



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 17, 2011

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CITY'S FIREFIGHTERS AGREE TO JOIN CITY'S WELLNESS PROGRAM

Major element of 2012 budget will benefit from addition of more than 8,500 firefighters and spouses; will improve health and quality of life for City's first responders

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today that the firefighters and paramedics for the city of Chicago have joined the City's new wellness initiative, a major step forward for the new program that is projected to save more than \$20 million for the City in the 2012 budget.

"The brave men and women of the Chicago Fire Department put their lives on the line every single day to protect the residents of Chicago," said Mayor Emanuel. "I am pleased that they are joining the City's wellness program, to improve their own quality of life and further protect taxpayer resources. On behalf of all Chicagoans, the firefighters have our continued appreciation."

The addition of the firefighters and paramedics adds more than 5,100 uniformed firefighters and paramedics and more than 3,400 covered spouses, for a total of approximately 8,600 additional lives for the program. This brings the total number of people in the wellness program to more than 35,000. The cost savings from the wellness program are estimated at \$20 million in 2012, with dramatic increases in the future as the City's workforce becomes healthier.

"Everyone understands how dangerous our job is, but many people don't know that because of the stress of our work environment, we are substantially more likely to suffer from job-related health issues," said Tom Ryan, President of Chicago Firefighters Local 2. "Preventative health and wellness has always been a top priority for Local 2 and we've conducted health fairs for our members for years. We look forward to participating in this new initiative. We hope it helps improve the overall health of our members as well as all others involved. This program is an extension of what we have already been doing, so it makes good sense for us to be a part of the Mayor's Wellness program."



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

The union requested a provision in the Wellness program that offers firefighters additional specific testing related to firefighter toxicity risk, a crucial test that will help ensure firefighters are staying safe relative to the endemic risks they face through their work.

This increase in people participating in the wellness program is significant for two reasons. First, the addition of the firefighters and paramedics will increase the general health and quality of life for these employees and their spouses, and will manifest itself in healthcare cost savings. Second, due to the significant increase in the pool of employees in the wellness program, the costs associated with the program will decrease as well, on a per-head basis, which will add value to the program.

Mayor Emanuel's 2012 budget proposal, which included the wellness program, was passed by the City Council on a 50-0 vote on Wednesday. The wellness program is one of the cost savings measures that made up more than \$420 million in savings in the budget. Mayor Emanuel met with departmental commissioners on Thursday morning to outline clear plans for implementation of the budget in order to maximize savings. He highlighted the addition of the firefighters to the wellness program as an example of a situation in which the City may outdo its own goals, for the benefit of employees and taxpayers alike.

The wellness program was announced this summer, in a joint announcement between Mayor Emanuel and Jorge Ramirez, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor. The RFP for the program was released a few weeks ago and bids are due in mid-December. The city aims to launch the wellness program early in 2012.

#