

I am a professional firefighter and have been for the past twelve years. Thirteen years ago, I was a part-paid firefighter in Norton Shores. At the time, I would have given my left arm to become a Professional Norton Shores firefighter. Unfortunately, the timing was not right and I ended up at another great Professional Fire Department in South East Michigan. It troubles me to read some of these comments regarding Norton Shores Firefighters. I personally know how dedicated they are to the citizens they protect and serve. I would like to clarify a few things. Take note; this is not whining about the job; this is defending the "lazy" and "greedy" perception that is portrayed in some of the online comments to the article: Gaertner, Eric. "Norton Shores OKs firefighter layoffs; city officials may seek millage." Muskegon Chronicle 6 May 2010: Print.

First and foremost, firefighters get in to the business to help people who are experiencing some of their worst moments of their lives. We see people live and die... sometimes right in front of us. At times, the stress can be overwhelming on our minds and bodies, physically and emotionally. That being said, it is exceptionally rewarding work. Second, Firefighters do not get rich. Trust me; you want fairly compensated firefighters. It retains and attracts the best employees. You can be a "training ground" for great employees or the place great employees go for employment; it is your choice by the way your government opts to compensate their employees. Third, we do work twenty-four hour shifts, roughly ten days a month. That sounds great on the surface and does have some obvious advantages. There are some not-so-obvious draw backs too. With our schedule, we rotate through the week and work weekends, kids sporting events, birthdays, and holidays. I have spent several Christmas's at the Fire Station, and I don't tuck my kids in bed at night on a regular basis. Fourth, there is some down time during the day that gives the appearance of "nothing going on". This is a 24-7 business; don't forget that those same firefighters may be up all night long on emergency calls while you are home in bed with your family. Fifth, Public Safety Officers (PSO) is not the answer to good emergency services. Police and Fire are two totally different professions. In a shooting, would you like the EMT's to help the victim or hunt the shooter? In a car accident, would you like the victim cut out of the car or the traffic directed around the accident? In a house fire, would you like the police officer directing traffic or locating a victim? Should the police officer respond to the bank robbery or the house fire with victims? I added a link to a video about Public Safety Officers below; watch it.

I urge Fire Chief Dave Purchase to step up and fight for his department to be adequately staffed. Your Governmental leaders and Fire Chief's primary goal should be to obtain more professional firefighters and not lose them. The fact is that your department is under staffed with professional firefighters... prior to the cuts. The more professional firefighters who show up, ready and on an apparatus, the quicker-more adequate-expert help will be provided. It increases life safety and property preservation. See the link below to the *National Institute of Standards and Technology's* (NIST) study on staffing. The residents of Norton Shores are extremely fortunate to have such a high level of dedicated Professional Firefighters. Sometimes it appears like firefighters are solely fighting for our own jobs. You need to look deeper into the arguments. We are fighting to adequately and safely perform our jobs of protecting and assisting citizens in their greatest time of need.

NIST staffing study link [http://www.nist.gov/cgi-bin/view\\_pub.cgi?pub\\_id=904607&division=866](http://www.nist.gov/cgi-bin/view_pub.cgi?pub_id=904607&division=866)  
See the attachment, conclusions on page 52

PSO link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOxV18goLjc>

Sincerely,

Joey Thorington