

Can Psychological Profiling Improve Firefighter Selection Procedures?

AIFP would like to extend a special note of appreciation to Ms Robyn Pearce of the Tasmania Fire Service for her assistance in preparing this research report.

Background

Since November 1999 the Tasmania Fire Service has been using the Australian Institute of Forensic Psychology Profiling System for screening applicants for the role of firefighter. AIFP, with the assistance of the Tasmania Fire Service, undertook a study to investigate the effectiveness of the AIFP system. This summary details the results of that study.

The research is based on the comparison of two groups of people who have been hired as firefighters in the Tasmania Fire Service. The first group had been hired without using the AIFP Profiling System. The second group had all been selected with the benefit of this tool.

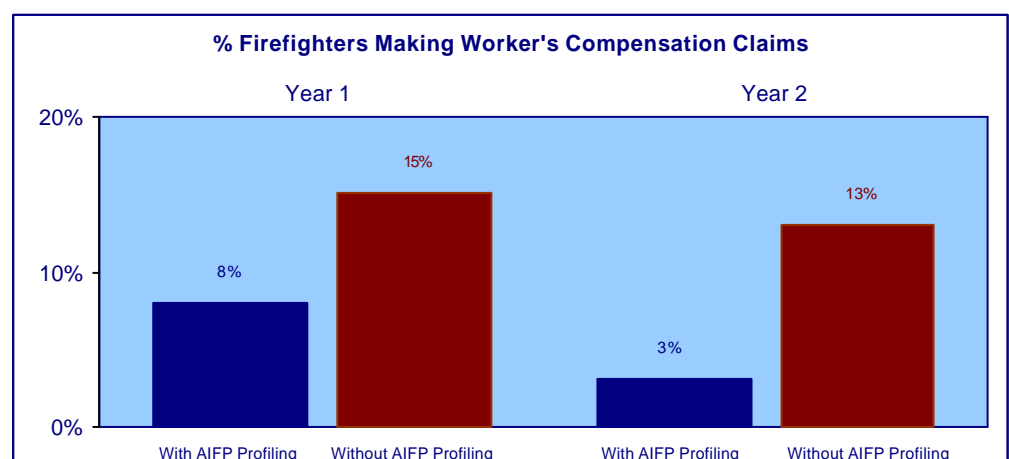
For each group, data was collected about their first two years of work experience. Naturally, the non-AIFP group has been employed longer—on average about four years. However, this study examined only the data from Year 1 and Year 2 for each group.

The pre-group contained 39 people and the post (AIFP) group contained 34. Where appropriate, adjustments have been made for this difference.

Study Results

Worker's Compensation Claims

During the first year of service 15% of the comparison group (6 out of 39 people) made a Worker's Compensation claim. In comparison 3 out of 34 of the AIFP group made a Worker's Compensation claim (8%). This is a difference of 7%.

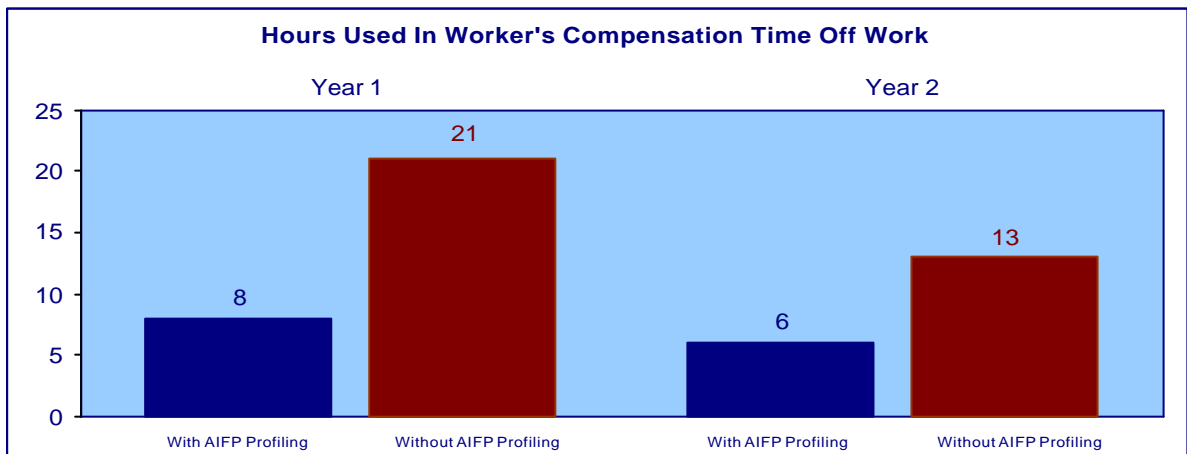


During the second year the gap widened slightly. In the comparison group 5 out of 39 people made a Worker's Compensation claim (13%). In the AIFP group 1 out of 34 people made a Worker's Compensation claim (3%). So, in the second year of employment the AIFP group had almost 10% less employees who made Worker's Compensation claims.

These relatively small differences become far more significant when the actual number of hours taken as a group is considered.

In year one the comparison group took an average of 21.16 hours of time off due to a Worker's Compensation claim. In contrast the AIFP group took 8.54 hours.

In the second year the non AIFP group took an average of 12.75 hours per person. The AIFP group took 5.6 hours per person.



Over the first two years of employment this means that the AIFP group took 249.02 fewer hours of time away from work due to a Worker's Compensation claim.

