

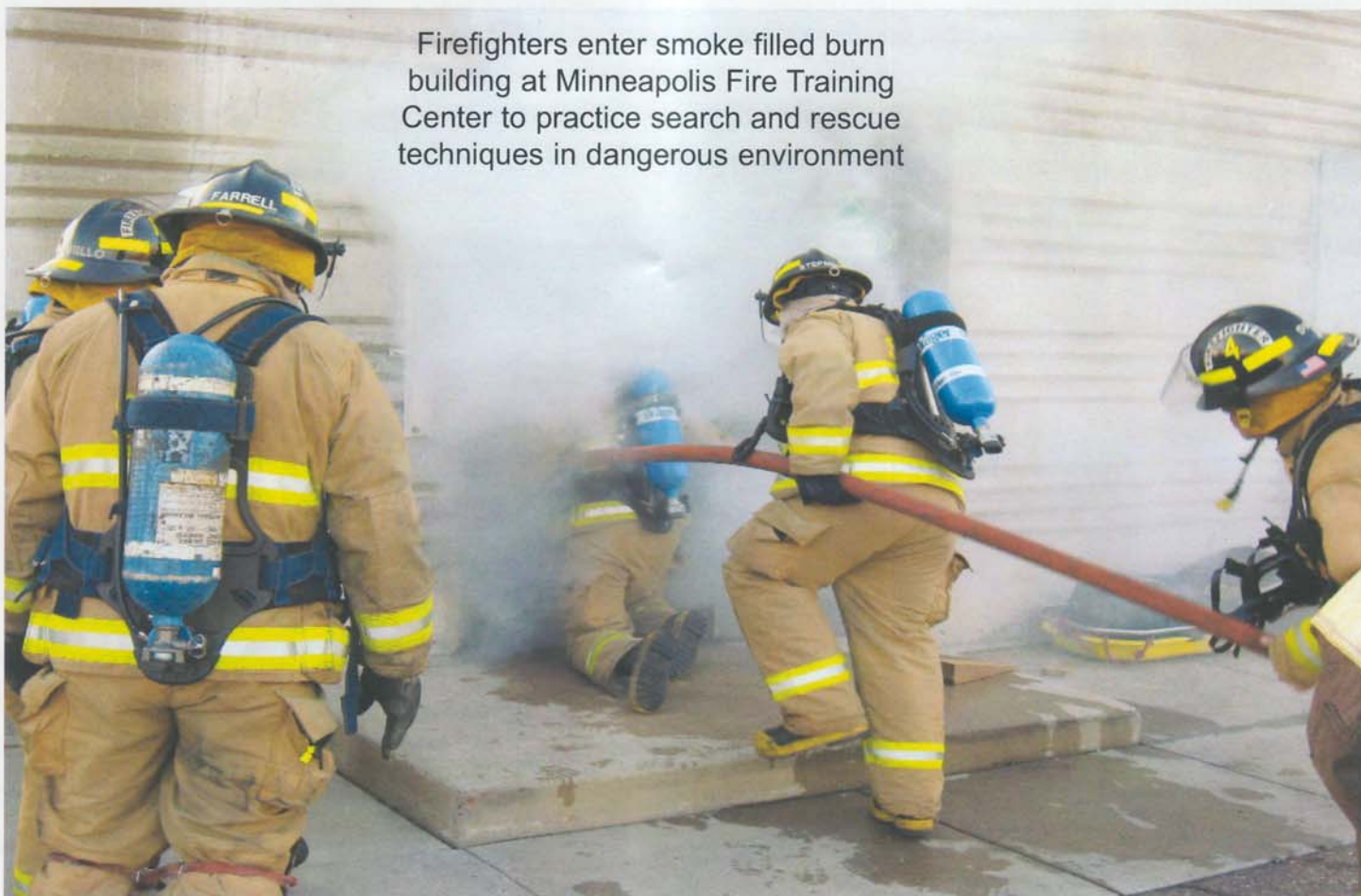
# Minnesota Fire Services Joint Council

## 2009 Legislative Conference

### TRAINING

The key ingredient to successful and safe operations.

