
Firefighters' exodus from Atlanta

Posted by cubana - 2009/02/25 13:45

http://www.ajccom/metro/content/metro/atlanta/stories/2009/02/24/atlanta_fire_station.html?cxntlid=homepage_tab_newstab

Firefighters' exodus from Atlanta contributes to stations closing

By ERIC STIRGUS, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution - Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Twenty-seven Atlanta firefighters have resigned since October and the city's fire chief said Tuesday those resignations have contributed to the occasional closing of some fire stations.

Some firefighters have retired, said Chief Kelvin Cochran. Others, he said, have left for higher-paying fire-fighting jobs in other area cities and counties. In all, the department of about 1,000 employees has 33 vacancies.

Cochran also told the City Council's Public Safety Committee on Tuesday that the department is "evaluating" a rash of sick calls since Feb. 1. Twice since then — Super Bowl Sunday and Valentine's Day — the department had to close some fire stations under a policy to cover "brownouts," when an abnormally high number of firefighters call in sick.

"I'm concerned because we do not have an adequate staffing level," the chief said.

Cochran said the "brownouts" are a result of a recent hiring freeze, furloughs, the abolition of about 120 positions and the loss of overtime pay to grapple with city budget cuts. He does not believe the absences were an organized protest. The chief said the cutbacks may be resulting in firefighters calling in sick more frequently.

"Whenever an organization experiences the type of losses we've had, there is an inherent increase in absenteeism," he said.

For now, there's little Cochran can do about the vacancies because Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin has frozen hiring in the fire department and most city agencies as Atlanta wades through declining property tax, sales taxes and other revenues. The mayor and her staff are trying to figure out how to cut spending after disclosing earlier this month that the city's revenues were \$20 million below initial projections between October and December.

Councilman C.T. Martin pressed Cochran to pursue more opportunities to obtain grants from the federal government that may help the department hire more firefighters.

"This is an abnormal situation that we're in," Martin said. "We have a dire emergency that at any point, someone can be hurt."

The chief said he is confident that the hiring freeze will be lifted before the city's fiscal year ends on June 30.

Re:Firefighters' exodus from Atlanta

Posted by catskill grappler - 2009/03/01 09:48

I heard that the police force is having an exodus of it own. In february , this month, on average 5 police officers have left everyday. This is making officers on the street to either avoid making a non emergency arrest because they do not have backup or using more force to apprehend a crook. We only had 1700 police officers. I wonder how many we have now.

Re:Firefighters' exodus from Atlanta

Posted by cubana - 2009/03/01 13:30

Well you are the second in command, throw your weight around and find out how many we have.
