

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL OF
A RECRUITMENT/RELOCATION BONUS X A RETENTION ALLOWANCE


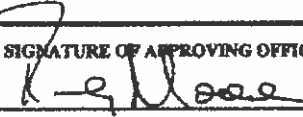
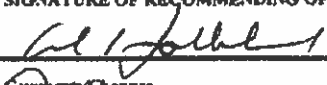
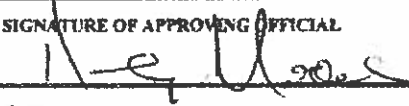
1. AGENCY NAME US Forest Service		2. AGENCY CODE 11	3. CASE NO. 07-09	4. EMPLOYING OFFICE CODE R5
5. NAME OF EMPLOYEE R5 Firefighters		6. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. Varies		7. DUTY STATION CODES R5 Duty Stations
8. POSITION TITLE Firefighters Currently Covered by Firefighter Retirement		9. LOCATION (City, State) California		10. PAY PLAN -SERIES/GRADE/STEP GS-499/462-5 through GS-499/462-8
11. SALARY GS-5 through GS-8 Varies	12. ORGANIZATION Fire Management		13. EFFECTIVE DATE March 1, 2009	
14. ACCOUNTING CODE	15. MAIL CHECK TO (if applicable)		16. EXPECTED DURATION OF RECRUITMENT/RELOCATION ALLOWANCE (if applicable) September 30, 2009 2/28/2010	

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION **MUST** BE ATTACHED, FOR REVIEW BY THE RECOMMENDING AND APPROVING OFFICIALS FOR A RECRUITMENT/RELOCATION BONUS: (See DPM Chapter 575, Subchapter 15b for Guidance)

- § A written justification outlining the difficulty experienced or expected in filling the position if bonus is not used.
- § The proposed recruitment/relocation amount, along with the rationale for the amount proposed.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION **MUST** BE ATTACHED, FOR REVIEW BY THE RECOMMENDING AND APPROVING OFFICIALS FOR A RETENTION ALLOWANCE: (See DPM Chapter 575, Subchapter 2-5c for Guidance)

- § A written determination that unusually high or unique qualifications of the employee or a special need of the agency exists.
- § A written determination that the employee is likely to leave the federal government in the absence of a retention allowance.
- § A written description of the extent to which the employee's departure would affect the agency.

17. RECOMMENDATION		
RECOMMENDED AMOUNT \$	PERCENTAGE OF SALARY 10%	
SIGNATURE OF RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL 	TITLE Director of Fire & Aviation Mgt	DATE 2/2/09
18. APPROVAL		
APPROVED AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE OF SALARY 10%	
SIGNATURE OF APPROVING OFFICIAL 	TITLE REGIONAL FORESTER	DATE 2/2/2009
19. RECERTIFICATION (for Retention Allowances Only)		
SIGNATURE OF RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL 	TITLE Director FPM	DATE 1/15/2010
Comments/Changes		
SIGNATURE OF APPROVING OFFICIAL 	TITLE Regional Forester	DATE 1/25/10
Comments/changes:		

Retention Allowance Extension Review for RFT Review Approval and/or Disapproval Signature

January 14, 2010

This is a group retention allowance extension review for GS-5 through GS-8 firefighters who permanently occupy covered firefighter retirement positions in Region 5. Enclosed is the original analysis on the group retention that was effective March 1, 2009 and is subject to expire on February 28, 2010. Before an extension is allowed, the group retention must be reviewed to determine its effectiveness and funding availability. The funding availability will be addressed by Fire and Aviation Management.

The criteria for a group retention is to identify the group or category where there is a high risk that a significant number of employees in the group would be likely to leave the Federal service in the absence of a retention incentive. The previous analysis referred to the Forest Service's response to Congress in April 2007 regarding the recruitment and retention situation of our wildland firefighters. A key finding was the attrition rate for our wildland firefighters was below the normal federal attrition rate of 14%. However, it was determined that the conditions present in wildland firefighting could supersede the supposition the federal attrition rate of 14% was appropriate to utilize. Fire Management continues to support the special need existing for a lower attrition rate for wildland firefighters as demonstrated in the original incentive request.

The data should assist in determining the following:

- 1) Whether the 10% was a sufficient incentive percentage,
- 2) Whether the targeted group was identified correctly, and
- 3) Whether the identified group is likely to leave the federal government in the absence of a retention allowance.

