

U.S. FIRE DEPARTMENT PROFILE THROUGH 2005

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Abstract

NFPA estimates that there were approximately 1,136,650 firefighters in the U.S. in 2005. Of the total number of firefighters, 313,300 or 28% were career firefighters and 823,350 (72%) were volunteer firefighters. Most of the career firefighters (76%) are in communities that protect 25,000 or more people. Most of the volunteer firefighters (95%) are in departments that protect fewer than 25,000 with more than half are located in small, rural departments that protect fewer than 2,500 people. There are an estimated 30,300 fire departments in the U.S. Of these, 2,087 departments are all career, 1,766 are mostly career, 4,092 are mostly volunteer and 21,575 are all volunteer. In the U.S., 12,900 or 43% of departments provide EMS service, 4,260 departments or 14% provide EMS service and advance life support, while 13,170 departments or 44% provide no EMS support.

Keywords: fire departments, firefighters, career, volunteer, EMS, statistics.

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Firefighters

There were approximately 1,136,650 firefighters in the U.S. in 2005, according to estimates based on NFPA's 2005 National Fire Experience Survey (see Table 1). This is an increase of 3.3% from a year ago.

Career firefighters include full-time (career) uniformed firefighters regardless of assignments, e.g., suppression, prevention/inspection, administrative. Career firefighters included here work for a public municipal fire department; they do not include career firefighters who work for state or federal government or in private fire brigades.

Volunteer firefighters include any active part-time (call or volunteer) firefighters. Active volunteers are defined as being involved in fire fighting. Of the total number of firefighters, 313,300 or 28% were career firefighters, while 823,350 or 72% were volunteers.¹

Most of the career firefighters (76%) are in communities that protect 25,000 or more people. Most of the volunteers (95%) are in departments that protect fewer than 25,000 people and more than half are located in the small, rural departments that protect fewer than 2,500 people (see Table 1).

Since 1983, a generally upward trend in career firefighters has been more than offset by a generally downward trend in volunteer firefighters (see Table 2). This held true in 2005, for the number of career firefighters, up 2.7% in 2005, but did not hold true for the number of volunteers, up 3.5%. The career firefighters total for 2005 was the highest ever recorded by NFPA.

¹ Note that these results are based on a sample survey, and as a result there is a confidence interval associated with each estimate. Based on data reported by fire departments responding to the 2005 National Fire Experience Survey, the NFPA is confident that the actual number of career firefighters falls within the range of 297,000 to 329,000, and the actual number of volunteer firefighters falls within the range of 806,500 to 840,500.

Table 1
Career and Volunteer Firefighters
in the U.S., by Population Protected, 2005

Population Protected	Career	Volunteer	Total
1,000,000 or more	36,100	100	36,200
500,000 to 999,999	35,900	4,150	40,050
250,000 to 499,999	24,750	2,800	27,550
100,000 to 249,999	47,100	3,000	50,100
50,000 to 99,999	47,050	5,650	52,700
25,000 to 49,999	46,650	23,950	70,600
10,000 to 24,999	45,200	79,200	124,400
5,000 to 9,999	17,000	109,000	126,000
2,500 to 4,999	5,500	165,950	171,450
Under 2,500	8,050	429,550	437,600
	313,300	823,350	1,136,650

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005

Note the number of volunteer firefighters for communities of 25,000 or more and the number of career firefighters for communities of less than 10,000 may change considerably from year to year because of their small size and sample variability.

