

## HSVPOA Fire Department Compromised?

### Description

#### At what cost are we saving money?

Is the safety of the community in jeopardy because the HSVPOA Fire Department is compromised? We hope there isn't a fire today (or any day).

This article is based off a conversation we had and also our own research. We have no reason not to believe the following as facts.

#### **FACT: Hot Springs Village has a total of 4 fire stations**

1. Balboa
2. Coronado
3. Desoto
4. Cortez

#### **FACT: At any given time, each station is staffed with a tiny staff of 1 to 3 firefighters on call**

Each Hot Springs Village fire station is staffed with only one firefighter at a time, with one exception. This exception is the Cortez fire station, which has three personnel on staff, the chief, lieutenant and a firefighter. HSV Fire Department has a total of 19 paid firefighters, plus the chief.

Hot Springs Village Fire Department has a total of 4 front-line pumper apparatus ([one being the new fire truck](#)), Truck 51 (a rescue truck) and a backup pumper truck.

#### **FACT: NFPA while not law sets the industry standards**

“So what’s the big deal if this standard and other standards are not laws or regulations that can be enforced? National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) standards tend to be viewed as accepted industry standards. **That means that if there is litigation, these standards will be held as the baseline against which to measure.**”

So an expert witness testifying in a lawsuit against a volunteer department for negligence resulting in the loss of life or property would probably cite NFPA 1720 as the standard for organization and operations for a volunteer department. Although other experts can argue that it is a written standard not necessarily reflecting standard practices, a lot more work has to be done to make that argument.”

### [NFPA 1720](#)

#### **FACT: NFPA recommends at least 3 firefighters per truck per station per shift**

NFPA 1710 recommends at least three firefighters per apparatus (truck) to be on call per shift at each fire station. It was a bit murky on what the NFPA 1720 staffing recommendations are. NFPA 1710 sets the standards for career fire departments and NFPA 1720 sets the standards for volunteer fire departments and combination fire departments. Combination fire departments are those which utilize both career employees and volunteers. While Hot Springs Village Fire Department uses mostly career firefighters, there are some volunteers.

In Hot Springs Village, volunteers may respond to calls, however, response turn out is usually very minimal. There are 12 total volunteer firefighters, but only 6 of them are active. In other words, we appreciate the volunteers, but they are not always available for the calls.

There is a problem all over the state with low volunteerism. The people that used to be the volunteers are getting older and many of the younger folks are not stepping up. We do not know why this is and are not making a judgment.

#### **FACT: Inadequate staffing of fire departments is a serious issue**

The following quotation addresses the serious issue of inadequate staffing of fire departments.

**\*“Because of the nature of our work, we can’t safely operate without a certain number of personnel. In other words, to send us to a fire with inadequate staffing would be irresponsible at best; at worst, deadly.”**

**“In this article, we’ll highlight three basic facts regarding staffing:**

- 1. The job of firefighting requires firefighters. Hoselines won’t deploy themselves, and there’s no firefighting robot we’re currently aware of that can function at or above a human firefighter’s level.**
- 2. Time affects life. By reducing the amount of time it takes to perform foreground tasks—specifically, deploying a hoseline—the better the outcome for the victim and the firefighters.**
- 3. Time directly correlates to the number of firefighters available. The more firefighters on the fireground, the less time it takes to complete a task.”**

**“These points should be fairly obvious and familiar, in part because of two documents: NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments (2010 ed.)...” [Click here to read the entire article.](#)**

**\*“[Engine Company Staffing & NFPA 1710/NIST Research](#)”**

**FACT: HSV Fire department is currently short staffed**

Recently, a Coronado station firefighter was injured and hospitalized while off duty, so the rest of the paid firemen were covering the injured firefighter’s shifts. He still has not been able to return to work and we do not know when he is expected to return. A second Coronado firefighter also was injured and is on sick leave. In other words, the already minimal staff is down by two firefighters.

POA management is no longer allowing coverage for the shifts of the two firefighters off of work for illness/injury and has implemented the policy that the Coronado fire station be shut down entirely, during the shifts these ill/injured firefighters were supposed to work.

**FACT: No one is on staff at Coronado fire station today**

**Therefore, starting today, Wednesday, July 10th, Coronado fire station will not be manned with any firefighter during the shifts the injured firefighter was scheduled, but cannot work due to injury. In the unfortunate event of a fire, firefighters will have to respond to that fire district from Cortez or Balboa stations.**

**FACT: Short staffed firefighters became dehydrated**

It is documented in a [Village Voice newspaper article](#) written by Managing Editor, Jeff Meek, on June 11, 2019, that firemen had to be hooked up to IV fluids at the last structure fire from heat exhaustion due to minimum manpower. The firefighters already work under treacherous conditions and then when you add inadequate manpower to the mix, you are only asking for trouble. It takes adequate manpower to fight fires.

**Quote from the Village Voice: ” Fire Chief Jason Miller said the call came in around 7:30 p.m. and his men did not return until 4:30 a.m.”**

**“He added that it was a very tough fire to extinguish, very hot and that 3 firefighters had to stop for a time to receive intravenous fluids on scene. “Then they went back to work,” Miller said.”**

**Additional FACTS**

- Paid HSVPOA firefighters are only allowed to respond to confirmed structure fires while off duty (this means they cannot respond to first responder calls when the ambulances are busy or for car wrecks, etc.) Previously, the off-duty-fire fighters were allowed to respond to extra calls, if they thought there was a need.
- Although off-duty firefighters are still allowed to respond to structure fires, there is now a delay in their response. Previously when they were notified of a structure fire they would just automatically respond. Now they must wait until the on-duty firefighter is at the scene and confirms that there is a fire. Much valuable firefighting time is lost.

- At one point it was threatened to not pay firemen for working during the night, however, the chief fought it and that never went into effect. To require someone to be at work, even if they are sleeping, and to not pay them for this time is illegal. Even if not awake, it is a requirement that the employee man the station.
- Paid firemen may no longer train together with all three shifts (which used to happen frequently) unless approved by POA management. They are allowed very little training time, usually only once every few months. This lack of much-needed training was the time when the firefighters learned how to work with each other in the most efficient way possible.
- In the past, firemen were permitted to attend Sunday service at a church located within their district, if their shift was on a Sunday. They are no longer allowed to do this and may not attend church services within their district anymore while on duty.

### **A huge thank you to our first responders**



**House fire (illustrative purposes, only)**

Firefighters and police officers, both, work in very underpaid and under-appreciated professions, not to even mention the danger they face when performing rescues and fighting fires. Although not verified, it is rumored that our firefighters are paid in the range of \$11 to \$14 per hour – putting their lives on the line for a mere pittance. HSV firefighters are FABULOUS and will do anything to protect and serve. They need support from the members of this community so that safety can be maintained.

Note: Please do your own research on these issues and we would love to read your comments below. Thank you.

by Cheryl Dowden July 10, 2019

**Max Pixel**

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