



June 2, 2000

2000-R-0600

FIRE FIGHTERS

By: Veronica Rose, Principal Analyst

You asked for summaries of acts affecting fire fighters that the legislature passed in the 2000 session.

CAMPFIRES

This act specifically allows for campfires and bonfires to the extent they do not represent a nuisance and do not conflict with other burning restrictions. It eliminates the requirement that the Department of Environmental Protection issue written approval for fires used to control forest fires or to reduce the risk of uncontrolled salt marsh fires. (**PA 00-1**, *effective upon passage*)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

This act enacts and commits Connecticut to the terms of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which requires member states to provide mutual aid to manage emergencies and disasters declared by the governor of any of the party states. (**PA 00-32**, *effective October 1, 2000*)

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR EMERGENCY PERSONNEL

This act allows municipalities to provide property tax exemptions to volunteer emergency service personnel as an alternative to a tax abatement authorized by law. By law, a municipality's legislative body can adopt an ordinance establishing a property tax relief program for volunteer emergency services personnel. Under prior law and this act, the program can provide property tax abatements of up to \$1,000 per year for residents who are volunteer fire fighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, or ambulance drivers. The act eliminates the requirement that the volunteer be a resident of the municipality and allows the program to provide a property tax exemption as an alternative to the abatement. The maximum exemption is \$1 million divided by the mill rate (expressed as a whole number per \$1,000 of assessed value) at the time of the assessment. **(PA 00-120, effective upon passage and applicable to assessment years starting October 1, 1999)**

FUNDS FOR BUYING THERMAL IMAGING CAMERA

This act allows municipalities to spend Local Capital Improvement funds (LoCIP) funds on thermal imaging equipment. **(PA 00-167, effective July 1, 2000)**

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS IN COLLEGE DORMITORIES

This act requires the state fire marshal and the higher education commissioner to survey all college dormitories to learn how many do not have automatic fire extinguishers. By January 1, 2001, they must report their findings to the Education and Public Safety committees and include any recommended changes to the state Fire Safety Code and a schedule for implementing the changes. **(PA 00-187, effective July 1, 2000)**

MEDICAL PLAN FOR SURVIVING DEPENDENTS OF TOWN EMPLOYEES

This act requires the state comptroller to get a group hospitalization and medical and surgical insurance plan for surviving spouses and dependent children of municipal employees who die after October 1, 2000 from a work-related injury and not from an illness or natural cause if the survivors not otherwise eligible for such insurance. **(PA 00-197, effective October 1, 2000)**

FIRE DEPARTMENT APPARATUS INSPECTION PROGRAM

This act requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to establish an annual safety inspection program for fire department apparatus within available appropriations. The commissioner must adopt implementing regulations. **(PA 00-202, effective October 1, 2000)**

PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF POLICE OFFICERS KILLED ON DUTY

This act allows a municipality by ordinance to establish a property tax abatement program for surviving spouses of police officers or fire fighters killed in the line of duty. The program may abate all or part of property taxes due on an eligible spouse's principal residence. **(PA 00-215, effective upon passage and applicable to assessment years beginning on and after October 1, 2000)**

DELEGATION OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL DUTIES

This act allows the public safety commissioner to delegate any of his power relating to fire prevention and safety that he considers appropriate to employees of the University of Connecticut's Storrs Division of Public Safety. Under prior law, the commissioner could delegate only to Department of Public Safety employees. **(PA 00-220, effective July 1, 2000)**

DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLAN FOR TOWNS

This act allows the Retirement Commission to establish a deferred retirement option plan and prescribe how a town participating in the Municipal Employees Retirement Fund (MERF) can adopt the plan. MERF members who are eligible for a service retirement allowance can participate in the plan if their town adopts it. Deferred retirement option plans allow municipal employees to continue working when they are eligible to retire while their retirement benefits are placed in an interest-bearing account administered by MERF. Participants stop accruing additional retirement credit once they enter the plan. **(PA 00192—Sec. 98— effective July 1, 2000)**

VR:ts