

The Bulletin



Publication of the Illinois Firefighter's Association, Inc.

Volume 72, Number 1

January - February 2018

FIRE LINE - DO NOT CROSS

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IFA Present Helmets to Legislators

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The Bulletin

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Mission Statement

Dedicated to the advancement of the Fire Service by providing leadership. The Association will proudly support the community of firefighters in Illinois through education, training, benefits and information networking at the local, state and national levels.

President's Message



Dear Brother Firefighters,

First and foremost, we are in the dead of winter and this is the time to take extra precautions because of the increase of firefighters injuries. With the cold weather comes slips and falls, along with possible frost bite. Make sure you have good footing where there are icy conditions and wear proper clothing to protect yourself. We all want to come home after a call uninjured.

Now is a good time to reflect back over the years and the accomplishments that were made in the Fire Service. Our State stands out over many of the other states in the regards to the mutual aid we provide to our residences because of MABAS. This System has gone statewide and has extended around our nation. This could be credited to one man, although we know it takes many. Jay Reardon has been that catalyst in this state to make it happen. We can take great pride in a system that gives us the reassurances that the extra manpower and equipment are available to us at a moments notice. Jay goes beyond just extending MABAS around this state, he has been the leader in helping to secure funding for this purpose. Jay has now retired from MABAS and we wish him and his family many years of happiness. The Illinois Firefighters Association has given him a token of our appreciation for his leadership in MABAS at a celebration in Northbrook on January 6th. From his leadership, we have a system in place that will carry on for years to come. Thank You! Jay Reardon.

In other business, you know we have a new state budget. In that budget, there were many sweeps in special funds, including the Fire Prevention Fund. The small equipment fund was one of the only programs that was funded. I hope that all of you that can apply, did so. We need to show the importance of that program to our Representatives and the Administration. I will be asking for a count of how many applications were submitted and how many were able to be funded. Remember, this is an election year and this is the time to get a commitment from the candidates to support the Fire Service. I want you to know that our Fire Marshal supports us 100%. He and his office are always working hard on our behalf. We know the problems that our state is in and its not going to be resolved over night. If we are going change anything, now is the time, lets make sure we support those who support us when that time comes. Our lives and our communities' lives and property are at risk. You should know by now the AFG grant has been extended and that grant period is open. By the time you get this, it will most likely be closed. Again, all of you need to submit an application if you have the need. These grants are safety nets for your organizations. You may not have the funding mechanism to support your department's needs. Your safety needs to come first before you can safely protect someone else. We want to thank all of those who was involved in getting this piece of legislation approved. It was a national effort and it proves when we all work together in one voice, things get done.

The last comment I want to make is the great partnership we have with our State Fire Academy over the years. The Winter Fire School has just finished. Sometimes I think, we may not be looking at everything IFSI provides, besides the hands on training. The Library is second to none and a world leader in providing fire related information and training materials. IFSI also is a leader in research and development in firefighter safety. We can take great pride and be thankful for those who help us do our job safely. With the awareness of the increase in cancer to firefighters and the other stresses that firefighters goes through IFSI will have our back.

So "Train Smart, Be Safe"

God Bless

John Swan President IFA



Legislative update

By Margaret Vaughn, IFA Legislative Lobbyist

AFG and SAFER Program Reauthorization Act of 2017 **Finally Signed into Law**

The AFG and SAFER Grant programs were in jeopardy of expiring January 2 and as of December 14th, no action had been taken in the US House. The Senate had passed a bill to reauthorize the grants back in August but the House did not act on it. Finally on December 15th the House introduced its own version which passed the House and Senate and was sent to the President on January 2nd, the day the current Act expired. With no time to spare, the Reauthorization Act was signed into law January 3rd. H 4661 also included very timely and critical provision to provide specialized training to first responders to recognize individuals who have mental illness and how to properly intervene with them, including strategies for verbal de-escalation of crisis. I reached to Dave Finger for updates and which Congressmen he wanted us to target in Illinois (LaHood and Hultgen). I got a conference call together with the various leaders of the fire service in Illinois and blasted the contact info for the specific staffers in Congressmen LaHood and Hultgren's office to contact. I also send out a statewide press release on behalf of IFA urging the Congress to act on the measure which was picked up by several media outlets from different parts of the state.

