



The Quick Connect

HOUSE PASSES TAX RELIEF FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMS PERSONNEL

On December 18, the United States House of Representatives passed the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA), prohibiting the federal government from taxing benefits provided to volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel by state and local units of government. VRIPA, which was one of the National Volunteer Fire Council's (NVFC) top legislative priorities in 2007, passed the Senate last week as part of H.R. 3648 and is now headed to the President for signature.

"Federal taxation of volunteer first responder benefits has several effects," said John McAuliffe, NVFC Connecticut State Director, during the testimony. "The most obvious is to reduce the value of the benefit to the volunteer. Additionally, small communities with severely limited resources often find the administrative and legal burdens associated with processing tax documents for volunteer emergency responders overwhelming. Passage of VRIPA would address both of these issues and enhance the ability of communities to recruit and retain volunteer emergency responders."

The language that passed in H.R. 3648 exempts all tax benefits provided by state and local units of government to volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel from taxation by the federal government. Additionally, the first \$360 per year of any other type of benefit that a volunteer receives would be exempted from taxation.

VRIPA originally passed the House of Representatives on November 6, as part of H.R. 3997. Then last week, the Senate inserted the VRIPA language into H.R. 3648, which passed in the Senate on December 14. All throughout this process, the NVFC has been contacting U.S. Senators and Representatives to advocate passage of the provision and asking our members to do the same.

"I'm very pleased to announce the passage of the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act," said NVFC Chairman Philip C. Stittleburg. "This is a tremendous benefit for volunteer emergency responders and the communities that rely on their service. The NVFC will continue to work to ensure that the President signs VRIPA into law and to see that it is implemented properly by the federal government."

For more information on VRIPA and other NVFC legislative priorities, visit the NVFC web site at www.nvfc.org.

SURPLUS PROPERTY

This program provides a collection, storage, and distribution system for surplus emergency response equipment.

While the equipment is not always state-of-the-art or the newest, it still has many years of useful life and in many cases is newer than what is currently being used. Due to the high flow of equipment being donated and given away it is very difficult to keep a current database. We ask that you contact OVFA with your request and we will supply you with equipment from storage.

If you have equipment to donate please contact us to see if we can make arrangements to either pick it up or make other delivery arrangements. If your department has a specific need, please contact Jim Oeder or Scott Mullen by emailing them at jkoeder@comcast.net or scott.mullen@stayonfire.org.

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CALIFORNIA CASUALTY INSTITUTES A COMPASSIONATE PROGRAM FOR OVFA POLICYHOLDERS

The Quick Connect

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Winter 2008

Firefighters make a pledge to protect and serve our communities despite the inherent danger of their job duties. Risking their lives every day to make our society a safer place for families to live and work makes them our local heroes. So when firefighters lose their life on duty, our hearts go out to their families. Friends, colleagues and those in their community ask - What can I do for the family? California Casualty asked this same question when the US Fire Administration reported approximately 106 firefighters lost their lives on duty during 2006.

Since 1981, OVFA and California Casualty have been partners in providing members with tailored auto and home insurance policies. Both organizations recognize the ultimate sacrifice of the families who have lost a loved one and wanted to do something for the surviving family members to ease the burden of their loss. Effective September 1, 2007, the Fallen Hero Benefit will be provided free of charge to all OVFA members who are insured with California Casualty, a special policy feature that would provide peace of mind for the family of a firefighter who dies in the line of duty.

The Fallen Hero Benefit will provide the following: If a firefighter loses their life in the line of duty, the policyholder's premium will be waived for the remainder of the current policy year, and for the subsequent year. George Bowen, California Casualty Senior Vice President says, "This program is an effort to provide even further protection for California Casualty's customers, and their families, at a time of great need." This policy benefit is a natural extension of California Casualty's stated commitment to determine the insurance needs of customers and to fill these needs as completely as possible. This commitment is reflected in the California Casualty Code, a statement of ethics that employees have embraced since the Code's introduction in 1966.

California Casualty is currently the only company to offer this type of premium waiver for fallen firefighters. Bowen also noted, "California Casualty is always trying to better

understand our customers and put ourselves in their shoes. That's what members of our groups have come to appreciate about us." This benefit among many other coverage features is the reason why OVFA chooses to sponsor California Casualty's A+ Auto & Home Insurance. California Casualty takes great pride in protecting our members who protect our communities. For more information about this new benefit, or if you would like to get a free, no obligation quote for auto and/or home insurance, Call 1-877-999-8954. Representatives are available by phone Monday - Friday, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm and Saturday 8:00 am to 12:00 pm or request a quote on-line at www.calcas.com/OVFA.

The coverage is Automatic. There is nothing the member needs to do - no phone calls to make and nothing to sign and return.

