



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 331

February Session, 2026

Substitute House Bill No. 5460

House of Representatives, April 1, 2026

The Committee on Public Safety and Security reported through REP. BOYD of the 50th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE FIRE PROTECTION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section:

2 (1) "Entity" has the same meaning as provided in section 20-474 of the
3 general statutes;

4 (2) "Fire protection" means the prevention and suppression of fires,
5 the investigation of the origin and cause of fires, the response to
6 hazardous materials incidents and technical rescues;

7 (3) "Municipality" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-148
8 of the general statutes; and

9 (4) "Subdivision or district" includes any entity or subdivision of a
10 municipality with a responsibility for fire protection services pursuant
11 to statute, charter or ordinance.

12 (b) On or before July 1, 2027, each municipality shall register each

13 entity responsible for providing fire protection services within all of the
14 geographic areas of the municipality in the National Emergency
15 Response Information System and enter into said system the
16 demographic and contact information related to such entities. The
17 municipality shall accurately maintain such demographic and contact
18 information and shall review such demographic and contact
19 information not less than annually.

20 (c) On or before July 1, 2027, each municipality shall establish a local
21 fire protection plan and submit such plan to the State Fire
22 Administrator. Such plan shall include, but need not be limited to:

23 (1) A general statement of how fire protection services are provided
24 within the municipality;

25 (2) A disclosure of the subdivisions or districts responsible for fire
26 protection services throughout all geographic areas within the
27 municipality;

28 (3) The name of each fire protection entity responsible for the primary
29 response by the municipality to the need for fire protection services;

30 (4) A description of any written agreements or contracts between the
31 municipality and the entities that provide fire protection services to the
32 municipality;

33 (5) An identification of the specific geographic boundaries of the
34 areas within the municipality that are served by each entity that
35 provides fire protection services to the municipality;

36 (6) The name of the person, including, but not limited to, the fire chief,
37 responsible for each fire protection services entity that provides fire
38 protection services to the municipality;

39 (7) A description of the fire protection performance standards to
40 which the municipality adheres, including, but not limited to, response
41 times, minimum fireground staffing levels and apparatus requirements;

42 (8) A description of the process used for collecting and tracking
43 personnel and response data, including, but not limited to, any software
44 used; and

45 (9) A description of any mutual aid agreements to which the
46 municipality is a party.

47 (d) The State Fire Administrator shall review and assign a rating to
48 each local fire protection plan in accordance with the standardized
49 protocol established by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control
50 pursuant to section 7-323*l* of the general statutes, as amended by this
51 act. The State Fire Administrator (1) may require any municipality
52 whose local fire protection plan is assigned an unsatisfactory rating to
53 submit a performance improvement plan not later than ninety days after
54 the assignment of such unsatisfactory rating, and (2) shall assist the
55 municipality with the development of such performance improvement
56 plan.

57 (e) Each municipality shall review and revise its local fire protection
58 plan at least once every five years and communicate any substantial
59 changes to such plan to the State Fire Administrator.

60 Sec. 2. Section 7-323*l* of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is
61 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*
62 *1, 2026*):

63 (a) The commission shall:

64 (1) Recommend minimum standards of education and physical
65 condition for candidates for any firefighter position;

66 (2) Recommend minimum standards for firefighter safety and
67 emergency response protocols. Such standards and protocols shall
68 address, but not be limited to, operational safety strategies used during
69 fire suppression operations, hazardous materials mitigation and
70 technical rescue operations and methods for ensuring the health and
71 wellness of fire service personnel;

72 [(2)] (3) Establish standards for fire service training and education
73 programs, and develop and conduct an examination program to certify
74 those fire service personnel who satisfactorily demonstrate their ability
75 to meet the requirements of the fire service training and education
76 program standards;

77 [(3)] (4) Establish an optional fire service training and education
78 program that provides information relative to the blue envelopes
79 designed pursuant to section 14-11j and yellow envelopes designed
80 pursuant to section 14-11l and techniques for the handling of incidents,
81 such as wandering, that involve juveniles and adults with autism
82 spectrum disorder, cognitive impairment or nonverbal learning
83 disorder, provided the curriculum for such techniques is made available
84 at no cost from (A) institutions of higher education, health care
85 professionals or advocacy organizations that are concerned with
86 juveniles and adults with autism spectrum disorder, cognitive
87 impairment or nonverbal learning disorder, or (B) collaborations of such
88 institutions, professionals or organizations;

89 [(4)] (5) Conduct fire fighting training and education programs
90 designed to assist firefighters in developing and maintaining their skills
91 and keeping abreast of technological advances in fire suppression, fire
92 protection, fire prevention and related fields;

93 [(5)] (6) Recommend standards for promotion to the various ranks of
94 fire departments;

95 [(6)] (7) Be authorized, with the approval of the Commissioner of
96 Emergency Services and Public Protection, to apply for, receive and
97 distribute any state, federal or private funds or contributions available
98 for training and education of fire fighting personnel;

99 [(7)] (8) Recommend that the Commissioner of Emergency Services
100 and Public Protection approve or reject the establishment of, or, when
101 appropriate, suspend or revoke the approval of, regional fire schools in
102 accordance with section 7-323u;

103 [(8)] (9) Advise the Division of Fire Services Administration within
104 the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection on the
105 management of the Statewide Fire Service Disaster Response Plan;

106 [(9)] (10) Implement the recommendations of the study of the fire
107 service authorized pursuant to subdivision (36) of subsection (b) of
108 section 41 of public act 23-204; [and]