LEGISLATORS NAMED "HONORARY CHIEFS"

IFA recently recognized the unwavering support Rep. Kathleen Willis (D-Addison) and Sen Emil Jones (D-Chicago) provided us as the chief sponsors of HB 2778, the new law which will now allow FPDs to vote to annex "no man's land" properties into their districts so they will not have to provide free service to properties they have already been assigned coverage to under the 911 Act.



IFA Lobbyist Presented Rep Kathleen Willis with an IFA Personalized Chief's Helmet at a special presentation at the Northlake Fire Protection District.



IFA Lobbyist Margaret and IFA Director Rosemarie Malone presented Sen. Emil Jones with an IFA Personalized Chief's Helmet at the Midlothian Fire Department. Special thanks to Rosemarie for arranging a delicious lunch after for all who attended.

SAVE THE DATE – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11th FIRE OFFICIALS LEGISLATIVE DAY

The various fire service organizations are putting together a collaborative Fire Official Lobby Day and Legislative Reception once again in Springfield. As soon as the agenda and reception location is secured, I will be sending out additional information.

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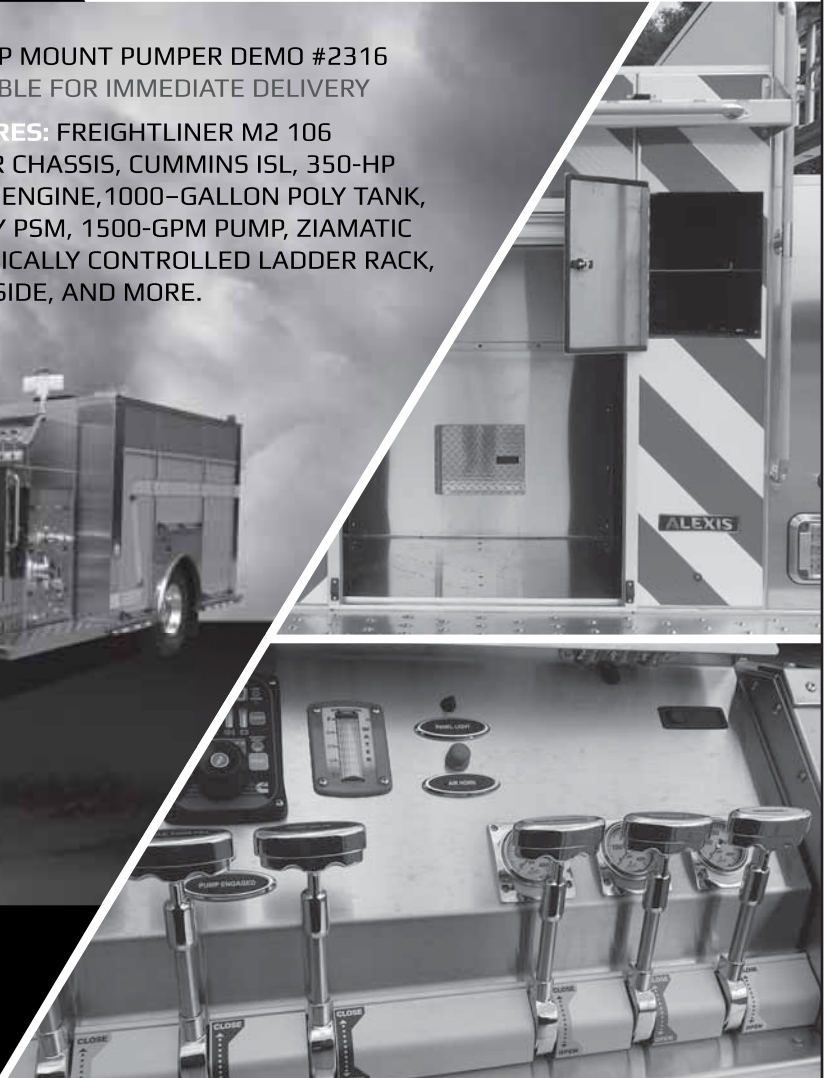


