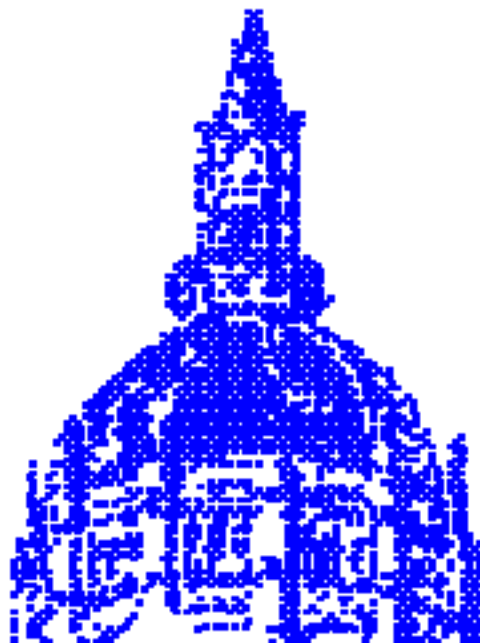


Office of Legislative Research
Connecticut General Assembly



FIREFIGHTERS



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NOTICE TO READERS

This report provides brief highlights of new laws affecting firefighters enacted during the 2011 regular session. At the end of each summary we indicate the public act (PA) number.

Not all provisions of the acts are included here. Complete summaries of all 2011 public acts will be available in the fall when OLR's Public Act Summary book is published; some are already on OLR's webpage: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/OLRPASums.asp>

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <http://www.cga.ct.gov>

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FIRST RESPONDERS

A new law makes it a crime for emergency responders, including firefighters, when responding to a request to provide someone with medical or other assistance, to knowingly (1) take that person's photograph or digital image or (2) make such an image available to a third person. The act does not apply if the (1) responders take the actions in the performance of their duties or (2) person being assisted or an immediate family member consents.

The penalty for a violation is up to one year in prison, up to a \$2,000 fine, or both.

PA 11-47, effective October 1, 2011

CONSOLIDATION/MERGING AGENCIES

A new law consolidates and merges agencies and makes numerous changes affecting firefighters.

PA 11-51, effective July 1, 2011

§§ 45, 90, 93-95, & 105-111 — Division of Fire, Emergency, and Building Services

The new law eliminates the departments of Public Safety (DPS) and Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) and creates the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

(DESPP) as a successor agency to DEMHS and DPS, with some exceptions. It dissolves the DPS Division of Fire, Emergency, and Building Services and transfers most of its functions to the Department of Construction Services (DCS), including the Office of the State Fire Marshal. It also makes (1) DCS responsible for enforcing the state fire safety and fire prevention codes and (2) the DCS commissioner appointee, rather than the Public Safety commissioner, the state fire marshal.

§§ 138, 139 — Workers' Compensation Claim Process

The new law streamlines the process for processing workers' compensation claims involving firefighters.

§ 140 — Grants to Fire Schools and Other Entities

The new law requires the DESPP commissioner, instead of the state comptroller, to disburse grants to regional fire schools, regional emergency dispatch centers, and county-wide fire radio base networks.

§§ 150, 151 — Commission on Fire Prevention and Control

The new law removes the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control from DPS for administrative purposes only and puts it within DESPP for all

purposes. It eliminates some of the commission's independence, including requiring it to (1) submit reports and (2) obtain approval before applying for and distributing grants.

§ 152 — Office of State Fire Administration

The new law requires DESPP, instead of the Office of State Fire Administration, to establish and maintain a state fire school. It requires DESPP, in consultation with the Fire Prevention and Control Commission to fix fees for operating and supporting the school.

WITHDRAWING WATER FROM WETLANDS FOR FIRE EMERGENCIES

A new law allows a person to withdraw water for fire emergency purposes from a wetland or watercourse without obtaining an inland wetlands permit. It also allows a municipal fire department to install a dry hydrant in an inland wetland or watercourse if certain requirements are met.

PA 11-184, effective October 1, 2011

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) EXEMPTION

A new law exempts secret ballots used for volunteer fire department elections from FOIA disclosure.

PA 11-220, effective October 1, 2011

FIRE POLICE LIABILITY/TAX RELIEF/REGIONAL FIRE SCHOOL

A new law makes several changes affecting firefighters, including:

1. making municipalities liable for damage caused by volunteer fire police officers under the same conditions as volunteer firefighters,
2. allowing a town legislative body to provide property tax relief to volunteer fire police officers,
3. barring any action against a volunteer fire police officer crossing or working upon another person's land while performing fire police services, and
4. requiring the DESPP commissioner to consult the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Connecticut State Firefighters Association when establishing a regional fire school.

PA 11-243, effective July 1, 2011 for the property tax relief provision; October 1, 2011 for the remaining provisions.

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