109 (11) Establish, in coordination with the State Fire Administrator, a
110 standardized classification system that evaluates and grades the
111 operational performance of the fire protection services provided by each
112 municipality or fire district with primary responsibility for such fire
113 protection services. In establishing such system, the commission shall
114 consider nationally recognized standards, including, but not limited to,
115 standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and
116 the Center for Public Safety Excellence;

117 (12) Not later than January 1, 2028, develop a standardized protocol
118 for the submission of operational data by each fire protection entity in
119 the state, and submit such protocol to the State Fire Administrator for
120 adoption;

121 (13) Not less than once every five years, establish, in coordination
122 with the State Fire Administrator, a standardized protocol by which the
123 State Fire Administrator shall review local fire protection plans
124 established and submitted pursuant to section 1 of this act and assign a
125 rating to each such local fire protection plan; and

126 [(10)] (14) Submit to the Governor, the joint standing committee of the
127 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety
128 and security, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, and the
129 Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection an annual
130 report (A) relating to the activities, recommendations and
131 accomplishments of the commission, and (B) making recommendations
132 on the funding necessary for the operation of, the maintenance of and
133 capital improvements to the state fire school and regional fire schools.

134 (b) The commission may recommend, and the Commissioner of
135 Emergency Services and Public Protection may adopt, regulations in
136 accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 as necessary to implement
137 the provisions of this section.

138 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Notwithstanding any
139 provision of the general statutes or the provisions of any special act,
140 municipal charter or home rule ordinance, each municipality, as defined
141 in section 7-148 of the general statutes, shall exercise its power granted
142 pursuant to subparagraph (B) of subdivision (4) of subsection (c) of
143 section 7-148 of the general statutes to provide for fire protection,
144 organize, maintain and regulate the persons providing fire protection,
145 provide the necessary apparatus for extinguishing fires and do all other
146 things necessary or desirable for the protection of the municipality from
147 fire, including, but not limited to, providing the facilities necessary for
148 the municipality's fire protection services.

149 Sec. 4. Section 7-323o of the general statutes is repealed and the
150 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

151 (a) (1) There is established the position of State Fire Administrator.
152 Prior to July 1, 2025, the State Fire Administrator shall be recommended
153 by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and be appointed by
154 the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection. Upon
155 a vacancy in the position of State Fire Administrator occurring on or
156 after July 1, 2025, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control may
157 recommend candidates for the position of State Fire Administrator to
158 the commissioner, and the commissioner shall appoint such State Fire
159 Administrator, who shall be qualified for the position by at least five
160 years of experience in the fire service.

161 (2) There is established the position of Deputy State Fire
162 Administrator. The Deputy State Fire Administrator shall report to the
163 State Fire Administrator. The Commission on Fire Prevention and
164 Control may recommend candidates for the position of Deputy State
165 Fire Administrator to the Commissioner of Emergency Services and
166 Public Protection, and the commissioner shall appoint such Deputy

167 State Fire Administrator, who shall be qualified for the position by at
168 least five years of experience in the fire service.

169 (b) The Division of Fire Services Administration shall:

170 (1) Administer federal funds and grants allocated to the fire services
171 of the state;

172 (2) Provide technical assistance and guidance to fire fighting forces of
173 any state or municipal agency;

174 (3) Develop a centralized information and audiovisual library
175 regarding fire prevention and control;

176 (4) Accumulate, disseminate and analyze fire prevention data;

177 (5) Recommend specifications of fire service materials and equipment
178 and assist in the purchasing thereof;

179 (6) Assist in mutual aid coordination;

180 (7) Coordinate fire programs with those of the other states;

181 (8) Assist in communications coordination;

182 (9) Establish and maintain a fire service information program;

183 (10) Review and approve the purchase of fire apparatus or equipment
184 at state institutions, facilities and properties;

185 (11) Recommend and provide reports on revisions to statutes relating
186 to firefighter training and fire prevention and control;

187 (12) Advise and assist the Commission on Fire Prevention and
188 Control regarding legislative proposals;

189 (13) Encourage the expansion and improvement of existing regional
190 firefighter training facilities in cooperation with the Commission on Fire
191 Prevention and Control;

192 (14) Administer the state fire school and regional fire schools;

193 (15) Administer certification examinations, testing procedures and
194 reciprocity recognition for credentials in the fire service disciplines;

195 (16) Manage the Statewide Fire Service Disaster Response Plan, with
196 the advice of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control; and

197 (17) Make recommendations to the Commission on Fire Prevention
198 and Control and the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public
199 Protection pertaining to the operational funding of the state fire school
200 and regional fire schools.

201 (c) The provisions of this section shall not be construed to apply to
202 forest fire prevention and control programs administered by the
203 Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection pursuant to
204 sections 23-33 to 23-57, inclusive.

205 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section and
206 sections 6 and 7 of this act:

207 (1) "Fire protection" means the prevention and suppression of fires,
208 the investigation of the origin and cause of fires, the response to
209 hazardous materials incidents and technical rescues; and

210 (2) "Municipality" has the same meaning as provided in section 7-148
211 of the general statutes.

212 (b) There is established within the Division of Fire Services
213 Administration within the Department of Emergency Services and
214 Public Protection, a program to be known as "Connecticut Fire". The
215 purpose of the Connecticut Fire program shall be to establish a
216 framework for the state to provide administrative and operational
217 assistance to municipalities or fire authorities that choose to receive such
218 assistance. The program shall include, but not be limited to, provisions
219 for resident firefighters to staff and augment volunteer fire departments
220 and fire districts with paid personnel while preserving the local
221 autonomy and command structures of fire protection services.