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Takata Recall Expands: What You Need to Know

If you drive an older model Ford Ranger, or know someone who does, here's important news: Ford has confirmed a second death attributed to a defective Takata airbag inflator. They are recalling 2004-2006 Ford Ranger Trucks and the automaker is strongly warning owners to stop driving them immediately.

Mazda will issue a similar recall and stop driving warning for 2006 Mazda B-Series trucks, which were built by Ford and are similar to the Ranger.

So far, at least 21 deaths have been linked to the faulty inflators that can rupture, sending deadly metal fragments at drivers and passengers.

These are just the latest in the massive 60 million vehicle recall because of Takata airbags that involves just about every automaker.

Here's the scary part, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) finds many Americans continue driving a car or truck that has been recalled with a safety concern. Are you or your family one of them?

It's More Than You Might Think

The statistics are a bit unsettling – millions of Americans are have an automobile that could be a danger to them and others.

And that's the concern; a recent Carfax survey found that tens of millions of vehicles that have been recalled the past few years have never been fixed. By their estimate, one in four on the roads today is in need of a repair for a safety defect. Even more troubling is that the type of vehicle with the highest rate of unfixed safety issues is a family-owned minivan. SUVs and pickup trucks are a close second and third. Often, this means the drivers of those cars or trucks, maybe someone you know, is at significant risk if a part should fail.

So Why Wouldn't Someone Get the Fix?

There are many reasons why drivers aren't getting defective vehicles to a dealer or mechanic:

- They are not aware of the recall
- They worry it will take too much time or cost too much
- They just don't care
- Recall notices are often mailed to an old address

So Has Your Vehicle Been Recalled?

The government maintains an excellent website where you can check, for free:
<http://www.safercar.gov/CheckForRecalls>

If you find your vehicle on the recall list, safety groups recommend that you contact the car dealer immediately to set up an appointment to have it looked at. Keep in mind, you should not have to pay for any parts or labor because of a recall. Not all vehicles may need a fix, but finding out will bring you peace-of-mind. And, if you think your vehicle has a defect, but hasn't been recalled yet, save any receipts; you should be reimbursed if the recall occurs later.

What Does a Recall Mean for My Insurance?

While driving a recalled vehicle shouldn't affect your insurance, the quicker you have it checked out or repaired, the safer you and others will be.

However, you should contact your insurance company if the dealer gives you a loaner car while yours is being repaired; you'll want to make sure you have enough coverage if it's more valuable than your vehicle.

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It's also a good idea to check your auto insurance to make sure you are fully protected and that you are getting all the discounts you deserve. Call a California Casualty advisor today for a free policy review or comparison at 1.800.800.9410 or visit www.calcas.com/IFA.

Sources for this article:

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<http://www.edmunds.com/car-safety/recalled-but-unrepaired-cars-are-a-safety-risk-to-consumers.html>

<https://www.carfax.com/recall>

This article is furnished by California Casualty, providing auto and home insurance to firefighters for over 40 years. Get more information at 1.800.800.9410 or www.calcas.com/IFA.

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New Website and Video Provide Important Information about Inspecting, Testing and Maintaining Fire Sprinkler Systems in Various Buildings

The Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB) has released FireSprinklerTesting.org, a new website that provides important information about inspecting, testing and maintaining (ITM) fire sprinkler systems in various types of buildings. A new companion video is featured on the website.

According to Tom Lia, NIFSAB executive director, fire sprinklers provide the greatest protection from fire for occupants, contents and the building itself. Proper ITM is vital to ensure the system is kept running properly.

