



— STATE COMPTROLLER —
SEAN SCANLON

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COMPTROLLER SEAN SCANLON RELEASES SPECIAL EXAMINATION ON FIREFIGHTERS IN CONNECTICUT

(HARTFORD, CT) – Comptroller Sean Scanlon today joined Connecticut fire service leaders to observe International Firefighters Day and to release the [Office of the State Comptroller's \(OSC\) Special Examination on Firefighters in Connecticut](#).

The report outlines an extensive survey conducted by OSC to assess the number of fire departments and firefighters—both career and volunteer—in Connecticut, as well as key demographic data such as age. The survey was the first of its kind, as no organization is responsible for tracking these statistics, and the most recent estimate on them was published in 2017.

In just eight years since these estimates, OSC's survey found that the number of firefighters in Connecticut has decreased by 50%, with an alarming decline of 62.7% among volunteer forces. Offsetting that, though, the number of career firefighters increased by 6.5% in the same timeframe.

The report speculates that fewer young people are being exposed to firefighting as a career path, despite it often being accompanied by high-quality benefits and a pension. Furthermore, volunteer departments are struggling to recruit young people as the intensive, low pay-out nature of the service is not seen as practical.

"Connecticut is facing a firefighter recruitment and retention crisis, and this impacts every city and town in our state," **said Comptroller Scanlon**. "This report is meant to be a call to action, and as the administrator of pensions and health insurance for thousands of firefighters, I am committed to working with the fire service and state and municipal leaders to find solutions that will keep our firefighters and our communities safe."

"Comptroller Scanlon's new report provides vital new information about the crisis facing the fire service. At the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection we know that more must be done to attract a new generation to firefighting," **said DESPP Commissioner Ronnell Higgins**. "We are working right now with other state agencies to expand pathways into

firefighting and public safety. Meanwhile, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, a division of DESPP, is working closely with the statewide fire service organizations to create a strategic plan to guide the fire service as we move into the future.”

“This report highlights the responsibility we all possess to uplift the firefighting profession and ensure those who put their lives on the line are adequately compensated for the risks they take. The safety of our communities is at stake,” **said Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut President Peter Brown**, “UPFFA is grateful to Comptroller Scanlon for conducting this much-needed survey and his eagerness to work with our organization to find innovative solutions to the workforce crisis we are facing.

“We are seeing a significant decrease in firefighters across the state, more severe to the volunteer ranks. We recognize the need to be more proactive in recruiting and retaining emergency responders in CT. I will add that our career ranks are also becoming thin with applicants as fewer are seeking this profession as a career,” **said Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations Chairman Steven Hoffman**. “We as fire service leaders need to look at strategies and initiatives to reverse this trend to attract individuals to emergency services. The data from the recent surveys and development of a statewide fire service strategic plan will assist in setting us on a path to address this concern.”

The [report](#) concludes with recommendations to continue this data collection on a regular basis, as well as compiling a central contact directory for all of the state’s fire chiefs. More information can be found in the complete report.

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