222 (c) The Deputy State Fire Administrator shall oversee the Connecticut
223 Fire program. Not later than July 1, 2028, the Deputy State Fire
224 Administrator shall, within available appropriations, implement the
225 recommendations of the working group established pursuant to section
226 7 of this act.

227 (d) The Connecticut Fire program may utilize the facilities and
228 equipment of the Connecticut Fire Academy, the Forestry Division of
229 the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the
230 regional fire schools to achieve the objectives of the program.

231 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Secretary of the Office of
232 Policy and Management shall administer a Connecticut Fire grant
233 program. Pursuant to said grant program, the secretary shall provide
234 grants-in-aid to municipalities that participate in the Connecticut Fire
235 program established under section 5 of this act, to incentivize the
236 regionalization of fire protection services and the sharing of fire
237 protection resources among municipalities. A municipality may submit
238 an application for a grant under this subsection in a form and manner
239 prescribed by the secretary. Not later than July 1, 2028, and annually
240 thereafter, the secretary shall submit a report on the grant program to
241 the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
242 cognizance of matters relating to public safety and security in
243 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.
244 Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, an accounting of
245 the grants paid pursuant to the program, a description of each grant
246 awarded under the program and an evaluation of the success of the
247 program and the fire protection services funded under this section.

248 Sec. 7. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a working group
249 to develop the administrative, operational, fiscal and personnel
250 framework for the Connecticut Fire program.

251 (b) The working group shall consist of the following members:

252 (1) The chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General
253 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety and

254 security, or their designees;

255 (2) The State Comptroller, or the comptroller's designee;

256 (3) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the
257 secretary's designee;

258 (4) The Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection,
259 or the commissioner's designee;

260 (5) The State Fire Administrator, or the administrator's designee;

261 (6) The chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Commission on Fire
262 Prevention and Control, or the chairpersons' designees;

263 (7) Three members of the Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service
264 Organizations, who shall be appointed by the joint council;

265 (8) A representative from the Office of Fiscal Analysis, who shall be
266 appointed by the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the
267 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety
268 and security;

269 (9) The executive director of the Connecticut Conference of
270 Municipalities, or the director's designee; and

271 (10) The executive director of the Council of Small Towns, or the
272 director's designee.

273 (c) The chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General
274 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety and
275 security shall: (1) Schedule the first meeting of the working group,
276 which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of
277 this section; and (2) select two cochairpersons from among the members
278 of the working group.

279 (d) The working group shall be an independent body within the
280 Legislative Department for administrative purposes only. The
281 administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General

282 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety and
283 security shall serve as administrative staff of the council.

284 (e) Not later than September 1, 2027, the working group shall submit
285 a report on its findings and recommendations to the Commission on Fire
286 Prevention and Control. Not later than January 1, 2028, the commission
287 shall (1) review the report and recommendations, (2) approve the report
288 and recommendations, with or without modifications, and (3) submit
289 the approved report and recommendations to the Deputy State Fire
290 Administrator. The working group shall terminate on the date that it
291 submits such approved report and recommendations or January 1, 2028,
292 whichever is later.

293 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established the
294 position of a regional fire coordinator for each region within the state.
295 Each regional fire coordinator shall serve as the primary liaison between
296 the Division of Fire Services Administration within the Department of
297 Emergency Services and Public Protection and the local fire
298 departments within the region served by the regional fire coordinator,
299 for the purposes of facilitating the Connecticut Fire program established
300 pursuant to section 5 of this act and coordinating fire protection
301 resources throughout such region. For purposes of this section, "fire
302 protection" has the same meaning as provided in section 1 of this act.

303 (b) The State Fire Administrator shall coordinate with the Division of
304 Emergency Management and Homeland Security within the
305 Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to establish
306 regions to be served by the regional fire coordinators that match the
307 regions established by said division. The State Fire Administrator shall
308 appoint a regional fire coordinator for each region in the state, and each
309 such appointment shall be subject to confirmation by the Commission
310 on Fire Prevention and Control. In any region where a recognized
311 regional fire chiefs' organization exists, such organization may
312 recommend candidates for the regional fire coordinator position for
313 such region to the State Fire Administrator.

314 Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Emergency

315 Services and Public Protection, in coordination with the Office of the
316 State Comptroller, shall establish and maintain a system for collecting
317 computer-aided dispatch data from municipalities throughout the state
318 for the purpose of aggregating and monitoring information regarding
319 emergency services requests managed by fire departments and
320 emergency medical services providers.

321 Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) Not later than July 1, 2027,
322 the Office of the State Comptroller, in coordination with the Department
323 of Emergency Services and Public Protection, shall establish and
324 maintain a First Responder Health and Benefits Unit of the Division of
325 Healthcare Policy and Benefit Services within the Office of the State
326 Comptroller. The unit shall coordinate and disseminate information
327 regarding all public benefits available to firefighters, including, but not
328 limited to, claims related to the firefighters cancer relief account
329 established pursuant to section 7-313h of the general statutes, as
330 amended by this act, claims related to the fallen hero fund established
331 pursuant to section 3-122a of the general statutes, injury claims, workers'
332 compensation claims and disability claims.

333 (b) (1) The unit shall consult with the Connecticut State Firefighters
334 Association regarding all matters related to the purposes of the unit.

335 (2) The unit shall maintain communications with all regional fire
336 coordinators appointed pursuant to section 8 of this act to promote the
337 efficient processing of firefighter benefits and claims and effective
338 communication regarding such benefits and claims.

