



*SC STATE FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION
JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM
RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES
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JUNIOR MEMBER GUIDELINES

(JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER AND JUNIOR RESCUER GUIDELINES)

Background

The need for well-trained and highly motivated volunteer firefighters, rescue, and EMS personnel throughout America's communities has never been greater. Over 70% of the fire and rescue personnel who protect our nation are volunteers. Yet, statistics show that while the fire and rescue departments' call volume is steadily increasing, the number of volunteers is decreasing. The causes for the downward trend in volunteers are varied, including increasing time demands of two-income families, more rigorous training standards, limited advocacy for volunteering among youth, not to mention pandemic fall out consequences. Retention and recruitment of new members has never been more challenging. In response to the challenge of recruiting volunteers, many departments have initiated programs to encourage the involvement of youth through Explorer programs and Junior Firefighter/Rescue member programs.

Encouraging young people to enter the emergency services as a community service or career, often places departments in competition with other services/occupations. Junior Member programs provide an opportunity to encourage and interest youth in the field of emergency service, as well as training and educational mechanisms to prepare them for future employment and teach a sense of community service.

Whether volunteer or career, departments may benefit from programs that allow participation by youth in the activities of the emergency services.

The South Carolina State Firefighters' Association recognizes the need for an initiative to reach out to South Carolina's youth and engage them in non-operational roles within fire departments. Reaching out to people when they are young has long-range effects and encouraging youth to take part in the emergency services is extremely beneficial to local communities and departments. Benefits of junior programs include:

- Allowing youth to gain insight and interest in becoming long-term members of the emergency services
- Increasing awareness among youth about volunteering and supporting the fire and rescue services
- Providing departments with additional help in accomplishing non-firefighting or non-emergency tasks
- Leadership development for America's youth who will be tomorrow's leaders
- Educating parents and mentors on the importance of encouraging volunteerism

To encourage Junior Firefighter and Rescue Responder programs, the SC State Firefighters' Association established this Junior Member Standard to offer guidance to fire and rescue departments in developing and administering programs in conjunction with SC Code of Laws section 41-21-110 and the Federal CFR parts 570-579(Please reference 41-21-110 at the end of this document). While designed to consider recognized programs nationwide, the Association recommends that departments research additional requirements that may be implemented between editions of this standard. All agency officers and firefighters should review this document thoroughly and be fully aware of their responsibility to junior members.

Overview

Junior members shall be separated into two groups: (1) minors 16 and 17 years of age; and (2) minors 14 and 15 years of age. Fire Departments and Rescue Squads should make sure their By-Laws, Constitution, Charter, and/or member insurance reflect the proper authority to have junior members. Participating agencies should take necessary precautions to ensure adequate supervision for male and female junior members. Departments should encourage parental involvement in the program. Junior members are eligible for membership in The SC State Firefighters' Association as regular members with full benefits. These guidelines do not take into consideration the necessity of the local authority implementing a junior firefighting program from adhering to all industry best practices as it relates to managing and overseeing minors and managing gender differences. Having in place policies which are trained on and adhered to, will limit risk exposure.

General Restrictions

This standard does not address minors under the age of 14 (fourteen). In general, the following guidelines should be used to restrict the activities of Junior Members. When not specifically listed or discussed, all activities should be limited to those considered non-emergency. The restrictions have been reviewed by the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Registration legal counsel, and appear to be in compliance with all applicable state and federal child labor laws.

- Junior Members shall not be substituted for trained personnel.
- Junior Members shall be equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment to accomplish the assigned tasks.
- Junior Members who ride on apparatus or other department vehicles shall be seated and must wear a seat belt.
- Junior Members shall not drive department vehicles.
- Junior Members shall not enter or perform ventilation procedures on a burning structure.
- Junior Members shall not use any tools or gloves on energized electrical equipment.
- During events, the junior members shall be clearly marked in order to easily identify them from a distance. This may be accomplished by different methods including different colored helmets or helmet striping, different colored coats, or special vests.

In addition, specific guidelines are provided based on age groups.

Guidelines for Minors 16 and 17 Years of Age

Minors who are 16 and 17 MAY:

- Ride as a passenger in the cab of a fire truck or in a rescue vehicle. The Junior shall be seated with his/her seat belt securely fastened.
- Attend and take part in supervised training to include SC Fire Academy courses found on the approved course list jointly developed by the SC Fire Academy and the SC State Firefighters' Association, and local training events as supervised and approved by the Fire Chief.
- Participate in department functions within the rehabilitation area of an emergency scene. This could include setting up the engine or light truck, assisting in water supply efforts, handling of wood and other technical rescue materials, and other support functions, which do not expose the junior member to hazardous areas or atmospheres.
- Pick up hoses or other materials and clean up at the emergency scene after it has been declared safe by the Incident Commander.
- Enter a structure only when accompanied by an adult responder once the structure has been determined safe by the Incident Commander and not considered immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH).
- Perform search and rescue activities, other than structural firefighting, high level, or in other areas considered dangerous or IDLH.
- Operate a fire pump or equipment located outside the danger zone at the directions of the Incident Commander.
- Use pressurized hose lines, if properly trained, under the direction of an Incident Commander and out of the danger area.

Minors who are 16 and 17 MAY NOT:

- Perform fire suppression involving structures, vehicles, or wildland fires per federal child labor guidelines 29 CFR 570.54.
- Perform high level, confined space, collapse rescue, or any rescue operation that places them in danger or areas of IDLH.
- Drive fire department or rescue vehicles.
- Perform firefighting "overhaul" activities (except when the structure has been declared safe by the Incident Commander and then only with an adult firefighter).
- Respond to a Hazardous Materials event (except for support functions within the cold zone).
- Participate or assist in any extrication activities at the scene of an accident or emergency (except in the capacity of a support function).
- Participate in any activities at the scene of an accident or emergency where fire or hazardous materials are involved unless they are performing support functions from outside the danger area.

- Participate in actual “ice rescue” activities but may provide assistance within any designated rehabilitation area or as a support member on dry land only.
- Direct traffic at the scene of a fire or other emergency.
- Train on departmental equipment or remove equipment from an apparatus unless under the supervision of an instructor.
- Youth under 18 years of age who are enrolled in school in Grade 12 or below may not be employed between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. when there is school for the youth the next day. Sixteen and Seventeen (16 and 17) year old youths may get the hour restriction waived upon written permission from the parent/guardian and from the youth’s school principal/designee.
- Youth under 18 years of age who are enrolled in school in Grade 12 or below may not respond, in a non-emergency mode, to calls during school hours.
- Stand on any fire apparatus at anytime it is in motion.

Guidelines for Minors Age 14 and 15 Years of Age

In addition to those restriction listed for 16- and 17-year-olds, the following are additional restrictions for minors aged 14 and 15 years old.

Minors who are 14 and 15 years of age and younger MAY NOT:

- Perform any hazardous duties at the fire station.
- Ride in the cab of the fire apparatus responding to an emergency scene.
- Stand on any fire apparatus at anytime it is in motion.

SC Code of Laws

Section 41-21-110. (A) The Director of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, in cooperation with the State Firefighters Association, may establish a junior firefighters program, consistent with all applicable state and federal child labor laws, for the purpose of encouraging, educating, and training qualified youth to enter the fire service as a career. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, qualified youth under eighteen years of age shall be allowed to participate in training activities offered by local fire departments, the Office of the State Fire Marshall, and the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. As used in this subsection, the term 'qualified youth' means an uncompensated fire department or rescue squad member who is between fourteen and eighteen years of age.