SECRETARY/TREASURER COMMENTS, JAMES OEDER JANUARY 2008

I would like to thank President Dean Hansell and the rest of the OFDDA Board of Directors for the honor of receiving the Presidents Award during the Joint Conference in Bend.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving on the board for the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association. During this time, I have been able to work with, and be mentored by, a lot of great people in the fire service who have served on the OVFA Board, or one of the other associations along with members of the State Fire Marshals office. The one thing that stands out is the dedication to the fire service these people show and the support they give to all the fire service.

Without dedicated people like them, Oregon would not be in the position it is now. There is still lots of work we have in front of us to accomplish. If you can either give some time to be part of the different association boards or committees, or even a board member in your district or department, it can make a big difference.

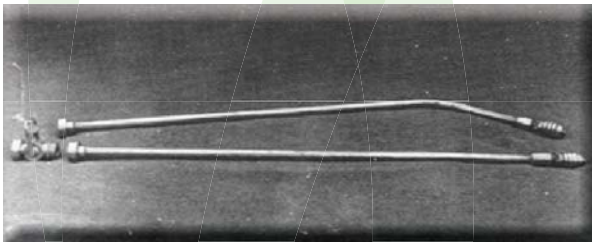
Again, I would like to thank Dean and the OFDDA board and all those that have supported and allowed me to be a part of the teams to accomplish this.

TRADITION MEETS TECHNOLOGY

The WaterLance™ Overcomes Past Problems of Penetrating- Fogging Nozzles

THE TRADITION

Penetrating-fogging nozzles have been around for over fifty years. They have been used by many of the Craftsman firefighters of the past and it is well known how effective they can be in common fires, such as attic and basement fires. Unfortunately there have been many design and materials problems with those nozzles. From melting brass nozzles, to units that weigh so much they render themselves useless. Penetrating-fogging nozzles were first designed and employed by firefighters in the U.S. Coast guard as a means of extinguishing fires within the machinery spaces of commercial and naval vessels. As a result of extensive testing, the realization was made that the more finely dispersed water particles could be delivered, the more efficient an interior fire could be fought. Steam and mist, of course, occupy more space thus squelching the fire.



THIS LOW-VELOCITY HEAD AND APPLICATOR WAS DESIGNED TO FIT 1½" HOSE. MADE OUT OF BRASS, ITS WEIGHT COULD BE CUMBERSOME AND ITS WATER DELIVERY WAS LESS THAN DESIRED AT 54 GPM AT 100 PSI. (PHOTO FROM LLOYD LAYMAN'S "ATTACKING AND EXTINGUISHING INTERIOR FIRES", P.34.)

THE TECHNOLOGY

The Classic Lloyd Layman book "Attacking and Extinguishing Interior Fires" contains a quote that should be a firefighters' credo, "Successful employment of the indirect attack calls for courageous, intelligent, resourceful and competent leadership. Courage to employ this method of attack should be based upon knowledge and understanding of natural laws", (48). The WaterLance™ combines the intelligence and insight of four decades of penetrating fogging nozzle use with the

knowledge of today's advanced technological materials. The WaterLance uses engineered nozzle designs that provide 100 gpm flow rates at 125 psi while giving a 28-foot diameter half-round fogging pattern. The water circle is nearly double most fogging nozzles.



The WaterLance weighs between 6-7lbs and has eight interchangeable components. The alloy steel construction and high gloss ceramic coating makes it durable and resilient.

The WaterLance™ is made from electroless nickel plated alloy steel that provides a long-lasting cutting edge, extreme fire resistance and easy clean-up. In addition, the penetrating tip has recessed water ports that provide resistance to plugging, particularly when foam is used.

Information at www.waterlance.com
Companion Fire Equipment, LLC
Tel. 503-259-0950 Fax 503-642-9108

Stress and overexertion (Cardiovascular) and vehicle collision (Response) account for 75% of annual firefighter fatalities.

FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY

In March 2004, the Firefighter Life Safety Summit was held in Tampa, Florida to address the need for change within the fire and emergency services. Through this meeting, 16 Life Safety Initiatives were produced to ensure that Everyone Goes Home. Please take a minute to browse the resources available on our website -- Learn how you can take responsibility for yourselves and your crew-- SO Everyone Goes Home®. For more information <http://www.everyonegoeshome.com/index.html>

16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

1. Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.
2. Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.
3. Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities.
4. All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.
5. Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform.
6. Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.
7. Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.
8. Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.
9. Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses.
10. Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.
11. National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.
12. National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.
13. Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support.
14. Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program.
15. Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.
16. Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.