339 Sec. 11. Subsection (a) of section 7-313h of the 2026 supplement to the
340 general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu
341 thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

342 (a) There is established an account to be known as the "firefighters
343 cancer relief account", which shall be a separate, nonlapsing account.
344 The account shall contain any moneys required by law to be deposited
345 in the account. Moneys in the account shall be expended by (1) the
346 cancer relief subcommittee of the Connecticut State Firefighters

347 Association, established pursuant to section 7-313i, as amended by this
348 act, for the purposes of providing wage replacement benefits to
349 firefighters who are diagnosed with a condition of cancer described in
350 section 7-313j, and (2) by the State [Treasurer] Comptroller for purposes
351 of providing reimbursement to municipal employers and state
352 employers that provide compensation and benefits to firefighters
353 diagnosed with a condition of cancer in accordance with section 7-313p.

354 Sec. 12. Subsection (h) of section 7-313i of the general statutes is
355 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*
356 *1, 2026*):

357 (h) The State [Treasurer] Comptroller shall remit wage replacement
358 benefits that are approved by the subcommittee from the firefighters
359 cancer relief account established pursuant to section 7-313h, as amended
360 by this act, not later than thirty days after such benefits have been
361 approved.

362 Sec. 13. Section 7-313k of the general statutes is repealed and the
363 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

364 Not later than January 1, 2018, and annually thereafter, the State
365 [Treasurer] Comptroller, in consultation with the Connecticut State
366 Firefighters Association, shall submit a report, in accordance with the
367 provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the
368 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public safety
369 on the status of the firefighters cancer relief account established
370 pursuant to section 7-313h, as amended by this act, and the firefighters
371 cancer relief program established pursuant to section 7-313j. Such report
372 shall include (1) the balance of the account, (2) the projected and actual
373 participation in the program, and (3) the demographic information of
374 each firefighter who receives benefits pursuant to such program,
375 including gender, age, town of residence and income level.

376 Sec. 14. Section 3-123 of the general statutes is repealed and the
377 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

378 (a) Whenever a person, under the provisions of the constitution and
379 bylaws of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association, is entitled to
380 relief from said association, as a firefighter injured in the line of duty, or
381 rendered sick by disease contracted while in the line of duty, or as the
382 widow or child of a firefighter killed in the line of duty, the
383 Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection shall, upon
384 the delivery to said commissioner of proper proofs from said association
385 of the right of such person to relief as aforesaid, process payment for
386 such person or persons entitled to such relief, or their legal
387 representative, for the amount to which such person or persons are
388 entitled as relief as aforesaid, provided such orders shall be limited to
389 available appropriations.

390 (b) Whenever a firefighter, under the provisions of the constitution
391 and bylaws of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association, is entitled
392 to wage replacement benefits from said association pursuant to the
393 firefighters cancer relief program established pursuant to section 7-313j,
394 the State [Treasurer] Comptroller shall, upon the delivery to the State
395 [Treasurer] Comptroller of proper proof from said association of the
396 right of such firefighter to wage replacement benefits as aforesaid,
397 process payment for such firefighter entitled to such wage replacement
398 benefits, or his or her legal representative, for the amount to which such
399 firefighter is entitled as wage replacement benefits as aforesaid,
400 provided such orders shall be limited to available funds contained in the
401 firefighters cancer relief account established pursuant to section 7-313h,
402 as amended by this act.

403 Sec. 15. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than July 1, 2027, the
404 Division of Fire Services Administration within the Department of
405 Emergency Services and Public Protection shall establish and maintain
406 a registry identifying the fire chief for each municipality and fire district
407 in the state.

408 Sec. 16. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than July 1, 2027, the
409 Office of the State Comptroller, in coordination with the Department of
410 Emergency Services and Public Protection, shall establish and maintain

411 a registry of all career and volunteer firefighters in the state, for the
412 purpose of verifying such firefighters' training, credentials and program
413 eligibility.

414 Sec. 17. Section 14-96q of the general statutes is repealed and the
415 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

416 (a) A permit is required for the use of colored or flashing lights on all
417 motor vehicles or equipment specified in this section except: (1) Motor
418 vehicles not registered in this state used for transporting or escorting
419 any vehicle or load, or combinations thereof, which is either oversize or
420 overweight, or both, when operating under a permit issued by the
421 Commissioner of Transportation pursuant to section 14-270; or (2)
422 motor vehicles or equipment that are (A) equipped with lights in
423 accordance with this section, (B) owned or leased by the federal
424 government, the state of Connecticut, or any other state, commonwealth
425 or local municipality, and (C) registered to such governmental entity.
426 When used in this section, the term "flashing" shall be considered to
427 include the term "revolving".

428 (b) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, or such other person
429 specifically identified in this section, may issue permits for the use of
430 colored or flashing lights on vehicles in accordance with this section, at
431 the commissioner's or such person's discretion. Any person, firm or
432 corporation other than the state or any metropolitan district, town, city
433 or borough shall pay an annual permit fee of twenty dollars to the
434 commissioner for each such vehicle. Such fee shall apply only to permits
435 issued by the commissioner.

436 (c) A [flashing] blue light or lights, including flashing blue lights, may
437 be used on a motor vehicle operated by an active member of a volunteer
438 fire department or company or an active member of an organized civil
439 preparedness auxiliary fire company who has been issued a permit by
440 the chief executive officer of such department or company to use such a
441 [flashing] blue light or lights while on the way to or at the scene of a fire
442 or other emergency requiring such member's services. Such permit shall
443 be on a form provided by the commissioner and may be revoked by such

444 chief executive officer or such chief executive officer's successor. The
445 chief executive officer of each volunteer fire department or company or
446 organized civil preparedness auxiliary fire company shall keep on file,
447 on forms provided by the commissioner, the names and addresses of
448 members who have been authorized to use a [flashing] blue light or
449 lights as provided in this subsection. Such listing shall also designate the
450 registration number of the motor vehicle on which an authorized [a
451 flashing] blue light or lights are to be used.

