



COLORADO

Division of Fire Prevention & Control

Department of Public Safety
690 Kipling Street, Suite 2000
Lakewood, CO 80215

HB 15-1017 “Volunteer Fire Department Organization Act” Fact Sheet

House Sponsor: Representative Hammer and Representative Buck
Senate Sponsor: Senator Roberts

Purpose: This bill creates a framework for organizing not-for-profit nongovernmental volunteer fire departments in order to encourage their creation as well as to promote their sustainability and efficacy.

Problem: In some areas of the state, fire protection is provided by non-governmental volunteer fire departments. These volunteer fire departments, though vital to robust response services, are often ineligible for funding assistance necessary to ensure they have the equipment and training required to safely and effectively fight fires.

This Bill Would:

- Set the requirements that must be met for volunteer fire departments to be considered in good standing
- Allow volunteer fire departments to enter into agreements with the State or any political subdivision of the state (e.g. mutual aid agreements)
- Encourage the creation of volunteer fire departments in areas where there is no organized fire protection
- Qualify volunteer fire departments to receive State assistance, including State grant awards such as those directed to firefighter safety and disease prevention

Background

Currently, there are 42 self-identified non-governmental volunteer fire departments in Colorado. These departments protect approximately 12,150 square miles (11.66% of Colorado) and 38,384 Coloradans. Despite their importance, funding for these organizations can be insufficient, as they lack the authority to tax and often rely solely upon gifts or donations to operate. However, some receive funding from municipal or county governments to support their operation.

While most of these VFD's have a geographical land area that they protect, there are a few that have been created within the jurisdictional boundaries of an existing fire protection district. There are others that have formed for the sole purpose of providing contractual fire suppression services. These private contractors take advantage of the absence of controlling legislation to call themselves a volunteer fire department in order to take advantage of government programs and services.