Enclosed are exit interview data voluntarily received from the permanent firefighting workforce. The data indicates the primary reason for leaving was better pay and benefits at 48.05%. When asked what would it take for the separating employee to stay or return, better pay had the highest percentage as the first, second and third choice. However, the data collected was not separated by year to determine if there were any significant changes for 2009. Therefore, the conclusion appears to be of those who submitted exit interviews, the need for better pay was the main reason for their departure and would be the incentive for their return.

Enclosed are updated data on firefighter attrition rates gathered from Region 5 records and include updated data to complete the 2008 figures. The data shows in the past 5 years, the total attrition rate fluctuated between 8 and 12.9% with a peak in 2007 of 12.9%. Since the allowance includes only a handful of GS-5 apprentices, it would be appropriate to review the attrition data excluding the apprentice population. In 2008, the total permanent attrition rate was 10.4%. In 2009, the total attrition rate was 7.7% which is a drop of 2.7%. However, this attrition rate included all grade levels. Since the incentive was targeted at the GS-5 through GS-8 grade levels, a breakdown of attrition by grade level would better illustrate whether the incentive had any effect on attrition.

Reviewing the number of resignations by grade level, consistently the GS-5 grade level had the highest rate. In 2007 the GS-5 resignation rate was at 17.62%. In 2008 it was 12.4% and by 2009 it

dropped to 5%, a difference of 7.4%. In fact, all the grades dropped from the 2008 rate by 1.6% for the GS-6 to 4.32% for the GS-8.

Determining the effectiveness of the incentive is difficult to ascertain. The total attrition rate dropped 2.7% but the previous year it had dropped 2.5%, without the incentive in place. However, if we review the total attrition rate and isolate the resignation rate, there were significant reductions. Again, reviewing the data from 2007 to 2008 when the incentive did not exist, there were significant reductions as well, excluding the GS-8 which showed a 1.44% increase in resignations. The drop in the resignation rate may be attributed to a variety of factors and not necessarily based on the implementation of the retention allowance. If outside influences such as the economic health of the nation and the high unemployment rate are encouraging employees to remain in their position, then removal of the retention allowance should not significantly increase the resignation rate.

If the current allowance is extended, the likely effect on morale from co-workers would be the same as the previous analysis in that it would be both well and not well received. Lastly, if a group retention allowance is affected, the data supports a target group of GS-5 through GS-6 (including apprentices) because there was a significant difference in the resignation rate from the GS-6 to the GS-7.

Please return this package to Lirian Penn after your review, and signature if approved.

/s/ Lirian Penn

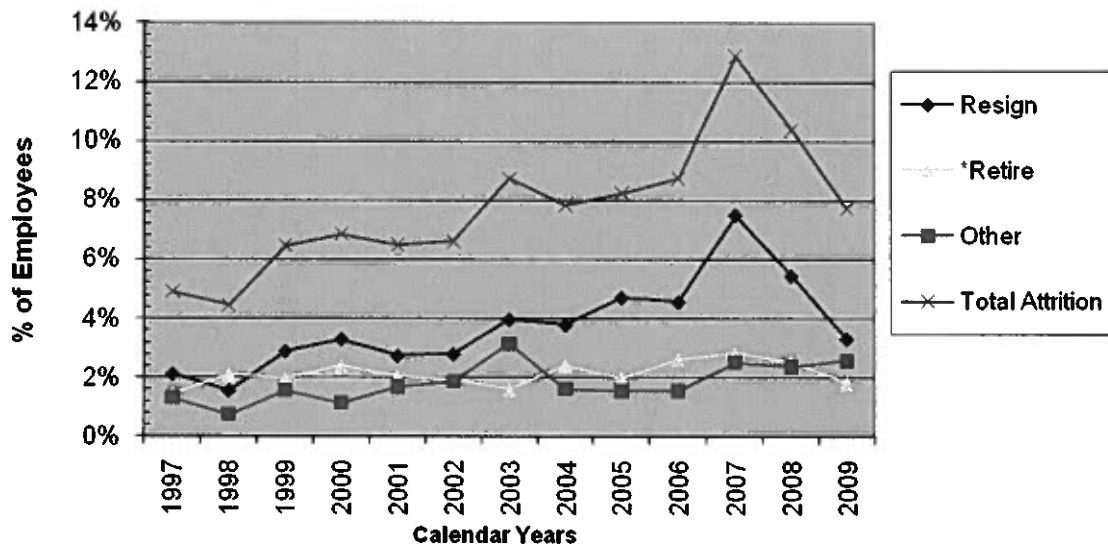
Lirian Penn
HR, (858) 674-2945

HR Director's Recommendation:

