



2026 Acts Affecting First Responders

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting first responders enacted during the 2026 regular legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Criminal Justice and Public Safety, are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) or special act (SA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the [General Assembly's website](#) or the Connecticut State Library.

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EMS Personnel

Deploying Behavioral Health Professionals After Mass Shootings

A new law requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) commissioner to coordinate with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) commissioner, in addition to the Department of Public Health (DPH) commissioner as under existing law, when deploying grief counselors and mental health professionals to provide mental health services to mass shooting victims' family members and other people with a close association to them. By law, these deployments must be made to (1) local community outreach groups in and around the impacted geographic location and (2) any school or higher education institution where a mass shooting victim or perpetrator was enrolled ([PA 26-38](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

Emergency Medical Transportation Rates

A new law sets requirements for how the Department of Social Services (DSS) calculates mileage to reimburse ambulance services under the state medical assistance program (which includes Medicaid). Specifically, the act requires the DSS commissioner to calculate out-of-district mileage for these services based on an ambulance's distance traveled with the patient onboard from the point of patient pickup to the destination, rounded to the nearest one-tenth of a mile. Ambulance service providers must maintain mileage documentation in the patient care record ([PA 26-88](#), effective July 1, 2026).

EMS Licensure Compact and Background Checks

New legislation enters Connecticut into the Recognition of Emergency Medical Services Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact, no earlier than one year after a neighboring state enters it. The compact creates a process authorizing emergency medical services (EMS) personnel who are licensed (or otherwise credentialed) in one member state to practice across state boundaries without requiring licensure in each state. The act correspondingly requires DPH to institute a criminal background check requirement for EMS personnel (starting one year after a neighboring state enters the compact) ([PA 26-13](#), §§ 28-30, effective October 1, 2026).

Insurance Department Study

New legislation directs the Insurance Department, in consultation with the Office of the Healthcare Advocate and within available appropriations, to study (1) surprise bills for ground ambulance services, (2) potential ways to lower the cost of infusion and injection services provided at hospital-based off-campus outpatient facilities, and (3) appropriate patient protections for stop-loss insurance policies used with self-funded employee health benefit plans. The department must

report to the Insurance and Real Estate Committee by October 1, 2027 ([PA 26-68](#), § 217, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 41, both effective upon passage).

Firefighters

Adjunct and Part-Time Fire Instructors

This year, the legislature required the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) commissioner, beginning July 1, 2026, and every fiscal year after, to adjust all Connecticut Fire Academy adjunct fire instructors' hourly compensation by the same percentage as the general wage increase and cost-of-living adjustment included in the most recently ratified agreement between the state and the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition ([PA 26-115](#), effective July 1, 2026).

Another act also requires the DAS commissioner, in consultation with the DESPP commissioner and the state fire administrator, to create a job classification for part-time fire service instructors within DESPP's Division of Fire Services Administration ([PA 26-12](#), § 49, effective October 1, 2026).

Firefighter Cancer Relief

This session, the legislature passed a law requiring certain telephone and telecommunication companies to report and remit the monthly five cent firefighters cancer relief account fee when they file a sales and use tax return and requires the Department of Revenue Services commissioner to deposit fees into the firefighters cancer relief account ([PA 26-68](#), §§ 209 & 210, effective upon passage).

The legislature also passed a law that advanced by six months the start date of the monthly five-cent telephone service fee (from January 1, 2027, to July 1, 2026) and date by which service providers must give subscribers written notice of the fee (from November 1, 2026, to May 1, 2026) ([PA 26-1](#), § 62, effective upon passage).

