

NFPA Research Report Shows 43 Percent Of U.S. Fire Stations Older Than Four Decades

Published on 4 Sep 2019



As the condition of aging bridges, roadways, transportation resources, and grids across the U.S. has increasingly become the focus of discussion, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has issued Renovations Needs of the U.S. Fire Service, a new report on the fire service's aging infrastructure.

Two key findings within the report show that more than 21,000 firehouses across the country

are beyond 40 years of age with total replacement costs estimated to be in the \$70-\$100 billion range.

Data Found In Survey

The report draws on data found in the Fourth Needs Assessment for the U.S. Fire Service, a survey that compares what fire departments actually have with what existing standards, government regulations, and other guidance documents state as being required in order to be safe and effective. Relevant case studies were also considered as part of the research project.

The objective was to determine just how old firehouses are today, and what it would cost to rebuild current, compliant structures that keep first responders safe from harm at their workplace. The report identifies the number of stations that are over 40-years old; are not equipped with exhaust emission control; are without backup power; do not have separate facilities for female firefighters; and need mold remediation.

Findings from the report

21, 230 of U.S. fire stations (43 percent) are more than 40 years old, representing an 11 percent increase in aging infrastructure over the past 15 years.

The estimated cost to replace these stations is estimated at between \$70 and \$100 billion; costs depend on space needs, location, site condition, and department

preferences.

Sixty-one percent of fire stations that are more than 40 years old are serving communities with less than 9,999 people.

A shortage of funding, tighter budgets, and a lack of grants are likely reasons for the large number of older stations.

29,120 fire stations (59 percent) in the U.S. are not equipped with exhaust emission control systems, which are critical for mitigating firefighter exposure to diesel fumes. These fumes can increase the likelihood of cardiovascular disease, cardiopulmonary disease, respiratory disease, and lung cancer.

Assistance to Firefighter Grants have helped reduce the number of firehouses without exhaust emission control systems from 66 to 59 percent.

Approximately 17,030 fire stations (35 percent) do not have access to backup power, which is critical for business continuity during an emergency event. When the power is out, firehouses without generators may run into issues with phones ringing, computers running, trucks being fueled, and garage bay doors opening. The cost to install backup generators runs between \$850 million and \$1.7 billion.

When fire stations were built 40-plus years ago, departments were exclusively male. Today, the most recent Needs Assessment estimates that 10 percent of career firefighters are female. The number of males and females in a particular fire

department typically varies based on whether the fire company is career, volunteer or combination, as well as the size of the community. Further research is needed today to determine the number of stations that do not provide separate facilities for female firefighters and the estimated cost to renovate these stations.

┌ The number of firehouses affected by mold is unknown, despite common perceptions that stations are susceptible given water damage, prolonged humidity, or dampness. All fire stations should allocate resources for mold prevention including dehumidifiers, proper ventilation, mold inhibitors, and mold-killing cleaning products to reduce the likelihood of seasonal allergy and pneumonia-like symptoms.

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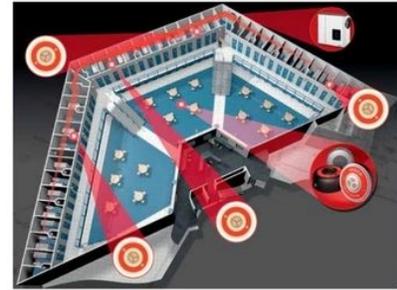
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