



The Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY)
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ECONOMIC STUDY: VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS SAVE NY TAXPAYERS MORE THAN \$3 BILLION EACH YEAR

FASNY releases the first comprehensive economic study in more than a decade outlining the fiscal impact of volunteer fire service on NYS Taxpayers

(Albany, New York) – New York's Volunteer Firefighters not only save lives, they also save billions in tax dollars for the state. In fact, New Yorkers save more than \$3 billion each year due to the services provided by the State's volunteer fire service according to a financial impact study released today by the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY).

New York's nearly 100,000 volunteer firefighters are available at a moment's notice to mitigate emergency situations and disasters, both short-term and for extended periods of time. In recent years, volunteer fire departments have been called upon to respond to hurricanes, blizzards, floods and large scale emergencies. These men and women are constantly training, providing ongoing community outreach and fire safety education, all to help their fellow neighbors and on their own time. Although their impact is felt throughout their communities every day, this study now quantifies the full financial impact these men and women create as they volunteer their time all across New York State.

The report, titled "*Tax Savings and Economic Value of Volunteer Firefighters in New York State*" was prepared by ERS Group, and is the most comprehensive study of its kind to date. In addition to the fiscal impact that volunteers have on the State's taxpayers, the report also quantifies the addition of Federal Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant funding in recruiting more volunteer firefighter and the resulting effect of lowering response times across the State.

Among the findings in the report:

- New York State's nearly 100,000 volunteer firefighters save taxpayers \$3.87 billion **EVERY YEAR** in salary and benefits, and potential debt service
- If NYS switched to all-paid fire service:

- An additional 30,822 firefighters would need to be hired and more than 1,300 stations would have to be built new or reconstructed
- There would be one-time cost of \$5.95 billion to acquire existing structures, vehicles and equipment
- Property taxes across the state would rise on average 26.5% to cover the added cost (taxes would rise between 3.3% and 123% depending on county)

The full report can be found at www.fasny.com/economicstudy

“We always knew that our volunteer firefighters contribute an enormous amount to their communities. This report sums it up accordingly: the Volunteer Fire Service keeps precious dollars in the pockets of our fellow New York State taxpayers; we don’t only protect lives and property but save money as well,” said **FASNY President Robert McConville**. “Quite frankly, without our Volunteer Firefighters, New Yorkers would be in line for some drastic tax hikes. We are proud to do our part to make the state safer and more affordable for the millions of New Yorkers we are sworn to protect.”

In a follow up to a previous study released in 2003, ERS analyzed paid and volunteer fire departments throughout the state (not including NYC). ERS calculated the cost and increased taxes if a paid fire department replaced volunteers in each locality. The new report used data from 2013 – the most recently available statistics.

The report also reviewed statewide fire response times as it relates to SAFER grant funding that resulted in increased volunteers across the state. As stated by FEMA, SAFER grants intend to improve or restore local fire departments staffing and deployment capabilities so they may effectively respond to emergencies.

ERS reviewed incident reports and response times in New York State from 2004, 2010 and 2013 to compile data on response times. In addition, ERS specifically looked at the change in response time of volunteer departments that participated in the most recent FASNY census. The findings illustrate that due to SAFER grant success in staffing, more volunteers are now available to respond to emergencies - thus driving response times down in nearly all regions across the state.

Over the course of FASNY’s SAFER grant period, 2011-2015, New York State has recruited approximately 20,000 new volunteer firefighters.

The report found specifically:

- Overall volunteer fire department response times were down from 2010-2013 a total of 2.5%
- Suburban fire departments saw a decrease in response times by 10%
- Rural departments had a slight uptick in response time from 9.4 minutes to 9.6 minutes
- Remote departments saw a decrease in response times by 3.3%

“We hope that by releasing this important report, we can show the public and our elected leaders the value that volunteers have throughout the State. We also want the Federal Government to

see that the SAFER Program has been a success in New York,” said **FASNY Board Secretary and SAFER Grant Administrator John D’Alessandro**.

About FASNY

Founded in 1872, the Firemen’s Association of the State of New York (FASNY) represents the interests of volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel in New York State. For more information, visit www.fasny.com.

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