Dear Friend,

The Volunteer Firefighters’ Benefit Law is prefaced by the statement: “One of the finest traditions of American community life is the service which people render to others without remuneration.”

The NYS Legislature works to ensure that each volunteer is protected by our state and receives the care and benefits they and their families deserve in the case of death or disability suffered in the line of duty.

At the end of 2021, legislation that added vascular rupture to the list of heart-related diseases covered under the Volunteer Firefighters’ Benefit Law was signed into State law. This ensures vascular rupture will be given the same consideration as other heart-related injuries suffered on the job.

I will continue to support legislation that protects these dedicated citizens. Please let me know if I can be of assistance in this or any other matter.

Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly

Compliments of
Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly

Your Rights As A Volunteer Firefighter

NYS Workers’ Compensation Board District Offices
Toll-Free Numbers

Albany
866-750-5157

Binghamton
866-802-3604

Buffalo
866-211-0645

Hauppauge
866-681-5354

Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens
800-877-1373

Peekskill
866-746-0552

Rochester
866-211-0644

Syracuse
866-802-3730

Additional Workers’ Compensation Board Contacts

Advocate for Injured Workers
800-580-6665

Customer Service
877-632-4996

Disability Benefits Bureau
800-353-3092

Updated 1/22
The Volunteer Firefighters’ Benefit Law*

**Benefit eligibility**

All New York State volunteer firefighters are entitled to benefits under the law if they are active volunteer members of a fire company of a county, city, town, village or fire district and are injured in the line of duty. Medical, osteopathic, dental, podiatric and psychological (by referral) care, chiropractic treatment, surgery, hospital care, laboratory tests, prescription drugs, nursing services, surgical appliances and prosthetic devices are covered. Preauthorization is sometimes required. In the case of death, cash payments will be made to surviving dependents.

What “in the line of duty” means

Any of the following activities when ordered or authorized:
- Work on or testing of fire apparatus and equipment, fire alarm systems, water supply systems and fire cisterns
- Inspection of firefighting vehicles and apparatus prior to delivery under a contract or purchase, or performing duties related to the delivery
- Response to a call for general ambulance service by a member of an authorized emergency rescue and first aid squad
- Meetings of the fire company
- Pumping water or other substances from a basement or building
- Participation in a supervised physical fitness class
- Some duties in the firehouse, such as construction, repair, maintenance and inspection
- Fire prevention activities

**Activities not covered by law:**

- Participation, including practice, in any recreational or social activity, other than noncompetitive fundraising activities
- Competitive events such as baseball, basketball, football, bowling, contests between bands or drum corps, or other competitive events in which volunteer members are competitors and which involve physical exertion on the part of the competitors
- Work done in the service of a private employer, public corporation or special district
- Work or service rendered while on leave of absence or suspended from duty
- Work that the volunteer has been ordered not to perform

**Individual service**

When volunteer firefighters offer their services to another fire company or fire department within New York State, the responsibility for benefits resulting from an injury in the line of duty will fall on the fire company or fire department (and its "home" political subdivision) that accepted the services.

**Presenting a claim for benefits**

Obtain a VF-3 form, the claim for benefits, from the nearest Workers’ Compensation Board office, the board’s website (www.wcb.ny.gov) or from the fire district or company.

Notify one of the following individuals within 90 days of injury. This may be in the form of a signed copy of a VF-1, the notice of injury or death:
- Clerk of the county board of supervisors;
- Town or village clerk;
- Secretary of the fire or ambulance district or company, or comptroller or chief financial officer of the city.

Mail a completed VF-3 to the board district office nearest you. Claims must be filed within two years of an accident or two years from the date a death occurs.

Failure to give written notice can be excused when:
- Notice can’t be given;
- A member of a body in charge of, or any officer of, the fire department or company knew within the prescribed 90-day period of the injuries or death; and
- The cause of disablement or death was not known to be due to service as a volunteer firefighter within the prescribed period of time.

**Compensation**

A volunteer firefighter does not need to be unable to work to receive the weekly cash payments under the law if the disability is one that results (a) in loss of earning capacity or (b) in loss or partial loss of use of an arm, leg or eye, or loss of hearing. If medical care is necessary, it will be provided without regard to the length of the disability, even though there is no time lost from work.

Source: NYS Workers’ Compensation Board
www.wcb.ny.gov

*This brochure provides a general overview and should not be used as a substitute for the text of the law or legal advice.*