

May 12, 2014

City of Ethridge Tennessee
Ms. Julie K. Yokley
City Recorder
P.O. Box 173
Ethridge, Tennessee 38456

Dear Ms. Yokley:

Your question regarding volunteer firefighters and the impact on your ISO rating was referred to MTAS Fire Consultant Dennis Wolf who answers as follows:

ISO credits firefighters based on where they respond from and not on what they may be called (i.e. volunteer, paid-on-call, reserve), or whether they are paid a salary (career), receive a nominal fee, or are truly volunteers and receive no compensation.

Under Section 570A, “On-Duty Firefighters at Fire Stations (ODF)” of the ISO Fire Suppression Rating Schedule, credit is awarded for on-duty firefighters at fire stations. The two key components are that the firefighter is at the fire station and responds on the initial alarm. On-duty firefighters include career personnel and volunteers, paid-on-call, reserve, etc. personnel who are at the fire station working a scheduled shift. Working in this sense does not mean they have to be paid. On-duty firefighters receive one-for-one credit: one on-duty firefighter equals one firefighter counted as responding.

Under Section 570C, “On-call and Off-duty Firefighters (OCF),” credit is awarded for personnel who respond on the initial alarm from some place other than the fire station. Also, firefighters that are at the fire station but not working a scheduled shift are counted as on-call and not on-duty. To account for the time needed for notification, travel, and assembly on the fire ground, ISO credits each on-call and off-duty firefighter as one-third of an on-duty firefighter: three on-call firefighters responding are counted as one firefighter responding.

Therefore, it does not matter what Ethridge calls their firefighters, it matters where the firefighters respond from and how many show up. If they have firefighters that sometimes work, stay over, or just “hang out” at the fire station, they can get one-for-one credit for those documented hours if they have a written shift staffing policy. The two key points to an acceptable written policy are the establishment of work shifts and receiving prior approval before working a shift. The attached draft policy complies with the ISO requirements for a written policy. The city can customize this policy for their department by changing the shift lengths, starting and ending times, the person who approves the volunteer to work, or any other component needed to meet local needs. They must retain the provision that establishes work shifts and the provision requiring prior approval before working a shift. Documentation is very important.

Ms. Julie Yokley
May 12, 2014
Page 2

Compensating volunteers is an incentive to improve response. If they decide to compensate the volunteers, it still does not matter what they call them. We have information on MORE about volunteers and compensation at this link:

<http://resource.ips.tennessee.edu/reference/compensation-and-employee-status-volunteer-firefighters>.

I suggest that they review the information to help them avoid issues with the FLSA act.

Please let Dennis or I know if you have any further questions regarding this matter. Dennis can be reached at 901-579-9247 or Dennis.Wolf@tennessee.edu.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey J. Broughton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeffrey J. Broughton
Municipal Management Consultant

Cc: Dennis Wolf