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With Less State Aid, Localities Look for Ways to Cope.

In much of the country, states are offering localities less financial help than they were before the recession. That won't change anytime soon.

The fire department in Springfield, Ohio, has grown accustomed to frugal times. Calls for service keep climbing, but staff levels are frozen. Firefighters themselves fix vehicles and breathing equipment in order to save money on repair contracts. Recently, when a fire engine's generator failed and they couldn't afford to replace it, they had to mount a portable generator and rig it to work.

Springfield's revenue is below the levels of a decade ago, not even counting inflation. The city has responded by eliminating administrative staff, deferring maintenance and taking other measures intended to be least burdensome for residents. "The last five or six years has been nothing but one cut after another," says Warren Copeland, the city's mayor. "We've reached the point where any of the cuts we make from here on out are much more noticeable."

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