

**FedHealth**

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**FedHealth e-news MAR 2015**

FedHealth's opt-in e-newsletter shares ideas, stories, program and product announcements, and other resources we hope you find of interest. *(Note: **Most** links open a new window.)*

Fedhealth e-news is also available **in PDF** (best for printing / sharing)

This month's topics:

**In the Spotlight: Volunteer Firefighter Crisis**

Statistics, obstacles & some creative recruitment resources

**Doing custom book print soon**

Need custom preparedness & basic first aid books?

**America's PrepareAthon!**

Get ready for 4/30 National Day of Action

**On The Front Lines**

GT: Will FirstNet Become the Next Healthcare.gov?  
 Johns Hopkins PPE prototype Ebola suit  
 Massachusetts E911 Silent Call procedure  
 USFRA PTSD/TBI Sunday connection

**On the Lighter Side**

EM / First Responder memes to make you smile

**Did You Know...**

El Niño has finally arrived; New rapid test for Ebola; Pee can generate electricity

**Cool Links / Ideas**

Exo portable shelters; Strongest biological material on earth; Making pet/owner reunifications easier



**In the Spotlight: Volunteer Firefighter crisis**

A dramatic decline in the number of volunteer firefighters, particularly young ones, threatens the ability of small departments to provide an essential public service.

Most people may not think this potential crisis impacts them, however almost **70%** of firefighters across the nation are **volunteers**.

And it's not just about fighting fires since most calls are for emergency medical services.

For the first time in 28 years, the majority of volunteer firefighters in the U.S. are over the age of 50, according to a firefighter profile released in November by the National Fire Protection Association. And while the number of on-call firefighters is decreasing, the demand for fire and



rescue services is increasing.

### Some Volunteer Fire Service statistics

The U.S. Fire Administration ([USFA](#)) says in 2013 there were an estimated 30,052 U.S. fire departments and **19,807** of them were **all volunteer**.

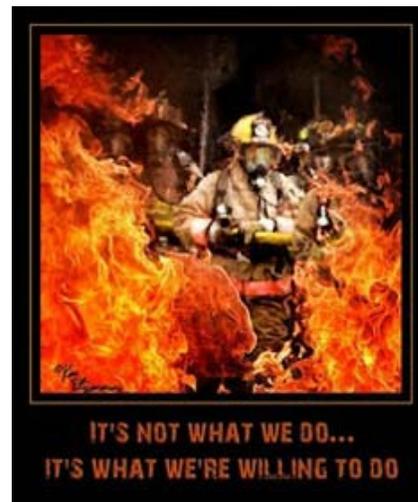
According to the National Volunteer Fire Council...

- **Volunteers comprise 69% of firefighters in the United States.** Of the total estimated 1,140,750 volunteer and paid firefighters across the country, 786,150 are volunteer.
- **Communities served by volunteer firefighters depend on them to be their first line of defense for many types of emergencies.** Volunteer firefighters are summoned to a wide array of emergencies across the country every day including fires, emergency medical incidents, terrorist events, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, high-angle and confined space emergencies, and other general public service calls. The public relies on the volunteer emergency services to be their first line of defense in these emergencies. Volunteers spend an enormous amount of time training to prepare for these emergencies.
- **Small and mid-sized communities rely heavily on volunteer firefighters.** Small communities (populations under 10,000) across the U.S. are typically protected by all volunteer departments. In some cases, however, these communities have hired a few paid firefighters to assist. Mid-sized communities (populations above 10,000) are typically served by combination volunteer and paid departments. Large communities (populations over 100,000) are most often protected by combination volunteer and paid departments that consist of primarily paid staff. There are few strictly paid fire departments in the U.S., but those that exist are primarily found in very urban areas.

### Recruitment Obstacles

The [Citizen-Times.com](#) writes in 1980, a firefighter needed only 36 hours of training. Today that number has grown to **250 hours** to obtain firefighter certification. Earning the certification can take up to a year for someone working a regular job and taking the training in the evenings.

Because fire departments have expanded the scope of their duties to include answering emergency medical calls, many firefighters also are emergency medical technicians, which requires another **100 to 250+ hours** of training.



As Mount Pleasant Fire Department Chief Larry McRae recently explained at a County Commissioners meeting, "We require them to attend numerous hours of training. We look for people to be willing to go into a structure fire or approach a burning vehicle to save someone's life. We ask them to expose themselves to contagious disease, use their personal vehicles, pay for their costs to replace their clothing, be available to respond at any time day or night, seven days a week in any kind of weather and under potentially stressful and life-threatening circumstances."

