

# Study: fire departments strained by growth and funding concerns

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Seventy-three percent of U.S. fire chiefs say residential and commercial growth is already straining their departments' ability to protect the communities they serve, according to an independent survey conducted by Opinion Research Corp. International.

What's more, 81% of the fire chiefs say growth is likely to put even more strain on their departments' resources during the next three years, according to the findings of the Princeton, N.J.-based research group.

The respondents cite two major reasons:

- 77% say they expect most future growth in their communities will occur in areas where water mains, hydrants and hauled-water services must be improved.

- Half (51%) say fire stations will be needed in areas of their districts where most of the growth is likely to occur.

By an overwhelming 91%, fire chiefs say getting necessary funding is a significant obstacle.

The chiefs see other serious obstacles to improving service:

- 79% noted difficulty recruiting and retaining firefighters-- career or volunteer.

- 69 % expressed difficulty in accessing adequate water supplies. □