The new NIFSAB content underscores the requirements within NFPA 25, Standard for Inspection, Testing and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems. Compliance with the standard helps to avoid system failures. It determines actions needed if there are any changes in occupancy, use, process, hazard or water supply that could potentially impact the performance of the system.

The purpose of the new video is to increase awareness, comprehension and the application of ITM procedures as part of the building protection program. Lia said it was produced with building owners and managers in mind. It will also be used to educate members of the fire service and authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs).

The video, which runs under seven minutes, includes animation illustrating four types of water-based systems and how they operate. The systems include wet pipe, dry pipe, preaction and deluge fire sprinkler systems. The video also explains three types of issues that may be discovered during ITM: impairments, critical and non-critical deficiencies.

The website provides a base where anyone involved in ITM can find basic information and resources. It can also be easily accessed using a smart phone or tablet for field work. The video and other resources will be used in future NIFSAB training programs as well.

The video does not teach how to do an inspection however; and Lia emphasized the need to hire a NICET II certified inspector or a professional trained through an approved apprenticeship program. For more information, visit: FireSprinklerTesting.org or view the video on the NIFSAB YouTube Channel.

About the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB)

NIFSAB is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting progressive legislation, raising public awareness, and educating code officials and governmental policy makers by demonstrating the proven performance of fire sprinklers in saving both lives and property. For more info, visit www.firesprinklerassoc.org.

The Bulletin



The OSFM enjoys the assistance and cooperation of many state agencies in the promotion of public safety. One of our closest alliances is with the Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI) which is statutorily designated and funded as the State Fire Academy. IFSI is nationally accredited and is recognized as a leader in fire service teaching, training and research internationally.

I have known IFSI Director Royal Mortenson for many years prior to either of our appointments on both a personal and professional level. In the last three years we have been able to leverage that relationship to bring our agencies closer together in order to benefit the firefighters of Illinois.

I am proud to announce that OSFM and IFSI have signed an intergovernmental agreement which will grant equivalency for IFSI end of course tests and OSFM certification tests. Illinois firefighters who rely on OSFM Personal Standards and Education division certifications and the comprehensive, up to date training provided by IFSI, will no longer be inconvenienced by having to sit through two tests. The main goals I have for our certifications are that they are up to date, they are affordable and they are easily assessable. OSFM issues roughly 11,000 certifications annually and over half of those are completed through IFSI. This agreement will make attaining certifications much easier for those firefighters.

The working groups from both agencies displayed trust, cooperation and completed an immense amount of work in order to converge each agencies process and bring this initiative to reality. In addition to Director Mortenson, I would like to recognize the following individuals who took part in this effort:

OSFM: Alix Armstead, Ronny Wickenhauser, Mitzi Woodson, Cindy Baum, Jodi Schrage and Bill Clauson

IFSI: Jim Keikan, Brian Brauer, Kurt Glosser, Katrina Mann, Sarah Moore

I look forward to working with all our partner agencies to make Illinois a safer place for our residents and firefighters.

New CWG® Fire/EMS PAK Illinois State Director!

We are pleased to announce Tyler Devonshire of Weber Insurance & Realty Brokers Inc. in Robinson has been appointed CWG Fire/EMS PAK State Director in Illinois.

Tyler will conduct Fire/EMS PAK business through Weber Insurance Agency, Inc. and Crawford County Insurance Agency Inc. in Oblong, Illinois. Weber Insurance & Realty Brokers has been in business for over 100 years and is committed to helping you insure your local fire department.

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This will be your last PRINTED Bulletin.