452 (d) A flashing green or blue light or lights may be used on a motor
453 vehicle operated by an active member of a volunteer ambulance
454 association or company who has been issued a permit by the chief
455 executive officer of such association or company to use such a light or
456 lights, while on the way to or at the scene of an emergency requiring
457 such member's services. Such permit shall be on a form provided by the
458 commissioner and may be revoked by such chief executive officer or
459 such chief executive officer's successor. The chief executive officer of
460 each volunteer ambulance association or company shall keep on file, on
461 forms provided by the commissioner, the names and addresses of
462 members who have been authorized to use a flashing green or blue light
463 or lights as provided in this subsection. Such listing shall also designate
464 the registration number of the motor vehicle on which the authorized
465 flashing green or blue light or lights are to be used.

466 (e) The commissioner may issue a permit for a [flashing] red light or
467 lights, including flashing red lights, which may be used on a motor
468 vehicle or equipment (1) used by paid fire chiefs and their deputies and
469 assistants, up to a total of five individuals per department, (2) used by
470 volunteer fire chiefs and their deputies and assistants, up to a total of
471 five individuals per department, (3) used by members of the fire police
472 on a stationary vehicle as a warning signal during traffic directing
473 operations at the scene of a fire or emergency, (4) used by chief executive
474 officers of emergency medical service organizations, as defined in
475 section 19a-175, the first or second deputies, or if there are no deputies,
476 the first or second assistants, of such an organization that is a municipal
477 or volunteer or licensed organization, (5) used by local fire marshals, (6)

478 used by directors of emergency management, or (7) used by a constable,
479 appointed pursuant to an ordinance authorized by section 9-185 or
480 elected pursuant to section 9-200, on a stationary vehicle as a warning
481 signal during traffic directing operations.

482 (f) The commissioner may issue a permit for a yellow or amber light
483 or lights, including a flashing yellow or amber light or lights, which may
484 be used on motor vehicles or equipment that are (1) specified in
485 subsection (e) of this section, (2) maintenance vehicles, or (3) vehicles
486 transporting or escorting any vehicle or load or combinations thereof,
487 which is or are either oversize or overweight, or both, and being
488 operated or traveling under a permit issued by the Commissioner of
489 Transportation pursuant to section 14-270. A yellow or amber light or
490 lights, including a flashing yellow or amber light or lights, may be used
491 without obtaining a permit from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles
492 on wreckers registered pursuant to section 14-66, on vehicles of carriers
493 in rural mail delivery service or on vehicles operated by construction
494 inspectors employed by the state of Connecticut, authorized by the
495 Commissioner of Transportation, used during the performance of
496 inspections on behalf of the state. The Commissioner of Transportation
497 shall maintain a list of such authorized construction inspectors,
498 including the name and address of each inspector and the registration
499 number for each vehicle on which the light or lights are to be used.

500 (g) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles may issue a permit for a
501 white light or lights, including a flashing white light or lights, which
502 may be used on a motor vehicle or equipment as specified in subdivision
503 (1), (2), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (e) of this section. A vehicle being
504 operated by a member of a volunteer fire department or company or a
505 volunteer emergency medical technician may use flashing white head
506 lamps, provided such member or emergency medical technician is on
507 the way to the scene of a fire or medical emergency and has received
508 written authorization from the chief law enforcement officer of the
509 municipality to use such head lamps. Such head lamps shall only be
510 used within the municipality granting such authorization or from a
511 personal residence or place of employment, if located in an adjoining

512 municipality. Such authorization may be revoked for use of such head
513 lamps in violation of this subdivision. For the purposes of this
514 subsection, the term "flashing white lights" shall not include the
515 simultaneous flashing of head lamps.

516 (h) The commissioner may issue a permit for emergency vehicles, as
517 defined in subsection (a) of section 14-283, to use a blue, red, yellow, or
518 white light or lights, including a flashing light or lights or any
519 combination thereof. [, except as provided in subsection (k) of this
520 section.]

521 (i) The commissioner may issue a permit for ambulances, as defined
522 in section 19a-175, which may, in addition to the flashing light or lights
523 allowed in subsection (h) of this section, use flashing lights of other
524 colors specified by federal requirements for the manufacture of an
525 ambulance. If the commissioner issues a permit for any ambulance, such
526 permit shall be issued at the time of registration and upon each renewal
527 of such registration.

528 (j) A green, yellow or amber light or lights, including a flashing green,
529 yellow or amber light or lights or any combination thereof, may be used
530 on a maintenance vehicle owned and operated by the Department of
531 Transportation.

532 [(k) No person, other than a police officer or inspector of the
533 Department of Motor Vehicles operating a state or local police vehicle,
534 shall operate a motor vehicle displaying a steady blue or steady red
535 illuminated light or both steady blue and steady red illuminated lights
536 that are visible externally from the front of the vehicle.]

537 [(l)] (k) Use of colored and flashing lights except as authorized by this
538 section shall be an infraction.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2026	New section
Sec. 2	October 1, 2026	7-323l

Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	7-323o
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	7-313h(a)
Sec. 12	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	7-313i(h)
Sec. 13	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	7-313k
Sec. 14	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	3-123
Sec. 15	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 16	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 17	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	14-96q

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In Section 5(b), "local autonomy" was changed to "the local autonomy" for clarity.

