

City of Pierre (South Dakota)
February 2010

RECRUITMENT PROGRAM

As one of only two volunteer fire departments that protect a state capital city, the City of Pierre (SD) Fire Department has a tremendous challenge recruiting new firefighters. We have an authorized strength of 75 firefighters and currently have 68 active members. To recruit new members we conduct an aggressive advertising campaign which includes public service announcements on the local radio and TV stations, billboard advertising near our city fire stations, and we have booths at the local Home and Sport Shows to get the word out.

One of the big things we have discovered in recruiting new members is to be upfront with them on the amount of time and dedication it takes to be a volunteer firefighter in today's world. We tell them immediately the hours of training and the requirements of the department. We have found that the ones who are only semi-interested will leave at that point, but the serious ones will continue the process and we are able to keep them for years.

RETENTION

We don't have a problem with retention of our members. Currently 95% of our members stay with the department for at least five years. Some of the programs we use include:

1. Annual physicals paid for by the department
2. Deferred Compensation which is paid at the end of their service to the department. Vested after five years and the current pay out is \$600 per year of service.
3. Free YMCA/Aquatic Center membership
4. Life Insurance policy of \$65,000 on all members paid by department. (not tied to LODD)
5. Discounts at local retailers
6. All in state and out of state firefighter/EMT training paid for by department
7. Family activities (family spring picnic, fishing tournament for members only, family fun night, formal annual award banquet, and quarterly dinners).

These programs seem to work for us, but as society changes we are always looking to update and to improve our programs.