**The IFA Board has decided to discontinue printing
of The Bulletin and
just publish the electronic version.**

**The Bulletin will still be published bimonthly
but will be online only and you will be advised by email when the
issue is uploaded**

**If you want to be notified by email, send your email address to
editor@illinoisfirefighters.org**

The Board apologizes for any inconvenience



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Illinois Fire Service Institute Updates

Jim Keiken, Deputy Director



Mark Your Training Calendar

2018 Winter Fire School – January 27th – 28th, 2018

Leadership Development and Decision Making February 16 – 18, 2018

Leadership Development and Decision Making April 2 – 6, 2018

2018 Fire College – June 7th – 10th, 2018

2018 Explore and Cadet Fire School - July 12th - 15th, 2018

Leadership Development and Decision Making October 1 – 5, 2018

IFA Down and Dirty Weekend - October 19 – 21, 2018

For more information on upcoming classes, visit our website @ <http://www.fsi.illinois.edu/>

Welcome to 2018 and a fresh start to take some IFSI training. Big news for IFSI and firefighters across the state, State Fire Marshal Matt Perez and Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI) Director Royal Mortenson have signed an intergovernmental agreement streamlining the process for Illinois firefighters who complete IFSI courses to receive state certification. Under the terms of the agreement, the IFSI will be granted state certification equivalency for its end-of-course examinations. This will eliminate the requirement imposed upon Illinois firefighters who attended IFSI courses to take both a final end-of-course examination and an OSFM examination in order to receive state certification.

Please note: The agreement will take effect on January 1, 2018. Specifically, all IFSI end of course examinations associated with an IFSI course/class with a start date after 1 January 2018 submitted for state certification will receive OSFM equivalency status. If an IFSI student failed an IFSI end of course exam in 2017 and scheduled a retest after January 1, 2018, that individual is not granted state certification and must still sign-up for and pass an OSFM exam.

The OSFM and IFSI are working cooperatively to address the impact on specific certification cases that involve a limited population of IFSI students. The expected decisions will be announced as we finalize the implementation details of the agreement.

Please contact Kurt Glosser, IFSI Director of Curriculum and Testing, at kglosser@illinois.edu or Mitzi Woodson, OSFM Division of Personnel Standards and Education, at Mitzi.Woodson@Illinois.gov for questions relating to this issue.

https://www.fsi.illinois.edu/featuredItem.cfm?feature_id=54

Check the IFSI website for more information @ <http://www.fsi.illinois.edu/>

Advanced Technician Firefighter/ NFPA Firefighter II

Later this Spring IFSI will offer its new Advanced Technician Firefighter program. This 40-hour program will provide firefighters with the next step in the professional development after the Basic Operation Firefighter. The Advanced Technician Firefighter/ NFPA Firefighter II Academy meets or exceeds all requirements outlined by the Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshall and NFPA 1001. This "Hand-On" course provides the student with the knowledge and skills necessary to operate unsupervised during Firefighting operations. This course focuses on an intense hands-on approach to advanced firefighting skills. Students will experience advanced lectures to promote critical thinking, practical skills evaluations to promote competency and live fire scenarios to promote teamwork and coordinated fire attack.

Fire Department Incident Safety Officer

IFSI has updated the Fire Department Incident Safety officer program, the goal of this course is to prepare the student to be designated by an incident commander (IC) as the incident safety officer (ISO). This critical roll on the emergency scene is responsible for evaluating the strategies and tactics being used and to monitor the effectiveness and stop unsafe acts before issue arise. This course will teach students how to monitor the various types of incidents including Fire, EMS, Technical Rescue, and Hazardous Materials scenes, and report to the IC the status of conditions, hazards, and risks present. This course will also cover accident investigation and review procedures as well as how to develop and participate in a post-incident analysis. This 40-hour program meets or exceeds NFPA 1521 and meets the OSFM and ProBoard requirements for Certification.

New IFSI Training Props

As we begin classes in 2018 IFSI is placing online a number of new props and programs to enhance training across the state. The first is our new pump simulator. This device provided hand on experience in pump operations in the classroom. Not only does it look, work and “feel” like a real pump but it allows the instructor to place students into a real-life situation that would not be possible with an operational pump. The student can problem solve a number of situations such as bust line, pump cavitation and multiple lines without the risk of damaging equipment.