PS *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	GF - Cost	Approximately 952,066	Approximately 1,030,957
State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹	GF - Cost	Approximately 359,813	Approximately 465,363
Policy & Mgmt., Off.	GF - Potential Cost	See Below	See Below
Policy & Mgmt., Off.	GF - Cost	Indeterminate	Indeterminate
Comptroller	GF - Cost	Approximately 156,000	Approximately 156,000

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$
All Municipalities	STATE MANDATE ² - Potential Cost	See Below	See Below
All Municipalities	Revenue Gain	Indeterminate	Indeterminate

Explanation

The bill creates and expands several fire protection programs resulting in fiscal impacts to both the state and municipalities. These

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.82% of payroll in FY 27.

² State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

impacts, described section-by-section below, should be considered approximate and will depend on implementation decisions made by the relevant state agencies and municipalities.

Section 1 requires all municipalities to establish a local fire protection plan, submit such plans to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) for review, and register with the National Emergency Response Information System by July 1, 2027.

This section results in a potential cost to municipalities in FY 27 to the extent additional resources are necessary to meet these requirements. It also requires municipalities to review and revise local fire protection plans once every five years which may result in a potential cost to municipalities in the out years.

This section results in a cost to the state in FY 28³ of up to \$260,546 for salaries and expenses,⁴ as well as \$90,141 for fringe benefits, for up to three new positions within DESPP to review and assign a rating to the local fire protection plans and to conduct on-site reviews and audits. If field work is not deemed necessary, fewer positions may be needed.

Section 2 expands the duties of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control within DESPP to include the establishment of a classification system for evaluating and grading the performance of municipal fire services and the development of standardized emergency response protocols. It is expected DESPP would need one new position beginning in FY 27 to develop and maintain this system and protocols, resulting in a cost of \$94,635 for salaries and expenses and \$33,303 for fringe benefits.

Section 3 requires all municipalities to meet certain requirements related to fire protection including providing facilities necessary for a municipality's fire protection services. This results in a potential cost to

³ These costs are not expected until FY 28 because it is anticipated that the local fire protection plans will not be submitted to DESPP for review until that time.

⁴ Each new DESPP position requires approximately \$15,000 in one-time other expenses for office supplies, IT equipment, telecoms, and related items.

municipalities beginning in FY 27 to the extent they do not already provide these services.

Section 4 establishes a new Deputy State Fire Administrator position within DESPP, resulting in annual costs of \$167,381 for salaries and expenses and \$61,635 for fringe benefits.

Section 5 establishes the "Connecticut Fire" program within DESPP to establish a framework for the state to provide administrative and operational assistance to municipalities. The Deputy State Fire Administrator position established in Section 4 of the bill will oversee the program. Depending on how DESPP implements Connecticut Fire, the agency may require at least one additional position to manage the program resulting in costs beginning in FY 27 of \$97,055 for salaries and expenses and \$34,315 for fringe benefits.

Section 6 requires the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to establish a Connecticut Fire grant program to incentivize regionalized services and resource sharing. This results in a potential cost to OPM to the extent additional resources are necessary to establish and manage the grant program. There is also a cost to OPM and corresponding revenue gain to municipalities associated with the grant program. The bill does not specify a funding source for the grant program.

Section 7 establishes a working group to develop the administrative, operational, fiscal and personnel framework for the Connecticut Fire program, and does not result in a fiscal impact because the members of the working group are anticipated to have the necessary expertise.

Section 8 establishes five regional fire coordinator positions within DESPP, resulting in a cost of \$530,340 for salaries and expenses and \$179,968 for fringe benefits.

Section 9 requires DESPP to establish and maintain a system for collecting computer-aided dispatch data from municipalities throughout the state for the purposes described in the bill. Depending on whether new software is needed to collect the required data and the

complexity of current data collection practices, this section could result in system development costs of at least \$100,000 in FY 27, with potential maintenance costs in future years.

Section 10 results in a cost of approximately \$220,000 annually beginning in FY 27 to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) for salary and associated fringe benefit costs for two new positions to establish the First Responder Health and Benefits Unit as outlined in the bill.

Sections 11 - 14 change the administrating constitutional officer of the firefighters cancer relief account from the Treasurer to the Comptroller and does not result in a fiscal impact.

Section 16 requires OSC and DESPP to make a registry of all career and volunteer firefighters in the state which does not result in a fiscal impact since the agencies have the necessary resources.

Section 17 makes changes to the use of steady blue or red lights on certain vehicles which does not have a fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation and as otherwise described above.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5460*****AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE FIRE PROTECTION.*****SUMMARY**

This bill expands existing, and creates new, fire protection programs and requirements, including by:

1. requiring municipalities to (a) establish a local fire protection plan, which the state fire administrator must review and rate, and (b) register the entity responsible for fire protection within its jurisdiction with the National Emergency Response Information System (§ 1);
2. requiring the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to develop standards for (a) rating local fire protection plans, (b) firefighter safety and emergency response protocols, and (c) grading fire protection service operational performance (§ 2);
3. requiring all municipalities to exercise their authority to provide fire protection (§ 3);
4. establishing the position of deputy state fire administrator, and a Connecticut Fire program to be overseen by the deputy, to create a framework for the state to assist municipalities and fire authorities (§§ 4 & 5);
5. establishing a working group to develop the Connecticut Fire program (§ 7);
6. establishing a Connecticut Fire grant program to incentivize regionalized services and resource sharing (§ 6);
7. establishing the position of regional fire coordinator to (a) act as

a liaison between the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection's (DESPP) Division of Fire Services Administration and local fire departments, (b) facilitate the Connecticut Fire Program, and (c) coordinate fire protection resources in Connecticut (§ 8);

