

International City Managers Association (ICMA) Study

Understaffing of fire departments is a nationwide problem. So much so in fact, that the ICMA has conducted studies to determine the effectiveness of fire companies based on staffing. This information was published Managing Fire Services, 2nd edition. This international organization of city leaders recognizes the importance of a properly staffed fire department. This publication included this information:

1. Fire suppression operations have three basic functions: (1) **RESCUE**; (2) work involving ladder, forcible entry, and ventilation; and (3) the application of water. To raise ladders, ventilate, search, and **RESCUE** simultaneously takes quick action by at least **FOUR** and often **EIGHT** or more firefighters, each under the supervision of an officer.
2. If about **SIXTEEN** trained firefighters are not operating at the scene of a working fire within the critical time period, then **DOLLAR LOSS** and **INJURIES** are significantly **INCREASED** as is fire spread.
3. As firefighting tactics were conducted and judged for effectiveness;

5 -person companies were 100% effective.

4 -person companies were 65% effective.

3 -person companies were 38% effective.

The Uniontown Bureau of Fire, with it's current staffing of career personnel, is at 4 persons per shift. While Uniontown is a combination department, and relies on the manpower of volunteer members and called back off duty career personnel, there is often a time lapse between getting these personnel from home to the scene. The first few minutes are the most critical in situations where life safety and rescue is concerned, where a fast spreading fire is endangering exposure buildings and houses, or when a small fire is encountered and can be contained quickly. Personnel on duty can arrive anywhere in the city within 3 minutes or less! However, if any cuts in manpower take place, you can see how it will diminish the effectiveness of our first arriving personnel!