

Pertaining to a firefighter only:

- A fire or vehicle crash resulting in serious injury or death to a first responder or citizen;
- The death of, or serious injury to, a person in the medical care of the firefighter;

Pertaining to both a peace officer and a firefighter:

- An officer or firefighter being the victim of a felonious assault;
- The death of a colleague or partner;
- The severe injury to, or death of, a child, particularly if the officer has a child of or near the same age;
- An incident involving multiple deaths or injuries in a short amount of time.

The leave may commence at the end of that officer's or firefighter's shift in which the incident occurred, or when necessary administrative procedures relating to a critical incident have been completed; and the officer or firefighter informs his or her supervisor.

For peace officers and firefighters, the leave may be paid or unpaid as determined by the employment contract, collective labor agreement, if any, or written departmental policy. The provisions of HB 562 GA shall not set aside any employment contract, labor agreement, or departmental policies that grant more than 48 hours.

For volunteer firefighters, this leave may be unpaid or paid as determined by the firefighter's written departmental policy.

The fiscal impact of HB 562 GA on local fire and police departments is expected to be minimal to moderate and negative. There is no way to predict the number of critical incidents an agency might deal with annually, nor the effect on an individual.

We don't know the number of agencies whose polices currently allow for leave less than, equal to, or greater than 48 hours. Regardless, when an officer or firefighter is on leave, that position must be temporarily filled by another employee. At the very least, this might necessitate additional pay or force an overtime situation to compensate for the personnel on leave, but this would be less costly than hiring and training new personnel.

The Institutes of Health estimate that more than 80% of first responders experience traumatic events on the job. The Institute also provides that 15% of emergency personnel (paramedics), 13% of rescue teams, 7% of firefighters, and 5% of police officers currently have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to previous involvement in emergency responses. Based on these percentages, the impact could be moderate depending on the size of the agency.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness states that both firefighters and police officers are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty and estimate that 18 to 24% of dispatchers and 35% of police officers suffer from PTSD. Many first responders self-medicate with alcohol or other self-destructive and abusive behaviors in an effort to cope with the stress and trauma they deal with daily.

The Kentucky Firefighters Association was contacted for input. They support the proposal and believe it will have a positive impact on the mental health of their personnel.

Part III: Differences to Local Government Mandate Statement from Prior Versions

Part II refers to HB 562 GA version. HB 562 GA is the same as the bill introduced. HB 562 GA passed its chamber of origin without any amendments or substitutes.

Data Source(s): LRC Staff, Institute of Health; National Alliance on Mental Illness

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