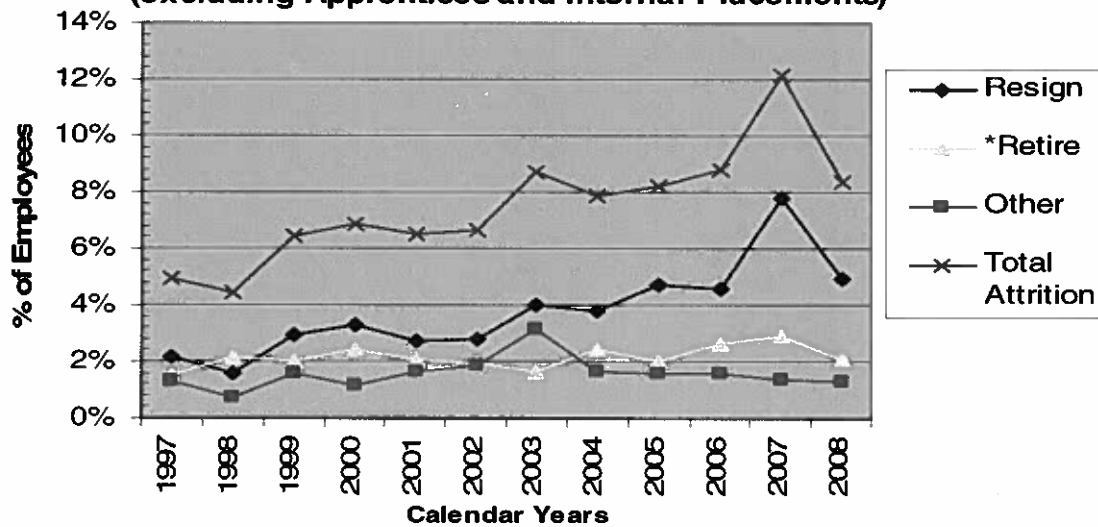
/s/ Stephen M. Deep

Stephen M. Deep
Director of Human Resources

**Permanent Firefighter Attrition
1997-2009
(excluding Apprentices and Internal Placements)**

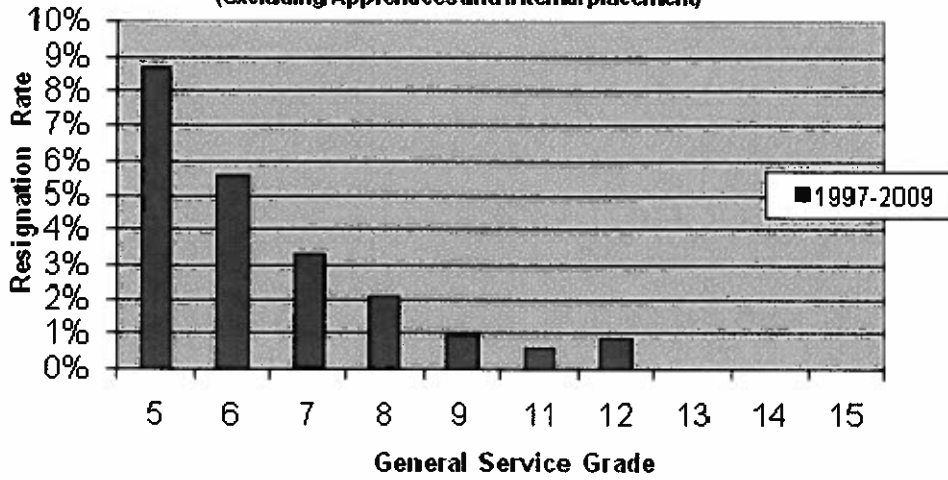


**Permanent Firefighter Attrition
1997-2008
(excluding Apprentices and Internal Placements)**