Table 2
Number of Firefighters in the U.S., 1983-2005

Year	Total		Career		Volunteer	
	Number	Rate per 1,000 People	Number	Rate per 1,000 People	Number	Rate per 1,000 People
1983	1,111,200	4.75	226,600	0.97	884,600	3.78
1984	1,129,100	4.78	231,600	0.98	897,750	3.80
1985	1,077,950	4.52	238,500	1.00	839,450	3.52
1986	1,045,950	4.35	237,750	0.99	808,200	3.36
1987	1,060,000	4.36	243,200	1.00	816,800	3.36
1988	1,040,750	4.25	252,500	1.03	788,250	3.22
1989	1,020,700	4.12	250,600	1.01	770,100	3.11
1990	1,025,650	4.11	253,000	1.01	772,650	3.10
1991	1,033,600	4.09	261,800	1.04	771,800	3.05
1992	1,058,300	4.14	253,000	0.99	805,300	3.15
1993	1,055,050	4.09	259,650	1.01	795,400	3.08
1994	1,073,600	4.12	265,700	1.02	807,900	3.10
1995	1,098,850	4.18	260,850	0.99	838,000	3.19
1996	1,081,800	4.07	266,300	1.00	815,500	3.07
1997	1,079,050	4.03	275,700	1.03	803,350	3.00
1998	1,082,500	4.00	278,300	1.03	804,200	2.97
1999	1,065,150	3.90	279,900	1.03	785,250	2.87
2000	1,064,150	3.86	286,800	1.04	777,350	2.82
2001	1,078,300	3.85	293,600	1.05	784,700	2.81
2002	1,108,250	3.89	291,650	1.02	816,600	2.87
2003	1,096,900	3.77	296,850	1.02	800,050	2.75
2004	1,100,750	3.76	305,150	1.04	795,600	2.72
2005	1,136,650	3.82	313,300	1.05	823,350	2.77

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience (1983-2005).

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

There were on average 25,000 African-American career firefighters or 8% of the total and 9,200 female career firefighters, or 3% of the total annually during the 2001-2005 period, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.²

A good way to develop a sense of the size of departments relative to the population they protect is to examine the rate of firefighters per 1,000 people. Tables 3 and 4 provide the range of rates for career firefighters in departments protecting at least 25,000 people and for volunteer firefighters in departments protecting fewer than 25,000 people. **Note that the rates are based on data reported to the NFPA and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.**

Fire departments protecting communities of 25,000 people or more had median rates of career firefighters per 1,000 people of 1.27 to 1.39 (Table 3). However, ranges for departments by community size varied considerably within stratum and particularly for communities of 100,000 to 249,999, 50,000 to 99,999, and 25,000 to 49,999. Note that the rates for a particular size of community varied considerably, because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies, including length of work week, unusual hazards, geographical dispersion of the community, and scope of services provided (e.g., whether the department handles emergency medical calls).

Fire departments protecting less than 25,000 people had median rates of volunteer firefighters per 1,000 persons in the range of 1.57 to 20.00 (Table 4). This wide range in median rates for smaller communities reflects the fact that it takes a minimum number of firefighters to staff a department regardless of community size. Also volunteer firefighters are usually available on a part-time basis only, so it takes more of them to ensure an adequate response to each alarm.

² Figures are from the *Annual Averages Tables Employment and Earnings*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. These numbers can change considerably from year to year because of their small size and sample variability.

**Table 3
Career Firefighter Rates
By Population Protected, 2005**

Population Protected	Career Firefighters Per 1,000 People		
	Low	Median	High
1,000,000 or more	0.31	1.35	1.91
500,000 to 999,999	0.48	1.38	2.51
250,000 to 499,999	0.63	1.32	2.34
100,000 to 249,999	0.53	1.32	2.62
50,000 to 99,999	0.00	1.39	3.08
25,000 to 49,999	0.00	1.27	2.83

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including length of work week, unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographical dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities over 25,000, where departments are comprised of all career or mostly career firefighters. The low and high values are the lowest and highest values by size of community. The median value is chosen so that half the departments had higher values, and half had lower.

Table 4
Volunteer Firefighter Rates
By Population Protected, 2005

Population Protected	Volunteer Firefighters Per 1,000 People		
	Low	Median	High
10,000 to 24,999	0.00	1.57	8.65
5,000 to 9,999	0.00	3.81	13.89
2,500 to 4,999	1.13	7.44	20.00
Under 2,500	3.20	20.00	*

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Volunteer rates are shown only for communities under 25,000, where departments are comprised of all volunteer or mostly volunteers. The low and high values are the lowest and the highest values by size of community. The median value is chosen so that half of the departments had higher values, and half had lower.

*Because there is a minimum number of firefighters to form even a single company, smaller communities of under 100 people can have very high rates.

Length of work week and its effect on rate of career firefighters per 1,000 population by size of community can be seen in Table 5. Tables 6 and 7 provide median rates for career and volunteer firefighters by region and size of community.