OVFA GRANT UPDATE

The OVFA has been the recipient of 2 Federal Grants. The first grant is a SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant) grant which is used for Recruitment of Volunteers around the state. The second grant is a FP&S (Fire Prevention and Safety Grant) Grant

We are currently in our third quarter for the SAFER Grant. This grant is used to air PSA (Public Service Announcements) on local television stations around the state. The PSA is a 30 second ad recruiting for Volunteer Firefighters and was produced by the Hillsboro Fire Department. In addition, we have printed some large, multi-color recruitment posters that are available to our member departments. The posters are available immediately by calling the OVFA Office at (503) 581-2011.

The second grant involves delivering Fire Prevention messages thru print, television and portable/tow behind billboards. Currently, one have billboard is complete and the other billboards are awaiting banners. The plan calls for the OVFA to have eight billboards available around the State. The original billboard is on display along HWY 101 at Millington FD. Soon, billboards will be appearing around

OVFA GRANT UPDATE CONTINUED

Salem and Bend.

OVFA collaborated with OLST (Oregon Life Safety Team) on a newspaper insert for Fire Prevention week. The full color 2-sided insert will be in almost every newspaper in Oregon with just a few exceptions, (The Oregonian, Salem Statesman Journal and the Eugene Register Guard). We still could not make every paper, but our message was in most of the newspapers. In areas where there is a larger paper, we did not include small papers that serve the same area. For Example, in the Coos Bay area we have The World Newspaper. This daily paper provides news coverage for all communities from Florence to Brookings. Therefore, we did not put inserts in the Bandon, Coquille and Myrtle Point weekly papers

SPEAKING OF GRANTS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), grants are awarded to fire departments to enhance their ability to protect the public and fire service personnel from fire and related hazards. Three types of grants are available: Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S), and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER). This Website provides a description of the three types of grants available and offers resources to help fire departments prepare and submit grant requests. The FEMA Fire Grant website is <http://www.firegrantsupport.com>.



FIRE SERVICE WINS ONE IN PSOB BATTLE

The Department of Justice (DoJ) has issued two policy memorandums to the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (PSOB) that will significantly change the determination process for PSOB applications made under the Hometown Heroes Survivor Benefits Act.

The new policy, which is effective immediately, clarifies the language of the law and is intended to fix the problems that have been plaguing the determination process. Under the new policy, no activity shall be understood to be "performed as a matter of routine" solely based on the public safety agency describing it as "routine" or "ordinary". The determination of whether an activity is "routine" will be informed less by how often it is performed than by its stressful or strenuous character. Responding to an emergency call shall presumptively be treated as non-routine.

DoJ has also changed its policy for determining whether there is "competent medical evidence to the contrary." No medical history records will be requested of claimants in cases where nothing in the claim file suggests that either something other than the line of duty may have caused the fatal heart attack or stroke or that it was more likely than not that the heart attack was imminent. The mere presence of cardiovascular disease or risk factors, however extreme, that is found, for example, through an autopsy or mentioned in a coroner's report or death certificate, shall not be considered in the determination unless information in the claim file itself suggests that the deceased person knew or should have known of such presence and appears to have worsened or aggravated the same by his or her own intentional and reckless behavior. Any medical history records requested of the claimant will be reviewed for mitigating evidence in favor of the claim.

Philip C. Stittleburg, Chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). I strongly encourage anyone whose Hometown Heroes claim has been denied to appeal the decision directly to the Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance as soon as possible. PSOB is a one-time payment of nearly \$303,064 to the families of fallen public safety officers. The Hometown Heroes Act, which was signed into law in December 2003, was intended

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 4-6, 2008

2008 IAFC Wildland/Urban Interface
Conference, Reno, NV
Information: (703) 273-0911 or
www.iafc.org

April 3-6, 2008

Newport EMS Conference,
Newport, OR
Information: (503) 550-7296 or
www.fireandemsshows.com

May 16-17, 2008

Northwest Fire & EMS Expo
Portland, Metro Expo Center, OR
Information: (503) 769-6834 or www.northwestfirerescue.com

June 18-21, 2008

OVFA Conference 2008
Wittenberg Inn, Keizer, OR
Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the first
OVFA Conference. Don't miss this event!
Information: (503) 581-2011 or
www.ovfa.org

FIRE SERVICE WINS ONE IN PSOB BATTLE CONTINUED

to make it possible for public safety officers who die from heart attack or stroke caused by participation in emergency response to qualify for PSOB. Up until now, DoJ's interpretation of the law has been at odds with the intent of Congress. DoJ has placed the burden of proof that the physical activity the officer engaged in was non-routine or stressful on the applicant and has denied claims in which firefighters suffered a fatal heart attack during emergency response, with the justification that emergency response does not necessarily constitute "non-routine stressful or strenuous physical" activity.

With the new policy in place, DoJ is soliciting appeals and is printing 35,000 packets to guide claimants in filing for the benefit.

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