"And we are asking them to do this for no pay," McRae said. "And then we ask them to work at their volunteer fire department fundraisers."

NVFC states volunteers typically contribute 20 to 100 hours per month or more.

McRae said without volunteers, the fire departments in the county can't offer the fire and rescue protection to residents they are commissioned to offer. Aside from the safety repercussions,

insurance service office ratings can cause home insurance rates for homeowners to go up several hundred dollars a year in communities without a fire department or volunteer fire department.

### Creative recruitment ideas & tools

Below are some creative recruitment ideas, resources and vids to share with family, friends, co-workers, local officials, schools and youth groups. If you can contribute your time and energy, please consider becoming a volunteer or at least talk to your local Fire Department to see if there are ways to support them operationally and/or financially.

And speaking of financial assistance... please share our programs associated with our customizable IT'S A DISASTER! preparedness and first aid manual since ideas can help fund and support volunteers, agencies and others. Download a 2-page [overview with funding examples](#) (PDF) or call Fedhealth at **1-888-999-4325**.

**Maine Pension Program:** Maine State Federation of Firefighters is working hard to try and recruit more volunteer firefighters, and to promote state legislation that aims to support the firefighters. [L.D. 164, An Act To Establish the Maine Length of Service Award Program](#), would create the framework for a **statewide pension-type program** under which volunteers such as firefighters or emergency medical service providers eventually would receive a pension. The bill would pay for the program through a tax on consumer fireworks writes [Bangor Daily News](#).

**The SERVE Act:** This bill, introduced in 2013 and one of the National Volunteer Fire Council's legislative priorities, is designed to help local volunteer emergency services agencies recruit and retain personnel. It would provide a **\$1000 tax credit** to volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency workers. Two other bills (Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Reauthorization Act (VRIPRA) and Volunteer Emergency Responders Tax Deduction Act) are also up for a vote in Congress. Read more at [WBNG.com](#) and [IAFC.org](#)

**WHHC free room & board:** A volunteer fire department in Lycoming County Ohio is looking for recruits and has something that could entice young firefighters writes [WNEP.com](#). The Willing Hand Hose Company offers **free room and board** for college students who will respond to ambulance calls, fire calls, accidents and more. The fire house has been upgraded with all new amenities, including an updated kitchen, living quarters, and a TV room. Not only are the live-ins getting free room and board but they are also getting professional training which would cost them thousands to do on their own.

**Fire Corps:** The NVFC has also been instrumental in the launch of Fire Corps, a national initiative to recruit community members into local fire and EMS departments to **perform non-emergency roles**. This allows department members to focus on training and emergency response while at the same time increasing the services and programs the department can offer. Fire Corps is a component of the DHS's Citizen Corps initiative and is administered on a national level by the NVFC. For more information, visit [www.firecorps.org](#) .

**1-800-FIRE-LINE:** In addition, the NVFC administers the 1-800-FIRE-LINE national recruitment campaign in an effort to boost the ranks in the volunteer fire service both operationally and non-operationally. Community members can call the toll-free 1-800-FIRE-LINE number from anywhere in the country to learn about the firefighter, EMS, and Fire Corps opportunities in their community. The campaign also includes resources for fire departments and state fire associations to implement and market the campaign. Learn more at [www.1800fireline.org](#) .

**NVFC Retention and Recruitment tools:** The National Volunteer Fire Council has many helpful resources, Best Practices, videos and PSAs and other tools on their [Retention and Recruitment section](#). Also learn more about other NVFC programs and services at [www.nvfc.org](#) or call 1-888-ASK-NVFC.

**National Junior Firefighter Program Recruitment Video:** Junior firefighter program advisors and department leaders can use this short video, which features juniors participating

and explaining their interest in junior firefighting and their plans for their future, to recruit youth for their program at the local level. The [video](#) can be downloaded and taken to schools, community organizations, or department open houses to educate youth and adults about the benefit of junior firefighter programs.



**Why I Chose Fire: Next Generation Volunteer Video:** This 9-minute video features inspirational interviews with diverse first responders about why they love volunteering and what inspired them to get involved in the fire/EMS services. The videos articulate what potential volunteer firefighters need to know to be successful today and in the future. [Click here](#) to download a free copy of Why I Chose Fire: Next Generation from the Fire 20/20 web site, and learn how to get a customized version for your department or organization.



