.
• We are full of people willing to help out on their worst day.
• We can't do it without your volunteering and support.
• We want to serve but need new members who will support our mission and purpose.
• Our department gives its heart and soul to protect our community.
• We operate the department as if it was our own business. We value the community and members of it like it is all family.
• We are doing the best job we can.
• We need Volunteers.
• We are fully committed to provide the best service possible to our community.
• We can always use more help.
• We need new members.
• **The time spent at training, truck maintenance and call volume.** People don’t realize the commitment we have to keep up on current training and requirements to stay certified for EMS.
• This is a dual department with full-time and reserve staff. I hope the community understands the efficiency of the cost versus service level they receive.
• We need new members.
• We need more qualified and devoted firefighters and EMTs.
• Opportunities to volunteer.
• That we are committed to excellence.
• **Need for a larger fire station.**
• We’re committed and read to respond.
• **It's disorganized.**
• We need more volunteers to step up and help.
• Needs more members.
• With the amount of training and physical natures of the job we will not have the man power if we do not get people volunteering the average age is getting older and new recruits are getting harder to find.
• The amount of time and effort volunteers provide before, during, and after calls.
• We are struggling with out-of-date equipment, need the support of our city council and the funds to have a real active equipment rotation so that we aren’t forced to use things that are passed their useful life.
• We continue to strive to provide the best service possible.
• PLEASE STEP UP AND JOIN TO SERVICE.
THE FULL SURVEY

WORKING FIRES

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS IN CRISIS
We would like you to help Nebraska get a better understanding of the operation of this state’s volunteer fire and EMS services and challenges we face.

The survey is a joint effort by the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association and Nebraska Public Media, the state’s PBS, and NPR stations. The results will be used for a major reporting project and TV documentary on challenges facing volunteer fire and EMS services.

NSVFA benefits by having data available for its own use and to inform policy makers.

- The survey should only take about 10 minutes of your time.
- Be prepared for questions concerning your department budget and the community’s ISO rating, if you have access to that information.
- You can stop taking the survey at any time.
- You may answer only those questions that pertain to your fire or EMS organization.
- The results are entirely anonymous, and your participation is voluntary.
- While the final question will ask for your contact information if you would be willing to speak with either Nebraska Public Media or NSVFA representatives for a follow-up conversation, your answers remain confidential.

We believe this survey will provide important information for our state’s volunteer departments, while providing insights into the communities we serve. Thank you for being willing to take part!
* 1. How would you describe the structure of your volunteer department?
   - Fire
   - EMS, No Transport
   - EMS, With Transport
   - Fire & EMS, No Transport
   - Fire & EMS, With Transport

* 2. What is the estimated population your organization serves?

* 3. How large is your department’s response area in square miles?

4. What was the most recent annual budget for your organization? If you are unsure or you do not have this information, please move to the next question.
* 5. At this moment, how many registered members are a part of your organization?

Number of only firefighters

Number of licensed EMTs or higher classification

Number serving as both firefighters and EMTs

* 6. On average, how many members regularly respond to an initial emergency call:

Between 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Between 4:00 PM to 12:00 AM

Between Midnight to 8:00 AM
7. In 2022, how many fire calls did your organization receive?


8. In 2022, how many EMS calls did your organization receive?


9. In 2022, how many other (non-fire, non-EMS) service calls did your organization receive?
10. What is the percentage of revenue for your organization provided by the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taxes/local government support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants/Donations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing or Payment for Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. What is your fire department’s ISO Score (1-10), if available? If you are unsure or you do not have this information, please move to the next question.

[Blank space]
* 12. With #1 being the most challenging, rank the issues facing your department this year. Use the ‘Other challenges’ option if there are other high-ranking challenges for your department.

You can move your responses up and down either by clicking and dragging or using the up and down arrows on the side. You will need to move at least one response for your answer to be accepted.

- Unable to recruit new members
- Existing members are aging
- Declining financial support
- The age of our equipment
- Lack of support from the community
- Increasing frequency and severity of emergency calls
- Difficulty meeting mandated training and continuing education requirements
- Other challenges

13. Are there any other challenges that your department is facing which haven’t been mentioned? If yes, please provide details in the space provided. If not, you can move to the next question.
* 14. Recruiting new members for our department is:
   - Easy
   - Neither Easy or Difficult
   - Difficult

* 15. If current trends in recruiting and retaining volunteers continue, the quality of service our department provides our community will:
   - Increase
   - Stay the same
   - Decrease

* 16. To meet the public safety needs of our service area, our department budget:
   - Exceeds our needs
   - Meets our needs
   - Falls short of our needs
17. Over the past five years, demands for our services have:
  - [ ] Increased
  - [ ] Decreased
  - [ ] Stayed the same

18. Looking ahead to the next five years, our department anticipates the risk of fires and EMS calls caused by extreme weather, including wind and drought, will:
  - [ ] Increase
  - [ ] Decrease
  - [ ] Stay the same
* 19. With #1 being the most likely, rank the reasons you believe someone volunteers for your department.

You can move your responses up and down either by clicking and dragging or using the up and down arrows on the side. You will need to move at least one response for your answer to be accepted.

- The safety of the community
- It’s an exciting activity
- Family or friends are already involved
- Important to volunteer in local activities
- Other

20. Are there any other reasons you believe someone volunteers for your department that haven’t been mentioned? If yes, please provide details in the space provided. If not, you can move to the next question.
* 21. With #1 being the most likely, rank the reasons you believe people do not join your department.

You can move your responses up and down either by clicking and dragging or using the up and down arrows on the side. You will need to move at least one response for your answer to be accepted.

- Too much of a time commitment
- Too much skilled training is required
- Perceived risk to personal safety
- Employer would not approve
- Does not want exposure to suffering or death
- Other

22. Are there any other likely reasons people do not join your department that haven't been mentioned? If yes, please provide details in the space provided. If not, you can move to the next question.
* 23. With #1 being the most likely, rank the reasons you believe are the primary reason people quit your department.

You can move responses up and down either by clicking and dragging or using the up and down arrows on the side. You will need to move at least one response for your answer to be accepted.

- [ ] Time Commitment too great
- [ ] Age of volunteer
- [ ] Health reasons
- [ ] Difficulty dealing with stressful situations
- [ ] Challenged by technical skills
- [ ] Conflict with department leadership or members
- [ ] Other

24. Are there any other likely reasons you believe are the primary reason people quit your department that haven't been mentioned? If yes, please provide details in the space provided. If not, you can move to the next question.
* 25. In your opinion, when it comes to volunteer fire/rescue services, does your community:

- [ ] Fully support the department.
- [ ] Somewhat support the department.
- [ ] Do not support the department.
- [ ] Unaware volunteers provide these services.

* 26. What do you want your community to know about the current status of your volunteer fire/rescue organization?
* 27. What zip code includes your department’s primary station?
28. The survey is anonymous, however, if you would like to talk with us about your department’s story, please provide your contact information below.

Name

Email Address
We at Nebraska Public Media and the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighters Association want to thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. We value your input and for providing important information about our state’s volunteer fire/rescue departments and the communities you serve.

You can close your browser at this time.