

# Volunteers Wanted

## Volunteers Needed To Answer The Call

(NAPS)—When an emergency strikes, firefighters are there to answer the call. In fact, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that fire departments responded to over 35 million calls in 2016. What people may not realize is that the majority of these firefighters are volunteers, donating their time and energy to be there for those in need.

“It really is neighbors helping neighbors,” said Steve Hirsch, volunteer firefighter and chair of the National Volunteer Fire Council. “There is nothing more rewarding than being a volunteer firefighter—we are there for our neighbors when they are having their worst possible day.”

The need for volunteer firefighters is stronger than ever. While the number of calls has tripled in the last 30 years, the number of volunteer firefighters has decreased. This trend has become especially noticeable in the last few years. According to NFPA data, there were 682,600 volunteer firefighters in 2017, down from 814,850 in 2015.

Despite the decline, volunteers play a critical role in the nation’s emergency services, particularly in small and rural communities. Of the nearly 30,000 fire departments in the U.S., 83 percent are either entirely or mostly volunteer. These volunteers respond to nearly every type of emergency—structure fires, wildfires, medical emergencies, natural disasters, vehicle crashes, hazardous materials spills, search and rescue, active shooter threats, and more.

“We need more people to step up and serve so that we can continue to provide critical life saving services in our local communities,” said Hirsch. “The biggest



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requirement is the desire to help others. The rest can be taught.”

For those who want to help but aren’t able to commit to becoming a firefighter or EMS provider, volunteers are also needed to fill non-operational roles. Community members can join a department’s auxiliary program to provide needed support services such as fire prevention education, disaster planning, fundraising, administration, and much more.

Volunteering with a local fire department takes commitment and dedication, but the benefits are many. Making a difference, saving lives, developing new skills, and being part of a close knit team are all reasons people choose to volunteer.

“I’m a lawyer by trade, but I don’t think about that every day. I think every day about being a volunteer firefighter. It truly is the most impactful way I can serve my community,” said Hirsch.

To find a local fire service volunteer opportunity, visit [www.MakeMeAFirefighter.org](http://www.MakeMeAFirefighter.org).