Firefighters Cancer Relief Fund Reports

A new law makes changes to the state treasurer's reporting requirements on programs that provide benefits to firefighters with cancer. It combines two existing reporting requirements into one annual report and changes the report's required contents to include the projected and actual (1) expenditures (rather than participation) for each program and (2) income sources for the firefighters cancer relief account (rather than certain demographic information about the firefighters receiving benefits). It also requires the treasurer to submit the report to the Labor and Public Employees Committee ([PA 26-83](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Fire Protection

This session, the legislature passed new legislation with various provisions on fire protection. Among other things, it requires (1) municipalities to establish local fire protection plans; (2) the state fire administrator to review and rate these plans at least every five years after the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control (CFPC) develops review standards; and (3) generally, municipalities to provide fire protection if fire protection services in the municipality are discontinued or disrupted. Relatedly, the act requires CFPC to recommend minimum standards for firefighter safety and emergency response protocols, and permits it to create a standard protocol for reviewing local fire protection plans.

The new legislation also creates the Connecticut Fire program for a framework by which the state may help municipalities. It additionally requires (1) DESPP to establish and maintain a system to collect computer-aided dispatch data from municipalities and a registry that identifies the fire chief of each municipality and fire district in the state and (2) the comptroller, in consultation with DESPP, to establish, maintain, and update a registry of Connecticut's career and volunteer firefighters ([PA 26-144](#), various effective dates).

Fire Safety Code Interpretations

A new law authorizes the state fire marshal to issue, upon anyone's request, official interpretations of the Fire Safety Code, including on the applicability of any code provision. The act requires her to compile and index each Fire Safety Code interpretation and publish them at periodic intervals at least every four months ([PA 26-110](#), § 2, effective October 1, 2026).

Grant Program for Junior Firefighter Programs

New legislation requires the state fire administrator to create and administer a program to give grants-in-aid to junior firefighter programs administered by volunteer fire departments. It requires the administrator to post a description of the program, including its eligibility criteria and application process, on DESPP's Division of Fire Services website ([PA 26-12](#), § 39, effective upon passage).

Insurance Coverage for Survivors of Volunteer Firefighters

This year, the legislature passed a law that extends nonstate public employer "partnership plan" health care coverage to the survivors of certain unpaid volunteer firefighters and requires non-state public employers to apply for partnership plan coverage for these survivors whether or not the first responder or unpaid volunteer firefighter was an employee of the nonstate public employer at the

time of death. It requires the non-state public employer the responder or firefighter provided services to at the time of death to apply for coverage.

The act also requires the state comptroller, with approval from the attorney general and the insurance commissioner, to allow the surviving spouse and dependent children of an unpaid volunteer firefighter to participate in the state employee health insurance plan ([PA 26-12](#), §§ 11 & 12, effective upon passage).

Reciprocity for Fire Apparatus Credentials

Under new legislation, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must waive the skills test requirement for a Q endorsement (which authorizes fire apparatus operation) for people who have a substantially equivalent credential from another state. CFPC determines which states' credentials have standards that meet or exceed Connecticut's standards and, consequently, qualify for reciprocity ([PA 26-24](#), § 3, effective January 1, 2027).

Reporting on Burn-Related Injuries and Deaths, Smoke Inhalation-Related Deaths, and Injuries From Fireworks or Explosives

Starting January 1, 2027, and annually after, a new law requires DPH to report to the state fire marshal's office on (1) all burn injuries and injuries resulting from fireworks or explosives, (2) any deaths resulting from those injuries or smoke inhalation, and (3) any deaths to which those injuries or smoke inhalation contributed. The act also requires DPH to use death certificate information and hospital discharge data provided to it, compile the information contained in the report, publish a statistical abstract, and annually submit the abstract to each local fire marshal and the legislature.

The new law also eliminates requirements for attending physicians, health care institution directors (and their designees), and health care providers to report on treatment provided for (1) a second- or third-degree burn to 5% or more of the body, (2) any burn to the upper respiratory tract, (3) laryngeal edema due to the inhalation of superheated air, (4) each case of a burn injury which is likely to or may result in death, and (5) any injury resulting from the use of fireworks. Under prior law, they had to report immediately by telephone to the local fire marshal of the jurisdiction where the incident that caused the burn occurred, and within 48 hours in writing to the state fire marshal's office ([PA 26-110](#), §§ 3 & 7, effective October 1, 2026).

