



For Immediate Release

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NEW PSA CAMPAIGN AIMS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER SHORTAGE AND RECRUIT PERSONNEL

Richmond, VA: October 18, 2021: The volunteer fire service has been experiencing a gradual decline in personnel across the country. Since 1985, national statistics have shown an approximate 10% decline in volunteer firefighters. According to the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the total number of volunteers in 1985 was 884,600 compared to approximately 682,000 today. According to the United States Fire Administration, 64% of all U.S. fire departments are strictly volunteer and 54% of all firefighters are volunteer.

Virginia's trends align with this national shortage. According to the United States Fire Administration's 2021 National Fire Department Registry, of the 552 fire departments in the Commonwealth, about 71% rely on volunteers; and according to the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, approximately 70% of all Virginia firefighters are volunteers.

The volunteer firefighter shortage is at a critical point. The declining volunteer force may negatively impact a volunteer department from meeting critical staffing levels to meet their community's needs. Volunteer staffing shortages also place additional stress on the existing volunteer force that may already be stretched to its limits.

To address Virginia's volunteer firefighter shortage, the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association has partnered with the International Association of Fire Chiefs to develop and release a new recruitment-focused public service announcement (PSA) and campaign. The PSA is entitled, **"You've Seen Us"** and is designed to bolster the recruitment of Virginia's next generation of volunteer firefighters. Produced by Emmy Award winning JeffInHighDef / FireMedia.TV, the PSA takes viewers through the realization that the volunteer fire service is all around us and suggests to viewers that they too



can find their life's broader purpose by joining the volunteer fire service and serving their community.

“With volunteerism on the decline across the state and nation, the VFCA believes that **“You've Seen Us”** will help recruit new members into Virginia's volunteer fire service,” said VFCA President Chief Keith H. Johnson. “The VFCA is very excited about the opportunities and impact that **“You've Seen Us”** will have, and our hope is that Virginia's next generation of volunteers will emerge as a result. We need your help to get the word out.”

Statewide distribution and viewing of **“You've Seen Us”** is a critical component of recruiting additional volunteer firefighters to address Virginia's shortage. The VFCA is asking Virginia's media markets to assist in the campaign distribution of **“You've Seen Us”** by seeking out feature stories at the local level, sharing on their respective social media channels, and hosting on their respective websites.

About the Virginia Volunteer Workforce Solutions Program

The **“You've Seen Us”** PSA is part of the Virginia Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS) program, which offer statewide recruitment and retention support to volunteer fire departments. This VWS program is funded



by a Staffing for Adequate Fire Emergency Management Response (SAFER) Grant through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). For more information about the Virginia VWS program, visit everydayherova.org.

About the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA)

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA), serves the communities of Virginia through its fire service leaders and advances the fire and rescue service through leadership, education and advocacy.. The VFCA is committed to providing its members the educational opportunities, leadership skills, and support tools to manage and lead today, and into the future. For more information about the VFCA, please visit www.vfca.us .

About the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)

The IAFC represents the leadership of firefighters and emergency responders worldwide. IAFC members are the world's leading experts in firefighting, EMS, terrorism response, hazmat spills, natural disasters, search and rescue, and public-safety legislation. Since 1873, the IAFC has provided a forum for its members to exchange ideas, develop professionally and uncover the latest products and services available to first responders. Learn more at www.iafc.org.