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The Influences on the Decline of Volunteer Firefighters: The Real U.S. Fire Problem

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**Abstract:**

This article reviews extant literature and identifies influences upon volunteer firefighters in the United States. The research examines Maslow's Emergent Theory of Altruism and Self-interest to determine if altruism alone is sufficient to maintain existing and recruit new volunteer firefighters. The paper examines relationships between influences affecting volunteer firefighters. This paper improves fire service managers' understandings of each influence. In order to determine the magnitude of each influence, this paper recommends further research.

## The Influences on the Decline of Volunteer Firefighters: The Real U.S. Fire Problem

The numbers of volunteer firefighters throughout the United States are in a steady state of decline. Volunteer fire chiefs and administrators must prepare for this immediately. Volunteer firefighters represent a large majority of the firefighting force in the United States and save taxpayers over \$100 billion each year (Hall 2012). The modern fire service has evolved throughout recent years to become responsible for many additional types of emergencies. However, none is more time and labor intensive than extinguishing building fires. The size of the building, persons inside in need of rescue, and weather conditions can greatly increase the number of firefighters necessary to mitigate this type of incident. To meet this need, some jurisdictions, particularly urban areas, have chosen to implement the use of paid or career firefighters. This may meet the needs of the individual jurisdiction; although as Karter (2006) notes, the increase in career firefighters has not overcome the decline in volunteer firefighters throughout the United States. Of the estimated 30,300 fire departments in the United States, volunteer firefighters solely staff 71.2% (Karter 2006). Fire service leaders must recognize this dependence on volunteer firefighters. Moreover, fire service leaders must fully understand the influences on and motivations of volunteer firefighters. This research reviews extant literature in an effort to provide that understanding to fire service leaders.

Bush, Schaenman, and Thiel (1998) note that according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), United States Fire Departments responded to over 17,000,000 calls for service in 1996, which is up sharply from 11,000,000 in 1983. The United States Fire Administration (2010) indicates that the number of building fires in the United States has fallen hard from 1,027,500 in 1980 to 515,000 in 2008. Although building fires are declining, the total number of incidents to which fire departments respond have had a marked increase. According to Karter and Stein (2011), the numbers of volunteer firefighters have declined over five percent from 808,200 to 768,150 nationwide. The decline in volunteer firefighters forces the fire service to do more with less. This is a real U.S. problem

and, although literature addresses this problem to a point, in order to reverse the trend, research must identify the reasons for the decline in volunteer firefighters.

## **Theory**

Altruism, or the selfless regard for others, is a necessary trait for volunteer firefighters to possess. One may consider the various levels of self-interest influencing volunteer firefighters conflicting with altruism. Flynn and Black (2011) indicate that the previously established dichotomization of altruism and self-interest is incorrect. Flynn and Black point to the emergent theory of altruism and self-interest, which is the work of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Rogers and Maslow (1951) both studied human beings and their tendencies toward realizing their full potential, otherwise defined as self-actualization. Rogers (1951) rejected the belief of innate selfishness and suggested that human growth toward their full potential involved self-preoccupation. Mayeroff (1990) built upon this notion and proposed that one's own development and the ability to help others are directly related. Therefore, a truly altruistic individual must also be somewhat self-focused. Maslow (1950) posited that an individual enjoys performing altruistic deeds and that this enjoyment is self-serving and leads to self-actualization. Therefore, one can reject the theory that altruism and self-interest are independent and divergent in favor of Rogers and Maslow's work. It illustrates that altruism and self-interest are related and convergent.

There are many other influences; although there is an assumption that altruism influences volunteer firefighters. Fire service managers and leaders today must struggle to answer the following question; is altruism alone a sufficient influence to maintain existing and recruit new volunteer firefighters? To answer this question, this literature review will examine the various influences affecting volunteer firefighters. The examination will include individual, organizational, and external influences.