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**Need custom books? Going to print soon**

In case you or someone you know needs custom IT'S A DISASTER! books we are trying to do a large bundled print soon.

We discount our **266-page** books **50% to 75% off** list (or as low as \$3.50 U.S. each + freight) and customize the covers and first 12 color, glossy pages for free. And, if needed, agencies, nonprofits and groups can [upgrade](#) to add **48 to 288** extra color glossy pages (so up to **300 custom** pages)



to include coupons, ads or sponsorship messages, grant specific data and more for **\$5.50** US each delivered (**\$6.50** for businesses).

It's a great way to collaborate with local businesses, helps raise funds for local volunteers, and gets the public excited and interested in preparedness using books filled with hundreds of dollars worth of savings. Learn more about our [books and programs](#) or call FedHealth at **1-888-999-4325**.

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## America's PrepareAthon!



**America's PrepareAthon!** is a national community-based campaign for action to increase emergency preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. The spring and fall events are designed to encourage Americans to practice preparedness before an emergency or disaster strikes.

America's PrepareAthon! is modeled on the same principle as the Great ShakeOut earthquake drills that encourage millions of people to physically practice what to do during an earthquake. Participants commit to take action and take at least one step (or more!) to prepare for a hazard they may face.

Want to plan a preparedness event for your family or community for the 4/30 National Day of Action (or anytime)? America's PrepareAthon! has FREE planning guides, toolkits, creative materials and more to prepare communities for [six hazards](#) (earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornados, wildfires, and winter storms). Most of these resources are available in [other languages](#), including Spanish, Japanese, and French.

It's not a matter of if the next disaster will happen, but when. Be smart, take part, and prepare for emergencies before they strike! Visit [www.ready.gov/prepare](http://www.ready.gov/prepare) to learn more.

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## On The Front Lines



**Will FirstNet Become the Next Healthcare.gov?** *by Bill Schrier [Sr Policy Advisor in OCIO of Washington State] 5-Mar-2015 via GT* - Another signature achievement of the Obama Administration – the \$7 billion nationwide network called **First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)** – appears headed down a path similar to the original Healthcare.gov. ... We can recognize the danger signs. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker and other administration officials have the authority to free FirstNet from the shackles of “Fedgov”, allowing it to innovatively accomplish its mission of creating a nationwide public safety wireless broadband network for our responders. But will they act?

...

Today – three years after the law created FirstNet – the agency plans to issue a draft RFP by the end of March, and perhaps a final RFP by the end of 2015. Given the extraordinary complexity of such an RFP (“build a nationwide wireless network in 55 states and territories serving all local, state and federal first responders”), responses to the RFP probably won't come in until mid-2016. The evaluation of the responses might take another year, and the final state plans another 6 to 12 months after that. It is likely to be 2018 – six years after FirstNet was created – before the network implements anywhere. And, of course, there could be protests after the contract award is announced, lengthening these times.

In the meantime, the technology industry is innovating and changing at a record pace. While

FirstNet writes an RFP in 2015, who knows what the wireless, smart phone, tablet computer, Internet-of-Things, connected and autonomous vehicle industries will look like in 2018? Noted wireless industry Chetan Sharma thinks 5G networks will be implementing at that time, while FirstNet implements 2015 or earlier technology.

Is there a way to change the direction of this impending train derailment? [Continue reading on GovTech.com](#)



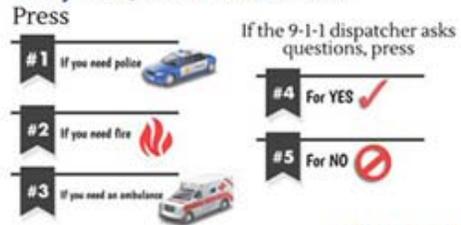
An **advanced protective suit for health care workers** who treat Ebola patients, devised by a **Johns Hopkins** team, is one of the first five awardees in a federal funding contest aimed at quickly devising new tools to combat the deadly disease.