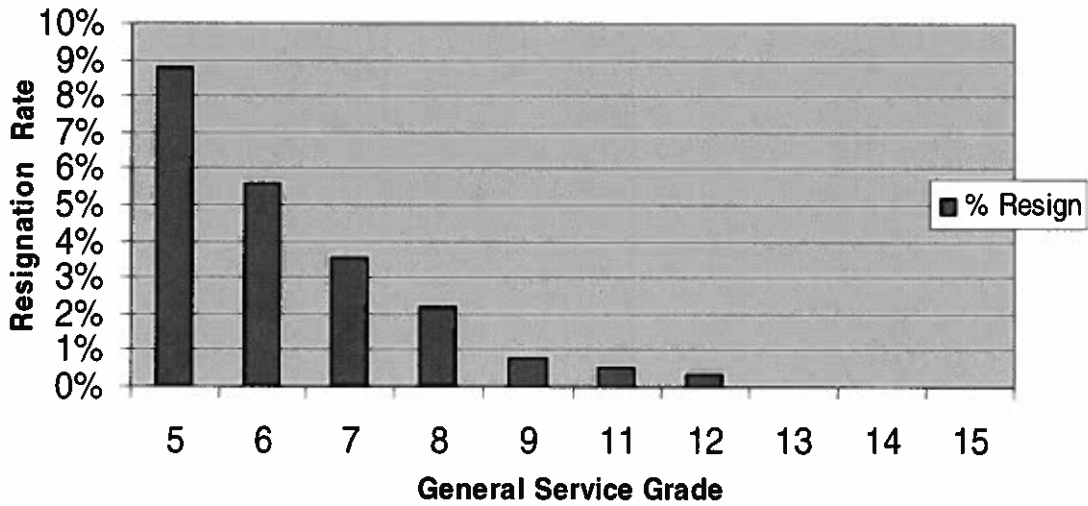
Permanent Firefighter Resignations by Grade 1997-2009

(excluding Apprentices and internal placement)



Permanent Firefighter Resignations by Grade 1997-2006

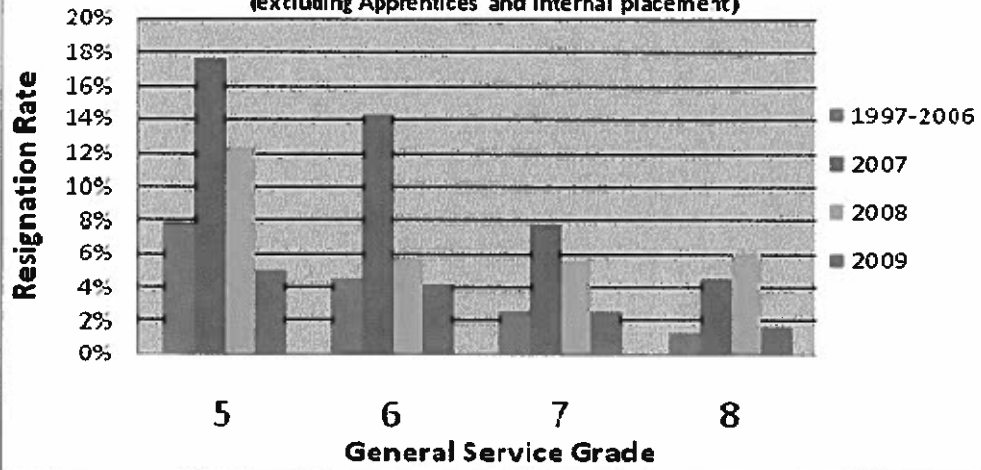
(excluding Apprentices and internal placement)



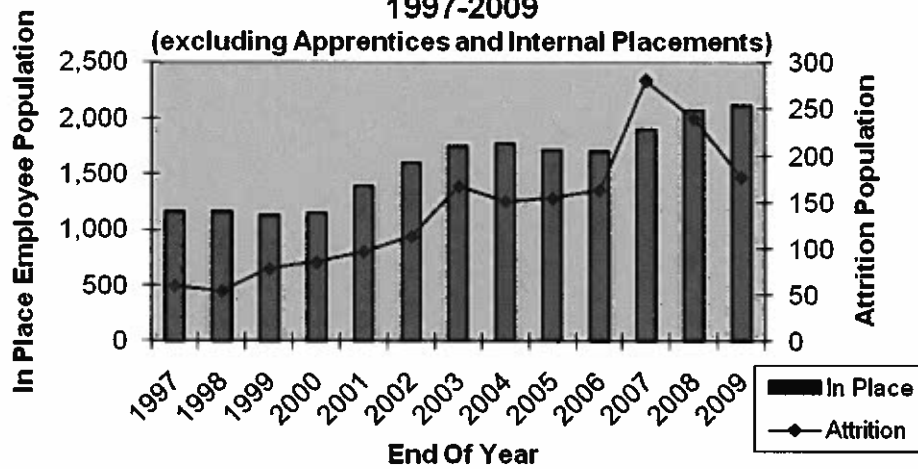
Permanent Firefighter Resignations by Grade

