



Airport Police & Fire Recruitment and Retention Issues

January 2019

Airport Police and Fire Officer

- Airport Police and Fire Officers (APFOs) occupy a very unique, yet very demanding role in public safety. The requirements to achieve and maintain the duties far surpass any other public safety profession in the State of Alaska. Blended with the unique environmental and operational challenges that exist in the state of Alaska, the Airport Police and Fire Department stands as one of the most highly trained and most highly qualified public safety department in the entire United States.
- Over time, the APFO job class has changed significantly without a commensurate parity in pay. Especially in the past 20 years, there have been significant advances in the training and job classification from the previously antiquated “Airport Safety Officer” to the current “Airport Police and Fire Officer.
- APFO’s are fully sworn, state-certified police officers in the State of Alaska, just like their Alaska State Trooper counterparts. Not only do they meet the state certification for Basic Police Officer Certification, they must also meet the FAA requirement for Law Enforcement (49 CFR 1542.217). Yet, they are paid far less for the same amount of training and responsibilities. The only variance in pay should be the Geographical Difference that Troopers receive over their Airport counterparts. Unfortunately, this is not the case.
- APFO’s and Alaska State Troopers are a part of the same union (Public Safety Employee Association) and share a labor contract with the state. Court Service Officers and Deputy Fire Marshalls are also in the same labor contract.
- The position of APFO is much more demanding than that of your typical police officer. The department’s agreements and responsibilities also encompass requirements specific to aeronautics-focused agencies: the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Homeland Security Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Department of Homeland Security Investigation (HSI), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). An Airport Police Officer is responsible for knowing and responding to violations of municipal, state, and federal laws / regulations.
- Similarly, all fire fighters in the State of Alaska must possess a state certification as a Fire Fighter I. Fewer then go on to become certified at the Fire Fighter II level, and fewer still earn the elite certification as an Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighter (all required to be an APFO).

APFO REQUIRED CERTIFICATIONS

- Airport Police and Fire Officers are currently required to attain and maintain the following certifications:
- Basic Alaska Police Standards Council Certification
- State of Alaska Hazardous Materials Awareness
- State of Alaska Hazardous Materials Operations
- State of Alaska Firefighter I Certification
- State of Alaska Firefighter II Certification

- State of Alaska Aircraft Rescue Firefighting (ARFF) Certification
- Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT)

Alaska State Troopers are only required to complete the Alaska Law Enforcement Training Academy and possess a Basic Alaska Police Standards Council certificate. APFO's not only have to successfully complete all of the above listed training to even become APFO's, they have a minimum of 126 hours of annual recurrent training they are mandated to complete to maintain their certifications.

In their recruitment and retention report published November, 2017, DPS reported that it costs approximately \$190,000 to recruit, train and certify a new Trooper. With the additional certifications and trainings required of an APFO, it takes a full year of training that costs approximately \$262,500 for each new officer. This does not include the nearly \$19,000 of yearly recurrent training that is required for each officer to maintain their certifications.

APFO POSITION DESCRIPTIONS AND WAGE COMPARISON

APFO VI

This is the Chief of the Anchorage Airport Police and Fire Department. The Chief oversees the entirety of public safety operations at the Anchorage Airport, a 5,000 acre campus which sees over 5 million passengers annually and serves a "resident" base of 5,500 employees and tenants. It is also (as of 2015) the fourth largest cargo hub in the world and is essential to the Alaskan economy. The Chief is one of several component managers reporting directly to the Airport Manager and manages an annual \$10M budget. S/he is responsible for the largest ARFF Fire department in the State of Alaska, and the 3rd largest police department. The chief supervises approximately 72 employees. There is only one APFOVI in the State of Alaska. The Chief is a Range 21. The Chief is required to hold a current police certification as well as firefighter certifications.

An Alaska State Trooper Lieutenant is ranged at a 24, much higher than a Chief of Police. This means that the Anchorage Chief is making 19% less than a DPS Lieutenant who has far less responsibility, and only 3.5% less (if starting at Step A) than a Trooper with 1 year of experience.

APFO V

This is the Deputy Chief of the Anchorage Airport Police and Fire Department. The APFO V has the same responsibilities as the APFO VI and serves as the Chief with the same authority in the Chief's absence. The Deputy Chief also directly supervises the APFO IV shift commanders.

Note that at Fairbanks Airport Police and Fire, the APFO V is the Chief, owing to the fact that the Fairbanks Airport Chief is responsible for a smaller area of operations than Anchorage. The Fairbanks Airport employs roughly 1,000 employees, and its campus is 3,470 acres. The Chief also is responsible for managing not only a \$5M budget, but also 33

department members. Just like the Anchorage Chief, he is one of several component managers reporting directly to the Airport Manager.