The Johns Hopkins prototype is designed to do a better job than current garments in keeping health care workers from coming in contact with Ebola patients' contagious body fluids, both during treatment and while removing a soiled suit. In addition, it is expected to keep the wearer cooler—an important benefit in hot, humid regions such as West Africa. [Continue reading on USFRA.org](#)

The **Silent Call procedure** in the **Massachusetts Enhanced 9-1-1 system** allows a caller who is unable to verbally communicate their emergency over the phone to receive the appropriate response. If you need to call 9-1-1 and you are unable to speak for any reason, such as a physical disability, domestic violence or home invasion, follow these simple steps using a touch tone wireline telephone or a cell phone:

### The Silent Call Procedure

If you need to call 9-1-1 and you are unable to speak for any reason, once the call is answered:



Source: MA State 911 Department and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



#### FIRST DIAL 9-1-1

Once the call is answered, indicate your need by pressing the appropriate number on your telephone.

- IF YOU NEED **POLICE** ~ PRESS **1**
- IF YOU NEED **FIRE** ~ PRESS **2**
- IF YOU NEED AN **AMBULANCE** ~ PRESS **3**

The 9-1-1 Dispatcher may ask questions that require yes or no answers.

- PRESS **4** FOR **YES**
- PRESS **5** FOR **NO**

Find more information at [Mass.gov](#) and consider implementing these procedures into your local emergency service systems since it would be a great to spread this nationwide. (Original source: [MA State Police FB pg](#) / h/t to [A O W Ambulance Svc](#))

## USFRA.ORG



NETWORKING • TRAINING • LEARNING • SHARING

**U.S. First Responders Association** member Bree is USFRA's PTSD/TBI blogger sharing her victories and struggles with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. Recently USFRA launched "PTSD/TBI Sunday connection" hosted by Bree throughout the entire day (9a-noon, 3p, 6p, 9p Central) to discuss a variety of topics of interest for TBI and/or PTSD survivors and supporters. Join us each Sunday in

USFRA's chat room to visit, chat, and discover the fact you are not alone. [www.usfra.org/chat](http://www.usfra.org/chat)

Also visit [Bree's blog](#) and USFRA's [PTSD & TBI Support Group](#) for resources on coping with these illnesses and to exchange ideas with other survivors and supporters.

Do you have a story or resource from the front lines you'd like to share? Send it to [info@itsadisaster.net](mailto:info@itsadisaster.net)

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**On the Lighter Side**

We know First Responders and EM officials deal with a lot of serious stuff, but they also create some great memes! Here's a few to lighten your day...



Find more of these (and other resources and news) on the [U.S. First Responders Association's Facebook page](#). And feel free to share your favorite meme there or send it to [info@itsadisaster.net](mailto:info@itsadisaster.net) and we'll credit you in a future enews or post!

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...the long-anticipated **El Niño has finally arrived**, according to forecasters with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center?! In their updated monthly outlook released today, forecasters issued an El Niño Advisory to declare the arrival of the ocean-atmospheric phenomenon marked by warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central Pacific Ocean near the equator. Due to the **weak strength** of the El Niño, widespread or significant global weather pattern impacts are **not** anticipated. However, certain impacts often associated with El Niño may appear this spring in parts of the Northern Hemisphere, such as wetter-than-normal conditions along the U.S. Gulf Coast. *Source: [NOAA News](#)*

...the World Health Organization has approved the **first rapid test for Ebola**?! The Ebola test by Corgenix is less accurate than standard PCR test but is easy to perform, does not require electricity, and **can give results within 15 minutes**. *Source: [Fox News](#)*

...a toilet, conveniently situated near the Student Union Bar at the University of the West of England, is proving that **urine can generate electricity**?! The prototype urinal is the result of a partnership between researchers at UWE Bristol and Oxfam. It is hoped the **pee-power technology** will light cubicles in refugee camps, which are often dark and dangerous places particularly for women. Students and staff are being asked to use the urinal to donate pee to fuel microbial fuel cell (MFC) stacks that generate electricity to power indoor lighting. *Source: [Science Daily](#)*

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### Cool Links / Ideas



A startup called **Reaction, Inc.** recently raised \$10 million to make disaster relief smarter, cheaper, and safer. The company has pre-sold hundreds of its 80-square-foot **Exo shelters** and projects that it will sell thousands of units this year, according to Forbes.

Since there are only two parts, a base (floor) and a shell (walls and roof), both Exo parts are lightweight making them easy to move around by hand. Assembly of an Exo couldn't be easier - just set the shell down onto a base and it clicks into place creating a secure,

locked connection.