1997-2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

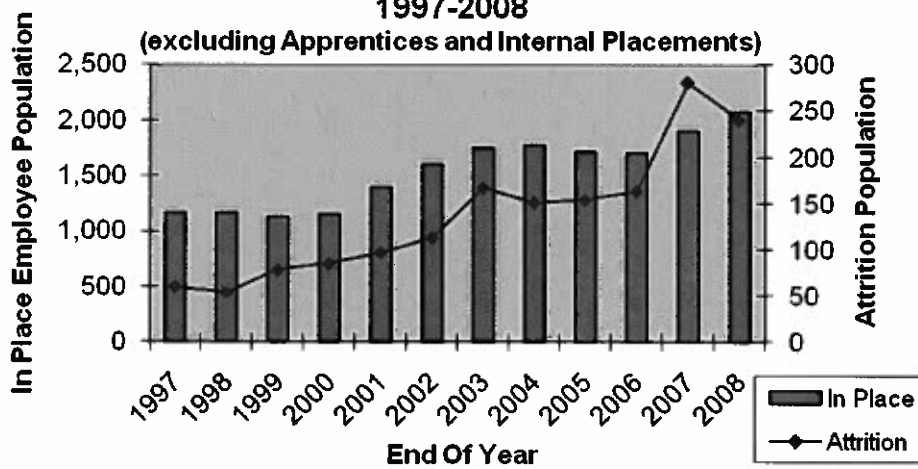
(excluding Apprentices and internal placement)



Permanent Fire Employees 1997-2009



Permanent Fire Employees 1997-2008



EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTION 14 * Primary reasons for leaving?

** Reason	Total	Percent of total Responses
Better Pay and Benefits	37	48.05%
Promotion/Advancement	11	14.29%
Negative Work Environment	8	10.39%
Personal Reasons	8	10.39%
Career Advancement	6	7.79%
Cost of Living	4	5.19%
Return to School	3	3.90%
Grand Total	77	

* Question 14 asks the following: "What are your primary reasons for leaving? (Please address all significant reasons that contributed to your decision to leave and numerically rank them, with 1 being the most significant reason. For example: personal or family reasons; career related reasons; job satisfaction; location/living environment; job environment; working relationship with supervisor, coworker, or management; harassment."

Each Interviewee was given the opportunity to check-off pre-determined responses or complete the narrative portion of the question and list the significant reasons.

** Individual responses were group from both the check list and the narrative into similar groups as listed above. Example: more pay, more money, better benefits and better pay were grouped into "Better Pay and Benefits"

- Responses are for permanent Fire employees who resigned or transferred out of region from FY 2006 through FY 2009
- 1317 individuals were coded as Resigning or Leaving the Region
- 504 of the 1317 completed or partially completed an exit interview Questionnaire
- 77 of the 504 provided a response(s) to Question 14

**PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION EXIT INTERVIEW
QUESTION 16: "What would it take for you to stay or return"**