## **Individual Influences**

Fire service managers and leaders often attempt to determine what motivates a person to volunteer to be a firefighter. The motivation can improve recruitment and retention programs. This will lead to an increase in the available volunteer firefighter work force. However, as Clary, Snyder, and Ridge (1992) indicate, grouping individuals into motive categories may be ineffective as individual motives may be different. In order to gain a better understanding of the motive, it is necessary to examine all of the potential individual influences. These influences are critical, as they exist at the level closest to the individual.

Observations of personality are the first individual influences. As previously outlined, altruism is an essential personality attribute that serves to influence those who desire to volunteer as firefighters. Altruism may be a personality trait obtained from the individual's parents. As Eisenberg and Fabes (1994) describe, parents often reward socially desirable behavior and disapprove when an individual fails to demonstrate pro-social behavior. Beyond parental reaction, Bekkers (2007) illustrates that the social learning theory can predict that parental volunteering will spill over into their children choosing to volunteer. This is readily apparent when examining any volunteer fire department that has more than one generation of family serving, which is a very common occurrence. Concern for the welfare of others and attitudes of sympathy and empathy toward people in need are personality attributes that are associated with those interested in volunteering (Eisenberg, Miller, Schaller, Fabes, Fults, Shell, & Shea, 1989). Carpenter and Myers (2010) found that altruism is a major underlying belief in those who choose to volunteer. In fact, their research indicates that offering extrinsic incentives has a zero net effect for increasing call response for individuals who consider the image value of volunteering important. Throughout their study, intrinsic rewards, such as an individual who uses altruism for self-actualization, serves as a greater influence to volunteer. Gidron (1983) agrees by stating that there is an overall predominance of intrinsic incentives over extrinsic incentives. Extrinsic rewards may also encourage

careerist behavior (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979). This could weaken the empowerment, image value, and social integration aspects of self-actualization.

Elshaug and Metzger (2001) reinforce the need for altruism when considering the potential costs of volunteering as a sacrifice on behalf of the individual volunteering. These costs may include out-of-pocket expenses such as fuel and personal vehicle use. The individual costs also include loss of time that could be used elsewhere, such as for leisure, family, or personal work. The time commitment necessary to be a volunteer firefighter is higher today than ever. This is mostly due to the increased call volumes and higher training requirements experienced in the fire service. This influence affects volunteer firefighters at the individual level. However, this is also an organizational influence, as the time commitment required may differ between fire departments.

Individuals may also hold widely different beliefs. For example, younger individuals may be less influenced by the use of altruism to self-actualize, but more by the opportunity to gain experience, socialize with others, have fun, and experience excitement. Smith (1999) conducted a study of young people in which he found that 94% of the respondents indicated that volunteering was a good way to gain experience. Additionally, respondents recommended that volunteer organizations should stress the fun and excitement associated with volunteering, as well as the opportunity it provides individuals with future jobs. Lewis (2007) reiterates this approach to recruiting and retention by outlining the use of volunteer fire department programs in which high school students work as Emergency Medical Technicians and junior firefighters. Scott, Buckman, Bettenhausen, Curl, Gassaway, and Leahy (2004) illustrate that volunteering for a fire department can also improve an individual's employability. Training, typically offered at no cost to the individual, allows individuals to obtain a full-time paid position at another fire department. However, attempting to influence volunteers by marketing the chance for excitement or the opportunity to gain training for a future full-time job may be more appealing to the individual's self-interest, rather than their altruism.

Many individuals hold beliefs that volunteering will serve individual emotional needs, such as the prevention of social alienation. This means that individuals may have therapeutic motivations to volunteer as a firefighter. These therapeutic motivations aid to reduce depression, loneliness, and emotional deprivation (Mostyn, 1983; Wardell, Lishman, & Whalley, 2000). The social aspects of a volunteer fire department provide benefits still considered intangible. Clark and Wilson (1961) suggest that tangible benefits or the incentives of material gain are useful for understanding voluntary action. However, Smith (1981) argues to focus upon intangible rewards, although altruism alone is not an incentive for voluntary action. Smith (1981) argues that typically, volunteer firefighters receive neither material rewards nor anything altruistic. Solidarity rewards, such as primary group interaction, spirit de corps, camaraderie, and departmental pride influence volunteer firefighters. The volunteer firefighter may also achieve self-actualization by engaging in the altruistic activities offered by a volunteer fire department.