Risk-Based Residential Fire Inspection Pilot Program and Working Group

New legislation requires the state fire marshal to create a two-year risk-based residential fire inspection pilot program to improve the scheduling, documentation, and prioritization of fire inspections of residential buildings designed to be occupied by more than two families. She must do so by January 1, 2027, and within available appropriations. The act also creates a working group to advise her on developing and implementing the pilot program ([PA 26-100](#), §§ 60 & 61, effective upon passage, except the pilot program provision is effective July 1, 2026).

State Building Code, State Fire Prevention Code, and Fire Safety Code Revisions

A new law makes identical changes to when the State Building Code, State Fire Prevention Code, and Fire Safety Code must be amended. Under prior law, each of these codes had to be updated whenever the nationally recognized model codes they were based on were revised, within 18 months after the revisions' first publication. The act extends this timing to within two years after that first publication date and provides that no revisions are required between the first publication of revisions to the respective 2024 model codes and the 2030 model codes' first publication of revisions. The act additionally requires the DAS commissioner to submit a report, by January 1, 2029, to the six legislative leaders and the Public Safety and Security Committee on the effects of extending the cycles for revising these three state codes and any recommendations for amending their cycles ([PA 26-58](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Working Group on Tax Incentives and Credits for Volunteer Firefighters

This session, the legislature created a working group to review and make recommendations for legislation on tax incentives and credits for volunteer firefighters. The group must report its findings and recommendations to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-12](#), § 63, effective upon passage).

Law Enforcement

Armed Security Guards in Schools

Under a new law, former parole officers meeting certain qualifications may provide armed security services in public schools. Under prior law, only sworn members of local police departments and qualified retired police officers could provide these services. The new law subjects former parole

officers to the same annual training requirements that other retired officers must complete in order to qualify.

Retired police officers and parole officers must have retired or left service in good standing in order to be hired as an armed security guard. The new law specifies that good standing means the officer's employment did not end due to disciplinary action, while under investigation, or while a disciplinary action was pending. The new law also specifies that retired police officers cannot provide security services if they are prohibited from being hired as a police officer due to being dismissed for malfeasance or other serious misconduct or resigning while under investigation ([PA 26-139](#), § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

Automated License Plate Reader Restrictions

Starting October 1, 2026, new legislation restricts law enforcement agencies, other public agencies, and private vendors under contract with them from using automated license plate reader (ALPR) systems or ALPR data, except for certain listed reasons. Among other things, it (1) sets a 21-day limit on how long agencies can keep this data unless certain conditions are met (such as its use in an active criminal investigation); (2) specifically prohibits several uses of ALPR systems or data, such as for investigating suspected immigration violations; (3) requires the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) to adopt a model ALPR usage policy and DESPP to adopt related regulations for implementation by law enforcement agencies; and (4) sets provisions on enforcement, reporting, and related matters ([PA 26-14](#), §§ 13-15, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 46, effective upon passage).

Blood and Urine Test Results Timing

A new law eliminates a requirement that blood or urine test results be delivered to defendants within a certain timeframe for the tests to be admitted as evidence in court for driving under the influence (DUI), impaired boating, or impaired hunting criminal prosecutions. Existing law establishes several conditions that generally must be met in order to admit into evidence breath, blood, or urine tests indicating the amount of alcohol or drugs in a defendant's system. Under prior law, one condition was that a true copy of the test result report was mailed or personally delivered to the defendant within 24 hours or by the end of the next regular business day after the result was known, whichever is later. The act limits this condition so that it only applies to chemical tests of the defendant's breath ([PA 26-45](#), §§ 2 & 3, effective October 1, 2026).

Changes to Police Training Curriculum on Interacting With People With Disabilities

New legislation replaces police officer training curricula on interacting with people who (1) have mental or physical disabilities and (2) are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Under current law, each police basic or review training program conducted or administered by POST, the State Police, or a municipal police department must include POST-developed curricula for police officers on interacting with those individuals. The act sunsets these curricula on June 30, 2027, and instead requires these training programs to use new curricula after that date, which the act requires POST to develop by March 1, 2027 ([PA 26-1](#), § 60, effective upon passage).

