

# Connecticut State Firefighters Association



## State Convention Host Department Guidebook

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# **OVERVIEW**

This booklet was prepared to provide guidance to Departments that desire to plan and host an annual Connecticut State Firefighter's Association Convention.

The CSFA and the Host Department will meet periodically to review the plans and make adjustments as necessary.

The requirements for the business meeting of the Convention are established by the CSFA.

Vendor displays and parade are the responsibility of the Host Department and may vary to meet the specific needs of the particular convention.

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GUIDELINES FOR CONVENTION COMMITTEES  
CONNECTICUT STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

To help fire departments, who are thinking of holding an annual convention in their town or city at some future date, or those who have already been awarded an Association convention, the following guidelines have been drawn up to assist them in making a decision or as a reminder of what they have to provide in order to make a successful convention:

FIRST DAY

The convention will be held on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The convention committee provides a meeting room for about 25 to 30 and arranges for a restaurant where the committee can meet for luncheon before the meeting at twelve-thirty (12:30 PM), and a meeting is either held in that restaurant or at any other convenient location directly after the luncheon. Four members of the convention committee are invited to the luncheon and the executive committee meeting, so that any last minute plans for the next day's convention can be disclosed or discussed. Luncheon is Dutch-treat except for the four invited guests from the host city.

On the night before the convention, the Irregulars have their meeting and social time. However, the location of this meeting is left in their hands. However, they will, no doubt, be in touch with your chairman or co-chairman for suggested halls or other places suitable for their gathering. The Irregulars have their own officers, treasury, etc., so there are no expenses involved with this as they pay all their own expenses. No other special entertainment is necessary for that evening, although the committee can, if they wish. However 200 or more usually attend these meetings, so this takes care of most delegates and alternates who stay over.

SECOND DAY

Convention Day requires much pre-planning by the committee. However, the financial outlays are small.

You invite local guests to the convention meeting, such as mayor, selectmen, city manager, fire chief, police chief, keeping your list to a minimum without snubbing anyone who has been

helpful to your department. We try to keep the speaking program as short as possible, as the delegates get restless if there are too many.

The Association will invite the Governor and in an election year, both candidates, the Commissioner of Public Safety, the State Fire Marshal and his deputy, sometimes a Federal office holder, a State Representative or State Senator or an important member of a Federal agency, such as the U.S. Fire Administration. If in a town or city with more than one fire chief, to save time, all can take a bow at the convention at the same time. We also invite the administrator of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and State Fire Training Officer.

The convention committee provides the meeting hall, usually the high school, but any hall with a good parking facility and seats to hold 800 to 1,000, will suffice. It can have a balcony, where alternates can be seated. However, if all the seating is on the first floor auditorium level, this is satisfactory. If there is a rental charge, this is paid by the convention host and any custodian fees also. The Association will pay for any fees necessary to have a public address system (PA System) in operation and will also record the convention on tape. The stage should have an American Flag, a speaker's stand with a microphone, a long table for the secretary with a microphone and thirty chairs for guests, speakers and past presidents. There should be a piano/organ on the stage or below it for use of the Memorial Service singer and his/her accompanist. The singer and accompanist are paid by the convention committee. There should be a microphone available for the singer, but the one on the stage can be moved for him/her or the microphone, which we need in front of the stage for delegates can be moved if the soloist is below stage level.

We need four long tables at the entrance to be used by the delegates for the credential committee, we will place them the way we want them. However, there should be enough room so that the delegate lines of eight counties do not crowd each other. Three other smaller tables should be available but not closer than 25 to 35 feet of the credential tables, one for the convention committee, who might want to give out programs, sell raffle tickets, etc., one for our Statute Book committee to sell statute books and patches, and one for the following year's convention parade. We put up the county credential signs and the county signs in the auditorium. We give out our annual reports and "The Connecticut Firemen" at the credential tables, this done by our committee. If there is "No Smoking" at any location in the hall or hallways, they should be posted by the school or other authorities or by the convention committee. The same thing holds true for any restrictive parking outside.

The custodian should be available at the school or place of assembly by 7:30 AM so that we can bring in our material to set up the credential committee.

The convention committee obtains a singer and an accompanist for the Memorial Service and pays for their services. At least a month before the convention date, it is suggested that the singer provide his two hymns so they can be included in the program and so that the Chaplain conducting the service is aware of the two titles. The singer can choose two appropriate hymns of his choice and if he/she desires, the secretary will give him/her the phone number or address

of the Chaplain for consultation. The singer should also be prepared to lead the delegates in the singing of the National Anthem at the beginning of the program so he/she should be available no later than 10:45 AM.

The Association will provide a gavel for the convention meeting, as well as fifty (50) convention badges for the convention committee to give to their committee members. Two of our Chaplains will officiate; one conducting the Memorial Service and one will give the Opening and Closing Prayer. The convention committee also provides a Color Guard necessary for the opening ceremonies, your own firemen. They must be in the hall by 10:30 AM, they assemble in the rear of the auditorium, march down the center aisle to the front of the stage, face the delegates, while the President leads them in a Salute to the Flag and the Soloist leads the delegates in the singing of the National Anthem, after which they go back up the same aisle to the rear of the auditorium, and disband. This takes about five minutes after the convention convenes at 11:00 AM. The convention actually is called to order by the President at 10:30 AM for county caucuses for election of county vice-presidents.