8. requiring the comptroller to establish a First Responder Health and Benefit Services Unit to provide information about firefighters' benefits (§ 10);
9. shifting general administration of the firefighters cancer relief account from the treasurer to the comptroller (§§ 11-14);
10. expanding which officials can use steady red, blue, or red and blue lights on vehicles (§ 17);
11. requiring DESPP, in coordination with the state comptroller, to establish and maintain a system to collect computer-aided dispatch data from municipalities to aggregate and monitor information on emergency service requests managed by fire departments and emergency medical service providers (§ 9);
12. requiring, by July 1, 2027, DESPP's Division of Fire Services Administration to establish and maintain a registry identifying the fire chief of each municipality and fire district in Connecticut (§ 15); and
13. requiring, by July 1, 2027, the comptroller, in coordination with DESPP, to establish and maintain a registry of all of Connecticut's career and volunteer firefighters to verify their training, credentials, and program eligibility (§ 16).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except provisions are effective upon passage for the (1) Connecticut Fire program, grant program, and working group; (2) creation of regional fire coordinators; (3) system collecting computer-aided dispatch data; (4) First Responder Health and

Benefits Unit; and (5) registries of fire chiefs and firefighters.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMATION SYSTEM REGISTRATION

The bill requires each municipality, by July 1, 2027, to register, and provide demographics and contact information for, each entity responsible for providing fire protection services within it with the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS, see National Emergency Response Information System below). The municipality must keep the data accurate and review it yearly.

Under the bill, an “entity” is any person; business entity; state or local government agency, political subdivision, or authority; or religious, social, or union organization, whether operated for profit or otherwise. “Fire protection” is preventing and suppressing fires, investigating their origin and cause, responding to hazardous materials incidents, and technical rescues.

MUNICIPAL LOCAL FIRE PROTECTION PLAN

The bill requires all municipalities, by July 1, 2027, to establish a local fire protection plan and submit it to the state fire administrator. The plan must at least:

1. state generally how fire protection services are provided in the municipality;
2. disclose the municipality’s subdivisions or districts responsible for fire protection services (a subdivision or district is an entity or municipal subdivision responsible for fire protection services under statute, charter, or ordinance);
3. name each fire protection entity responsible for the municipality’s primary response for fire protection services;
4. describe any written agreements or contracts between the municipality and the entities that provide fire protection services to it;

5. identify the specific municipal geographic boundaries that are served by each entity that provides fire protection services to it;
6. name each person, including the fire chief, responsible for each fire protection services entity that provides fire protection services in the municipality;
7. describe the municipality's fire protection performance standards, including response times, minimum fireground staffing levels, and apparatus requirements;
8. describe the process for collecting and tracking personnel and response data, including any software used; and
9. describe mutual aid agreements the municipality is part of.

State Fire Administrator Review

Under the bill, the state fire administrator must review and assign a rating to each local fire development plan under protocols the bill requires the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to develop (see below). The state fire administrator (1) may require municipalities with an unsatisfactory plan rating to submit a performance improvement plan within 90 days after being assigned that rating and (2) must help municipalities develop a performance improvement plan.

Each municipality must review and revise its local fire protection plan once every five years and report any substantial changes to the state fire administrator.

COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

By law, this commission must perform several duties relating to fire protection in the state, including recommending minimum education and physical condition standards for firefighter candidates, setting training and education program standards, and conducting training programs. The bill additionally requires the commission to:

1. recommend minimum standards for firefighter safety and emergency response protocols, including (a) operational safety

- strategies for fire suppression operations, hazardous materials mitigation, and technical rescue operations and (b) methods to ensure the health and wellness of fire service personnel;
2. establish, in coordination with the state fire administrator, a standardized classification system to evaluate and grade the operational performance of municipal and fire district fire protection services (the commission must consider nationally recognized standards, including those by the National Fire Protection Association and the Center for Public Safety Excellence);
 3. by January 1, 2028, develop and submit for the state fire administrator's approval a standardized protocol for state fire protection entities to submit operational data; and
 4. establish, once every five years and in coordination with the state fire administrator, a standardized protocol for the administrator to review and rate local fire protection plans.

As with other commission responsibilities under current law, the bill allows the commission to recommend, and the DESPP commissioner to adopt, necessary regulations.

MUNICIPAL FIRE PROTECTION

By law, municipalities have the authority to provide fire protection services, including, organizing, maintaining, and regulating people providing fire protection; providing the necessary fire apparatus; and doing other things necessary or desirable to protect the municipality from fire. The bill requires municipalities to exercise this authority regardless of any statutes, special act, charter, or home rule ordinance, including by providing the facilities necessary for the municipality's fire protection services.

CONNECTICUT FIRE

Program Establishment and Deputy State Fire Administrator

The bill creates the Connecticut Fire program within DESPP's

Division of Fire Services Administration, which is overseen by the deputy state fire administrator. The deputy state fire administrator must report to the state fire administrator. The DESPP commissioner must appoint the deputy, who must have at least five years of experience in fire service, and the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control may recommend candidates for the role.

Under the bill, the program must establish a framework for the state to give administrative and operational assistance to municipalities or fire authorities that want assistance. The program must include provisions for resident firefighters to staff and augment volunteer fire departments and fire districts with paid personnel, while preserving their local autonomy and command structures.