Collaboration Between Police Officers and Social Workers

A new law requires POST to add to its guidance to law enforcement units on police officer collaboration with social workers. Beginning October 1, 2026, the act requires the guidance to include (1) the potential impact of this collaboration and (2) instances where it may or may not be feasible, including when a social worker may respond to a call for assistance or accompany a police officer on certain calls for assistance ([PA 26-130](#), § 10, effective upon passage).

CRISIS Initiative Expansion

New legislation requires the State Police, in conjunction with DMHAS, to expand the Connection to Recovery through Intervention, Support and Initiating Services (CRISIS) Initiative pilot program throughout the state by January 1, 2027. This expanded program must at least include the pilot program's components that require state police officer training, coordination between state police officers and mental health professionals, and referrals to mental health services facilities ([PA 26-12](#), § 14, effective upon passage).

Dashboard Cameras and Police Patrol Vehicles

Under existing law, each state and local law enforcement unit must require the use of dashboard cameras with a remote recorder in each police patrol vehicle used by any of the police officers it employs. A new law specifies that a "police patrol vehicle" does not include (1) administrative vehicles with a body camera-wearing occupant, (2) bicycles, (3) motor scooters, (4) all-terrain vehicles, (5) electric personal assistive mobility devices, and (6) animal control vehicles. In effect, a "police patrol vehicle" is any state or local police vehicle besides these excluded vehicles ([PA 26-45](#), § 15, effective October 1, 2026).

Destruction of Risk Protection Order Items

New legislation extends, generally from one year to two years, the length of the existing prohibition against DESPP and local police departments destroying firearms, deadly weapons, and ammunition held under a risk protection order. The act also requires, at least 90 days before destroying the items, DESPP and local police departments to notify the owner in writing of the date his or her items will be destroyed ([PA 26-45](#), § 11, effective October 1, 2026).

Distracted Driving

This session, the legislature made several changes to the distracted driving law, including:

1. updating and reorganizing the distracted driving law to reflect current device and vehicle technology and how it is used;
2. explicitly prohibiting driving while a video is visible to the driver in the normal driving position, regardless of whether the video is playing on a mobile electronic device, installed screen, or other similar device (with exceptions for things like GPS and back up cameras);
3. prohibiting (a) holding or supporting a mobile electronic device with any part of the body while driving and (b) failing to maintain a proper lookout; and
4. making it a reckless driving violation to drive in a highway work zone while engaged in any activity prohibited under the state's distracted driving law ([PA 26-63](#), §§ 31-34, and [PA 26-120](#), both effective October 1, 2026).

Gun Law Changes

The legislature made various changes in the state's gun (firearm) laws this session, including the following:

1. generally making it a class D felony to knowingly import into Connecticut or knowingly advertise, sell, offer, or expose for sale any convertible pistol manufactured on or after October 1, 2026;
2. prohibiting anyone without a local dealer permit from (a) advertising, selling, or delivering unfinished frames or unfinished lower receivers; (b) offering or exposing them for sale or delivery; or (c) possessing them with the intent to deliver them or sell them at retail;
3. explicitly allowing anyone to deliver or surrender any firearm or ammunition they possess to DESPP or a local police department, which must then hold them for at least 14 days, up to a maximum of one year; and
4. requiring local handgun permitting authorities to refund \$70 to applicants if the authority does not act within statutorily established timeframes ([PA 26-41](#), as amended by [PA 26-68](#), §§ 162 & 163, most provisions effective October 1, 2026).

Inspector General Use of Force Investigations

A new law changes when the inspector general must investigate specified peace officers' use of physical force on someone that results in the person's death or the death of a person in custody by (1) limiting the investigations to deaths that occur in physical custody and (2) requiring an investigation when the officer is any federal law enforcement officer. By law, the inspector general must prosecute cases involving unjustifiable use of force. Among other things, the new law also requires investigators to have unrestricted access to the scene and to collect evidence and the inspector general's post-investigation report to recommend actions for the law enforcement agency involved ([PA 26-14](#), §§ 3-5, effective upon passage).