The final individual influence examined is that of role. As a volunteer firefighter, there are extreme demands placed upon the individual in the forms of time commitment, training requirements, and availability to respond to emergencies. In a study conducted by Thompson and Bono (1993), they found that on average, volunteer firefighters donated 236 hours annually, which includes between 50 and 250 hours of training. This is the equivalent of six 40-hour workweeks. Thompson and Bono (1993) note that volunteer firefighting work serves as both self-actualizing and non-alienating labor. However, volunteer firefighters cannot avoid alienation completely, since they must also sell their labor to earn a livelihood. Thompson and Bono (1993) suggest that the administrative hierarchies often found in volunteer fire departments and the day-to-day control over the volunteer work within the organization serve to compensate for this unavoidable alienation by establishing a position that the individual continuously occupies.



Nearly every volunteer firefighter must also serve in the role of family member. This role could be father, mother, son, daughter, or a multitude of other family roles. The family role is a critical influence on volunteer firefighters. Individuals that have family members who require considerable amounts of attention, such as a special needs child or the elderly, may not have time available to volunteer. However, this does not necessarily mean that individuals are more likely to volunteer if they do not have a family that requires time commitments. In fact, Kulik (2007) found a direct relationship between family support and volunteering. Family support is a resource and when present, the individual can better legitimize devoting time to the volunteer activity. Additionally, family support to an individual volunteering will lead to greater levels of self-esteem for the individual (Kulik, 2007).

However, burnout from volunteering can occur because of the accompanying stressors (Chou-Wai-yan & So-Kum-Tang, 2003). One of these stressors may include the presence of work family conflict. This could be a complex issue but may also be as simple as conflict between the roles of volunteer firefighter and family member. The number of hours devoted to or required by one role may have a detrimental effect on the other. As Cowlshaw, Evans, and McLennan (2010) found, there is a less severe inter-role conflict from volunteer work. This is associated with fewer hours devoted to volunteer organizations and away from family. Accordingly, Cowlshaw et al. (2010) note that influences on home demands for a volunteer may also be less. Although the inter-role conflict may be less, it is important to acknowledge its existence as an influence upon volunteer firefighters. This conflict can also be present between an individual's paid job and their volunteering position. In the same manner, if a volunteer firefighter's paid job requires the devotion of extensive hours or extensive travel, inter-role conflict will be present.

To compensate for the inter-role conflict between family and volunteering, many volunteer fire departments include several generations of family members. Although this could potentially reduce inter-role conflict by allowing for a simultaneous time commitment to family and as a volunteer, it may

have a detrimental effect to recruitment. If potential members are limited to families of current firefighters, immediate friends and long-term residents, recruitment may not include new arrivals to the community or other non-traditional candidates, such as women and racial minorities (Thompson, 1993). Tradition is widely visible throughout the volunteer fire service and many departments have become family traditions. However, fire service leaders must consider these effects on the entrance of candidates from outside this traditional makeup.

