



NEW YORK STATE PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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NYSPFFA Calls Recent Report by Volunteer Association Flawed

Professional firefighters' training, certification and readiness surpasses preparation of volunteer departments.

The New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPFFA) today offered a sharp and substantive response to a recent study issued by the Firemen's Association of the State of New York.

The report, prepared for FASNY by the Washington D.C.-based ERS Group, is in error when it reports, outside of New York City, the existence of 211 full-time or part-time departments. In fact, the New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association represents 107 paid departments, representing 18,000 active professional firefighters who protect 75 percent of the state's population.

In addition, the report fails to acknowledge the differences between paid and volunteer firefighters, including their availability, qualifications, service quality, accountability and response times.

"I acknowledge the merit and endorse the spirit of community symbolized and practiced by volunteer fire companies. However, the report issued by FASNY is fundamentally flawed, and is built on a foundation of basic inaccuracies," said Mike McManus, NYSPFFA president. "If the intent of the study is to offer calculations demonstrating value and savings, it should start by reporting basic facts."

The number of volunteer firefighters in New York is often overstated as a means of convincing policymakers and lawmakers that volunteer departments are well staffed and capable, while justifying the need for increased resources, training and advanced equipment. What is often not revealed is that volunteer department rosters often include members who are retired, have moved away, who don't own gear, or who are unreliable, undertrained, unqualified to enter a burning structure, or are only social members of their departments.

Professional firefighters repeatedly study, drill and prepare to handle a vast number of threats to public safety. They are certified as emergency medical technicians and paramedics, trained to handle and counter hazardous substances and are qualified to conduct search and rescue while buildings are engulfed in flames.

Professionals in New York are required to undergo 229 hours of initial training, 100 hours of annual in-service training and pass a Candidate Physical Ability Test. Volunteers may have as little as 15 hours of training and eight hours of annual in-service training.

"Our field of play is unlimited; high-rise buildings, underground and confined spaces, hazardous materials, contagions, even acts of terror," said Sam Fresina, NYSPFFA secretary treasurer. "The

members of a volunteer fire squad fill a commendable role in providing suppression and prevention services, but it's not a comparable one to career firefighters.”

In 2015, the NYSPFFA issued a comprehensive [report](#), Setting the Record Straight. Its first paragraph cites that those advocating for the replacement of paid professional firefighters with volunteers will often point to studies purporting to measure the cost savings of volunteer firefighters.

However, these studies rarely incorporate the existing costs of volunteer departments into their analysis. For example, volunteer companies receive property tax exemptions and state income tax credits. They award length of service awards, and provide financial incentives to recruits and college-bound volunteers.