Law Enforcement Hiring

New legislation extends to all peace officers the law's prohibition on hiring police officers who (1) were dismissed for malfeasance or serious misconduct that called into question their fitness to serve as an officer or (2) resigned or retired during an investigation for this conduct. This prohibition now also applies to federal law enforcement officers and other state employees like state or judicial marshals and certain correctional employees. Previously, it covered such people as sworn members of organized local police departments, appointed constables with criminal law enforcement duties, and certain special policemen ([PA 26-14](#), § 12, effective upon passage).

Law Enforcement Retention and Readiness Training

A new law requires DESPP, by January 1, 2028, and in consultation with POST, to coordinate with an independent institution of higher education located in West Haven to establish a one-day training program for police officers. The training must be available online and must include expert instruction, de-escalation skills, and practical planning. By January 1, 2029, and annually after, the DESPP commissioner must submit a report to the Public Safety and Security and Labor and Public Employees committees on the status of the program ([PA 26-128](#), § 1, effective October 1, 2026).

Number of State Police

Under existing law and according to the DESPP commissioner's determination, he must appoint and maintain enough sworn State Police personnel to efficiently maintain the operation of their division. New legislation removes the requirement that he make his determination according to recommended standards the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee developed in a 2013 study ([PA 26-45](#), § 7, effective upon passage).

Passenger Restrictions for Youth Instruction Permit Holders

Under a new law, 16- and 17-year-old learner's permit holders may have their sibling as a passenger during driving instruction if the sibling also holds a learner's permit. By law, learner's permit holders may drive only if they have a licensed driver (age 20 or older with at least four years of licensure) riding with and instructing them. Under prior law, these permit holders could only have their parents or legal guardians as a passenger during instruction ([PA 26-24](#), § 17, effective October 1, 2026).

Peace Officer Civil Offense Custody Actions

New legislation imposes restrictions on specified peace officers detaining, arresting, or taking people into custody based on a civil offense in certain locations, including at state or municipal facilities (buildings the government owns, leases, occupies, controls, or uses for business), schools, hospitals and urgent care centers, places of worship, playgrounds, social service establishments, cemeteries, and places of disaster or emergency response. To do so, a peace officer must be acting in his or her official capacity and have a judicial warrant for the individual. This restriction applies to the facilities' or locations' buildings, their grounds, and garages or parking lots that are used as part of their operation ([PA 26-14](#), § 7, effective October 1, 2026).

Peace Officer Liability

The legislature passed a new law with several provisions related to peace officer liability. First, it creates an individual cause of action, including against a federal or state officer, for alleged civil rights violations. The new law also makes federal law enforcement agencies liable when their officers interfere with someone taking a photo, digital still, or video image of them or another officer performing their duties. It also limits the circumstances under which a federal officer, employee, or agent has immunity when prosecuted for an offense based on an action taken under color of law ([PA 26-14](#), §§ 1, 10 & 11, effective upon passage).

Peace Officer Masking and Identification

Subject to certain exceptions, new legislation (1) prohibits specified peace officers from wearing a facial covering or personal disguise when interacting with the public as part of their duties and (2) requires them to clearly identify themselves with a badge and name tag on their uniform when making a planned arrest or interacting with the public as part of official duties when authorized to make arrests. A violation of these provisions is a class D misdemeanor, which by law, is punishable by up to 30 days in prison, a fine of up to \$250, or both ([PA 26-14](#), § 6, effective upon passage).

Police Training Center

A new law makes changes to a law under which DESPP must establish a police training center to train and educate police officers in crime scene processing, the collection and analysis of forensic evidence, and criminal investigations. Under prior law, the center had to be located at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) and the DESPP commissioner had to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with CCSU to establish it. The act instead requires the (1) center to be located at any Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) institution and (2) associated MOU be entered into with that institution by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-45](#), § 19, effective July 1, 2026).

