Career versus Volunteer Comparison Calculator: User Guide

The NVFC Career versus Volunteer Comparison Calculator requires a simple set of data:

- Number of response positions staffed by career personnel. For example, if four volunteers cover a ladder, enter 4. If three volunteers cross-staff three vehicle types, enter 3. If nine volunteers is the average for every call for service, enter 9.
- Hours per day of career coverage
- State: Pick your state to use a volunteer rate representative of your state. The calculator automatically applies the rate. Alternatively, you may also use the US national average.

Career versus Volunteer Comparison Calculator: Use Examples

Want to see examples of how the calculator works? Example 1 will show the cost savings volunteers provide by staffing an ambulance 24-7. Example 2 shows the cost savings when volunteers staff both an Engine and a Ladder. Example 3 shows the cost savings volunteers provide in a combination department if they cover the calls for service ½ of the time in a community, nights and weekends. Example 4 shows the cost savings when 9 responders, on average throughout the year, respond to every incident.

Example 1: Somewhere Volunteer EMS routinely staffs an ambulance 24-7 that responds with two volunteers each time it is dispatched. What is the cost savings to the community that Somewhere Volunteer EMS provides for this vehicle type?

Calculator Inputs

Step 1: Number of staffed response positions: 2

Step 2: Hours per day of coverage: 24

Step 3: Select the US average volunteer rate or your state rate for more detailed results. In this example, Texas

Step 4: Press Calculate

Step 5: Right-click the output to save or copy for later use. Note: If your device is set to dark mode, the file may appear dark when opened in an editing app. However, when inserted into a document file, it will present properly.

Calculator result: Somewhere Volunteer EMS provides a cost savings of $668,747.99 annually for the 2-person ambulance.

What would the cost savings be if Somewhere Volunteer EMS could staff a second ambulance every day?
If you change the number of staffed positions to 4, the Calculator result of the cost savings would increase to $1,337,495.98.

Example 2: The First Hose (New York) Company has one engine and one ladder that responds 1000 times per year, normally together, with four volunteers on each vehicle each time they are dispatched. This is a total of 8 response positions filled by volunteers. The calculator can determine the cost savings provided by the First Hose Company.

Calculator Inputs

Step 1: Number of staffed response positions: 8
Step 2: Hours per day of coverage: 24
Step 3: Select the US average volunteer rate, or your state rate for more detailed results. In this example, New York.
Step 4: Press Calculate
Step 5: Right-click the output to save or copy for later use. Note: If your device is set to dark mode, the file may appear dark when opened in an editing app. However, when inserted into a document file, it will present properly.

Calculator result: First Hose Company provides a cost savings of $3,123,057.29 annually.

What happens if First Hose Company finds itself in a position where the number of volunteers has reduced over time to the point that it can not simultaneously respond with the engine and ladder? Change the number of staffed positions to 4, and the calculator result is that the cost savings First Hose Company provides would decrease to $1,561,528.64.

Example 3: Jagged Mountain Volunteer Fire and EMS in Colorado has six career daytime positions that cover several vehicle types, including engines, tankers, forestry, and ambulance, 12 hours per day from 6 AM to 6 PM. They usually respond with one to three people per vehicle, as determined by the department's incident response plan. From 6 PM to 6 AM, a core group of 20 volunteer staff cover the same 6 positions for 12 hours each overnight. What is the cost savings to the community that the volunteers provide?

Calculator Inputs

Step 1: Number of staffed response positions: 6
Step 2: Hours per day of coverage: 12
Step 3: Select the US average volunteer rate or your state rate for more detailed results. In this example, Colorado
Step 4: Press Calculate
Step 5: Right-click the output to save or copy for later use.

Calculator result: Jagged Mountain Fire and EMS provides a cost savings of $1,141,938.49 annually.

Example 4: On average, the Deep-Green (Oregon) Volunteer Fire Department arrives on the scene with nine volunteers for each of the 675 annual calls for service. Members closest to the station drive the needed response vehicles while the remaining volunteers respond to the incident scene in their POVs. What is the annual cost savings Deep-Green VFD provides its community?

Calculator Inputs

Step 1: Number of staffed response positions: 9

Step 2: Hours per day of coverage: 24

Step 3: Select the US average volunteer rate or your state rate for more detailed results. In this example, Oregon

Step 4: Press Calculate

Step 5: Right-click the output to save or copy for later use. Note: If your device is set to dark mode, the file may appear dark when opened in an editing app. However, when inserted into a document file, it will present properly.

Calculator result: Deep-Green VFD provides a cost savings of $3,273,180.12 annually, which is the cost of having nine career responders on duty 24-7 to respond if it wasn't providing the service.