### **Organizational Influences**

Organizational level influences may differ between jurisdictions. Stocker (2004) points to the increased time demands on the volunteer by the organization. This comes in the form of increased training requirements, fund raising demands, and increased call volumes. Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements have increased organizational training requirements. In addition, the organization may receive added responsibilities. An organization may become responsible for emergency medical treatment and transport which would greatly increase their call volume. This new responsibility would also require a significant amount of training. The number of properly trained volunteer firefighters in the United States is in a steady state of decline. This is due to a number of influences, the most significant of which is the time commitment required to obtain proper training. Unlike volunteering at a soup kitchen or as a school crossing guard, the fire service has become extremely diverse in the services it offers. Today's full-service all-hazard departments must provide pre-hospital medical care, technical rescue, and hazardous materials mitigation, in addition to the fire suppression, inspection, and investigation services. Each of these services brings with it a high level of training and when combined can create an insurmountable time requirement. The overall call volume in the United States has risen tremendously while the number of fires has dropped significantly (Bush, et al., 1998; United States Fire Administration, 2010). This suggests that structural fires have become high risk, low frequency incidents. Not only is structural firefighting training more important today because

of low experience rates, but also the statistics suggest the fire service is responding to even more non-fire related incidents. This requires an even higher commitment to training by firefighters to learn how to perform at these new types of incidents. Childs (2005) agrees that a firefighter's role has changed significantly and will continue to change in the future. Childs (2005) recognizes the wider role of fire-rescue work and suggests altering the type and delivery of training in the future.

The strain on personnel will also increase with an increased call volume (Scott, Buchanan, Windisch, Homan, Fulmer, & Curl, 2005). Stocker (2004) also notes that the increased weight, because of the mandated use of personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus, demands extremely high physical requirements. Enhanced personal protective equipment provides better protection than ever for volunteer firefighters. However, the nature of firefighting has not changed. It is still physically demanding labor. Fire service leaders must not overlook this organizational requirement, given that sudden cardiac death is the highest cause of death among all firefighters. This is complicated by the fact that across the United States, the average age of volunteer firefighters is rising (National Volunteer Fire Council, 2010). Some volunteer firefighters may choose to quit volunteering because of their own physical limitations.

Organizations may also enforce rules that limit the ability of some to volunteer. Campbell (1997) notes the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) has prohibited its members from volunteering as firefighters. Although the Fair Labor Standards Act prevents an employee from being paid and volunteering for the same organization, some governments have misconstrued this requirement. These governments may prevent firefighters that work for another organization from volunteering with their organization. This prohibition may vary widely from one jurisdiction to the next throughout the United States. Nevertheless, it is an important organizational influence.

Organizational influences can also be viewed as a psychological contract between two broad categories, transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1990). The categories must be balanced and

represent essential elements for volunteer management. The volunteer must understand the organization's performance expectations and what the organization will provide to them in the form of a transactional or explicit exchange. The organization must balance this with the less tangible long-term loyalty to the organization by the volunteer and to the volunteer by the organization (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1996a; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1996b). Liau-Troth (2005) agrees and suggests that volunteer administrators must insure a complete understanding of the obligations of the organization and the entitlements of the volunteer within their mutual relationship.

Yanay and Yanay (2008) note that a problem may exist because of a failure to make clear what is expected by both parties. They note that many volunteer organizations view volunteerism as based on free will or choice and therefore should not include prompting or motivating by the other side. Some suggest that an organization cannot make a volunteer perform because they are a volunteer. However, without clear direction or performance requirements, volunteers may obtain a sense of abandonment by the organization. If the individual chose to become a volunteer firefighter to obtain social benefits, such as to combat isolation or alienation, the individual will likely disengage from the organization if they experience these same emotions after joining. Yanay and Yanay (2008) described several respondents that indicated they felt as if they were not needed if the organization did not specifically instruct them as to when and where to perform. In fact, Abrashoff (2002) suggests that the perception of abandonment by newcomers to the organization begins on the first day of work. It is essential that the organizational leadership manage its people, as it will greatly affect retention (Bush, Schaenman, & Thiel, 1998).

