

Firefighter Shortage Alleviated By Suspension of Age Limit

The shortage of firefighters throughout Alaska may be alleviated due to a recent decision by the Bureau of Land Management regarding age limits of firefighters, according to U. S. Senator Mike Gravel.

Gravel said the previous age limits were 18 to 60 years.

The policy was criticized by Gravel in a letter last month. He requested that the policy, which he termed "arbitrarily discriminatory," be rescinded.

The BLM replied: Following receipt of your letter...we reconsidered our policy of limiting the hire of firefighters to persons between the ages of 18 and 60.

"We have decided to suspend the age restriction for the balance of the year," BLM authorities said.

Gravel said the BLM will con-

duct a study to determine a policy whereby persons over 60 years would be required to pass a physical examination. Hiring medical evaluation of an individual's physical fitness.

"This decision by the BLM not only rights an obvious discrimination against physically able senior citizens," Gravel said, "but makes immediately available to the BLM some badly needed personnel to battle the fires raging throughout Alaska."