

Looking for a few good men (and women)

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Still others allow them to leave but dock their pay. "That's the biggest trump card," says Smith. "Most people can't afford losing a day's pay or even a partial day's pay."

Not sure how those employers would feel if their house was burning down or their child trapped in a vehicle following an accident and no one could respond, but this is the reality for volunteer fire fighters.

However, on the "more good news" front, Ivy Tech is in the process of instituting a new program that will offer free tuition to volunteer fire fighters at all campuses.

There are caveats. The student must exhaust all other options for financial aid, must be working toward a degree and can't pursue a degree in aviation because flight costs are too high.

The details are still being worked out but there is \$250,000 in the fund and the option will be available to fire fighters in all 92 counties, so anyone interested may want to start

checking into the program. More information can be found on the home page of IVFA.org (the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association website).

Speaking of the IVFA, if you read the article about the Dubois County firefighters round table (actually, rectangular table would be more accurate) you'll see that fire fighters everywhere are concerned about the combustibility of today's building materials. While improvements in durability may add to the integrity of the structure, they also make the materials, which are deemed light construction, highly flammable. Trusses will suddenly collapse, unlike the wood beams of yesteryear.

In fact, it takes a mere three minutes for the floor joists and trusses to burn through, adding danger from top to bottom.

The IVFA attempted to lobby the state legislature seeking one small protection. They asked for a requirement that a minuscule placard be attached in an inconspicuous spot on all newly constructed homes. The placard

would denote light construction, so fire fighters would not enter a burning structure unless people were trapped inside.

It was truly just a small thing to ask, one that could save lives. Members of the Indiana House of Representatives agreed and approved the measure. However, the Indiana Builder's Association has far more money for lobbying and thought the placard would be perceived as a negative, so they lobbied hard against it. A member of the State Senate from the northern half of Indiana agreed with the Builder's Association and was able to kill the bill.

Other pieces of legislation continually fail. For example, a tax exemption for volunteer fire fighters routinely gets a thumbs down from the state legislature. And during the 2019 legislative session, the IVFA sought \$1 million for education and training which passed the House but failed abysmally in the Senate.

Training and funding are also issues.

Daming brought in trainers from Evans-

ville for his department for one module — at a cost of \$5,000.

The state mandates a new recruit to complete Module A to go on a fire run. "It basically teaches them how not to get hurt," Daming said.

With four modules to complete it can get costly.

To complete all four, it takes 160-170 hours of training, then another 100 hours for EMR certification. To become an EMT will take additional training.

All the chiefs agreed — medical runs far exceed fire runs. While the state average is 90% medical to 10% fire, the Luce Fire Territory averages 60% medical while other county departments are a bit higher but not at a 90/10 ratio.

Groves noted that no matter how long a fire fighter is on the job, he or she learns something new with every fire, every call out.

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Celestine Volunteer Fire Department

Celestine Volunteer Fire Station is located at 6964 East SR 164 and has remained at that location since its inception in 1979.

There are 24 dedicated firefighters in Celestine VFD, including Fire Chief Ryan Wineinger; Assistant Chief Adam Glendenning; Captain Kurt Sermersheim; Lieutenant/Training Officer Nick Hasenour; EMS Officer Chris Hasenour; Equipment Officer Jeff Bieker; Safety Officer Chris Burke; Kent Hasenour; Jeff Sander; Grant Knies; Ryan Stemle; Matt Beckman; Luke Gehlhausen; Duane Thewes; Keith Thewes; Pat Hasenour; Kris Buechler; Cole Knies; Jason Verkamp; Tyler Hasenour; Derek Schmitt; Lance Thewes; Josh Vaal; Brandon Verkamp.

The department has 27 retired firemen: Elmer Meyer, Dan Gehlhausen, Doug Bachmen, Edwin Betz, Jeremy Hopf, Blake Shroering, Troy Englert, Lee Ray Goodman, Gary Knies, Gerald Schepers, Todd Goepfrich, Brad Knies, Andy Merkel, Jim Roshone, Randy Meyer, Terry DeKemper, Adam Brosmer, Kent Sander, Leon Recker, Fred Lampert, Kurt Hopf, Herb Burke, Bill Mattingly, Don Sander, Melvin Betz, Brian Haase and Eugene Burke.

Six officers have retired from service:



Dennis Schroering, Jim Steffe, Don McCain, Ron Sander, Ed Verkamp and Doug Bachman.

Celestine Volunteer Fire Department's fire apparatus list includes: A 1979 Chevrolet K20 w/250 gal. tank and mini pumper (wildland fire tools and a floating pump

are carried on this truck); 2003 Chevrolet C8500/Ferrara Pumper w/1,000 gal. tank and 1,250 gpm pump (this truck has a built in foam system and a generator); 2013 Kenworth T300 with a Ferrara Pumper w/1,000 gal. tank and 1,250 gpm pump and built in foam system, acquired in 2014; 1999

Sterling with a custom built 1,850 gal. tank; 2018 Chevy 3500 Light Rescue vehicle.

The department hosts two annual fundraisers to help assist the department: a raffle/shooting match in the spring on the Friday after Easter; and a truck/tractor pull on the fourth Sunday in August.