

YOUR DEPARTMENTS FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF FUND

Overview The Firefighters' Relief Fund (FRF) was established in 1907 to financially assist firefighters that are injured while performing their duties, and to insure that no firefighter would become financially destitute through no fault of their own. The FRF has seen several legislative revisions over the course of its history. Some of these added additional uses for the fund and recent changes placed additional guidelines on the fund. The FRF laws are found under G.S. 58-84 and G.S. 58-85. Laws that govern your departments use of the FRF are concentrated in G.S 58-84. The FRF is funded by a portion of the Gross Premium Tax (GPT) (G.S. 105-228.5(d)(3)) on insurance policies containing fire and lightning protection, as well as certain automotive policies. Of the total GPT collected, 20% is dedicated to the FRF. The fund is distributed by the State Fire Marshal to local firefighter relief funds (LFRF) annually. The amount each department receives is based upon several calculations. Each County is allocated an amount based on the amount received the previous year. If the total amount to be allocated statewide during the current year is above or below the amount distributed the previous year, the adjustment allocated to each county is based on the population of the County as compared to the overall State population. Once the County distribution amount is determined, the amount the County is allocated is divided between the eligible departments within the County by the amount of property tax covered. For example, if your Department protected 17% of the property within your County, your LFRF check would be for 17% of the County allocation. The checks from the State Fire Marshal are mailed out after the beginning of each budget year to eligible departments. Amounts designated for departments who are not eligible for distribution for reasons described in this pamphlet create the State Firefighters' Relief Fund. This fund helps provide Line of Duty Death and Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance to firefighters of all eligible departments across the State. The fund also provides scholarships to firefighters and their dependent children. Since the FRF laws remained virtually unchanged until the 1950's, several department's LFRF across the State got laws passed at the State level to allow them uses for their fund that were not allowed by Article 84 at the time. There are currently over 50 local bills of this nature. Due to changes in Article 84 of the General Statutes since 1950, most recently 2014, most of the provisions used in local laws are now allowed in Article 84, rendering many local laws obsolete and the necessity for new ones non-existent. Changes in the 2014 legislative session also rendered several components of existing local laws repealed, such as interest only spending limits, or fund uses not otherwise found and allowed in GS 58-84. The new provisions of the law allow increased flexibility to utilize the funds for the benefit of firefighters across the State. **Requirements To be eligible to receive funds for a LFRF, the fire department must follow several guidelines. 1) It first**

must be a rated department by the State Fire Marshal; and 2), a member of the NC State Firefighters' Association (GS 58-84-1). 3) Next, it must appoint a Local Relief Fund Board (LRFB) consisting of five members (GS 58-84-30): two members serving at the pleasure of the fire department elected by the membership who are qualified as beneficiaries of the fund; two of whom shall be elected or appointed by the Mayor, Board of Alderman, or City Council if it is a municipal department, or other local governing body to serve at their pleasure, or, if it is a non-municipal department, two appointed by the County Commissioners to serve at their pleasure; and one appointed by the State Fire Marshal. If the local Fire Chief is not one of the members appointed, they shall serve as ex-officio members of the local Board. The Local Relief Fund Board (LRFB) shall then elect a Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Secretary and Treasurer may be the same person. The funds received from the State Fire Marshal shall be maintained by the Treasurer in a separate and distinct fund, the balance and use of which shall be reported annually to the NC State Firefighters' Association. Each year a good and sufficient surety bond must be purchased equal to the amount held, but in most cases the State Fire Marshal purchases one bond for all Local FRF accounts each year. Unless advised differently by the NCSFA annually, a LRFB Treasurer may assume a statewide bond has been purchased.