

NEW YORK STATE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER TRAINING STIPEND PROGRAM

Earlier this year New York State passed a volunteer firefighter training stipend program to enhance state and local government volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention programs at the state and local levels. A new general Municipal Law §200-aa was passed which created the authority to provide volunteer firefighter training stipend programs at the state and local level and directed the Office of Fire Prevention and Control ["OFPC"] to promulgate regulations to govern these programs. The statute became effective on August 31, 2023, and reads as follows:

§ 200-aa. Training stipend for volunteer firefighters

1. For purposes of this section:

- (a) "fire company" shall have the same meaning as defined in section three of the volunteer firefighters' benefit law.*
- (b) "training stipend" means payment of a nominal fee to a volunteer firefighter of a stipend for the completion of certain firefighter training, as identified and published by the office of fire prevention and control.*
- (c) "volunteer firefighter" shall have the same meaning as defined in section three of the volunteer firefighters' benefit law.*

2. The governing board of a city, town, village or fire district may, by local law, ordinance or resolution, authorize a fire company to provide training stipends to volunteer firefighters.

3. The office of fire prevention and control may make available state funds through a training stipend to volunteer firefighters for completion of certain firefighter training, as identified and published by the office of fire prevention and control.

4. No volunteer firefighter may receive a training stipend from both a volunteer fire company pursuant to subdivision two of this section and the office of fire prevention and control pursuant to subdivision three of this section for completion of the same firefighter training.

5. Any training stipend provided under this section shall not be deemed remuneration or gratuity under the volunteer firefighters' benefit law or any other provision of law and shall not interfere with or impact the volunteer status of volunteer firefighters under the volunteer firefighters' benefit law or any other provision of law.

6. The office of fire prevention and control shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this section. N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law § 200-aa (McKinney)

As of this date we are still waiting for OFPC to promulgate the regulations. Taking the courses and submitting requests for payment of the stipends awaits those regulations.

What will be permitted at the local level awaits those regulations.

In the interim the OFPC has printed the following information at <https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/new-york-state-volunteer-firefighter-stipend-program> and directed fire districts and fire departments to check at that website for developments relative to the regulations.

The Program

Effective August 31, 2023, General Municipal Law § 200-aa authorizes training stipends for volunteer firefighters to increase recruitment and retention of the volunteer fire service.

State Fire Training Stipend

The Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) is authorized to administer a State-fund Fire Training Stipend to volunteer firefighters for completion of certain firefighter training courses (listed below) on or after August 31, 2023. Eligible courses, amounts, and program requirements are identified herein and will be codified in regulations, which will be forthcoming and published here.

Local Fire Training Stipend

GML 200-aa authorizes fire companies to administer a local fire training stipend program, subject to authorization by the governing board of city, town, village, or fire district (AHJ). Regulations necessary to implement this program will be forthcoming and published here.

State Fire Training Stipend

First time completions of the following courses or course equivalency as determined by OFPC will be eligible for a State Fire Training stipend:

- 2021 BASIC EXTERIOR FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS W/HMFRO (01-05-0101)
- 2021 SCBA/INTERIOR FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS-FF1 (01-05-0102)
- 2021 BEFO W/HMFRO (BLENDED LEARNING) (01-05-0103)
- 2021 BEFO-SCBA/IFO-FF1 (BLENDED LEARNING) (01-05-0104)
- FIRE OFFICER I (NFPA 1021-2020 ED.) w/FSTFAC (01-11-0176)
- FIRE OFFICER I – SUPERVISING FIRE OFFICER MODULE SERIES (01-11-0154)

The stipend amount that will be paid to the Volunteer Firefighter by OFPC is:

\$750.00 –

- o 2021 BASIC EXTERIOR FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS W/HMFRO (01-05-0101) or
- o 2021 BEFO W/HMFRO (BLENDED LEARNING) (01-05-0103)

\$1250.00 –

- o 2021 SCBA/INTERIOR FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS-FF1 (01-05-0102)

\$1000.00 –

- o FIRE OFFICER I (NFPA 1021-2020 ED.) w/FSTFAC (01-11-0176) or
- o FIRE OFFICER I – SUPERVISING FIRE OFFICER MODULE SERIES (01-11-0154)

\$2000.00 –

- o 2021 BEFO-SCBA/IFO-FF1 (BLENDED LEARNING) (01-05-0104)

Stipend Conditions and Requirements:

1. State Fire Training Stipends are limited to a first-time completion of a qualifying course.
 - Repeating a course or subsequently taking an equivalent course does not qualify for a State Fire Training Stipend.
2. The qualifying course must have been completed on or after August 31, 2023.
3. Any Volunteer Firefighter that receives a Local Fire Training Stipend cannot receive a State Fire Training Stipend for the same or equivalent course.
4. Stipends will be disbursed on a first come, first serve basis, as determined by OFPC.
5. All course equivalents must be reviewed and approved through OFPC's equivalency process prior to submission of a stipend application and be entered as a completion on the students training record.
6. Submitting an application does not create a right or entitlement to the receipt of a Training Stipend.
7. Awards of State Fire Training Stipends are subject to the availability of allocated funds.

How to submit for the stipend:

1. Applications for a training stipend must be submitted by the Volunteer Firefighter's Fire Chief or Chief Officer to OFPC within two years of the completion date of the qualifying State Fire Training Course.
2. Applications must be submitted using the OFPC Stipend Endorsement form.
3. Applications must include, but are not limited to, the following components:
 - a. signed statement from the Fire Chief/Chief Officer of the Fire Department indicating that:
 - i. the Volunteer Firefighter is an active firefighter and Member in Good Standing (as determined by the authority having jurisdiction);
 - ii. the Volunteer Firefighter was authorized by the Fire Department to take the course; and
 - iii. the Volunteer Firefighter successfully completed the course

- b. a Substitute W-9 form, if not already submitted (by the student) during course registration.
4. Application paperwork must be submitted through email to OFPC-Stipened@dhses.ny.gov.
5. Substitute W-9 form can be submitted during registration of the pre-determined courses listed above
6. Upon receipt and verification of a completed application, OFPC will process the stipend payment directly to the Volunteer Firefighter, subject to the requirements of this part and the availability of funds.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What forms must the student and fire chief submit to get the student's stipend?
- Student must complete a Substitute W-9 form
 - Fire chief/company must complete and submit the Annual fire reporting from the previous year,
 - Fire chief/Chief officer must complete the Annual Fire Department Demographics form
 - Fire chief/Chief officer must submit the OFPC Stipend Endorsement form.
2. Do I have to complete a Substitute W-9 form for each course qualifying for a stipend?
- No, only one W-9 form is required unless students' demographics changes, such as home address, etc.
3. What are the five courses make up the module series to obtain credit for FIRE OFFICER I - SUPERVISING FIRE OFFICER MODULE SERIES (01-11-0154)
- NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT-COMPANY TRAINING AND COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION (01-11-0150)
 - NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT-FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY COURSE (01-11-0151)
 - NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT- LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION COURSE (01-11-0152)
 - NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT-PLANNING AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE COURSE (01-11-0153)
 - FIREGROUND STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR FIRST ARRIVING COMPANIES (01-11-0143)
4. Why are course completions before August 31, 2023 not eligible?

The new Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Stipend Program (General Municipal Law Section 200-aa) is effective August 31, 2023. The authority and corresponding state funding is effective as of August 31st.

We will continue to monitor developments relative to promulgation of the regulations on the OFPC website and on the State Register which publishes new regulations.