

PA FIRE POLICE ***It's the Letter of the Law. . .***

By Tony Riccardi - PA State Fire Academy Approved Fire Police Instructor

In this article we may very well be repeating information provided in a previous issue. However, due to information received, we felt it necessary to clarify this erroneous belief by someone who complained that I had removed the requirement for fire police to wear helmets and use helmets when on duty.

First of all, I have neither the authority nor the inclination to change anything that is not legal and proper. In these articles and in the books we have always attempted to identify facts that can be supported by law.

Having said that, now let's address the concern raised by an individual who became angry because "I had removed the requirement for fire police to wear helmets."

When this information was initially presented to me by a student, that fire police are now required to wear helmets, I did what I normally do when presented with new information.

PennDot was contacted directly, since the requirements for head wear is made by that entity.

The official from PennDot stated that fire police had simply misread the law.

PennDot Vehicle Code regulations Title 67, Chapter 101, Section 101.1, states: "A fireman's helmet is suitable attire for a firefighter and an official hat must be worn by fire police."

PennDot Vehicle Code Regulations Title 67, Section 101.3 states that *Utility workers, construction workers, and maintenance workers* are required to wear a helmet and are required to use a traffic control device with a paddle indicating STOP on one side and SLOW on the other side.

Thus you can see that the wrong section was read.

Helmets are a great idea and fire police would do well to wear them when on duty as effective protection for their head. If your fire company has purchased helmets for their fire police, they are going to want you to wear it and you should.

We would encourage everyone to make sure you read the law correctly before making declarations that will confuse and/or mislead others.

Second area to be repeated due to a large number of activities is that of coverage during non-emergency activities. We have covered this item numerous times, but there are still fire police officers placing themselves in a position where they may be denied coverage should they become injured.

The reason for the re-visit to this topic stems from a recent notification via email for all available fire police officers to respond to another department to assist them at a fireworks display.

I don't know if anyone went and I don't know if anyone got injured, what I do know is that this procedure is totally contrary to Title 35, Fire Police Law.

A fire police may not be summoned to an assist for a non-emergency activity by being paged out, contact by email, tweeter, text, or any other form of

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communication. If they respond to the assist and get injured they are not covered. In fact, they don't even have authority to respond or authority when they do respond.

Let's look at Title 35 and see what the reading is.....

....."fire police have authority at non-emergency activities PROVIDED they have been AUTHORIZED by their municipality. Their municipality grants them this authorization upon the written request of the municipality requesting their services."

In plain English, Fire Company A needs assistance at a non-emergency activity. Fire Police Unit A goes to their township/borough and requests the municipality notify the township/borough whose fire police they wish to use in the assist. The individual township/borough then authorizes their fire police to participate in the requested assistance. Everybody is covered; there is no question now that the proper procedure has been followed.

No matter how often or what we write about, there are certain folks who will do things their way no matter what. That is your choice. These articles are only designed to show you the proper way. We cannot nor will ever mandate that you comply with the statement of the articles, only that you be properly informed.



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