



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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FIRE TRAINING SCHOOLS

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You asked us to compare the number of fire training schools and total number of firefighters in Connecticut and three states that have a population density similar to Connecticut.

We attempted to compile comparable data from the states most similar in population density to Connecticut: Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. There is not a central source for tracking the number of firefighters within a state, thus we were not able to find estimates for all these states. In the states we contacted, we were able to find out the number of state-controlled facilities. But we were unable to find out the number of other types of training schools that also exist.

SUMMARY

According to the National Fire Protection Association, a nonprofit organization that advocates standards for fire prevention and training, there were over 1.1 million firefighters in the United States in 2009; 29% were career firefighters and 71% were volunteer firefighters. Career firefighters have full-time paid jobs as firefighters. In Connecticut and the states we contacted, volunteer firefighters are those who are not career firefighters. They may be unpaid, paid hourly, or paid on a per-call basis.

The states we contacted do not have a central source for tracking the number of firefighters working in their state. Rather, estimates come from local union membership and firefighter association statistics. Even with these figures, it is difficult to give a precise number of firefighters because a firefighter can belong to more than one department, departments may define their active personnel differently, or a firefighter may not be a union member.

Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, and Massachusetts each establish a fire training school by law. Rhode Island law establishes a fire training academy that provides fire training courses. Individual departments, firefighting associations, and private companies may conduct their own training, have their own facilities, or share facilities, but we could not find the number of these training facilities.

FIREFIGHTERS AND STATE-CONTROLLED TRAINING SCHOOLS

Table 1 shows the number of firefighters and state-controlled training schools in Connecticut and states similar in population density to Connecticut.

Table 1: Firefighters and State-Controlled Training Schools

State	Population	Population Density Rate (Persons per Square Mile)	Firefighters (approximate)	State Owned and Controlled Training Facilities
Connecticut	3,518,288	726.2	26,575	1
Delaware	885,122	453.0	Unknown	1
Maryland	5,699,478	583.1	Unknown	1 Headquarters 6 Regional
Massachusetts	6,593,587	841.0	25,000-28,000	1
Rhode Island	1,053,209	1,007.9	5,800	0

Sources: CQ Press's State Fact Finder Series using data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009 values; various state officials; state agency, firefighter association, and union websites.

FIREFIGHTERS

Estimating the number of firefighters is difficult because no central agency tracks them here or in the states we contacted. Union and firefighter association membership statistics, which formed the basis of the figures in Table 1, provide some information but may not cover all firefighters in a state.

Connecticut

According to Jeffrey Morrissette, legislative liaison at the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, Connecticut has approximately 22,150 volunteer and 4,425 career firefighters for a total of 26,575. These are estimates and are based on membership statistics as of September 2010 from the Connecticut State Firefighters Association for 2009/2010.

Massachusetts

The State Fire Marshall's Office estimates that there are between 25,000 and 28,000 firefighters in Massachusetts. The Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts union represents approximately 12,000 firefighters. The Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters' Association has over 3,400 firefighter members. According to that group, approximately 40% of the firefighters in Massachusetts are volunteer firefighters.

Rhode Island

According to the Rhode Island Fire Academy, Rhode Island has approximately 2,600 paid and 3,200 volunteer fire fighters for a total of 5,800.

FIRE TRAINING SCHOOLS

Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, and Massachusetts establish a state fire training school by statute. These states have physical schools controlled by the state. Under Rhode Island law, the state's fire academy is a unit within the Division of Fire Safety. Rhode Island's programs, provided through the academy, are delivered regionally and hosted by local fire departments. In all five states, individual departments conduct their own training and may have their own facilities or share facilities not owned by the state, but we were unable to determine the number of these facilities. In general, cities and towns set the requirements to become a firefighter in their area. Not all firefighters are required to attend a state school.

Connecticut

Connecticut has one state-owned fire school, the Connecticut Fire Academy, and nine regional schools. One regional school, in Windsor Locks, shares a building with the Connecticut Fire Academy, which is under the control of the State Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. The other regional fire training schools are operated and controlled by municipal or regional fire associations.

Delaware

The Delaware State Fire School is the state-controlled training facility in Delaware. It has three locations, but two of these locations are not staffed regularly. Instead, they are used for training as needed.

Maryland

The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute is state-owned and controlled. It has six regional training centers in addition to its headquarters, all of which are controlled by the state. This differs from Connecticut's regional centers, which are operated and controlled by municipal or regional fire associations.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy is the only state-operated school. According to the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management, there is a proposal for a state-run regional fire training facility in Springfield. Additionally, city departments have their own training, such as the Boston and Brookline fire academies.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Fire Academy, a unit within the state's Division of Fire Safety, offers fire training courses. It does not have a central school location. Programs are delivered regionally and hosted by local fire departments.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Department Census is a voluntary program. Since reporting to it is voluntary, it does not provide a complete census. As of February 2011, approximately 26,400 fire departments registered with the census. The National Fire Protection Association estimates that there are 30,165 fire departments in the U.S.

U.S. Fire Administration, National Fire Department Census Database
<http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/applications/census/>

JB: ek