By July 1, 2028, the deputy state fire administrator must, within available appropriations, implement the recommendations of the working group described below. The program may use facilities and equipment of the Connecticut Fire Academy, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Forestry Division, and the regional fire schools.

Connecticut Fire Working Group

The bill establishes a working group to develop the administrative, operational, fiscal, and personnel framework for the Connecticut Fire Program. The working group is an independent body within the Legislative Department for administrative purposes only, and the Public Safety and Security Committee's administrative staff must serve in that role for the working group. Under the bill, the working group consists of:

1. the Public Safety and Security Committee's chairpersons;
2. the comptroller;
3. the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary;
4. the DESPP commissioner;

5. the state fire administrator;
6. the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control chairperson and vice-chairperson;
7. three members of the Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations;
8. a representative from the Office of Fiscal Analysis, appointed by the Public Safety and Security Committee's chairpersons;
9. the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities executive director; and
10. the Council of Small Towns executive director.

Members may choose a designee to serve in the place, except for the Office of Fiscal Analysis representative and members of the Joint Council of Connecticut Fire Service Organizations.

The Public Safety and Security chairpersons must (1) schedule the first meeting within 60 days of the bill's passage, and (2) select two working group co-chairpersons from among its group members.

By September 1, 2027, the working group must report its findings and recommendations to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. By January 1, 2028, the commission must (1) review the report and recommendations, (2) approve them with or without modifications, and (3) submit the approved report and recommendations to the deputy state fire administrator. The working group ends when it submits an approved report and recommendations or on January 1, 2028, whichever is later.

Connecticut Fire Grant Program

The bill requires the OPM secretary to administer a Connecticut Fire grant program to give municipalities that participate in the Connecticut Fire program grants to incentivize (1) the regionalization of fire protection services and (2) sharing fire protection resources.

Municipalities may apply in a way set by the secretary.

The bill requires the secretary, starting by July 1, 2028, to annually report to the Public Safety and Security Committee on the program, including (1) information on grants paid by the program and (2) an evaluation of the success of the program and the fire protection services funded by it.

REGIONAL FIRE COORDINATORS

The bill establishes the position of a regional fire coordinator and requires each coordinator to (1) serve as the primary liaison between DESPP and the local fire departments within their region, (2) facilitate the Connecticut Fire program, and (3) coordinate their region's fire protection resources.

The bill requires the state fire administrator to coordinate with DESPP's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to establish fire coordinator regions that match the division's five regions. The state fire administrator must appoint a regional fire coordinator for each region and the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control must confirm each appointment. In regions with a recognized regional fire chiefs' organization, the organization may recommend coordinator candidates to the state fire administrator.

FIRST RESPONDER HEALTH AND BENEFIT SERVICES UNIT

The bill requires the comptroller, in coordination with DESPP, to establish a First Responder Health and Benefits Unit within the comptroller's Division of Healthcare Policy and Benefit Services by July 1, 2027. The unit must coordinate and spread information about public benefits for firefighters, including claims for the firefighters cancer relief account, the Fallen Hero Fund, injuries or disabilities, and workers' compensation.

The unit must (1) consult with the Connecticut State Firefighters Association on its purposes and (2) communicate with regional fire coordinators about firefighter benefits and claims and to promote their efficient processing.

FIREFIGHTERS CANCER RELIEF ACCOUNT ADMINISTRATION

By law, the firefighters cancer relief account provides wage replacement benefits for eligible paid firefighters diagnosed with cancer. The bill generally shifts the administration of the account from the state treasurer to the state comptroller, including for:

1. reimbursing employers that provide benefits to firefighters diagnosed with cancer;
2. remitting wage replacement benefits;
3. annually reporting to the Public Safety and Security Committee on the account's status; and
4. payment processing for certain firefighters entitled to wage replacement benefits from the Connecticut State Firefighters Association.

Under the bill, the treasurer retains certain responsibilities relating to the account, including investing its funds and auditing.

STEADY COLORED LIGHTS ON VEHICLES

The law generally requires a permit to use colored or flashing lights on motor vehicles or equipment. The bill allows certain fire and emergency medical service personnel and certain constables during traffic operations who are currently authorized to use flashing blue or red lights to also use steady lights in those colors. It eliminates a provision that only police officers and Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) inspectors operating a state or local police vehicle may use steady red, blue, or red and blue lights, visible from the vehicle's front. By law, unauthorized use of colored or flashing lights is an infraction.

BACKGROUND***National Emergency Response Information System***

NERIS is an emergency reporting system that replaced the National Fire Reporting System. It is a cloud-based platform that allows agencies to enter, manage, and use their own data. It was developed in

collaboration between the U.S. Fire Administration, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate, and UL Research Institutes’ Fire Safety Research Institute, and will continue to develop.

The National Fire Protection Association and Center for Public Safety Excellence

The National Fire Protection Association produces model codes and standards for fire, electrical, and life safety guidelines and requirements. The Center for Public Safety Excellence offers education and accreditation to fire departments and fire and emergency services personnel.

Related Bills

sSB 407, favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, allows the DMV commissioner to issue permits to organ transport vehicles to use steady or flashing blue, red, yellow, or white lights.

sSB 410, favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, expands the Fallen Hero Fund to provide compensation for firefighter cancer deaths. It also requires nonstate public employers to provide Partnership Plan benefits to survivors of first responders that die due to certain cancers. These employers must be reimbursed from the firefighters cancer relief account instead of the Fallen Hero Fund.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/17/2026)