



## **GSFA Position Statement as of 09/21/2010 GFSTC Rules Development**

Almost two years ago, a committee was formed to review and revise the current rules and regulations of the Georgia Fire Service. A cross section of career, combination, and volunteer departments along with representatives from many of the state's fire service organizations were invited to be a part of this process. Although involvement in this committee has varied and faces have come and gone.....the work has continued until this present time. The Georgia Fire Service owes a debt of gratitude to the individuals who have unselfishly served on this committee.

During this process, the position of the Executive Board of the Georgia State Firefighter's Association has been to monitor the progress of the committee and have members present at the committee meetings to offer input. In our opinion, it was unfair to the Rules Committee to form an opinion on a document that was incomplete. Until now.....

Recently the document and actions surrounding the document have caused a storm of conflict throughout the fire service. Rumors, twisted stories and assumed intentions of the document have caused some definite division across Georgia. Having met with the Chairs of the Rules Committee, this Board is convinced that their intentions behind the document are for the right reasons. Firefighter safety and survival and providing the local Fire Chief a set of tools for his/her toolbox seem to be an overarching theme from this committee. Sadly enough, their good intent and rules draft have brought to light many pointed and difficult questions. Who will fund these unfunded mandates, how will these rules effect our pension, what if a department can't meet minimum staffing and equipment requirements, definitions which could jeopardize indemnification payments in the event of a line of duty death, exceeding O.C.G.A. Title 25 and employment law are only a few of the questions now being asked about the content of this document.

The Rules Committee met on Tuesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> in Forsyth for their regular meeting. Some individuals felt that this meeting would produce a final draft, ready for the Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training Council to vote on at their next called meeting scheduled for October 14<sup>th</sup>. During this Tuesday's meeting it has become very obvious that there is much work that is still to be done on the rules draft before it is ready for a vote from Council. Council Chairman Frank Edwards has canceled the October meeting because of this very reason. This Executive Board of the GSFA appreciates the fore sight of the Rules Committee and Chairman

Edwards to “slow down” the process and let’s make sure we get it right and not just rush it through. Too much is at stake.

The bottom line is this: – Georgia is a big state, with fire departments who serve communities of all sizes, where a one size fits all document is a difficult fix, and where the current document is 35 years old and the law governing the rules is as outdated as the rules – do you see a situation here?

With all of this being said, the position of the GSFA Board concerning the Rules and Regulations Update is this:

1. We support the continued work of the committee to produce a document that is in line with the current law.
2. We are committed to insure that firefighters in this State, career and volunteer, large and small are heard and the effects of these proposed changes are recognized.
3. We will insure all avenues as laid out by state statute, are followed during this process to include proper hearings and notifications.
4. We commit to remain involved in this process, as a participant and as an observer and to work closely with the Fire Service Unification Partners during this process.
5. We commit to keep the membership of GSFA abreast of the process.
6. We ask for the continued patience and support of the Council to the Committee to allow sufficient time for their work to be completed.
7. We ***plead*** the Georgia Fire Service to get involved in this process. Let your questions and concerns be known. We will make sure that all comments that are received by this association are forwarded to the rules committee, GFSTC and the GFSTC staff.
8. We commit to help spread factual and accurate information concerning this process through every form of media outlet that is available to the GSFA. This is to include the posting of the correct version of the draft and associated minutes of discussion to maintain a transparent and comprehensive view of the document.
9. We encourage the rules committee, GFSTC, and GFSTC staff to take the needed time to make sure that this document is correct, legal and most importantly will improve the fire service in Georgia and not degrade the service.
10. We strongly urge caution on any points that will place pensions, certifications and compliance in jeopardy. This is to include initial certifications and annual recertification for all positions, career and volunteer.

The GSFA representative on the rules committee is 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Joey Hartley. His email address is [joey.hartley@moultriega.com](mailto:joey.hartley@moultriega.com) . Of course as always, all of the contact information for the GSFA association CEO and Executive Board can be found on our web site at [www.GSFFA.org](http://www.GSFFA.org).

Georgia, this is not an issue where you can sit back. Good or bad, this issue will have far reaching effects for the fire service today and generations to come. You must stay aware, involved, and informed. Your GSFA board will speak for you, but you must give us something to say.

***This statement is by unanimous consent of the executive Board of the GSFA 9/21/2010***