

Workers' Benefits: Volunteer Emergency Responder Leave

N.C. Gen. Stat. 166A-19.76

When an emergency declaration is in effect, a member of the emergency medical services, volunteer fire department, or rescue squad, who is called into the service of the state, can take unpaid leave of their current employment without being forced to use vacation time or other accrued leave time. They must provide their organization with a copy of the written request for services before taking leave.

Leave options for voluntary firefighters, rescue squad workers, and emergency medical service personnel called into service

(a) Leave Without Pay. -- A member of a volunteer fire department, rescue squad, or emergency medical services agency called into service of the State after a declaration of a state of emergency by the Governor or by the General Assembly, or upon the activation of the State Emergency Response Team in response to an emergency, shall have the right to take leave without pay from his or her civilian employment. No member of a volunteer fire department, rescue squad, or emergency medical services agency shall be forced to use or exhaust his or her vacation or other accrued leave from his or her civilian employment for a period of active service. The choice of leave shall be solely within the discretion of the member.

(b) Request in Writing Required. -- For the volunteer member to be entitled to take leave without pay pursuant to this section, his or her services shall be requested in writing by the Director of the Division or by the head of a local emergency management agency. The request shall be directed to the Chief of the member's volunteer fire department, rescue squad, or emergency medical services agency, and a copy shall be provided to the member's employer. This section shall not apply to those members whose services have been certified by their employer to the Director of the Division, or to the head of a local emergency management agency, as essential to the employer's own

ongoing emergency relief activities.

(c) Definition of an Emergency Requiring Activation of the State Emergency Response Team. -- For purposes of this section, an emergency requiring the activation of the State Emergency Response Team means an emergency at Activation Level 2 or greater according to the North Carolina State Emergency Operations Plan of November 2002. Activation Level 2 requires the State Emergency Operations Center to be fully activated with 24-hour staffing from all State Emergency Response Team members.

(d) Enforcement. -- The Commissioner of Labor shall enforce the provisions of this section pursuant to Chapter 95 of the General Statutes.