

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 810
Economic Matters

(Delegate Wivell)

Finance

Workers' Compensation - Washington County - Volunteer Company - Fire and
Rescue Academy Student

This bill specifies that a member of a volunteer company in Washington County is a covered employee (for purposes of workers' compensation benefits) if the individual is at least 15 years old and is enrolled in the fire and rescue academy program operated by the Washington County Board of Education. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: Washington County expenditures are not anticipated to be materially affected because the bill applies workers' compensation benefits to a small number of students under limited circumstances. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Workers' Compensation Benefits – Generally

If an employee covered under workers' compensation insurance has suffered an accidental personal injury, compensable hernia, or occupational disease, the employee is entitled to compensation benefits paid by the employer, its insurer, the Subsequent Injury Fund, or the Uninsured Employers' Fund, as appropriate. Workers' compensation benefits include

wage replacement, medical treatment, and vocational rehabilitation expenses. Wage replacement benefits are calculated based on the covered employee's average weekly wage while medical benefits are generally fully or partially covered depending on how the treatment is related to the personal injury, hernia, or occupational disease.

If a covered accident or occupational disease results in the death of the covered employee, then the employee's dependents are entitled to workers' compensation death and funeral benefits. Similar to wage replacement benefits, death benefits are calculated using the covered employee's average weekly wage. The duration of benefits and total benefits allowed depend on if the dependents were partially or wholly dependent on the covered employee, among other factors.

Washington County is self-insured for workers' compensation, meaning that all compensation claims are paid directly by the county instead of through an insurer.

Workers' Compensation Benefits – Washington County Volunteer Companies

“Volunteer company” means a volunteer (1) advance life support unit; (2) ambulance company or squad; (3) fire company or department; (4) rescue company, department, or squad; and (5) fire police unit. A volunteer company member in Washington County is not considered a covered employee for purposes of workers' compensation benefits unless the Board of County Commissioners passes a resolution to classify the volunteer company in such a way that its members are considered covered employees while on duty.

Background: The Washington County public school's [fire and rescue academy program](#) is sponsored by the University of Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute and the Washington County Volunteer Fire & Rescue Association. Through the program, students can earn up to 16 college credits toward a fire science or emergency management degree from the University of Maryland. Additionally, students can earn certifications related to, among other things, firefighting, emergency medical services, and hazardous material operations. The program affords cadets the opportunity to meet the prerequisites for employment by any career fire department.

Washington County advises that each its fire and rescue academy program totals about 25 students each year.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Washington County; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 1, 2020
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