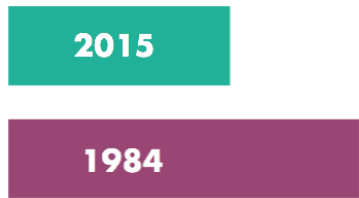


Retention in the U.S. Volunteer Fire Service

Dr. Candice McDonald



The U.S. volunteer fire service is experiencing its biggest challenge to date with volunteer firefighter retention. The number of volunteer firefighters in the U.S. has decreased by 12% since 1984.



...involuntarily volunteer firefighter turnover negatively affects the sustainability of a fire department.

Volunteer firefighters donate \$139.8 billion a year of time

The cost to outfit and train a firefighter is approximately \$27,095

BARRIERS TO FIREFIGHTER RETENTION



Sleep Deprivation.

Volunteer firefighters report an average of three to six hours of sleep during nights of deployment.



Gender Specific Issues.

Female firefighters are at risk of higher anxiety, exposure to sexism, lower job association, and higher levels of coworker conflict.



Job Satisfaction.

Poor leadership can impact levels of job satisfaction & retention among volunteer firefighters.



Mental Health.

Repeat exposure to traumatic events is a key risk factor for substance abuse and mental disorders in firefighters.



Work Life Balance.

Competing demands between family and the demands of the fire service may influence a volunteer's decision to disengage.

Generational Factors.

Generational conflict exists between older and younger employees because of diverse perceptions of work-life balance and work ethics.



Retention Strategies

What can be done to improve retention?



Schedule Accommodations



Recognition



Nonwage Benefits



Family Involvement

Opportunities for Employee Success



Recruitment Efforts