Firefighters enter smoke filled burn building at Minneapolis Fire Training Center to practice search and rescue techniques in dangerous environment



#### **FIRE SAFETY ACCOUNT** Dedicated funding for firefighter training.

Goes directly to your local fire department to reimburse them  
for much needed training in:

Fire Suppression, Apparatus Operator, Hazardous Materials Technician,  
Hazardous Materials Specialist, Auto Extrication, Fire Investigation, Fire  
Prevention, Officer I and Officer II, Fire Instructor, Confined Space Rescue,  
Water and Ice Rescue, Technical Rescue, and Fire Inspection.

## Fire Safety Account

Session Laws 2006

Repealed hidden insurance tax on homeowners and commercial policies

Replaced tax with transparent fee & dedicated revenue to the Fire Safety Account

Funding provides much needed resources for:

- Funding the Firefighter Training and Education Board
- Office of the State Fire Marshal who provides code, investigation, data collection and inspection support to the Minnesota Fire Service

2009 is the first year training money became available and equals \$838,629

With 20,000 Firefighters in State of Minnesota this averages to \$44 per firefighter

Average tuition cost to train one firefighter = \$3,325 (see inside back cover)

Right - Firefighters practice extinguishing an engine fire at aircraft simulator training facility in Duluth



Below Left - Wearing insulated flotation suits, firefighters practice launching inflatable boat to rescue potential drowning victim

Below right - Firefighters set up a mass decontamination station to wash victims exposed to hazardous chemicals



## We need your **HELP** and **SUPPORT!**

Minnesota ranks 47th in the nation in per capita spending on fire service (MN Taxpayers Association).

20 years ago basic fire training was on how to put out fires and consisted of approximately 20 hours of time. Today's training includes anti-terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, hazardous materials, ice and water rescue, confined space and technical rescue, hybrid vehicles, personal injury crash rescue, medical training and, (still) putting out fires! This same "basic" training today exceeds 220 hours.

The Fire Safety Account is the first money going directly to fire departments to help ease the enormous burden placed on today's firefighters and fire departments.

Clockwise - Haz Mat Training, SCBA & Confined Space Training, Cold Water Rescue Training, Extrication Training





The Minnesota State Fire Department Association (MSFDA) has been representing fire departments since 1873. Currently, just under 600 of the 782 departments in the state are members. The MSFDA focuses on training and education for firefighters, advocates at both the state and federal level for firefighter safety and training issues, and partners with all other fire service groups in the state in order to continue improving the fire service overall.

### **Protect the Fire Safety Account:**

The MSFDA joins the MPFF and MSFCA in urging the Minnesota Legislature to spare the fire safety account from the budget cutting discussions. Training is critical to safety and retention and cash strapped departments are struggling just to maintain basic levels of firefighter training.

### **Volunteer Fire Pensions:**

The vast majority of volunteers who serve in the state receive little or no compensation other than their volunteer pension upon conclusion of service and reaching age 50. Most funds have experienced declines of 20% to 35% of their fund value over the last two years and are now underfunded. In addition, fire state aid has decreased by almost 30% over the same period. Further reductions in fire aid will put even more pressure on this system causing even greater challenges in recruitment and retention.

### **First Responder Reimbursement Pilot Study: HF 161 (Thissen) SF 109 (Lourey)**

Budget impacts are hurting fire departments, volunteer and career alike. Most departments respond to more medical related calls than fire calls. Costs associated with medical response continue to increase, however, current law provides only transporting services to invoice for response. Only a handful of departments currently are allowed to transport. This study seeks to determine if a more efficient method of first responder response can be done and use savings to provide modest revenues to those first responder units.

### **Oppose expansion of legalized fireworks: HF 713 (Howes) SF 393 Day**

Fire Departments are currently overburdened due to critical staffing challenges and shortages and budget impacts. Expanding fireworks will increase the demands on response and education and add to the ever increasing burden placed on members, the vast majority of them volunteers.



The Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters (MPFF) represents 1,600 full-time, professional fire fighters from 42 cities and fire fighting districts across the state. The MPFF works in conjunction with other fire fighter groups to promote issues relating to public safety, fire fighter training, fire fighter pay and benefits, and adequate funding for these issues.

