

## 1 VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

2 *An Act to amend and reenact § 27-15.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the authority of a fire chief*  
3 *over unmanned aircraft at a fire, explosion, or other hazardous situation.*

4  
5 Approved

[S 873]

6 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

7 **1. That § 27-15.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

8 **§ 27-15.1. Authority of chief or other officer in charge when answering alarm; penalty for**  
9 **refusal to obey orders.**

10 While any fire department or fire company is in the process of answering an alarm where there is  
11 imminent danger or the actual occurrence of fire or explosion or the uncontrolled release of hazardous  
12 materials that threaten life or property and returning to the station, the chief or other officer in charge of  
13 such fire department or fire company at that time shall have the authority to (i) maintain order at such  
14 emergency incident or its vicinity, *including the immediate airspace*; (ii) direct the actions of the  
15 firefighters at the incident; (iii) notwithstanding the provisions of §§ 46.2-888 through 46.2-891, keep  
16 bystanders or other persons at a safe distance from the incident and emergency equipment; (iv) facilitate  
17 the speedy movement and operation of emergency equipment and firefighters; (v) cause an investigation  
18 to be made into the origin and cause of the incident; and (vi) until the arrival of a police officer, direct  
19 and control traffic in person or by deputy and facilitate the movement of traffic. The fire chief or other  
20 officer in charge shall display his firefighter's badge or other proper means of identification.  
21 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, this authority shall extend to the activation of traffic control  
22 signals designed to facilitate the safe egress and ingress of emergency equipment at a fire station. Any  
23 person or persons refusing to obey the orders of the chief or other officer in charge at that time is guilty  
24 of a Class 4 misdemeanor. The chief or other officer in charge shall have the power to make arrests for  
25 violation of the provisions of this section. The authority granted under the provisions of this section may  
26 not be exercised to inhibit or obstruct members of law-enforcement agencies or emergency medical  
27 services agencies from performing their normal duties when operating at such emergency incident, nor to  
28 conflict with or diminish the lawful authority, duties, and responsibilities of forest wardens, including  
29 but not limited to the provisions of Chapter 11 (§ 10.1-1100 et seq.) of Title 10.1. Personnel from the  
30 news media, such as the press, radio, and television, when gathering the news may enter at their own  
31 risk into the incident area only when the officer in charge has deemed the area safe and only into those  
32 areas of the incident that do not, in the opinion of the officer in charge, interfere with the fire  
33 department or fire company, firefighters, or emergency medical services personnel dealing with such  
34 emergencies, in which case the chief or other officer in charge may order such person from the scene of  
35 the emergency incident.