



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

Providing leadership for the fire and emergency services since 1873

4025 FAIR RIDGE DRIVE • FAIRFAX, VA 22033-2868 • TEL: 703/273-0911 • FAX: 703/273-9363 • www.iafc.org

Volunteer and EMS Jobs Protection Act

Background

Nationally, there are around 800,000 volunteer firefighters in the United States, according to the National Fire Protection Association's *U.S. Fire Department Profile Through 2000*. Currently, these volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) providers are not protected from termination or demotion by their employers should they miss work when asked to respond to a national disaster. Volunteer firefighters and EMS providers must face the threat of losing their livelihoods, when they respond to national disasters such as Hurricane Katrina.

Representative Michael N. Castle (R-DE) introduced H.R. 3949, the Volunteer Firefighter and EMS Personnel Job Protection Act, to address this issue. Senator Thomas R. Carper (D-DE) and Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH) introduced S. 2399, a companion bill in the Senate. This legislation would prevent volunteer firefighters or EMS personnel from being demoted or fired for serving up to 14 days at the scene of a Stafford Act-defined emergency or major disaster. Under this legislation, a volunteer firefighter or EMS provider would have to make a reasonable effort to notify his or her employer of the absence. The employer may request written verification that the volunteer was responding to an emergency or major disaster, and may withhold pay for the time that the volunteer was not at work. The legislation would allow a volunteer firefighter or EMS provider to bring a civil action in U.S. district court, if he or she had been terminated for responding to a Stafford Act-defined emergency or major disaster.

Where It Stands

H.R. 3949 currently has 68 cosponsors in the House of Representatives, and S. 2399 has 2 cosponsors in the Senate.

IAFC Focus

- The IAFC is working to secure cosponsors on H.R. 3949 and S. 2399 to help them move through both the House and the Senate.