



JUNIOR FIRE FIGHTER PROGRAMS

RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Many municipalities in North Carolina, as well as in other states across the country, have set up a Junior Fire Fighter Program. Generally, the objective of such a program is to provide training for young men and women interested in serving their community and preparing to become active fire fighters upon reaching the age of 18.

Periodically, we are asked to review the town's proposed rules and guidelines for such a program.

In most cases, these programs are developed with similar structure to other municipal programs and include these basic elements:

- Objective
- Membership qualifications
- Duties and Responsibilities
- Training activities
- Disciplinary action program

As in any good risk management program, controlling, reducing, or eliminating the potentials for loss or injury to participants is of extreme importance.

One effective way to include a Junior Fire Fighter program is to sponsor an Explorer Post through the Boy Scouts of America. This program allows for training and participation of youths ages 14 to 18 years of age.

The Boy Scouts offers primary general liability insurance through its Learning for Life program, to cover the participating organization (the public entity including the fire department) and its board, officers, and employees against all personal liability judgments arising from official Exploring activities. All vehicles must be covered by a liability insurance policy that must meet or exceed the requirements in North Carolina. Finally, accident and sickness coverage is available through this program for the explorer post members.

An example of one such program is in Granite Falls. Tom Laws is the Fire Chief and has seen this program as successful. Benefits of this program, once the Post is established, are to provide insurance coverage for the explorer and provide an excellent educational opportunity towards working for fire fighter certification. In addition, this may be a better way to introduce young adults to the profession. The advantage is that the Explorer Post gives you a time-tested framework on which to achieve your goals.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES:

Fire and Emergency Services Exploring: Safety Issues (NOTE: The information in this section is taken from literature provided by the Boy Scouts of America)

There are some issues and hazards specific to Fire and Emergency Services Explorer programs that must be considered when organizing a post. These issues are fairly unique compared with other types of Explorer posts, being a direct result of the post's affiliation with the department and the potential for hazards.

Before engaging in any training activity or direct operational activities with the department, Exploring and/or department officials should investigate the legalities of Explorers participating in such activities. Most states have child labor laws that define what minors under the age of 18 may and may not participate in. Even though the individual may not be an actual member or employee of the department, these regulations may still apply. The following is a general list of guidelines that should be used for the formation of a post Explorer safety policy.

- Explorers must be equipped with personal protective equipment that is appropriate for the activity being done.
- Explorers may not be substituted for trained personnel.
- Explorers may be mobilized only as a post, with required leadership. Explorers are not on call as individuals.
- Explorers who ride on apparatus or other department vehicles must be seated and must wear a seat belt.
- Explorers may not drive department vehicles.
- Explorers may not climb aerial ladders.
- Explorers may not climb ground ladders that exceed 35 feet in length. (SEE NOTE BELOW)
- Explorers may not enter or perform ventilation procedures on a burning structure.
- Explorers may not use any dielectric tools or gloves on energized electrical equipment.
- Explorers may not operate powered hydraulic rescue tools or equipment.
- Explorers may not operate acetylene-cutting torches.
- Explorers may not handle life nets.

NOTE: Risk Management Services does not recommend that Junior Fire Fighters climb ground ladders of this height, unless provided with proper fall protection devices as outlined in current OSHA Fall protection standards.

One issue that requires particular attention is what the Fire and Emergency Services Explorer will be allowed to do at the emergency scene. Many departments allow Explorers to respond on the apparatus with trained personnel. A solid policy must be established as to what the Explorer

may and may not do once he or she arrives on the scene. This policy must fit with departmental regulations, Learning for Life regulations, and state laws. All of these issues should be resolved in the post bylaws before Fire and Emergency Services Explorer activities are begun. If you have any questions about the safety of an activity not listed above, contact your local Learning for Life office.

ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION FOR JUNIOR FIREFIGHTERS

For the purpose of this section, the Incident Commander in the best use of his or her judgment shall determine hazardous and non-hazardous duties or situations.*

Minors Who Are Under Sixteen

Minors who are Under Sixteen **MAY**:

- Perform non-hazardous duties at the fire station
- Ride in the cab of fire apparatus responding to an emergency scene.
- Attend training sessions. However, if the training is deemed hazardous an instructor shall supervise the minor.
- Participate in non-hazardous duties only within the rehabilitation area at the scene of an actual emergency.

Minors who are Under Sixteen **MAY NOT**:

- Perform any hazardous duties at the fire station.
- Ride outside of the cab of any fire apparatus
- Perform any hazardous work at the scene of an accident.
- Fight fires (except in training as above).

Minors Who are Sixteen and Seventeen

Minors who are Sixteen and Seventeen **MAY**:

- Ride as a passenger in the cab of a fire truck or in an emergency vehicle.
- With proper training, fight ground fires when they are directly supervised, except ground fires which involve an existing "Crown Fire" exposure
- Perform patient care (for which they are licensed) in an emergency vehicle or at the scene of an accident or other emergency.
- Attend and take part in supervised training.
- Participate in fire department functions within the rehabilitation area of an emergency scene. This could include setting up the engine, assisting in water supply efforts, and other support functions, which do not expose the Junior Firefighter to hazardous areas or atmospheres.
- Pick up hose and clean up at the fire scene after it has been declared safe by the Incident Commander.
- Enter a structure only when accompanied by an adult firefighter once the structure has been determined safe by the Incident Commander.

- Perform search and rescue activities, other than structural firefighting.
- Operate a fire pump located outside the danger zone at the direction 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 Sixteen and Seventeen **MAY NOT:**

- Perform fire suppression involving structures or vehicles.
- Drive fire department or emergency vehicles
- Respond with operating red lights (drive any vehicle, including their own car with attached operating red lights) to the scene of a fire or emergency.
- Perform firefighting "overhaul" activities (except when the structure has been declared safe by the Incident Commander and then only with adult firefighter).
- Respond to Hazardous Material events (except for support functions within the cold zone).
- Perform any activity, except training, which involves the use of self-contained breathing apparatus.
- 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 is 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.

* An "Incident Commander" is the Fire Chief or his/her designee.

It is important to take all necessary precautions in these settings to eliminate, as far as is practical, injuries to participants that may result in long-term consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Based on this discussion, Risk Management Services recommends utilizing the professionalism of the Boy Scouts of America for the establishment of a Junior Fire Fighter program by sponsoring an Explorer Post at your fire department.
2. It is further recommended the sponsoring entity seek to obtain a "Certificate of Insurance" from the Learning for Life program of the Boys Scouts of America to include naming the entity as an additional insured.

For additional information contact risk management services at **1- 800-228-0986** and select **“safety and risk control”** from the available options.

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