An APFO V is a Range 20. An Alaska State Trooper Lieutenant is a Range 24, meaning he/she is making 30% more than the Chief of the Fairbanks Airport department. This same Chief (if starting at Step A) is also making 10% less than a Trooper with 1 year of experience.

APFO IV

In Anchorage, the APFO IV is the designated Shift Commander (Watch Commander) responsible for one of four 12-hour shifts that operate around-the-clock and are responsible for all Police, Fire, and EMS functions at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. The APFO IV directly supervises two Sergeants (APFO IIIs) and 7-10 patrol officers and fire fighters. The APFO IV oversees all public safety functions for the entire airport during nights and weekends. The APFO IV has the authority to close the airport in an emergency, which has a tremendous impact on the entire State of Alaska. The APFO IV provides corrective and career counseling, writes performance evaluations, and each APFO IV oversees all the additional duties of one of four critical function within the Anchorage Airport Police and Fire organizational structure (Fire, Police, Vehicles, Special Duties).

In Fairbanks, the APFO IV is the Deputy Chief and Watch Commander for the bulk of the weekday dayshift, with the same duties and responsibilities as his Anchorage counterpart, but fewer people on shift to supervise.

The APFO IV is a range 77, the same range as an Alaska State Trooper with no supervisory responsibilities or additional duties.

APFO III

The Sergeant (APFO III) is the first line supervisor for one of four 12-hour shifts that operate around-the-clock and is responsible for all Police, Fire, and EMS functions at either the Fairbanks or Anchorage International Airport. The sergeant can fulfill the duties of the lieutenant in his/her absence and has all the same responsibilities and authority of the APFO IV when acting in that capacity.

A sergeant (APFO III) typically has 7-15 years of experience before applying for a supervisory position. APFO III has the authority to close the airport in an emergency, which has a tremendous impact on the entire State of Alaska. The APFO III provides corrective and career counseling, writes performance evaluations.

In Fairbanks, the APFO III is typically the Watch Commander for the shift he/she is working.

The APFO III is a Range 76 employee, one range (7.5%) lower than an Alaska State Trooper with only a year on the job with no supervisory responsibilities, experience, or additional duties.

APFO I/II

The APFO I is the entry-level recruit. Upon hiring, the APFO I is required to successfully complete an approved Law Enforcement Academy and three State-Certified Fire Fighter Academies. Following the academy training, each recruit is required to complete a period of Field Training with an APFO II or III who is trained as a Field Training Officer.

The APFO II is the journeyman level Airport Police and Fire Officer.

APFOs receive the exact same police training as their State Trooper counterparts.

The APFO I and Trooper Recruit could be hired on the same day and attend the same academy; yet the Trooper is designated one range and two steps (75C vs. 74A) ahead of the APFO (15% higher pay). Upon completion of the same police academy, the APFO must now attend 3 more academies and two field training sessions before being released to full duties. The APFO II is promoted to Range 75. The Trooper is now a Range 77 (15% higher pay than an APFO II), the same as an APFO Lieutenant who may have over 20 years of state service.

In Fairbanks, APFO II's are often tasked with Watch Commander duties in their Sergeant's absence. On a night shift, this means that an APFO II acting as Watch Commander is in charge of the entire airport.

Notwithstanding the same police training as an Alaska State Trooper, and the additional three Fire Fighter certifications...

- All APFOs are required to undergo annual training in small boat operations and are required to operate the rescue boats in Lake Hood, Lake Spenard, the Fairbanks float pond or the Chena and Tanana Rivers in all weather and lighting conditions. Anchorage Airport is also required by the FAA to have a water response to the Cook Inlet within a 3-mile radius, using aluminum jet skis in one of the strongest tidal zones in the world.
- All APFOs are required to maintain certifications as either Emergency Trauma Technicians (ETT) or Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), as well as maintain certifications in Basic Life Support (BLS) and be certified to use Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) Technicians.
- All APFOs must be knowledgeable with FAA Air Traffic Control procedures that allow them to operate on aircraft movement areas, and communicate with the tower and pilots of aircraft on a frequent basis. All APFOs, regardless of longevity, are trained to be capable of serving as Incident Commanders in high profile, high stress situations that may involve mass casualties.
- All APFOs are required to complete a physical fitness test each year as a condition of continued employment.

APFO RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS

Neither airport has a separate recruitment and hiring team that performs those functions year round. We rely on officers to work on these as "extra assigned duties."