Required Basic Police Training

Existing law and regulations set out basic training requirements for being certified as a police officer by POST, including authority to waive training under certain circumstances. New legislation prohibits POST from waiving the basic training program requirements for peace officers unless they give evidence of satisfactorily completing a substantially equivalent training or education program with at least 480 training hours ([PA 26-14](#), § 9, effective upon passage).

School Resource Officers

By law, each school board that assigns a school resource officer (SRO) to its schools must have a MOU with a local law enforcement agency that outlines the SRO's role and responsibility in the school. A new law sets a deadline of January 1, 2027, for school boards to meet requirements in existing law to (1) post the MOUs on their websites and (2) include information in the MOUs on the officer's daily interactions with students and staff and graduated discipline response models. The new law also requires MOUs to be updated at least every three years ([PA 26-1](#), § 34, effective July 1, 2026).

Security Officer Training and License Applications

New legislation makes several changes related to security officers, including expanding who is eligible for training waivers. Specifically, it exempts the following people if they present proof that they completed training that is equivalent to the training required for a security officer license:

1. anyone currently employed, or separated from service in good standing within the past two years, as a Department of Correction correction officer or parole officer, or Judicial Branch judicial marshal; and
2. anyone who is separated from service in good standing within the past two years as a police officer and is not prohibited from being hired by a law enforcement unit (due to serious misconduct, for example).

Additionally, the act requires incomplete license applications to be completed within 10 calendar days if the DESPP commissioner notifies the applicant (or security service employing the applicant who submitted the application) that an application is incomplete. For re-submissions, if the commissioner determines the application is still incomplete, he may, in his discretion, deny the application ([PA 26-45](#), § 12, effective October 1, 2026).

State Police Salaries for Highway Construction Projects

A new law changes who decides what the salaries are for sworn members of the State Police who are assigned to a Department of Transportation (DOT)-administered highway construction project. Under prior law, these members' salaries were fixed by the DAS commissioner. The act instead requires they be paid at a rate established under an agreement executed between the DOT commissioner and the DESPP commissioner on or after the act's passage ([PA 26-12](#), § 53, effective upon passage).

Towing

This year, the legislature made several changes related to nonconsensual towing that affect first responders. These include:

1. requiring police departments and parking authorities to (a) upload information on certain vehicles they take into custody to the towed vehicle portal the new law requires DMV to create and (b) send the required notice of tow by regular mail, in addition to certified mail as the law already required;
2. requiring individual owners and employees of towing companies that are included in the State Police tow rotation list or a municipal police tow rotation list to take DOT's traffic incident management (TIM) training; and
3. creating a Towing Advisory Council to advise DMV on matters related to nonconsensual towing and requiring the commissioner to appoint two law enforcement officers to the council ([PA 26-24](#), §§ 29, 35, 36, 39, 40 & 42, most provisions effective October 1, 2026).

Training on Human Trafficking

Provisions in omnibus legislation about combating human trafficking in the state requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), within available appropriations, to help POST develop training for law enforcement about human trafficking, instead of only allowing it to do so. DCF must do this in collaboration with the Office of Policy and Management Criminal Justice Planning and Policy Division. The legislation also requires any police basic or review training program conducted or administered by POST or a municipal police department to have training on human trafficking. The training must at least have information about related laws and how to identify, get access to,

and provide services for victims ([PA 26-70](#), §§ 10 & 11, effective July 1, 2026, for DCF's requirements and October 1, 2026, for including the content into police training).

UConn Special Police Forces Recruitment and Retention

This session, the legislature passed a new law to require the UConn president, by July 1, 2027, to establish a recruitment and retention program for the UConn special police forces and fire department to address staffing shortages and high resignation rates. As part of the program, the president must develop salary schedules for all sworn members of the university's special police forces and all members of the fire department, and an education benefit for those members ([PA 26-12](#), §§ 41-43 effective upon passage).