Besides their cool, futuristic appearance, the startup's Exo shelter has a variety of selling points:

- They are stackable and 16 units can be loaded in the back of a semi truck.
- They are customizable and "smart," with features like HVAC systems and digital door locks.
- They sleep four adults and can be lifted and assembled by four people in a matter of minutes. (It's just two pieces, a shell and a base.)
- They can be connected to a source of electricity, including solar panels or car batteries, if available.

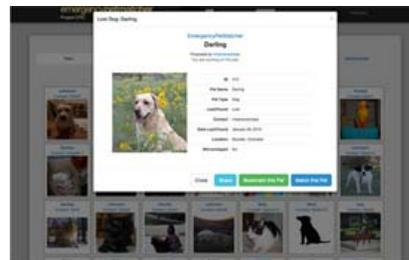
- And most importantly, they're affordable. The units cost around \$6,000 for the basic disaster relief version and go up to \$10,000 for more tricked-out commercial units.

The company expects disaster relief to make up the bulk of its sales ~ esp. when communities are faced with providing shelters for people displaced for long periods of time.



Popular Mechanics explains the Exo has enormous potential. The units can be fit together to form a multiroom home of sorts. A wet unit, containing running water, is also in the works. Beyond its intended relief mission, it could, and most likely will, be used for other purposes: for workers in the North Dakota oil fields, campers at a music festival like Bonnaroo, or in dozens of other scenarios. The pods aren't fancy, and they're not cozy, but they're secure, fully wired, and they have access to power.

Read more on [Popular Mechanics](#) and [Fortune](#) and visit [www.reactionhousing.com](http://www.reactionhousing.com)

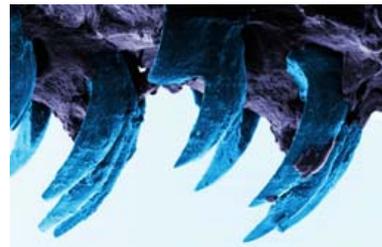


**EmergencyPetMatcher**, a new website created by computer scientists at the **University of Colorado at Boulder**, hopes to make pet-and-owner reunifications during and after disasters even easier.

EmergencyPetMatcher is a one-stop website for lost and found postings, where people can post photos of lost pets and hopefully match them with photos of pets found. Users of the website can peruse posted photos and look for matches. When a certain number of people suggest a match, an email is generated to the posters of lost and found photos.

Having a system to reunite people with their pets will hopefully mitigate some of the intense trauma of a disaster situation, said Joanne White, a CU Boulder researcher who helped create the website.

The site is a part of Project EPIC, a 2009 National Science Foundation initiative that set aside \$2.9 million for projects that help with information flow during disasters. Continue reading on [EmergencyMgmt.com](http://EmergencyMgmt.com) or visit [www.emergencypetmatcher.com](http://www.emergencypetmatcher.com)



In a study set to come out this month in the *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*, British researchers announced that **the teeth** of shelled, aquatic creatures called **limpets** are the **strongest** biological material on Earth.

The teeth, which are so small they must be examined with a microscope, are composed of very thin, tightly-packed fibers containing a hard mineral called goethite. Limpets use them to scrape food off of rocks, but humans could adapt the technology to build better planes, boats and dental fillings.

Asa Barber, a professor at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom, found that the limpet tooth fibers had a strength of 5 gigapascals, about five times stronger than most spider silks. The teeth also bested several man-made materials, including Kevlar, a synthetic fiber used to make bulletproof vests and puncture-proof tires. The amount of weight it can withstand, Barber told the BBC, can be compared to a strand of spaghetti used to hold up more than 3,300 pounds, the weight of an adult female hippopotamus. *Continue reading on [Washington Post](#)*

Got a cool link or idea? Email it to [info@itsadisaster.net](mailto:info@itsadisaster.net)

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Please help us spread the word about our customizable tools and fundraising programs by sharing this with others.

And if you know an agency, nonprofit, school, church, Scout troop, or volunteer group (like a CERT, MRC, Radio Club, Rotary, etc) who could benefit from our preparedness book and/or funding ideas, please have them visit [www.itsadisaster.net/ppp.html](http://www.itsadisaster.net/ppp.html) or call **1-888-999-4325** or [email](mailto:info@itsadisaster.net) us for a **FREE** information kit!

Also ... we're always looking for input, stories, news, products or services from agencies, volunteer groups, schools and others so feel free to email them to [info@itsadisaster.net](mailto:info@itsadisaster.net) .

Stay safe out there, j & B

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