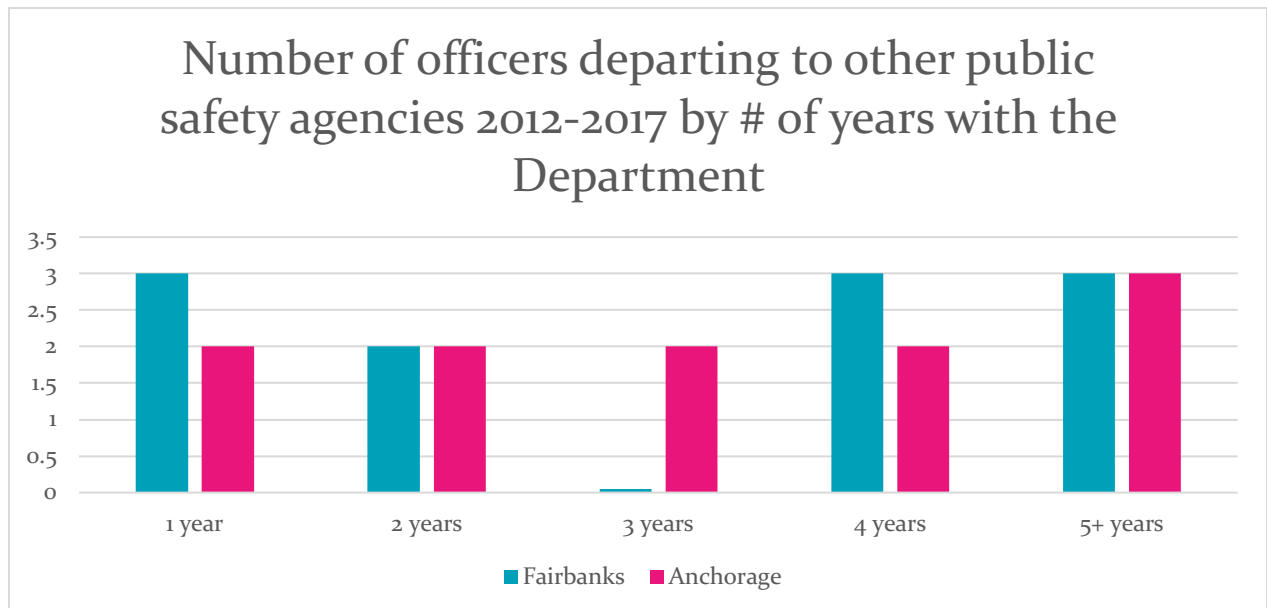
Since DPS has received a 7.5% raise in the fall of 2018, it will make it much harder to recruit new officers, as their starting salary will be 7.5% higher than ours, possibly 15% higher if DPS receives the 2nd expected raise. Once through training and with a successful promotion to an APFO II, our officers will be making 22.5% less than a Trooper recruit (with the 2nd DPS raise). There is absolutely no way that our recruits will want to stay with the airport systems when they can get an immediate almost 25% pay increase, with a job that requires far less initial and on-going training.

In the past 11 years, Anchorage's positions (PCN's) have been cut from 93 down to 61, mostly due to positions that were open for too long due to a lack of qualified applicants. This has led to fewer officers to fill shift positions and more required overtime.

APFO RETENTION PROBLEMS

Both Anchorage and Fairbanks airports have extreme retention problems, which will become much worse if APFO's are not provided the same pay increases that Troopers have realized in the last 6 months. Between the years of 2012 and 2017, Anchorage Airport hired 41 new officers and lost 40. In this same time period, Fairbanks fared much worse, having hired 18 and lost 24. Fairbanks and Anchorage are expecting to each lose 3 additional officers in the next 6 months. An employee can quit with the traditional two-week's notice. If it were possible to start the hiring process the very next day (which it is not), it would still take 20 months to replace that employee and have them count for staffing.

Of the 40 officers that Anchorage lost, 11 of them (28%) were to other public safety agencies. Of the 24 officers that Fairbanks lost, 11 of them (46%) were to other agencies. When discussing high turn-over and retention issues, the officers who don't remain with the department for more than 2 years are a substantial drain of state resources, as the departments realize little, if any, return on their investments. Of the 11 that Fairbanks lost, 5 of them (45%) were in the first 2 years of their employment, and Anchorage lost 4 of their 11 (36%) in the first 2 years.

