

FIREFIGHTERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

112.80 Short title.--This part may be cited as the "Firefighters' Bill of Rights."

112.81 Definitions.--As used in this part:

(1) "Firefighter" means any person who is certified in compliance with s. [633.35](#) and who is employed solely within the fire department or public safety department of an employing agency as a full-time firefighter whose primary responsibility is the prevention and extinguishment of fires; the protection of life and property; and the enforcement of municipal, county, and state fire prevention codes and laws pertaining to the prevention and control of fires.

(2) "Employing agency" means any municipality or the state or any political subdivision thereof, including authorities and special districts, which employs firefighters.

(3) "Informal inquiry" means a meeting by supervisory or management personnel with a firefighter about whom an allegation of misconduct has come to the attention of such supervisory or management personnel, the purpose of which meeting is to mediate a complaint or discuss the facts to determine whether a formal investigation should be commenced.

(4) "Formal investigation" means the process of investigation ordered by supervisory personnel, after the supervisory personnel have previously determined that the firefighter shall be reprimanded, suspended, or removed, during which the questioning of a firefighter is conducted for the purpose of gathering evidence of misconduct.

(5) "Administrative proceeding" means any nonjudicial hearing which may result in the recommendation, approval, or order of disciplinary action against, or suspension or discharge of, a firefighter.

(6) "Interrogation" means the questioning of a firefighter by an employing agency in connection with a formal investigation or an administrative proceeding but shall not include arbitration or civil service proceedings. Questioning pursuant to an informal inquiry shall not be deemed to be an interrogation.

112.82 Rights of firefighters.--Whenever a firefighter is subjected to an interrogation, such interrogation shall be conducted pursuant to the terms of this section.

(1) The interrogation shall take place at the facility where the investigating officer is assigned, or at the facility which has jurisdiction over the place where the incident under investigation allegedly occurred, as designated by the investigating officer.

(2) No firefighter shall be subjected to interrogation without first receiving written notice of sufficient detail of the investigation in order to reasonably apprise the firefighter of the nature of the investigation. The firefighter shall be informed beforehand of the names of all complainants.

(3) All interrogations shall be conducted at a reasonable time of day, preferably when the firefighter is on duty, unless the importance of the interrogation or investigation is of such a nature that immediate action is required.

(4) The firefighter under investigation shall be informed of the name, rank, and unit or command of the officer in charge of the investigation, the interrogators, and all persons present during any interrogation.

(5) Interrogation sessions shall be of reasonable duration and the firefighter shall be permitted reasonable periods for rest and personal necessities.

(6) The firefighter being interrogated shall not be subjected to offensive language or offered any incentive as an inducement to answer any questions.

(7) A complete record of any interrogation shall be made, and if a transcript of such interrogation is made, the firefighter under investigation shall be entitled to a copy without charge. Such record may be electronically recorded.

(8) An employee or officer of an employing agency may represent the agency, and an employee organization may represent any member of a bargaining unit desiring such representation in any proceeding to which this part applies. If a collective bargaining agreement provides for the presence of a representative of the collective bargaining unit during investigations or interrogations, such representative shall be allowed to be present.

(9) No firefighter shall be discharged, disciplined, demoted, denied promotion or seniority, transferred, reassigned, or otherwise disciplined or discriminated against in regard to his or her employment, or be threatened with any such treatment as retaliation for or by reason solely of his or her exercise of any of the rights granted or protected by this part.

112.83 Rights of firefighters with respect to civil suits.--If an agency employing firefighters fails to comply with the requirements of this part, a firefighter employed by such agency who is personally injured by such failure to comply may apply directly to the circuit court of the county wherein such employing agency is headquartered and permanently resides for an injunction to restrain and enjoin such violation of the provisions of this part and to complete the performance of the duties imposed by this part.

112.84 Rights of firefighters nonexclusive.--

(1) The rights of firefighters as set forth in this part shall not be construed to diminish the rights and privileges of firefighters that are guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this state or limit the granting of broader rights by other law, ordinance, or rule. These rights include the right to bring suit against any individual, group of persons, association, organization, or corporation for damages, either monetary or otherwise, suffered during the performance of the firefighter's official duties or for abridgment of the firefighter's rights, civil or otherwise, arising out of the performance of his or her official duties.

(2) This part is neither designed to abridge nor expand the rights of firefighters to bring civil suits for injuries suffered in the course of their employment as recognized by the courts, nor is it designed to abrogate any common-law or statutory limitation on the rights of recovery.