Of the 1,136,650 firefighters, the age group accounting for the largest share of firefighters was the 30-39 group, which accounted for 330,400 or 29.1% of all firefighters (Table 8 and Figure 1). Many firefighters fell in the 20-29 age group (21.6%) and the 40-49 age group (27.1%). Few firefighters fell outside this combined range of 20 to 49 years old. Only 3.6% of firefighters were age 16 to 19, and another 19.5% were age 50 and over.

Age group patterns did vary somewhat by population of community protected (Table 9). Departments that protect less than 25,000 people tended to have higher proportions of firefighters in the under 30 age group, while departments that protect 25,000 people or more had higher proportions of firefighters in the 30-39 and 40-49 age groups.

Table 5
Career Firefighters per 1,000 People For All Career Departments
By Work Week and Population Protected, 2003-2005

	Career Firefighters Per 1,000 People		
	40-45 hour	46-51 hour	52-60 hour
Population Protected			
1,000,000 or more	1.67	1.35	1.03
500,000 to 999,999	2.29	1.90	1.35
250,000 to 499,999	2.41	1.91	1.36
100,000 to 249,999	2.05	1.58	1.37
50,000 to 99,999	2.19	1.60	1.38
25,000 to 49,999	2.12	1.59	1.64

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2003-005.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, type of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities over 25,000, where departments are comprised mostly of career firefighters.

Table 6
Median Rates of Career Firefighters per 1,000 People
By Region and Population Protected, 2005

Population Protected	Northeast	Northcentral	South	West
250,000 or more	1.66	1.62	1.43	0.94
100,000 to 249,999	1.92	1.41	1.49	0.79
50,000 to 99,999	2.10	1.37	1.54	0.89
25,000 to 49,999	1.43	0.99	1.81	0.95

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities over 25,000, where departments are comprised mostly of career firefighters.

Table 7
Median Rates of Volunteer Firefighters per 1,000 People
By Region and Population Protected, 2005

Population Protected	Northeast	Northcentral	South	West
10,000 to 24,999	2.00	1.71	1.22	1.73
5,000 to 9,999	5.00	4.02	3.33	3.06
2,500 to 4,999	9.29	7.33	5.88	7.28
under 2,500	19.37	22.00	18.18	21.68

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

The rates listed above are based on data reported to the NFPA, and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates of a particular size of community department may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Volunteer rates are shown only for communities under 25,000, where departments are comprised of mostly volunteers.