Question 16 1st Response*	Question 16			Question 16			Total	%	2nd 3rd Response*	Total	%	3rd TOTAL	TOTAL	%
	Total	1st	2nd	Total	2nd	3rd								
Better Pay **	72	32.9%	Better Pay	28	35.0%	Better Pay	3	15.8%	103	32.4%				
Better Benefits	14	6.4%	Better Benefits	20	25.0%	Better Benefits	6	31.6%	40	12.6%				
Better Management/Leadership	13	5.9%	Better Management/Leadership	3	3.8%	Better Management/Leadership	2	10.5%	18	5.7%				
Personal Reason or Choice	15	6.8%	Personal Reason or Choice	1	1.3%	Personal Reason or Choice	1	5.3%	17	5.3%				
Permanent/Full-time/Career Opportunity	12	5.5%	Permanent/Full-time/Career Opportunity	2	2.5%	Permanent/Full-time/Career Opportunity	0	0.0%	14	4.4%				
Returning or will Return	13	5.9%	Returning or will Return	0	0.0%	Returning or will Return	0	0.0%	13	4.1%				
A Call/Just Ask/Job Offer	11	5.0%	A Call/Just Ask/Job Offer	0	0.0%	A Call/Just Ask/Job Offer	0	0.0%	11	3.5%				
N/A	10	4.6%	N/A	0	0.0%	N/A	0	0.0%	10	3.1%				
Better/Different Work Schedule	2	0.9%	Better/Different Work Schedule	8	10.0%	Better/Different Work Schedule	0	0.0%	10	3.1%				
Family Concerns/Issues	6	2.7%	Family Concerns/Issues	2	2.5%	Family Concerns/Issues	1	5.3%	9	2.8%				
Promotion	7	3.2%	Promotion	2	2.5%	Promotion	0	0.0%	9	2.8%				
Nothing	7	3.2%	Nothing	0	0.0%	Nothing	0	0.0%	7	2.2%				
Training/Training Opportunities	5	2.3%	Training or Training Opportunities	1	1.3%	Training or Training Opportunities	0	0.0%	6	1.9%				
Job Opportunity	5	2.3%	Job Opportunity	0	0.0%	Job Opportunity	0	0.0%	5	1.6%				
More time off	2	0.9%	More time off	3	3.8%	More time off	0	0.0%	5	1.6%				
Recognition as a Firefighter	2	0.9%	Recognition as firefighter	2	2.5%	Recognition as firefighter	2	2.5%	4	1.3%				
Better/Different work Schedule	4	1.8%	Better/Different work Schedule	0	0.0%	Better/Different work Schedule	0	0.0%	4	1.3%				
Affordable Housing/Living	3	1.4%	Affordable Housing/Living	1	1.3%	Affordable Housing/Living	0	0.0%	4	1.3%				
Better Hours	1	0.5%	Better Hours	2	2.5%	Better Hours	1	5.3%	4	1.3%				
Extended Tour	2	0.9%	Extended Tour	1	1.3%	Extended Tour	1	5.3%	4	1.3%				
Unsure	3	1.4%	Unsure	0	0.0%	Unsure	0	0.0%	3	0.9%				
Respectful Work Environment	1	0.5%	Respectful Work Environment	0	0.0%	Respectful Work Environment	2	10.5%	3	0.9%				
Education Conflict/Issues	2	0.9%	Education Conflict/Issues	0	0.0%	Education Conflict/Issues	0	0.0%	2	0.6%				
Job stability	2	0.9%	Job stability	0	0.0%	Job stability	0	0.0%	2	0.6%				
Health/Fitness Concerns	1	0.5%	Health or Fitness Concerns	1	1.3%	Health or Fitness Concerns	0	0.0%	2	0.6%				
More Work or Hours	1	0.5%	More Work or Hours	1	1.3%	More Work or Hours	0	0.0%	2	0.6%				
Better Housing	0	0.0%	Better Housing	2	2.5%	Better Housing	0	0.0%	2	0.6%				
A Better/Different Work Location	1	0.5%	A Better/Different Work Location	0	0.0%	A Better/Different Work Location	0	0.0%	1	0.3%				
Better Funding	1	0.5%	Better Funding	0	0.0%	Better Funding	0	0.0%	1	0.3%				
Opportunity for leadership or Responsibility	1	0.5%	Opportunity for leadership or Responsibility	0	0.0%	Opportunity for leadership or Responsibility	0	0.0%	1	0.3%				
Better Commute	0	0.0%	Better Commute	0	0.0%	Better Commute	0	0.0%	0	0.0%				
Grand Total	219		Grand Total	80		Grand Total	19		318					

* A Departing employee is allowed to list multiple answers to the questions. In this report 219 individuals supplied at least one response, 80 supplied a second response, and 19 supplied a third response.

** Individual responses were group into similar groups as listed above.
example: more pay, more money, and better pay were grouped into "Better Pay"

- Responses are for permanent Fire employees who resigned or transferred out of region from FY 2006 through FY 2009

- 1317 individuals were coded as Resigning or Leaving the Region

- 504 of the 1317 completed or partially completed an exit interview Questionnaire

- 219 of the 504 provided a response(s) to Question 16