



State of New Hampshire

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PRESS RELEASE

NEWLY FORMED RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION WORKGROUP AIMS TO ANALYZE SHORTAGE OF FIREFIGHTER AND EMS CANDIDATES

CONCORD, NH – New Hampshire Department of Safety Commissioner Robert L. Quinn, Division of Fire Standards and Training & Emergency Medical Services Director Justin Cutting and State Sen. Sue Prentiss, D-West Lebanon, are announcing the formation of an ad hoc committee to address the increasingly challenging effort to recruit, hire and retain firefighters and EMS providers throughout the state.

In 2021, there was a net loss of nearly 200 New Hampshire EMTs and paramedics – more than twice as many than in 2020. However, currently there is no centralized collection of data of recruitment efforts in the state.

“We are hearing from career, volunteer and on-call departments around the state – from our largest cities to our smallest towns – that are reporting increased difficulty in recruiting members,” Director Cutting said. “This committee will analyze the problem, determine the causes and develop recommendations to reverse the trend.”

The newly formed ad hoc committee is comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders and elected officials, including workforce and HR professionals that will collaboratively bring together expertise from a variety of perspectives.

Members of the committee include: Jason Grey of the New Hampshire Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, Shawn Riley of New Hampshire Ambulance Association, Blair Weathers of Professional Firefighters of New Hampshire, Kirk Beattie (career) and Hank Thomas (on-call/volunteer

member) of the New Hampshire Association of Fire Chiefs, Tom Blanchette of the New Hampshire State Fireman’s Association and Lisa Drabik of New Hampshire Municipal Association. The committee will also include Joe Doiron, the state’s workforce development director, and two members of the public -- Ahni Malachi and Eva Castello – along with legislators Sen. Sue Prentiss, D-West Lebanon, and Rep. Brodie Deshais, R-Wolfeboro. Tina Sharby, who has nearly three decades of human resource management experience, will serve as Chair of the Committee.

“As a paramedic and a state senator, I am acutely aware of the recruitment and retention challenges facing our Fire and EMS agencies,” said Sen. Sue Prentiss, D-West Lebanon. “Particularly over the past two years, the stress of these industries who have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated staffing shortages, increased the need to examine our pay structure, and highlighted the need for additional training opportunities. I am happy to see this important work moving forward and look forward to contributing as a member of the Workgroup.”

In addition to the newly formed ad hoc committee, the Division of Fire Standards and Training & Emergency Medical Services is also currently in the hiring process for a newly-established recruitment and retention coordinator.

“Adequately staffed communities, properly trained firefighters and emergency medical personnel are essential to the quality of life in New Hampshire,” said Commissioner Quinn. “I have confidence that this diverse group of dedicated professionals will come up with helpful solutions and recommendations for this statewide issue.”

The Committee will hold its first meeting on March 16, 2022 and submit recommendations to the Commissioner within 90 days.

About the Department:

The New Hampshire Department of Safety is one of the largest departments of state government, with more than 1,600 full-time, part-time, non-classified, and seasonal employees functioning in both uniformed and civilian capacities throughout the State. The Department affects the lives of all New Hampshire residents and visitors by enforcing criminal, motor vehicle and boating laws, and providing for fire safety, fire and emergency medical training, emergency communications and disaster planning. Established by the New Hampshire General Court in 1961, the Department consists of the divisions of Administration, Emergency Services and Communications, Fire Safety (Office of the State Fire Marshal), Fire Standards and Training & Emergency Medical Services, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Motor Vehicles and State Police. Follow us on [Twitter](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#).