### **Protect Local Government Aid to Minnesota Cities:**

Many cities rely heavily on LGA to fund public safety operations. It is virtually impossible to adequately protect and ensure the public safety and firefighter safety without substantial help from the State of Minnesota. In the last six years, local property taxes have increased dramatically while fire protection throughout the state has declined. The Governor's unallotment of \$60 million last year and his proposed cuts to LGA for the next biennium will force many cities to cut firefighters and fire safety programs. The MPFF strongly opposes further cuts in state aid to cities that will result in decreased funding for fire departments.

### **Fire Fighter Licensing:**

This legislation will create a statewide firefighter licensing process similar to that of other licensed professions. This proposal would only affect full-time firefighters throughout the state. Minimum training requirements and basic certifications similar to those for EMTs would be established for new firefighters hired after July 1, 2012, grandfather provisions would exempt existing firefighters, and apprenticeship programs to deal with special populations would be allowed. Representative Joe Atkins and Senator Ann Rest will be the chief authors of the bill.

### **Protect the Fire Safety Account:**

The MPFF worked to set up an account for fire fighter training in 2006. The Governor and legislature have already raided the fund once. This is a dedicated account and must be used for fire safety, not to balance the budget.



The Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) consists of just over 2,100 members representing just under 600 of the 782 departments in the state. Members include fire chiefs as well as all other officer ranks in the department. The vast majority of the members are volunteers who come from all walks of life. The MSFCA has a strong working relationship with all fire service groups in the state with a focus on education, advocacy, and providing whatever support is requested from members.

### **Protect the Fire Safety Account:**

Estimated 20,000 firefighters in state of which 18,000 are volunteers.

Volunteer departments, especially rural are suffering from critically low staffing.

Over 70% of volunteers in state are over 35 years of age, 20% are over 50.

**Training is a major cost and retention issue.** The Fire Safety Account is critical to future training AND staffing of all departments, especially volunteer.

2010/2011 projected Fire Safety Account revenues will provide \$200 per firefighter, which is only 50% of our financial needs. The goal of the training reimbursement program is to provide \$400 per firefighter per year. The average tuition cost for training a new firefighter is \$3,325! In 2008/2009 biennium only \$44 per firefighter was provided for training.

### **Fire Pension Aids:**

Volunteer fire relief pensions are in critical shape. Almost all are in a deficit after the last two years. Volunteer pensions are the ONLY pensions in the state where the benefit level can be reduced (if the city has not approved the increase). Reducing the fire pension aid will result in greater city contributions being required (if city approved) or reductions in benefits and an exodus of firefighters prior to the benefit change. This exodus has happened already in three Minnesota communities and has resulted in serious challenges for those organizations as they lose their senior/experienced staff.

### **Donation of Fire Equipment: SF 568 (Scheid) HF XXX (Bigham)**

Current law does not provide enough clarity on immunity when donating used equipment to rural Minnesota fire departments. Thus, very little gets donated, rather it is being donated and shipped to Central and South America. A change in law will allow this much needed equipment to stay in Minnesota.

### **Voluntary State-Wide Volunteer Pension Plan: SF 504 (Betzold) HF 825 (Murphy)**

Alternative plan for those reliefs looking for an alternative. Plan provisions include:

Voluntary to join - both city and relief to pass resolution. City and Relief elect benefit level.

Administered by PERA and the Funds are managed by SBI.

5 year vesting and portability to other departments if members of the state plan.

Advisory board to PERA for administering plan includes three active volunteers.

Local determination member requirements for active service and inclusion in plan.

# Equipping Your New Fire Fighter

## TRAINING

Fire Fighter I Training	\$850
Fire Fighter II Training	\$550
EMS Training	\$775
Haz Mat Training	\$450
Terrorism Training	\$100
SCBA Fit Test	\$50
FF Health Test	\$250
Background Check	\$50
Physiological Exam	\$250
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$3,325</u>

## STATION WEAR

Uniform Shirt	\$50
Uniform Pants	\$55
Uniform Jacket	\$115
Cap / Tie / Brass	\$65
Uniform Boots	\$135
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$420</u>

## COST TO OUTFIT A FIRE FIGHTER

Helmet	\$300
Coat	\$800
Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)	\$4,500
Gloves	\$90
Pants	\$600
Boots	\$250
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$6,540</u>



Flammable gas fire suppression training