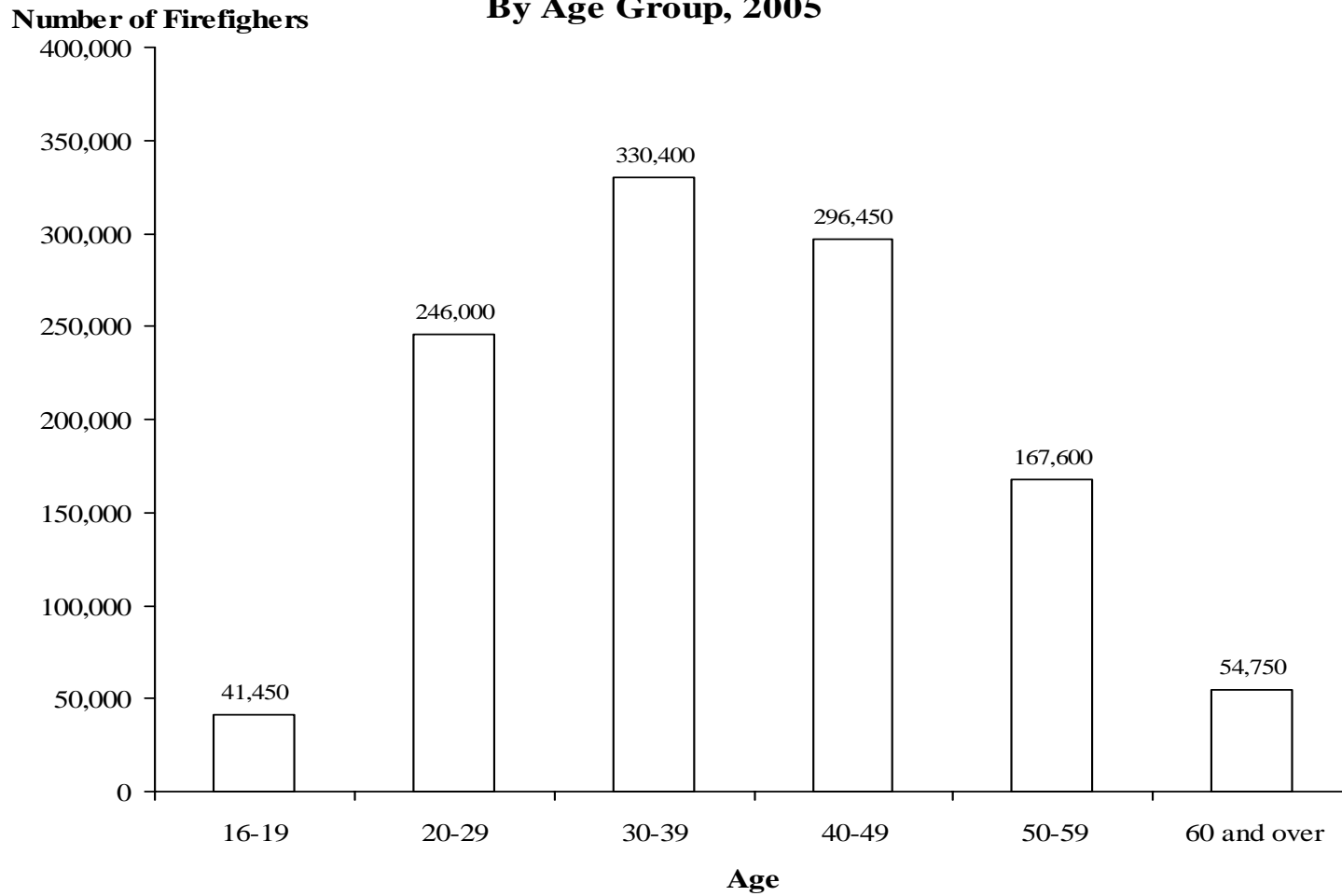
Table 8
Number of Firefighters in the U.S., by Age Group, 2005

Firefighters

Age	Number	Percent
16-19	41,450	3.6
20-29	246,000	21.6
30-39	330,400	29.1
40-49	296,450	26.1
50-59	167,600	14.7
60 and over	54,750	4.8
Total	1,136,650	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

Figure 1.
Number of Firefighters in the U.S.
By Age Group, 2005



Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005

Table 9
Age Profile of Firefighters
By Size of Community, 2005

Size of Community	Percent Firefighters under Age 30	Percent Firefighters Age 30-39	Percent Firefighters Age 40-49	Percent Firefighters Age 50 and up	Total
Mostly Career Firefighters					
1,000,000 or more	13.5%	37.6%	33.8%	15.1%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	10.1	33.5	36.9	19.5	100.0
250,000 to 499,999	13.7	32.8	37.0	16.6	100.0
100,000 to 249,999	16.8	32.7	33.1	17.4	100.0
50,000 to 99,999	16.7	35.3	32.5	15.4	100.0
25,000 to 49,999	24.2	32.3	28.8	14.7	100.0
Mostly Volunteer Firefighters					
10,000 to 24,999	28.4%	31.2%	25.1%	16.3%	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	31.0	29.4	22.5	17.1	100.0
2,500 to 4,999	29.5	28.4	23.1	19.0	100.0
Under 2,500	25.9	25.8	24.8	23.5	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

Fire Departments

There are an estimated 30,300 fire departments³ in the United States. Of these, 2,087 departments or 6.8% are all career⁴; that is, they are comprised solely of career firefighters. An estimated 1,766 departments (5.8%) are mostly career, while 4,092 (16.2%) are mostly volunteer. An estimated 21,575 departments (71.2%) are all volunteer (Table 10).

Another way to put this is that 13% of all departments are all career or mostly career but protect 62% of the U.S. population, while 87% of the departments are mostly volunteer or all volunteer and protect 38% of the population (Table 10).

