

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 1997 SESSION

CHAPTER 791

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 9-155 and 38.2-401 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Fire Services Board; Fire Programs Fund.

[S 951]

Approved April 2, 1997

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 9-155 and 38.2-401 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 9-155. Powers and duties of Board.

The Virginia Fire Services Board shall have the responsibility for promoting the coordination of the efforts of fire service organizations at the state and local levels. To these ends, it shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To establish a process, involving state and local agencies, public and private, for setting priorities for implementing the Virginia Fire Prevention and Control Plan and coordinating the activities of state and local agencies, public and private, in implementing the Plan;
2. To develop a five-year statewide plan for fire education and training;
3. To establish criteria for the disbursement of any grant funds received from the federal government and any agencies thereof and any other source and to disburse such funds in accordance therewith;
4. To provide technical assistance and advice to local fire departments, other fire services organizations, and local governments;
5. To develop and recommend personnel standards for fire services personnel;
6. To develop and implement a statewide plan for the collection, analysis and reporting of data relating to fires in the Commonwealth, utilizing appropriate resources of other state agencies when deemed proper by the Board;
7. To make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly concerning legislation affecting fire prevention and protection and fire services organizations in Virginia;
8. To evaluate all state programs or functions which have a bearing on fire prevention and protection and to make to the appropriate government officials any recommendations deemed necessary to improve the level of fire prevention and protection in the Commonwealth;
9. To provide training and information to localities relative to the Statewide Fire Prevention Code;
10. To study and develop alternative means of providing financial support for volunteer fire departments and to make appropriate recommendations regarding the implementation of such alternatives;
11. To conduct training schools for fire service personnel in various areas of the Commonwealth; and
12. To render assistance to local fire departments and volunteer fire companies in training fire fighters.

Except for those policies established in § 38.2-401, compliance with the provisions of § 9-154 and this section and any ~~regulations~~ policies or guidelines enacted pursuant thereto shall be optional with, and at the full discretion of, any local governing body and any volunteer fire department or volunteer fire departments operating under the same corporate charters.

§ 38.2-401. Fire Programs Fund.

A. There is hereby established a Fire Programs Fund which shall be administered by the Department of Fire Programs under policies and definitions established by the Virginia Fire Services Board. *The Fund, which includes grants noted herein, shall be created in the State Treasury as a special nonreverting fund and shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. Any moneys deposited to or remaining in such Fund during or at the end of each fiscal year or biennium shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys shall be deposited or transferred to the account as collected by the State Corporation Commission and as coordinated with the Department. Interest earned on all moneys shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Interest earned from the Fund shall be set aside to be used for fire service purposes as defined by the Virginia Fire Services Board. The Fund shall consist of any moneys appropriated for this purpose by the General Assembly and any other moneys received for such purpose by the Board or Department. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, policies established by the Board for the administration of the Fund, and any grants provided from the Fund, that are not inconsistent with the purposes set out in this section shall be binding upon any locality that accepts such funds or related grants.* In order to maintain the Fund, the Commission shall annually assess against all licensed insurance companies doing business in this Commonwealth by writing any type of insurance as defined in §§ 38.2-110, 38.2-111, 38.2-126, 38.2-130 and 38.2-131 and those combination policies as defined in § 38.2-1921 that contain insurance as defined in §§ 38.2-110, 38.2-111 and 38.2-126, an assessment in the amount of one percent of the

total direct gross premium income for such insurance. Such assessment shall be apportioned, assessed and paid as prescribed by § 38.2-403. In any year in which a company has no direct gross premium income or in which its direct gross premium income is insufficient to produce at the rate of assessment prescribed by law an amount equal to or in excess of \$100, there shall be so apportioned and assessed against such company a contribution of \$100. The Commission shall be reimbursed from the Fund for all expenses necessary for the administration of this section.

B. *After reserving funds for the grants noted herein*, seventy-five percent of the ~~total~~ remaining amount collected annually pursuant to this section shall be allocated to the several counties, cities and towns of the Commonwealth providing fire service operations to be used for the improvement of volunteer and ~~salaried career~~ fire services in each of the receiving localities. Funds allocated to the counties, cities and towns pursuant to this subsection shall not be used directly or indirectly to supplant or replace any other funds appropriated by the counties, cities and towns for fire service operations. Such funds shall be used solely for the purposes of ~~fire service~~ *training volunteer or career firefighting personnel in each of the receiving localities; funding fire prevention and public safety education programs; constructing, improving and expanding regional or local fire service training facilities; or for purchasing fire-fighting equipment or purchasing protective clothing and protective equipment for fire-fighting personnel* ~~personal protective equipment, vehicles, equipment and supplies for use in the receiving locality specifically for fire service purposes.~~ Notwithstanding any other provision of the Code, when localities use such funds to construct, improve or expand ~~local~~ fire service training facilities, ~~all~~ fire-related training provided at such training facilities shall be by instructors certified ~~and~~ or approved according to ~~regulations~~ *policies* developed by the Department of Fire Programs and approved by the Virginia Fire Services Board. Distribution of this seventy-five percent of the Fund shall be made on the basis of population as provided for in §§ 4.1-116 and 4.1-117; however, no county or city eligible for such funds shall receive less than \$10,000, nor eligible town less than \$4,000. *In order to remain eligible for such funds, each receiving locality shall report annually to the Department on the use of the funds allocated to it for the previous year and shall provide a completed Fire Programs Fund Disbursement Agreement form. Each receiving locality shall be responsible for certifying the proper use of the funds. If, at the end of any annual reporting period, a satisfactory report and a completed agreement form have not been submitted by a receiving locality, any funds due to that locality for the next year shall be retained until said documents are submitted to the Department.*

C. The remainder of this Fund shall be used for the purposes of underwriting the costs of the operation of the Department of Fire Programs *which shall include providing funded training and administrative support services for nonfunded training to localities.*

D. *The "Fire Services Grant Fund Program" is hereby established and will be used as grants to provide regional fire services training facilities, to finance the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System and to build or repair burn buildings as determined by the Virginia Fire Services Board. Beginning January 1, 1996, \$1,000,000 from the assessments made pursuant to this section shall be distributed each year for the fire Services Grant Fund to be used as herein provided, and \$100,000 shall be distributed annually for continuing the statewide Dry Fire Hydrant Grant Program. All grants provided from the fund shall be administered by the Department according to the policies and procedures established by the Virginia Fire Services Board.*