Between 2008 and 2010, an estimated 365,000 residential building fires occurred causing 13,000 civilian fire injuries, 2,560 deaths, and \$7.4 billion in property damage annually (United States Fire Administration, 2012b). In fact, an injury occurs in a residential building fire every 40 minutes in the United States (United States Fire Administration, 2012a). Each organization, depending on the overall

risk to their community, will attempt to provide the type and amount of fire protection needed. Hall (2012) suggests that organizations may begin with a response time objective, consider travel time, and travel distance. In rural settings, where most volunteer firefighters work, small populations may live in a large geographic area. This will increase the demand for additional fire stations, which will subsequently increase demand for volunteer firefighters. Building fire stations in sparsely populated areas can have tremendous effects on the community and the organization. The fire station can become a powerful source of community identity and solidarity (Perkins & Metz, 1988). The fire station can allow for regularized group contact at training and fundraising efforts, rituals such as parades and dinners, and can allow community members to escape the mundane into lore and tradition through retelling heroic events (Kantor, 1972; Perkins, 1987). This organizational level influence allows individuals to achieve the non-tangible incentives or solidarity rewards such as camaraderie, spirit de corps, and departmental pride, which Clark and Wilson (1961) described at the individual level.

Organizational influence may also include community level influences. For example, Putnam (2000) and Bekkers (2005) found that church attendance is a key predictor for volunteering. Religiosity is as powerful as education in predicting civic engagement and conversely the non-religious show the lowest rates of volunteering. However, there may also be community level influences competing for the available time that a potential volunteer firefighter possesses. As Snook and Olsen (1989) describe, the competition is other organizations, activities and events in the community such as civic groups, bowling leagues, and other social networks. The single biggest community level influence could be from the altruistic norm established by the community itself. If volunteering as a firefighter is an established responsibility by the community, then it becomes the social responsibility of all the individuals physically capable of performing within that community. This is readily apparent in other countries such as Germany, where volunteers comprise 98% of that nation's fire services. Although this serves to influence those choosing to become a volunteer firefighter, it also affects the disengagement from the

organization at the community level. For example, Linardi and McConnell (2011) found that subjects are more likely to disengage from an activity after someone else had also disengaged. Individuals will remain engaged because they are either altruistic or because they desire to avoid the stigma as being the first to disengage. However, Linardi and McConnell (2011) found that individuals are more likely to leave in clusters after the first individual disengages. This means that community level influences can have an effect on both volunteering as a firefighter and on the choice to stop volunteering as a firefighter. Communities therefore have an effect on the organization, as well as the converse. This reciprocal relationship explains why organizational influences differ between communities.

Organizations will often choose to add paid or career firefighters in an effort to add services or supplement volunteer responses particularly when call volumes increase. The paid firefighters alone may be insufficient to meet all the community driven demand for services. However, this new combination fire department made up of both volunteers and paid personnel brings with it influences on volunteer firefighters. Thompson and Bono (1993) have found that many volunteer firefighters see paid firefighters as being extrinsically motivated in their work, and this could lead to alienation of the paid personnel. Thompson and Bono (1993) outline that many volunteer firefighter respondents indicated that they favored the use of paid personnel if it was necessary to provide for adequate fire protection. This reinforces the intrinsic motives of altruism and community integration possessed by volunteer firefighters. It also creates an environment into which the extrinsically motivated paid firefighters may not fit. Other volunteer firefighter respondents agreed with adding paid positions only if the organization offered current volunteer firefighters the positions first (Thompson & Bono, 1993). Hiring full-time positions from existing volunteer firefighters is a common practice as firefighters who currently volunteer for a department are already familiar with the operations, area, and apparatus. However, if the individual found a solution to isolation and alienation at the individual level by way of volunteering, they may be alienated when the individual becomes a paid firefighter. Although this may

not result in the individual disengaging from the organization because they now rely on it for an income stream, it recognizes both the new influence of extrinsic rewards on the individual and the separation between the volunteer and paid firefighter groups.