The number of fire departments by size of community is displayed in Table 11. Department type did vary considerably by population protected. For community sizes above 25,000, the percentage of departments classified as all career or mostly career ranged from 71 to 100%, while for community sizes less than 25,000, the percentage of departments classified as all volunteer or mostly volunteer ranged from 60 to 99% (Table 12).

³ A fire department is a public or private organization that provides fire prevention, fire suppression and associated emergency and non-emergency services to a jurisdiction such as a county, municipality, or organized fire district.

⁴ Department type is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised 100% of career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised 100% of volunteer firefighters.

Table 10
Number of Departments and Percent of U.S. Population Protected
By Type of Department, 2005

Type of Department	Number	Percent	Percent of U.S. Population Protected
All Career	2,087	6.8%	45.0%
Mostly Career	1,766	5.8%	17.3%
Mostly Volunteer	4,902	16.2%	16.0%
All Volunteer	21,575	71.2%	21.7%
Total	30,300	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NFPA Fire Service Inventory, and 2005 NFPA Survey of Fire Departments.

Type of department is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised of 100% career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters.

Table 11
Number of Fire Departments in the U.S.,
By Population Protected, 2005

Population Protected	Number of Fire Departments
1,000,000 or more	16
500,000 to 999,999	35
250,000 to 499,999	56
100,000 to 249,999	232
50,000 to 99,999	509
25,000 to 49,999	1,271
10,000 to 24,999	3,525
5,000 to 9,999	4,375
2,500 to 4,999	5,760
under 2,500	14,551
 Total	 30,300

Source: NFPA Fire Service Inventory

Table 12
Department Type by Population Protected, 2005

Population Protected	Type of Department (Percent)				Total
	All Career	Mostly Career	Mostly Volunteer	All Volunteer	
1,000,000 or more	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	69.6	26.1	4.3	0.0	100.0
250,000 to 499,999	77.8	19.4	2.8	0.0	100.0
100,000 to 249,999	79.8	14.1	5.1	1.0	100.0
50,000 to 99,999	76.8	14.3	7.4	1.5	100.0
25,000 to 49,999	43.4	27.8	21.5	7.3	100.0
10,000 to 24,999	17.6	22.1	41.4	18.9	100.0
5,000 to 9,999	3.7	7.5	36.0	52.8	100.0
2,500 to 4,999	0.2	1.7	16.0	82.1	100.0
Under 2,500	0.5	0.5	4.3	94.6	100.0
All Departments	6.8	5.8	16.2	71.2	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005.

Type of department is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised of 100% career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters.

Fire Department Apparatus and Stations

Estimates of the number of apparatus and stations in the United States for the 2003-2005 period indicate that there were 68,950 pumpers, 6,600 aerial apparatus, and 52,900 stations. Table 13 provides a breakdown by community size.

It is worth emphasizing what the rates in Table 13 really mean. The numbers reflect averages of apparatus and station rates per 1,000 people by population protected reported to the NFPA. They do *not* represent recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

The rates are higher for departments protecting smaller communities (under 25,000). This is because it takes a minimum number of apparatus and stations to operate a fire department regardless of the number of people protected. For instance, for a department protecting 1,000 people, you would expect according to Table 13 on the average 1.162 pumpers, .031 aerial apparatus, and .946 stations. The .946 stations per 1,000 people is the highest rate shown in Table 13, but for this community size it is equivalent to one station per department. Another way to put this is that for every 100 departments reporting 1,000 people, you would expect approximately 116 pumpers, 3 aerial apparatus, and 95 stations. For communities of 25,000 to 999,999, the rates tend to be quite similar: .061-.112 pumpers per 1,000 people; .016-.021 aerial apparatus per 1,000 people, and .055-.094 stations per 1,000 people.

Tables 14, 15, and 16 display the frequency of occurrence of the number of pumpers, aerial apparatus, and stations by size of community.

Table 13
Average Apparatus and Station Rates per 1,000 People
By Community Size, 2003-2005

Population Protected	Pumpers per 1,000 People	Aerial Apparatus per 1,000 People	Stations per 1,000 People
1,000,000 or more	.031	.011	.037
500,000 to 999,999	.061	.016	.055
250,000 to 499,999	.061	.015	.061
100,000 to 249,999	.072	.013	.071
50,000 to 99,999	.081	.016	.081
25,000 to 49,999	.112	.021	.094
10,000 to 24,999	.185	.033	.126
5,000 to 9,999	.323	.035	.202
2,500 to 4,999	.540	.027	.344
Under 2,500	1.162	.031	.946
National Average	.233	.022	.201

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2003-2005.

