

## **How Many Firefighters Does It Take To Put Out A Fire?**

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It isn't the set up of a joke, but a study that fire chiefs believe is important in tough economic times.

ROCKVILLE, Md. (WUSA) - Firefighters crawling inside a burning building to put out a fire. But this is a test. If this had been an actual emergency your local fire department may not have four firefighters on board each fire truck as they did on Thursday at the Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service Training Academy. At times there may be only two or three firefighters on an engine in the Washington area.

Like heads of every government agency, fire chiefs are fighting for every dollar and position they can to keep their firefighters and the public safe. What they lack is the ability to clearly show how the staffing of fire engines and ladder trucks impacts the ability of people to survive a fire and how quickly a fire can be extinguished.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is leading a team of fire service organizations in trying to arm fire chiefs for the next budget battle. Firefighters from Fairfax County and Montgomery County are spending weeks basically fighting the same fire over and over. Data is being recorded to show how long it takes and how effective fire crews are using a variety of staffing levels to extinguish the fire.

NIST plans to have a report available in the fall. Fire chiefs are calling this a landmark study. It may also give the public a tool to better understand what effect the number of people on duty in the local firehouse has on their safety.