Miscellaneous Acts Affecting Multiple or Other First Responders

Crisis Response Drills

New legislation establishes new protocols for school crisis response drills to ensure they are designed to prevent emotional harm and support psychological safety while improving preparedness. Among other things, the new law:

1. prohibits active assailant simulations or simulated violence when students are present (but staff and first responders may do them outside of school hours);
2. requires the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention at Western Connecticut State University, in collaboration with DESPP, to develop standard terminology and definitions for conducting and reviewing drills, methods for evaluating drills, and guidance for crisis responses and crisis debriefing;
3. addresses education and communication between school personnel, students, and parents about the nature and purpose of crises response drills; and
4. requires school boards to make parts of their school safety and security plans that are not prohibited from disclosure available upon request to school community members ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 44-47, effective July 1, 2026).

Dynamic Part-Time Lanes (Flex Lanes)

A new law authorizes the Office of the State Traffic Administration to temporarily designate any highway lane or shoulder for certain specified uses to control and manage traffic (a "dynamic part-time lane," also known as a flex lane), including, among other things, as a dedicated lane for authorized emergency vehicles responding to an emergency call. Relatedly, it restricts motor vehicle operation in flex lanes based on the lane's currently designated use. For example, a flex

lane actively dedicated for emergency vehicles is limited to these operators or other motor vehicle operators obeying a law enforcement officer's direction. Among other things, the new law also allows DOT to establish a program to operate flex lane control systems (automated enforcement systems) ([PA 26-63](#), §§ 5-11 & 13, most provisions effective January 1, 2027).

Electric Generation and Storage Facility Safety

New legislation requires Siting Council certificate holders for electric generation or electric storage facilities to (1) report major and minor incidents to the council and (2) designate an emergency contact person for the facility. Major incidents include events that require emergency shutoff due to hazardous conditions, require emergency services personnel to respond, or cause an injury requiring hospitalization. Minor incidents are unanticipated or unplanned shutdowns that do not require emergency services personnel to respond. The act also (1) allows the Siting Council to require that applicants provide emergency services training specific to the proposed facility to local firefighters or other emergency services personnel; (2) requires the council to require applicants to designate an emergency contact person and give the person's contact information to the local fire official where the facility is located; and (3) requires the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to convene a working group to review processes on resuming energy generation services after a service shutoff ([PA 26-127](#), §§ 12-14, effective October 1, 2026).

Fireworks and Special Effects Displays

A new law conditions certificates of competency to handle or fire certain fireworks and special effects displays on applicants submitting to state and national criminal history record checks and providing evidence of good moral character and competence in the control and handling of the respective devices. Additionally, the act specifies that fireworks certificates of competency are not transferable and eliminates the authority of local fire marshals to suspend or revoke a fireworks permit ([PA 26-45](#), §§ 9 & 10, effective October 1, 2026).

First Responder Recruitment and Retention

New legislation provides financial assistance to eligible police officers, firefighters, and EMS personnel (first responders). Among other things, the act requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education to waive CT State and CSCU tuition for (1) first responders who certify their eligibility and are enrolled or accepted for admission, and (2) students attending the state fire school who are enrolled in a program offered together with the respective college or university that accredits courses in the program. The act caps the total number of these waivers at CT State and CSCU at 200 per school year, respectively.

The act also requires the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to develop and administer a mortgage assistance program for eligible first responders who submit a compliance certification and are buying a home as their principal residence in the community where they serve. This mortgage assistance must be provided under CHFA-established guidelines ([PA 26-12](#), §§ 65-72, various effective dates).

Health Insurance for Retired Police and Firefighters

This session, the legislature required the state comptroller to study health insurance coverage for retired police officers and firefighters, including an assessment of any gaps in, absence of, or diminished coverage for those who retired due to an illness or injury. The comptroller must submit a report on the study's findings to the Labor and Public Employees Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-12](#), § 50, effective upon passage).

Juice Bar Restrictions and Requirements

New legislation makes several changes to the law regulating “juice bars,” which are places where nonalcoholic beverages are served to minors (under age 21) on the premises of a cafe permit holder. The act allows towns, by ordinance, to prohibit the operation of juice bars within their borders or set the hours when they may operate, and authorizes towns and municipalities, by ordinance, to prohibit the sale of alcohol on any cafe permit premises while a juice bar is operating. The act also requires cafe permittees to limit the number of patrons where the juice bar is being operated to no more than 10% of the total building occupant load established by the fire marshal under the Fire Safety Code. It also allows, at any time before or during a scheduled event, the chief law enforcement officer, or the officer's designee, to reject the event or order it to be stopped under certain conditions ([PA 26-100](#), § 62, effective October 1, 2026).