These results reflect average apparatus and station rates per 1,000 people by population protected reported to the NFPA. They do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard.

Note that pumpers reported above had a capability of 1,000 gpm or greater. Many departments reported other suppression vehicles including apparatus with pumps less than 1,000 gpm, hose wagons, brush fire vehicles, tankers, etc.

Table 14
Pumpers (750 gpm or greater) by Community Size, 2003-2005

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	1-5 Pumpers	6-9 Pumpers	10-19 Pumpers	20-39 Pumpers	40 or More Pumpers	
1,000,000 or more	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%	87.5%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	0.0	11.4	62.9	25.7	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	0.0	0.0	47.3	45.5	7.3	100.0%
100,000 to 249,999	14.3	37.8	38.7	8.3	0.9	100.0%

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	No Pumpers	1 Pumper	2 Pumpers	3-4 Pumpers	5 or More Pumpers	
50,000 to 999,999	1.1%	1.5%	6.1%	32.8%	58.5%	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	1.1	3.7	20.5	47.6	27.1	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	1.0	7.3	32.3	49.3	10.1	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	1.6	13.3	44.1	37.6	3.4	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	2.8	24.4	48.4	23.5	1.0	100.0%
Under 2,500	12.5	43.3	36.1	7.9	0.3	100.0%

Source: 2003-2005 NFPA Fire Service Survey

Note that pumpers reported above had a capability of 1,000 gpm or greater. Note that many departments reported other fire suppression vehicles including apparatus with pumps less than 1,000 gpm, hose wagons, brush fire vehicles, tankers, etc.

Table 15
Aerial Apparatus by Community Size, 2003-2005

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	No Aerial Apparatus	1-5 Aerial Apparatus	6-9 Aerial Apparatus	10-19 Aerial Apparatus	20 or More Aerial Apparatus	
1,000,000 or more	0.0%	12.6%	12.5%	31.3%	43.8%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	25.7	20.0	45.7	8.6	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	12.3	50.9	19.3	17.5	0.0	100.0%

Population Protected	Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With					Total
	No Aerial Apparatus	1 Aerial Apparatus	2 Aerial Apparatus	3-4 Aerial Apparatus	5 or More Aerial Apparatus	
100,000 to 249,999	20.6%	21.6%	28.4%	19.7%	9.6%	100.0%
50,000 to 99,999	30.0	38.0	23.5	8.0	0.4	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	37.1	51.1	10.7	1.0	0.1	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	50.0	46.0	3.7	0.3	0.0	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	74.1	25.2	0.7	0.0	0.0	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	90.3	9.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	100.0%
Under 2,500	96.6	3.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	100.0%

Source: 2003-2005 NFPA Fire Service Survey.

Table 16
Fire Stations by Community Size, 2003-2005

Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With

Population Protected	1-5 Stations	6-9 Stations	10-19 Stations	20-29 Stations	30 or More Stations	Total
1,000,000 or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	0.0	1.4	17.1	71.4	100.0%
250,000 to 499,999	0.0	0.0	49.1	35.1	15.8	100.0%
100,000 to 249,999	10.6	38.5	43.6	5.0	2.3	100.0%

Percentage of U.S. Fire Departments With

Population Protected	No Stations	1 Station	2 Stations	3 Stations	4 or More Stations	Total
50,000 to 99,999	0.0	0.9	4.3	14.1	80.7	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	0.0	15.0	23.2	26.7	35.1	100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	0.0	45.9	30.4	13.3	10.4	100.0%
5,000 to 9,999	0.0	69.5	20.4	6.6	3.5	100.0%
2,500 to 4,999	0.0	79.6	15.1	3.6	1.6	100.0%
Under 2,500	0.5	87.3	9.9	1.6	0.8	100.0%

Source: 2003-2005 NFPA Fire Service Survey

Emergency Medical Services

The level of emergency medical service (EMS) provided by fire departments by size of community for the 2003-2005 period can be seen in Table 17. The larger the community, the more likely EMS service was provided. Overall for the country, 12,900 or 42.6% of departments provided EMS service, 4,260 departments or 14.1% provided EMS service and advanced life support, while 13,170 departments or 43.5% provided no EMS service.