Resignations

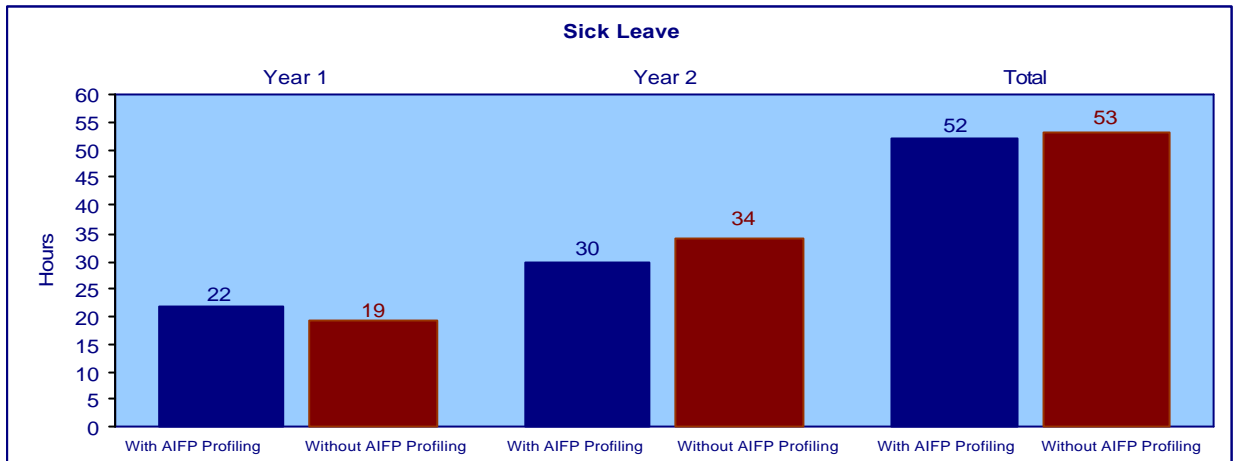
Firefighting is one of the most highly sought after and competitive positions within the Public Safety community. Firefighters are largely welcomed by the communities they serve and receive more positive feedback than do other Public Safety Officers such as those working in Police or Corrections.

Historically, the rate of people resigning from the position has been much lower than in other Public Safety professions.

When the number of people who resigned during their first two years of service is examined, we found that three people in the pre AIFP group quit the job. In contrast, no one from the AIFP group resigned.

Sick Leave

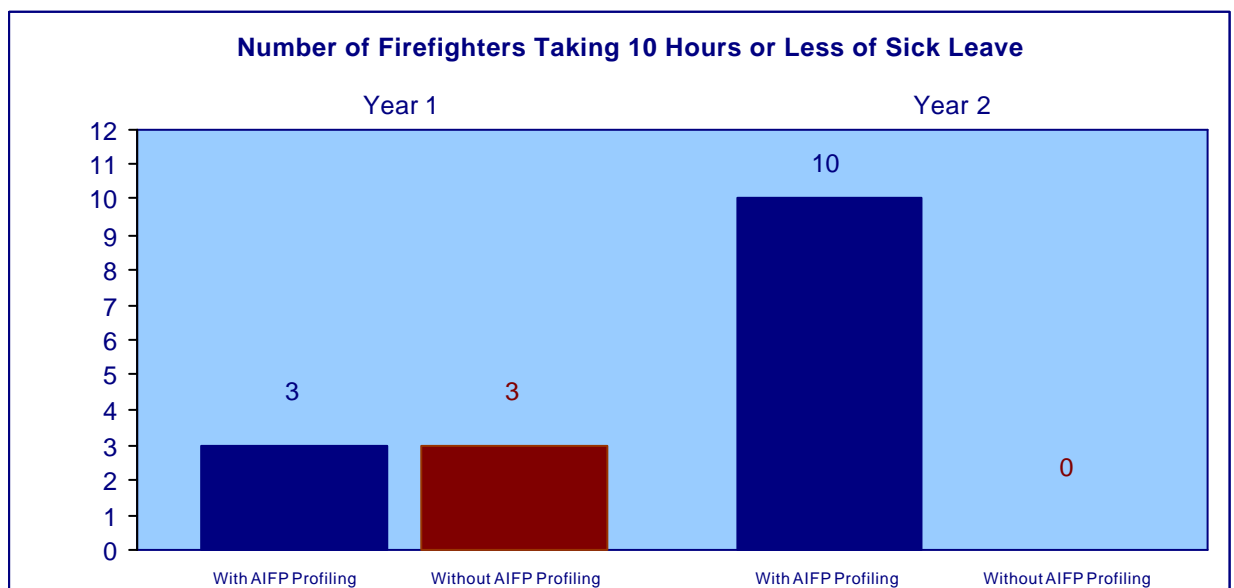
In the first year of work the comparison group took an average of 19.12 hours sick leave. The AIFP group took slightly more, with an average of 22.52 hours sick leave.



In the second year this pattern reversed. The comparison group took 34.38 hours sick leave whereas the AIFP group took 30.85 hours sick leave.

In order to examine sick leave more closely, we then studied the people in each group who had taken sick leave in year one and year two, and examined how many of those had taken ten hours or less of sick leave.

In year one the non screened group had 22 people who took sick leave, and three of these had ten hours or less. The results were very similar for the AIFP group, with 20 people taking sick leave and again three taking ten hours or less.



In year two however the situation changed substantially. Of 33 people in the non screened group there was no one who took ten hours or less. In the AIFP group there were 28 people who took sick leave, and eight of these (28%) took ten hours or less.

Thus, it appears that AIFP group members who take sick leave during their second year in the job tend to be off work for a significantly less amount of time.

For more information on this or other studies, or to discuss how AIFP can help your organisation recruit the best possible candidates for your public safety positions, please contact us.

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