Peer Support Program Liability

A provision in the annual court operations legislation generally immunizes (1) an employer for having a peer support program to benefit first responders and (2) peer support team members for performing peer support services (including deciding if it is appropriate to disclose confidential communications). This liability protection does not apply to wanton, reckless, or malicious conduct ([PA 26-92](#), § 10, effective July 1, 2026).

Pensions

A new law makes changes to how certain workers' compensation benefits may be used when calculating pension benefits in certain municipal pension systems. It prohibits the pension systems from decreasing a retiree's pension benefit because the retiree receives permanent partial

disability benefits. It also requires the systems to count an employee's temporary total disability and temporary partial disability benefits as wages when calculating a retiree's pension benefit ([PA 26-1](#), § 48, effective upon passage).

The same new law also requires the comptroller to study how a municipality that does not have a defined benefit pension plan for its police officers and firefighters can successfully transition them into the Connecticut Municipal Employees Retirement System or a comparable plan. The comptroller must report the study's results to the Labor and Public Employees Committee by January 1, 2028 ([PA 26-1](#), § 49, effective upon passage).

Property Tax Abatements for Domestic Partners of First Responders Killed in Action

New legislation expands eligibility for the property tax abatement that municipalities may give to surviving spouses of first responders (police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians) who died in the line of duty. Under it, domestic partners may also receive the abatement if they meet certain requirements, including having lived with the first responder at the time of his or her death and being the responder's only domestic partner. The exemption may cover all or some of the taxes due on a residence the claimant owns and occupies as his or her primary residence ([PA 26-12](#), § 62, effective October 1, 2026).

PSAP Consolidation Study

A new law gives the South Central Regional Council of Governments \$250,000 in FY 27 to study the consolidation of public service answering points (also known as public safety answering points or PSAPs) ([PA 26-68](#), § 52, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 47, effective upon passage).

Public Safety Personnel Recruitment and Retention Task Force

New legislation establishes a task force to study recruitment and retention issues for public safety personnel. The study must examine the feasibility and fiscal impact of the state providing:

1. tuition waivers, mortgage assistance, and tax credits to correction officers and judicial marshals;
2. tuition waivers to dependent children of police officers, uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments, and EMS personnel;
3. tuition waivers for undergraduate and graduate degree programs at UConn to police officers, uniformed members of paid or volunteer fire departments, and EMS personnel; and

4. tuition vouchers for public safety personnel to any accredited higher education institution in Connecticut.

The task force must submit its findings and recommendations to the Public Safety and Security Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-12](#), § 73, effective upon passage).

Task Force to Study Undue Delay in Workers' Compensation Claims by Police Officers and Firefighters

This session, the legislature created a task force to study causes of undue delay in workers' compensation claims made by police officers and firefighters. It must examine delays caused by administrative processing, medical provider availability and schedule limitations, and insurer authorization requirements, and report to the Labor and Public Employees Committee by January 1, 2027 ([SA 26-34](#), effective upon passage).

Vehicle Lights

The law generally requires a permit to use colored or flashing lights on motor vehicles or equipment. This year, the legislature passed two acts that modify the persons allowed to use certain lights on vehicles. The first act allows the DMV commissioner to issue permits for organ transport vehicles to use any combination of steady or flashing blue, red, yellow, or white lights.

The second act removes a restriction that only police officers and DMV inspectors may use steady red, blue, or red and blue, lights, visible from the vehicle's front. The second act also allows certain fire and emergency medical service personnel and certain constables already authorized to use flashing blue or red lights to also use steady lights in those colors ([PA 26-147](#), effective October 1, 2026, as amended, and [PA 26-144](#), § 13, effective October 1, 2026).

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