IFSI also took delivery of our new driver simulation trailer. This virtual world will allow the new, driver to gain experience in a various situation normally see while driving apparatus. It also allows the experience drive to be placed into challenge situation not normally seen that would not otherwise be possible with real apparatus. A situation such as a tire or brake failures weather condition such as hydroplaning or ice and obstacles such as pedestrian and poor drivers.

IFSI has also received a new mobile roof ventilation prop trailer. This prop allows us to provide the hands-on ventilation and forcible entry training at fire department across the state. The prop allows for various roof pitch as well as two (inward/outward) forcible entry doors to give experience in real life situation.

All of these props will begin to be used in various existing classes as well as be part of the development of new hands-on training classes. For more info on these feel free to contact your Regional Rep or Drive/Operator Program Manager Tal Prendergast or Sean Burke Associate Director of Firefighting Programs.

As always, if there is something you think IFSI would be providing or you have ideas for the next great program please feel free to contact me at the Institute.



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The Illinois Fire Service Institute Regional Representative can be your important link to bringing State Fire Academy training to your Fire Department.

Helping Firefighters do their work through Training, Education, Information and Research



Chaplain's Corner

MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

Most of my firefighting career in Chicago was lived out previous to today's well-defined MAYDAY and RIT equipment, procedures, and training. I suppose I was in a few tight spots that may have qualified for a MAYDAY call, but thankfully, by God's grace, I emerged from danger with only minor cuts and bruises on my own or with the help of a brother firefighter. What a blessing it is for firefighters to have all the benefit of the hard lessons learned that have informed our ability to identify a MAYDAY and to rescue our own in today's toxic and dangerous firefighting scenarios!

That's why I love the fire story that Jesus told that goes something like this:

Suppose one of you incident commanders (IC) has a hundred firefighters operating on the scene and loses one of them resulting in a MAYDAY call. Does he not activate the dedicated and trained RIT response and go after the lost firefighter until they find him? And when they find him do they not immediately stabilize and remove him from danger? Don't they joyfully communicate with the IC that the lost firefighter has been found? Then the IC secures the MAYDAY so that all companies on the scene and/or listening to the radio can rejoice that the lost firefighter has been found.

In fact, the Bible is filled with truths and promises relating to God's personal and powerful presence and activity in a MAYDAY situation. Here's a few examples:

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble."

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honor Me."

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart...in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."

"He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."

MAYDAY procedures and RIT responses have been developed because we know – and God knows – that dangerous situations are going to arise as we fulfill our fire service calling in which they will be desperately needed. And so it behooves all fire departments and firefighters to train and prepare to respond...and to call upon the Lord for the help, deliverance, direction and literal breath that He supplies to get the job done – and to sustain us by His grace when things don't turn out the way we would hope. I offer you the following prayer to assist in bringing forth your faith and the faith of your fire department:

"O God, You have promised to be with us always and to never forsake us. And Your ear is especially open to our cry of distress when we are in trouble or danger. Lord, we pray for any firefighters who are or will be trapped, lost, injured, in danger, or low on air in a MAYDAY situation. Please protect them, direct their steps to the path of safety, show them the move that will release them from entanglement, preserve their air supply and sustain their lives. We pray for the RIT response, that You would grant them skill and unity and strength, and that You would lead them by Your unseen hand to quickly locate and remove any downed firefighters. We thank you, Lord, for our EMS brothers and sisters and pray that You would bless their efforts as they receive, treat, and transport the rescued firefighters. We pray for wisdom for the incident commander and all chiefs on the scene, especially that leadership and communication would be clear and effective. Lord, our lives are in Your perfect and powerful hands and we look to You in faith trusting that, whatever the outcome, You will be present with us and You will be pleased by our service. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."

Oh...the conclusion Jesus gives to the above story: ***"I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."*** Now there's an invitation to an eternal rescue that I hope every "lost" firefighter will respond to with faith – and you'll find me at the front of that line!

