

Georgia Firefighters Cancer Insurance

Frequently Asked Questions

Highlights of the Bill

Q. What is the purpose of [HB 146](#)?

A. It provides employed and volunteer firefighters with monetary assistance in the event they are diagnosed with cancer. This is a less expensive alternative than providing workers' compensation coverage for those who believe they may have contracted cancer from firefighting. Last year, Governor Nathan Deal vetoed legislation that the General Assembly passed in the 2016 Session that would have required local governments to pay for cancer coverage through workers' compensation. State leadership strongly encouraged ACCG and the Georgia Municipal Association to find an alternative to help firefighters diagnosed with cancer, and HB 146 is the result of those negotiations.

Q. What are the required benefits?

A. There are two separate requirements, which are independent of each other:

- 1) The lump-sum benefit provides a payout for a diagnosis of cancer based upon severity of the condition. For severe forms of cancer, the payout is \$25,000. For less severe forms of cancer, the payout is \$6,250. Certain types of pre-cancerous conditions would not qualify for a payout.
- 2) Income replacement is required to start no later than 6 months after the determination that a firefighter can no longer perform the duties of a firefighter. The income replacement requirement is 60% of the firefighter's salary or \$5,000 per month, whichever is less. If the firefighter is a volunteer, the income replacement requirement is \$1,500 per month.

Q. When does the legislation become effective?

A. The effective date is January 1, 2018.

Q. How do I know if my jurisdiction is required to comply with this legislation?

A. If your entity has a legally organized fire department that employs firefighters or utilizes volunteer firefighters, then your entity is subject to the legislation and required to provide the benefits.

Q. I've determined that my jurisdiction is subject to the legislation. How do we comply?

A. You can purchase insurance from a private insurance company licensed in the State of Georgia or self-insure the required benefits.

Q. What are the requirements to become self-insured?

A. These requirements are established by the Georgia Department of Insurance.

Q. Who determines if an entity has complied with the provisions of the Act?

A. The Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council will determine rules and regulations governing the requirements and what constitutes compliance.

Group Program

Q. Is a group program being established?

A. ACCG and the Georgia Municipal Association are working together to provide a group program for counties and cities. Group purchasing helps all participants obtain lower pricing. Another goal is to make it easier for jurisdictions to be in compliance regarding this valuable benefit for firefighters.

Q. What is the estimated cost of insurance?

A. Early estimates are \$400 per firefighter (employed/volunteer) for the two required benefits. Premiums will be based on the number of firefighters and likely billed the first of every quarter with an audit at year-end. In a case where a firefighter is employed by one fire department and serves as a volunteer at another, only the employer will be responsible for the premium.

More Details in the Act

Q. Can a firefighter submit a claim for cancers diagnosed prior to January 1, 2018?

A. No. Only compensable injuries and illnesses diagnosed on January 1, 2018 or after will be eligible.

Q. Must a firefighter have served continuously for a period of time to be eligible?

A. Yes. A firefighter must serve 12 consecutive months with their fire department to be eligible.

Q. If a firefighter works as an employed firefighter in one location and a volunteer firefighter in another, would that firefighter be eligible for coverage in both locations?

A. No. Upon a diagnosis of illness or injury, a firefighter would be eligible in their primary place of work or where they volunteer as a firefighter, but not both.

Q. Does the lump-sum benefit pay for more than one diagnosis of cancer?

A. Yes. Based on the severity of the cancer diagnosis, the eligible firefighter may receive up to \$50,000 (maximum of \$25,000 for each diagnosis). Those benefits would then be exhausted.

Q. How much time must separate the two diagnoses to allow for more than one payout?

A. The firefighter must be symptom free for 180 days between diagnoses.

Q. May the firefighter take the lump-sum benefit with them when they leave service?

A. Yes, provided they have not exhausted their \$50,000 limit while employed or volunteering. The firefighter must pay the premium to continue coverage.

Q. Does the income replacement benefit pay only for a diagnosis of cancer?

A. No. The income replacement benefit will pay for any illness or injury resulting in a disability as detailed under the insurance contract provisions.

Q. For a firefighter who is employed with more than one fire station, may they combine the income received from each station to determine their income replacement benefit?

A. Yes, provided the salary information is available, the firefighter may combine all sources of firefighter income to calculate their benefit up to a maximum of \$5,000 per month.

Q. If the employed or volunteer firefighter is receiving income from other sources, is the monthly benefit reduced?

A. Yes. The monthly benefit will be reduced based on the other sources of income, unless the firefighter purchased a privately owned policy (i.e., not one offered on a group basis through their employer).

Q. Are both benefits taxable?

A. HB 146 allows the payments received by a firefighter under this program to be excluded from their Georgia taxable net income, to any extent such amounts are included in their federal adjusted gross income. In addition, if the firefighter continues coverage after they are no longer employed or volunteering for the fire department, the premiums they pay are excluded in the same manner.

Should you have additional questions, email accginsurance@accg.org or contact Ashley Abercrombie or David Uhlman at 404.522.5022 / 800-858-2224.