Local publicity is taken care of by your committee, through the local or area newspapers or radio/television stations. The secretary will send you any news items available to him, which can be used in the media. The secretary of the Association will send notices to "Connecticut Magazine", the various national fire magazines, telephone company monthly news bulletins, and the New York Times Connecticut Sunday edition. The committee should endeavor to have representatives of the media at the convention and a photographer or television crew. The secretary will have available to the media a list of the newly elected officers. The Association is especially interested in having statewide coverage of their Awards contests.

A "Connecticut Firemen" is published in March or April, in late June or July, and in September, which is given to the delegates. For the March/April issue, we would like a list of the motels/hotels and first-class restaurants available in or near the convention town or city, a list of the full convention committee, any early plans made, any entertainment planned, any fundraising plans of your committee, such as a carnival or a raffle, so we can give it publicity in the Connecticut Firemen. Motel addresses should also include their phone numbers. The location and directions to the convention hall and any information you wish published, such as how many fire units and bands have signed up to March 1<sup>st</sup> the closing date for news.

For the June/July issue, the latest news available, any changes in plans, changes or additions to the convention committee and we will also repeat some of the March issue information. Closing date for this issue is June 1<sup>st</sup>.

For the September issue, any changes in the convention committee, latest parade news, any further entertainment plans, further information on your raffle, carnival or fire equipment displays or demonstrations.

Our annual report has the by-laws covering convention committees. Paragraph (a) concerning advertising solicitors for your program is in there because a few years ago, one of the

sponsoring cities contracted professional solicitors on a commission basis, which left a bad taste in everyone's mouth, the city, the merchants and our Association, due to high pressure tactics, etc. There is no objection to incentives to your own firemen to get advertisements. However, they all must be bonafide firemen. Also, if you go outside your town or city, you should coordinate their activities with the fire departments in those cities, so that you are not looking for advertisements when the other fire department, itself, has a fund drive, ticket sale, etc.

One hundred dollars (\$100) must accompany your application to hold the convention, which must be voted at an annual convention; if you feel more than one fire department is looking for the convention, it will be up to you to make a presentation at the convention, helpful to your invitation. Two hundred dollars (\$200) must be sent to the secretary of the Association by February 1<sup>st</sup> and the last two hundred (\$200) before or on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Public liability insurance of \$500 and property damage insurance of not less than \$100,000 must be taken out as stated in section (d). Nothing stops a committee from having more insurance than is asked for. Some municipalities allow the fire companies to use their general coverage by the use of a rider for the three day convention; this is much less expensive but if the municipality does not agree to do this, private insurance will have to be taken out. This policy cost one city a thousand dollars (\$1,000) a few years ago, and like all insurance, goes up every year. It should run from twelve noon on the first day to twelve noon on Monday or Sunday at midnight in order to cover all activities as the parade and awarding of prizes will not be over until 8PM or 9PM in the evening or later. A copy of your policy must be sent to the secretary as provided in the by-laws.

There should be some sort of entertainment on Saturday evening to try to get the delegates out of their hotel rooms. However, this is the choice of the convention committee. If you plan a carnival, beer fest, etc., this will suffice.

### THIRD DAY

This is your most difficult day, when you will need plenty of help from your members or possibly from area or other fire departments to get the parade organized and started as division marshals, possibly help in crowd control and at the end of the parade for handling refreshments. To help pay the cost of the parade, the committee is allowed to charge a fee for entry into the parade by fire companies. This fee has risen over the last few years to help adjust for inflation. In the past, free liquid refreshments and free sandwiches have been given to all participants in the parade. However, your committee should consult with the previous convention committee whenever you decide to have it to see how the previous year's arrangements worked out and to make any adjustments necessary. In fact, your committee should meet with the previous year's committee, soon after their convention, to get pointers, ideas, etc that you can use or avoid.

Parade entries can usually be made at the previous convention or the convention committee also sends out notices to all fire companies, inviting them to participate. The Association will provide free mailing stickers to the convention committee, which will provide them with the latest addresses of all fire companies. Usually the time these applications are made denote the position of the company in the parade with modifications for musical units, etc. in that division. A gentleman's agreement exists where the host fire department of the previous parade is given the No. 2 spot in the first division in your parade. Although the Association has no voice in how you run your parade, extreme commercialism is frowned upon for a number of reasons; it can get out of hand. The Association's past and present officers are in the line of march and have a parade banner and color guard with personnel supplied by host (seven men), for their identification.

The Association pays for one trophy, which should be purchased by the convention committee along with their others; send a bill to the Association; it usually costs a maximum of five hundred dollars (\$500). It must be given as the main prize for most all-around company and must be given to a fire company in Connecticut, which is a member of this Association.

All invitations to march in the parade or for seating on the review stands are issued by your committee. Parade publicity is handled by your committee, except for that sent to magazines by the secretary. (He will send dates only, so if you want additional coverage, the convention committee can send more information.) We suggest, if possible, coverage by television stations or newspaper photographers, for both the parade and convention session, which is taken care of by your committee.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The actual dates for the convention are approved by the executive committee and if the convention committee wants to deviate from the normal dates, they should get in touch with the executive committee immediately after the convention application is accepted by the convention delegates.

The executive committee requests that, if it is possible, the length of the parade route be held to three miles or less; complications develop if the parade day is hot and humid for the marchers.

The executive committee asks that any demonstrations planned on the day of the convention, end promptly before 10:30 AM and not commence again until the convention is adjourned, due to noise or getting the attention of the delegates away from the convention.

If no invitation is received for an annual convention with a parade, the executive committee picks a location for a two-day convention without a parade, but this is not usually until the first meeting of the new executive committee, which is held in October, November and December following the convention, and not until the dates above of the year before the convention, in which there is no invitation.