Keeping Recruits

There are many reasons why volunteers decide to join the fire service. There are also many reasons why they decide to leave. Keeping recruits can be a struggle but in most cases, worth the effort. Listed below are some of the reasons recruits leave the department.

Retention Issues:

1. Disenfranchisement or feeling of not belonging
2. No acknowledgement or accolades from leaders and members
3. Department has a poor community image
4. No incentives for volunteering
5. Burn-out or age-out

How can your department retain recruits? Everyone wants to know that their talents and time is relevant and useful and that they are making a difference to the organizations they serve. Department leaders and members need to develop trust, build loyalty and stimulate team and individual performance.

Possible Solutions:

1. Incentives (reimbursement for tuition, books, mileage, gasoline cards, or achievement – grades or completion to attend (community) college or outside firefighter training
2. Some states give income tax breaks for volunteer firefighters
3. Reduced rates for health check-up
4. Low cost health insurance
5. Networking with other members – recommendations for plumbing help, moving assistance, personal services (dentists, doctors, etc.), outside job opening, etc.
6. Service awards
7. Training that can relate to other jobs, such as driving skills, emergency knowledge
8. Recognition and praise at meetings, training events, socials
9. Articles about the new recruits on the website, local publications, bulletin boards
10. Mentoring
11. Certificates of achievement/accomplishment
12. Award T-shirts, hats, pins, patches
13. Drawing for top ten responders for 10 gallons of gasoline
14. Burn-out or age-out members can support the department by
    1. becoming a Recruitment Committee member or the coordinator
    2. mentoring
    3. record keeping
    4. preparing/shopping for meals
    5. restoring or making building improvements
    6. becoming the clean-up crew leader
    7. working with the department at community meetings
    8. given lighter shifts
    9. becoming an instructor/trainer
    10. developing advertisement for recruiting volunteers through local media, newspapers, etc.
    11. developing or working on the department’s website
    12. photographing events
    13. organizing the department members for local parades or events