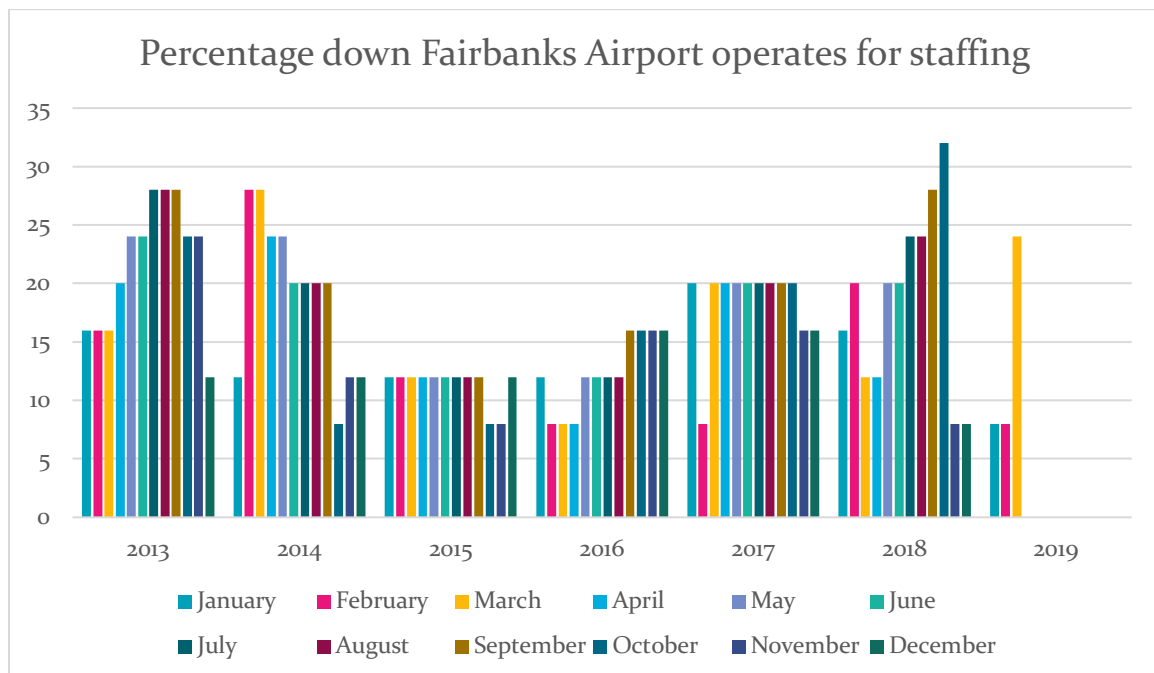


The lack of a defined benefit retirement system makes it far too easy for officers to take their retirements with them to jobs with higher pay, better benefits, lower health care

costs, and a defined benefit retirement system (outside Alaska). A return to a defined benefits retirement system has been desperately needed to retain officers for longer than just a few years. Currently in Anchorage, they have 61 total APFO positions, with 3 currently vacant. Twenty-eight have been with the department 5 or less years, and they currently have 39 (64%) Tier 4 employees. In Fairbanks, there are 26 APFO positions, 2 are currently vacant. Half of the department has been employed there for 5 or less years, and 16 (62%) are Tier 4. Of the total 22 employees who left for other departments, 20 of them (91%) were Tier 4.

Due to the amount of training required for a new recruit, it takes a full year before they can even count towards staffing on both the police and fire sides of the job. Even though at times the number of PCN's may look filled or close to it, many of those positions do not alleviate the amount of overtime that is needed to fulfill minimum staffing at each department. Having recruits in training actually adds to the overtime that is required of fully trained staff, as almost all of the training (minus the police academy) is provided in-house. Constant overtime, understaffing, and training needs for new recruits negatively impacts employee morale, and causes burnout of existing staff.

Below is a chart that shows, on average by month, what percentage down the Fairbanks Airport department operated. As a comparison, DPS reported that they were 40 positions down from their fully staff position of 389, roughly 10%. Since 2013, Fairbanks Airport has rarely seen staffing levels as good as DPS, as they are usually operating at 12-20% down, but have seen levels as high as 32% down from fully staffed.



CONCLUSION

Both Anchorage and Fairbanks Airports have had extreme issues for years with recruiting and retaining qualified officers. The portability of the Tier IV retirement system makes it incredibly easy for officers to leave either department for jobs with better pay and benefits, as evidenced by the fact that 91% of officers who left for other departments were in Tier 4 of PERS. The constant revolving door of new officers is not only a massive drain on state resources and time, it is taxing on senior officers who have to train them and work understaffed shifts on their off time, causing burnout and higher levels of job dissatisfaction. Both airport departments operate at a much higher rate of understaffing than the Troopers, yet it is the Troopers who were recently awarded a 7.5% raise, with a potential additional 7.5% soon. The pay rates between APFO's and Troopers needs to be addressed as soon as possible, before the airport departments lose even more officers to other agencies.

A return to a defined benefits retirement plan and pay raises that the Troopers recently realized will be huge tools in keeping us competitive with DPS and other agencies, but more importantly allow us retain valuable employees. It is currently costing the State of Alaska far too much money to keep operating this way.

