

**Funding option for Worker Comp for VFD's
In the State of Montana
SJR 21**

This is a concept for funding Workmens Comp for Volunteer Fire Departments, prepared by Steve Gist. gistfire@yahoo.com 406-231-4050

The issue of providing Workmen's Compensation to volunteer firefighters, volunteer first responders and EMTs is a very important topic. We have people all over the state donating their time and efforts to ensure that we all have safer communities. They place themselves in situations where they are at a greater risk of being injured, while helping others. It is only appropriate that that they are covered with Workmen's Compensation insurance in case of an injury.

The question has arisen, "How do we pay for worker compensation without further encumbering smaller fire departments?" There already is a considerable amount of tax dollars being spent on fire suppression. Considering that there are volunteer fire departments participating in out of area fire suppression for income building purposes through the DNRC cooperator program, and those departments are using taxpayer funded equipment, one possibility is to use this money to offset the cost of SRJ-21. The volunteer fire departments that participate in the cooperator program--those that take fire assignments outside of a 40 mile radius of their designated fire protection District's--would be the ones required to would be the ones charged with funding the lion's share of the cost of SJR-21. The volunteer fire departments that take fire assignments outside of the 40 mile radius will be reimbursed for the crew wages (two firefighters--one engine boss and one basic firefighter). Under this proposal the firefighters would be paid at the state rate set for wildland firefighters unless they are picked up by the State of Montana as EFF's. The department will also be reimbursed \$100 a day for each of the fire apparatus that they use, as a token of goodwill for helping fund SJR-21. The money collected would go to the state special revenue account as outlined in SRJ-21, the new section 2 of the proposed draft. MCA 53-4-1115

If needed, MCA 7-33-2107 contracts for fire protection services could be amended to reflect the change on money from contracts for a wildland fire suppression assignments outside of the fire suppression districts. These funds would be sent to the State special revenue account, thereby, using taxpayer fire suppression money to help fund SRJ-21 thus reducing the amount of additional taxpayer dollars needed from Montana taxpayers.

Funding Worker Compensation in this way, would in effect create the atmosphere of bigger volunteer fire departments helping out smaller volunteer fire departments, thus bolstering the true meaning and spirit of the term volunteering.

Appendix: Definitions

The following are what might be considered public perceptions of the terms volunteering, mutual aid, and volunteer fire departments, as defined by popular internet sources.

Volunteering:

Volunteering

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia This is a condensed version of the term and does not contain the entire definition. *This page was last modified on 30 July 2016, at 14:34.*

Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial gain... Many volunteers are specifically trained in the areas they work, such as [medicine](#), education, or emergency rescue. Others serve on an as-needed basis, such as in response to a natural disaster.

Mutual Aid:

Mutual aid (emergency services)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia This is a condensed version of the term and does not contain the entire definition. This page was last modified on 22 April 2016, at 17:59.

In emergency services, **mutual aid** is an agreement among emergency responders to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries. This may occur due to an emergency response that exceeds local resources, such as a disaster or a multiple-alarm fire.

(Note-the definition states jurisdictional boundaries NOT multiple jurisdictional boundaries.)

Volunteer Fire Department

Volunteer fire department

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia This is a condensed version of the term and does not contain the entire definition. *This page was last modified on 3 August 2016, at 21:57.*

A **volunteer fire department (VFD)** is a fire department composed of [volunteers](#) who perform fire suppression and other related emergency services for a local jurisdiction.

The term "volunteer" contrasts with career firefighters who are fully compensated for their services. Some volunteer firefighters may be part of a combination fire department that utilizes both full-time and volunteer firefighters. In this way, a station can be staffed

24 hours between volunteer and career firefighters. Both provide essential staffing on apparatuses during their assigned staffing

Also from this page:

[in the] United State

In the United States, the Department of Labor classifies volunteer firefighters as firefighters that receive no compensation or nominal fees up to 20% of the compensation a full-time firefighter would receive in the same capacity. The DOL allows volunteer firefighters to receive benefits such as worker's compensation, health insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, pension plans, length of service awards, and property tax relief. DOL-defined volunteer firefighters may be paid nominal fees on a per call basis, per shift basis, or various service requirements, but may not be compensated based on productivity such as with an hourly wage.

The terms "part paid" and "paid on-call" refer to firefighters that are receiving some compensation less than the compensation a full-time firefighter would receive. It may often refer to volunteer firefighters that do not qualify as volunteers under the United States Department of Labor. They may also volunteer time for training, public education, fund-raising, and other non-emergency department related activities.

Financial support

A VFD may be financially supported by taxes raised in a city, town, county, fire district, or other governmental entity, as well as corporate and other private donations, federal grants, and other assistance from auxiliary members, or firefighters' associations.

With these funds the VFD acquires and operates the firefighting apparatus, equips and trains the firefighters, maintains the firehouse, and possibly also covers insurance, worker's compensation, and other post-injury or retirement benefits. A VFD (or its governing entity) may also contract with other nearby departments to cover each other in a mutual aid (or automatic aid) pact as a means for assisting each other with equipment and manpower, when necessary.

Expanded duties

Depending upon the location and availability of other services, a VFD may be responsible for controlling structure fires as well as forest fires. Because it may be the only emergency services department for some distance, a rural VFD may also be fortunate to include community first responders, emergency medical technicians, Hazardous Materials response, and other specially qualified rescue personnel. Law enforcement officers may also be trained in these related duties and overlap with the VFD. The VFD may also have duties as the local fire inspectors, arson investigators, and as fire safety and prevention education, in addition to being the local/civil defense or disaster relief liaison.

Training

Operational volunteer fire department members receive some form of training, either in a formal or informal setting, this depends on the state and regulatory authority. The level and type of basic and specialty training varies across the country. Many volunteer fire departments have training programs equal to that of paid departments. New members are referred to as "recruits," "rookies," "probies" (short for "probationary"), or even "red hats" in some departments that require the recruit to wear special gear or markings (such as a red helmet in some departments) to denote their ranking. Some departments allow (or even require) new recruits to ride along on fire apparatus as observers before undergoing the rigors of further fire training.

Specialty training can include wildland firefighting, technical rescue, swift water rescue, hazardous materials response, vehicle extrication, FAST team, and others.