Kevin Coffey, IFA Chaplain (815-457-2007, kc9526@yahoo.com)



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Tax Implications of Uniform Allowances

by Ryan R. Morton

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As "Tax Day" approaches, employees often question exactly what they need to include on their tax returns. Obviously, the employee's salary must be included, but what about non-monetary benefits received during the year? Specifically, do firefighters need to include the value of their uniforms in their gross income? Doing so could significantly increase their tax burden, especially if they received thousands of dollars' worth of technical gear.

For Employees

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) defines "gross income" as "all income from whatever source derived." (26 U.S.C. § 61) That includes "compensation for services, including fees, commissions, fringe benefits, and similar items." Some benefits are specifically exempted from income, though, such as health insurance and meals. (26 U.S.C. §§ 106 & 119)

Uniforms provided by employers are also exempted from gross income, as long as they meet certain requirements. First, the uniform must be a condition of employment, meaning the employee is required to wear a uniform at work. Second, the uniform must not be adaptable for general wear. That means the uniform is so specialized that it can only be used at work. Clearly, special protective clothing and accessories would qualify, as would shirts depicting insignias, logo, and names. On the other hand, plain black or blue pants that could be used outside of work would need to be declared as income.

Some fire protection districts reimburse their employees for uniforms, rather than purchasing them for their employees. An extra requirement exists to exempt such reimbursement from an employee's gross income. In addition to the rules applicable to the actual provision of uniforms (condition of employment, not adaptable for general wear), the employee must also submit paid receipts in exchange for their uniform reimbursement. If all of those conditions are met, the uniform payments do not need to be included on the employee's W-2, and the employee does not need to include the value as income.

Another method sometimes used by employers is paying employees a flat fee annually for clothing expenses. For income tax purposes, this method is no different than giving the employee more wages. The fee must be reported on the employee's W-2 and the employee must pay taxes on that amount. In years past, employees could then write off the cost of uniforms on Form 2106.

However, under the new tax bill passed in December, that itemized deduction has been eliminated (as well as the deduction for union fees and other unreimbursed work expenses). Now, employees who purchase their own work clothes, regardless of whether they received a flat fee from their employer, cannot deduct the cost from their gross income. The deduction is still permitted on 2017 tax returns, though.

There is a way for employers to provide a flat fee for uniforms without the fee being considered taxable income. The employer must establish a written plan for such allowances. This plan must satisfy five conditions:

- 1) The uniform is required as a condition of employment;
- 2) The uniform is not adaptable for general wear;
- 3) The expenses covered under the plan must have a business connection;
- 4) Employees must substantiate expenses with receipts; and
- 5) Employees who receive money in advance must return any amount in excess of their substantiated uniform expenses

If the fire protection district has this written plan in place, and the employee meets each of the conditions, then that flat fee does not need to be reported to the IRS on the employee's personal tax return. However, if an employee fails to return any excess money to the fire protection district within a reasonable time period, that extra money is treated as income to the employee.

In summary, from an employee's perspective, the best option regarding apparel would be for the fire protection district to directly purchase and distribute uniforms. Reimbursing employees for their expenses would have the same tax implications, but it would require a little more paperwork. A flat fee would be the least desirable option, as it could lead to taxable income for the employees. However, if a written plan is in place whereby the employer recovers unused portions of the flat fee, then the fee would also be exempted from the employee's gross income.

***Ryan R. Morton** is an associate with the law firm of Ottosen Britz Kelly Cooper Gilbert & DiNolfo, Ltd. in Naperville. He graduated from the John Marshall Law School in June 2017 and holds an undergraduate degree in journalism from Northwestern University. Prior to earning his law degree, Ryan worked for six years as a radio news director, covering local governments throughout Northern Illinois. He focuses his practice in the areas of municipal, school, and fire district law, as well as public pension and public labor and employment law.*

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