### **External Influences**

External influences occur outside of the individual and organizational levels. The individual and the organization both possess influences that are essential to examine. Moreover, other influences do not occur locally but could influence volunteer firefighters. The United States as a culture desires protection from fire and this desire influences volunteer firefighters. Volunteers in lieu of paid personnel must provide these services in the absence of an adequate tax base. Hall (2012) indicates that the monetary value of time donated by volunteer firefighters was \$129.7 billion in 2009. Considering that the core total cost of fire in 2009 was \$115.1 billion, up 56% from 1980 after inflation adjustments, this translates to a \$331 billion total cost of fire in 2009. This is roughly 2.3% of the United States Gross Domestic Product and over half of the costs are those that volunteer firefighters save United States taxpayers.

Hall (2012) outlines that 80.3% of the U.S. population lives in 20% of the area. Since metropolitan areas rarely rely on the use of volunteer firefighters, this roughly translates to the remaining 20% of the population living in 80% of the country who also desire to have fire protection provided to them. This is a daunting task for the volunteer fire service. A citizen living in an urban area one block from a fire station may expect to have a fire engine arrive within three minutes of calling 9-1-1 with at least four firefighters on the apparatus. A citizen living in a remote rural area would desire the same services; however, they are more likely to experience one apparatus with one firefighter and a much longer waiting time, in some cases perhaps 15 to 20 minutes. Providing the citizen in the remote rural area the same services that the citizen in the urban area receives may simply be cost prohibitive.

The United States as a culture is also moving into a newer and faster information based era, which may present a generational gap between current volunteer firefighters and future volunteer firefighters. One cannot assume that individuals born in 2012 will be less altruistic, more self-interested, or less responsible; however, they will live in a world where patience has a different meaning than past generations. These individuals will not have to wait to hear their favorite song on the radio because it of instant downloads from online music stores. Nor will they have to wait for information because of smartphones and the internet. Nor will they have to wait for a phone call because of mobile phones. Nor will they have to wait to develop a picture because of digital photography. The intrinsic rewards offered by the volunteer fire service will have to be speedy enough to reward future volunteers before their patience expires. Perry (2002) agrees stating that focusing our loyalties has become more difficult because of the new culture, which demands our attention in multiple new ways. It remains the responsibility of the organizational leaders to keep people focused on the orienting value or organizational vision, particularly during difficult changes (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002).

Ideologically, there are many influences among volunteer firefighters. Perkins and Metz (1988) conducted research in which they found over two-thirds of respondents indicated that being a firefighter was of equal or greater importance than church membership. Perkins and Metz (1988) posit that perhaps there is something sacred about both institutions. This also represents an emotional influence at the external level. Society as a whole thinks of volunteer fire fighting as an exciting and a noble endeavor. Although ideologies typically influence volunteer firefighters at the individual level, there are also ideological influences that intersect cultural influences at the external level. For example, socioeconomic status provides resources and interests that facilitate volunteering, and as a result, volunteering is more common among those in higher socio economic status groups (Wilson & Musick, 1998; Wilson, 2000). An external influence also exists between children and their parents who serve as volunteers. However, it is more likely that the external influence of this relationship and the passing of



socioeconomic status between generations are related (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Ganzeboom, Treiman, & Ultee, 1991; Smith & Baldwin, 1974; Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986).

At the external level, geographical or physical location influences may also affect volunteer firefighters. Those who live in small communities may have an abundance of opportunities to volunteer with their local fire department. However, those who reside in metropolitan areas are not likely to have the same opportunities because similar volunteer organizations may not exist. Thompson (1993) indicates that short commuting distances to full-time work by volunteer firefighters will enhance volunteer participation. Conversely, long commuting distances, such as those for an individual who volunteers as a firefighter in a suburban or rural area and commutes to a full-time job in an urban area, will limit volunteer participation. Moreover, during the time that this individual is located at their full-time job in the urban area, they are unavailable to assist with emergencies at their community volunteer fire department. Urbanization may be the overreaching influence throughout the United States rather than sprawl.

