

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Fire Fighter Training

Background

There are a total of 842 fire departments in Iowa. Of this number, 786 departments are fully volunteer departments, 21 are fully paid fire departments, 31 are a combination with at least one or more paid members, and four are departments assigned to military facilities such as the Air National Guard bases at the Des Moines and Sioux City airports. There are approximately 17,000 fire fighters in Iowa, and approximately 15,300 (90.0%) are volunteers and the remainder are paid or career fire fighters. Some volunteer fire fighters are considered “paid on call,” meaning they receive modest compensation for responding to incidents. Whether the fire fighter is a volunteer or a career fire fighter, the state’s minimum training standards apply.

Volunteer fire fighters employed by state government, except those considered “essential personnel,” have a leave provision and job protection as a matter of statute ([Iowa Code section 55.2](#)). This allows fire fighters to respond to fire calls with job protection. [Iowa Code section 100B.14](#) provides volunteer job protection and prohibits a public or private employer from terminating the employment of an employee for joining a volunteer emergency services unit or organization.

Funding for Training

Most training is available at no cost to volunteer fire fighters. Funds are appropriated from the General Assembly and are used to provide training by the Department of Public Safety to volunteer fire departments upon request.

In addition to the General Fund appropriation for Fire Fighter Training, funding is provided from two other sources. The Paul Ryan Memorial Training Fund receives limited funding from a fee associated with special fire fighter license plates. The average revenue in the Fund is approximately \$30,000 annually. The Volunteer Fire Fighter Preparedness Fund receives limited funding from the state income tax checkoff for fire fighters, as well as gifts, bequests, and donations. The average revenue from the checkoff is approximately \$30,000 annually.

Basic training is available from either the Fire Service Training Bureau located at the Iowa State University campus, or the community colleges (15 districts) as they partner with the Fire Service Training Bureau to provide basic training for volunteers. Funding is provided from the Fire Fighter Training appropriation. Volunteer fire fighters do not receive community college credit hours for volunteer service. Several of the community colleges in Iowa offer fire service degree programs but these are degree programs requiring the payment of tuition and fees. However, as with any other college degree program, state, federal, and other financial assistance may be available.

Funding for Equipment

A General Fund appropriation of \$500,000 was made each year in FY 2004 to FY 2006 for the establishment of a \$1.5 million Revolving Loan Program for the purchase of equipment by local fire departments. The funds cannot be used to build fire stations. This Program provides interest-free loans with an origination fee of 1.0%. The fee is withheld by the Fire Services Training Bureau from the original loan payout and used to offset administration costs. A repayment schedule is established at the time the loan is awarded, with a minimum of two payments per year for the duration of the loan. Generally, loans of \$50,000 or less are repaid over a five-year period and loans greater than \$50,000 are repaid over a 10-year period. The maximum loan amount is \$150,000 and there is no penalty for early repayment. A total of \$3.5 million has been loaned to date. Applications are accepted annually in September and October.

More Information

Department of Public Safety Fire Marshal’s Office: <http://www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/index.shtml>

Department of Public Safety Fire Service Training Bureau: <http://www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/fstb/index.shtml>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>

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Line of Duty Death Benefit

If the death of a volunteer emergency services provider occurs as the result of an injury incurred in the line of duty, a death benefit of \$100,000 is paid in a lump sum to the volunteer provider's beneficiary. The death benefit is paid from a standing appropriation to the Department of Administrative Services from the unobligated General Fund balance.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [80](#)
[661](#) Iowa Administrative Rules

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