

## Virginia State Firefighter's Association

### Certification VS Re-Certification Committee Report

**Issue:** The Virginia Fire Services Board is considering reinstating requirements for refresher training in firefighting duties. This subject is slated to come up at the Virginia Fire Services Board meeting to be held in Hampton, VA on 12, 2011.

**Response:** There seems to be many firefighters/departments that are opposed to any recertification and for various reasons. We have strong concerns that DFP can't handle any more work load than what they are doing, so where would we get funding to develop or deliver any type of recertification program. Departments are already complaining that DFP does not have enough instructors and the departments can't get classes scheduled when they are requested now. Funding would not be available unless taken from other programs. Many classes now are being taught non-funded by DFP at the expense of the local departments.

Many people believe that certification has been a down fall to firefighter training in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Classes are very hard to obtain, classes are way too long and if you miss two nights out of some courses then you are out of the class and you have lost all the time you have put into it up to that point. Every few years DFP comes up with these ideas and all of a sudden any training that you have is ignored or either the training records are done away with and you have to start thru the process again. This disheartens the firefighters to a point that they are not interested in anything from DFP and it has betrayed the volunteer system.

With the economy like it is at the present time most firefighters are working two or more jobs and also their spouse is doing the same while also maintaining a family at home. When one parent is on the job the other one is at home taking care of the children and vice versa. It is very difficult for the firefighter to find any additional time to continue taking the classes that he/she has already been certified in to begin with. Also many firefighters have to travel 30 or 40 miles to be able to take a class and this takes up more time and more expense with the price of fuel being what it is today.

Recertification may be the most destructive thing to happen to volunteers in years and it will be another added cost to our career people that we just don't need at this time. It appears this may very well be another unfunded mandate passed down to the localities by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The localities (Authorities have Jurisdiction) should have the option of deciding what level of training their firefighters should have based on the need in their locality and at what level of funding for training they are willing to provide.

## Certification VS Re-Certification Committee report

It was also interestingly noted while fires occur all over the Commonwealth of Virginia in many different types of structures and situations there hardly seems to be much difference in the severity of the damage done to the structure by fire. This seems to be true in both career and volunteer departments. While this is not any reflection against career departments who have the time and ability (with their own instructors) and whom VSFA supports in every way possible, the losses incurred by the property owner doesn't seem to be any greater in the rural areas versus the metropolitan areas.

While the Virginia State Firefighter's Association supports training for the firefighters whether career or volunteer it is a general consensus that this process needs much thought and consideration. If any one major change is needed it would be to allow credits for approved in-house training on the local level for all firefighters both volunteer and career. That would pay far more dividends than any additional certification or re-certification efforts.

There is also a strong concern that the Pro-Board may be leading the Commonwealth of Virginia and DFP down a road that we do not need to be on. Many of the training requirements have come to the state thru the Pro-Board and adopted by the state and passed down thru the system. There are a very slim number of firefighters in the Commonwealth of Virginia who benefit at all by the Pro-Board certification. It is fine that our firefighters have the option of following the Pro-Board certifications if that is what the individual firefighter wants but it should not be at the expense of all the other many firefighters who care nothing about the Pro-Board certification. There should be a charge placed on any individual who wants to follow the Pro-Board route and the charge should be sufficient enough to cover the cost of the program to DFP. The monies paid out by DFP for the Pro-Board certification for such a small number of people who want or need it is money that is not being spent wisely.

VSFA strongly supports both volunteer and career firefighters and departments. Anything that DFP does must protect and improve the volunteer system as most towns, cities, counties and taxpayers cannot afford any additional cost. DFP must also be sure regulations adopted will equally assist the career departments as well.

Respectively,

*Richard W. Harris*

Richard W. Harris, Chairman

Pete Kirby

Charlie Singleton

Tommy Chinault

Larry Logan

Ken Brown

By invitation: Lee Day