

Expanded Cancer Benefits for Firefighters Shift Financial and Administrative Responsibilities to Local Employers

SB 984 – Sen. Nick DiCeglie (HB 813 – Rep. Demi Busatta)

General Bill Summary

CS/CS/SB 984 revises Florida’s firefighter cancer benefits law to expand eligibility for certain benefits and clarify employer responsibilities when a firefighter is diagnosed with cancer. The bill modifies provisions in Florida’s existing presumption law for firefighter cancer, which recognizes certain cancers as occupational diseases tied to firefighting service.

The legislation updates conditions under which a firefighter’s former employer must provide a one-time cancer benefit payment if the firefighter receives a qualifying diagnosis after leaving employment. It also requires a former employer to continue providing death benefits to eligible beneficiaries for a specified period when a firefighter dies from a qualifying cancer that is presumed to be work-related.

Additionally, the bill removes the requirement that the Division of State Fire Marshal adopt rules establishing employer cancer-prevention best practices for fire departments. Instead, prevention guidance is no longer tied to formal rulemaking.

The bill passed the Senate unanimously (37–0) and the House unanimously (109–0) during the 2026 legislative session and was ordered enrolled on March 11, 2026.

Overall, the legislation expands and clarifies benefit protections for firefighters diagnosed with cancer while adjusting administrative requirements related to prevention standards.

Potential County Impact

County governments that employ firefighters—particularly counties operating fire departments or fire rescue services—may experience increased financial exposure and administrative responsibilities under this bill.

First, counties may be required to provide one-time cancer benefit payments even after a firefighter separates from county employment, depending on the circumstances of the diagnosis and prior service. This change could extend potential liability beyond the period of active employment.

Second, counties could face additional death-benefit obligations if a firefighter dies from a qualifying cancer linked to firefighting duties. The requirement for former employers to provide death benefits to beneficiaries may increase long-term benefit costs for county fire departments.

Third, while the bill removes the requirement for the Division of State Fire Marshal to adopt rules for employer cancer-prevention best practices, counties may still maintain or update internal policies related to firefighter health, exposure mitigation, and protective equipment.

Removing the rulemaking requirement may reduce state-level guidance but does not eliminate employer responsibilities related to worker safety.

Fiscal impacts on counties will vary depending on the size of the firefighter workforce, benefit structures, and the number of qualifying cancer claims. Local governments with large fire rescue departments could experience higher benefit liabilities and insurance or workers' compensation costs.

Effective Date

July 1, 2026.

Primary Statutory References

- s. 112.1816, F.S.