Altruism also exists at the external level. Both culturally and ideologically, most citizens of the United States are appreciative of and desire to see people who are selfless in their actions. This is critical as, although it is an influence farthest from the individual, it closely relates to the altruism that exists at the individual level. In fact, altruism at the individual and external levels encompasses all other influences. At one point or another in their lives, selflessly helping others in their time of need is a desire of most individuals. Likewise, a culture of people selflessly helping others in their time of need is a desire of the majority of the United States population.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

The literature reveals many influences on volunteer firefighters. While it is apparent that altruism is a necessary influence, both at the individual and external levels, on volunteer firefighters, it appears that fire service managers and leaders have many more influences to consider.

At the individual level, the literature reveals a number of influences on volunteer firefighters. The literature outlines that self-interest and altruism are not in a state of constant struggle as Rogers and Maslow's works suggests, but are rather closely related. Altruism is an individual influence necessary for volunteer firefighters. However, altruism does not appear to be sufficient to maintain existing and attract new volunteer firefighters. There are many other influences on the individual to consider. Fire service leaders should pay special attention to role conflict. Volunteer firefighters with families may have limited time available because of the multiple roles. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that family support can increase volunteerism and the self-esteem of the volunteer. Fire service managers and leaders should also deliberate the social benefits offered by the volunteer fire service. A department steeped in tradition with a tightly woven group of family and friends may limit social benefits. This could make integration of new members difficult. In order to appeal to every potential volunteer firefighter, the organization will benefit from cultural diversity.

The dichotomy of intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards is also an important concern. While extrinsic rewards serve to provide tangible benefits and offset a volunteer firefighter's costs, it is possible that they distract from the overall mission of the organization. Intrinsic rewards must be present and marketed effectively to potential new volunteer firefighters. Above all, fire service leaders should stress altruism and the opportunity to help others as an organizational mission and value. Fire service leaders should market this as a central value of the organization. It is the responsibility of the fire service manager or leader to keep new and existing volunteer firefighters focused on this central theme. Moreover administrators should emphasize that altruism can be used as a path to self-actualization and self-interest. This is essential to stress to individuals who have contemplated becoming a volunteer firefighter but believe a dichotomy exists or that they must choose between altruism and self-interest. At the individual level, today's volunteer firefighters can selflessly serve others while receiving

professional training, social rewards, and, most importantly, the knowledge that they are helping a member of the community on one of the worst days of their lives.

At the organizational level, the literature outlines a clear answer to the struggle between volunteer autonomy and laissez-faire management versus clear volunteer direction and hands-on performance requirements. Although inter-role conflict may exist and prevents a tremendous time commitment by volunteer firefighters, organizational requirements and accountability serve to prevent volunteer isolation or alienation. The literature reveals a positive correlation between volunteering as a firefighter and religion. Moreover, the addition of paid firefighters is likely to create individual influences such as alienation and isolation. Administrators must prepare for the emergence of this and plan for keeping all personnel socially connected and centrally focused. Additional research is also necessary on the influence of social networks on volunteer firefighters.

At the external level, the fire service needs additional research into emerging cultural and ideological changes. Administrators should consider geographic, physical, and emotional influences on volunteer firefighters, as they may vary from one department to another. The literature suggests that the volunteer fire service is entering a faster information age. This will ultimately change the value for patience among future volunteer firefighters. The literature also illustrates that volunteers desire close direction instead of abandonment. Fire service managers and leaders can utilize these changes to create an even more efficient and effective volunteer fire service in the future. Administrators should constantly orient those within the organization by continuing to stress altruism as an ideological and cultural desire from the external level. This is the tradition from where the fire service originated and is also where the future of the fire service lies.

The literature reveals that altruism alone is not a sufficient influence for volunteer firefighters in society today. Altruism may be one of the most significant influences. However, there are a number of other influences that can have a dramatic effect on existing and prospective volunteer firefighters. The

fire service should research these influences further to identify those with the highest effect on volunteering as a firefighter.

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