U.S. Expenditures on Local Fire Protection

Table 18 shows expenditures on local fire protection by governments, with and without adjustment for inflation. Note that these expenditures adjusted for inflation, have risen 110% from 1980 to 2004. Other municipal service costs like police protection have risen in a similar manner.

Fire protection costs rose 90% from 1983 to 2004 after adjusting for inflation, while the number of career firefighters was increasing 38%. Since chiefs of fire departments serving larger communities report problems with shrinking budgets or with level budgets combined with increasing responsibilities, this clear pattern of increasing fire department resources nationwide is difficult to interpret. Some of the factors possibly contributing to this increase in costs are (1) shrinkage of the work week⁵ for some departments, which results in a need to increase staffing and apparatus or to pay firefighters at overtime rates; (2) increased EMS responsibilities requiring increased staffing and, in some communities, a more frequent replacement of apparatus; and (3) costs of retirement and health benefits continuing to rise as they do for the general population.

⁵ This is the result at least to some extent of the Fair Labor Standards Act being applied to municipal fire departments.

Table 17
Departments Providing Emergency Medical Service
By Community Size (Percent), 2003-2005

Population Protected	No EMS	EMS	EMS and ALS	Total
1,000,000 or more	0%	19%	81%	100%
500,000 to 999,999	0	26	74	100%
250,000 to 499,999	2	28	70	100%
100,000 to 249,999	5	35	60	100%
50,000 to 99,999	11	39	50	100%
25,000 to 49,999	18	39	43	100%
10,000 to 24,999	30	41	29	100%
5,000 to 9,999	42	41	18	100%
2,500 to 4,999	45	44	11	100%
under 2,500	49	46	6	100%
Total	43	43	14	100%

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2003-2005

ALS refers to fire departments providing advanced life support.

Table 18
Direct Expenditures on Local Fire Protection

Year	Expenditures (in Billions)	Expenditures (in Billions) Adjusted for Inflation*
1980	\$5.7	\$5.7
1981	\$6.3	\$5.7
1982	\$7.0	\$6.0
1983	\$7.6	\$6.3
1984	\$8.2	\$6.5
1985	\$8.5	\$6.5
1986	\$9.6	\$7.2
1987	\$10.5	\$7.9
1988	\$11.8	\$8.2
1989	\$11.9	\$7.9
1990	\$13.2	\$8.3
1991	\$13.8	\$8.3
1992	\$14.4	\$8.5
1993	\$15.4	\$9.0
1994	\$16.1	\$9.0
1995	\$17.0	\$9.2
1996	\$17.7	\$9.3
1997	\$19.4	\$10.0
1998	\$20.3	\$10.3
1999	\$21.3	\$10.5
2000	\$23.1	\$11.1
2001	\$25.0	\$11.6
2002	\$26.0	\$11.9
2003	\$27.9	\$12.1
2004	\$28.4	\$12.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Governments Division*

*Adjustments were made to 1980 dollars using the Consumer Price Index.

Data Sources

The report is based on two data sources: the annual NFPA Survey for U.S. Fire Experience, 2005, and the NFPA Fire Service Survey, 2003-2005.

The annual fire experience survey is a sample survey of fire departments in the United States, which serves as the basis for making national estimates of the fire problem. The sample is stratified by the size of the community protected by the fire department. All U.S. fire departments that protect communities of 100,000 or more are included in the sample, because they constitute a small number of departments with a large share of the total population protected. For departments that protect less than 100,000 population, a sample was selected stratified by size of community protected. Survey returns in recent years have ranged from 2,800 to 3,500 departments annually. The survey also includes questions on the number of career and volunteer firefighters. The national projections are made by weighing sample results according to the proportion of total U.S. population accounted for by communities of each size.

The NFPA Fire Service Survey is a three year cycle survey which attempts to survey about one third of the states in the country each year. The survey includes questions on the number of career firefighters, the number of volunteer firefighters, length of work week, number of apparatus and stations, etc. In recent years the survey has had a response rate of about 30% from departments.

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