



SEBASTOPOL FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION

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Did you know that in the United States there are 1,140,750 local firefighters. Out of these,
Career firefighters: 31% (354,600)

Volunteer firefighters: 69% (786,150)

Usually those in communities of less than 25,000 people are more likely to be volunteer firefighters. The term "volunteer" in the fire service is commonly used to describe a model where fire services are not delivered with career staff. A common model used in the United States is a "paid by call" model, which is how Sebastopol Fire Department delivers its fire service. Sebastopol firefighters are paid \$15 per call when they respond to a call for service. There is no lower cost model to deliver fire service to a community.

Realizing the importance volunteer firefighters bring to their communities, the federal government started the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants (SAFER). This grant was created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase or maintain the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities. The goal of SAFER is to enhance the local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response and operational standards established by the NFPA (NFPA 1710 and/or NFPA 1720).

The Sebastopol Fire Department was awarded a SAFER grant, however, the grant had a sunset date with the purpose of the city adopting it into their budget. The City did this and the program has been a success, just last year the department was able to recruit 9 new volunteers. Cutting the \$80,000, line 4016, from the Fire Department Budget for incentive pay appears to be in direct conflict with the stated purpose of the Ad Hoc Fire Committee's goal of decreasing response times and increasing staffing of calls.

I see the City Manager, City Attorney and Finance budgets are increasing this year by 56%, 97.4% and 15%, respectively. Why can't the Council prioritize the budget to fund the fire department incentive pay?

Respectively,

Mike Simpson

President, Sebastopol Firefighters Foundation