



SONOMA COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

2373 Circadian Way. Santa Rosa, CA 95407-5439

July 10, 2009

The Honorable Wes Chesbro
PO Box 942849
Sacramento CA 94249-0066
Atten: Lucas Freichs

Dear Assemblyman Chesbro;

On behalf of the Sonoma County Fire Chief's Association, I am writing to lend our support to the efforts of yourself and Assemblyman Jeffries to resolve the challenges obtaining licenses for fire department personnel. As an agency that is currently certified by the DMV to operate an Employer Testing Program, I am well aware of the need to modify the program. To that end, I would like to add the following recommendations to your efforts;

Inability for an Examiner to test individuals from other agencies: As you are well aware, fire agencies by their nature work closely with each other at emergency incidents and in many other non-emergency cooperative arrangements. While this type of relationship would lend itself to sharing an examiner amongst a several departments, when we attempted to do this several years ago, we learned an examiner could only test employees of the same organization. Not only did this penalize those agencies around us who could of benefitted from the use of our examiner, it also made it exceedingly difficult for us to conduct a test within the 90 day timeframe. I feel strongly that any changes to the program should include a provision that allows an examiner to test drivers from other fire agencies.

Empower the Agency Examiner Greater Discretion in selecting the driving course: Given there are very few persons who have a better understanding of the streets and roads of a locale than the fire department, some latitude should be provided to allow the fire agency to select and approve a driving course that is appropriate for their agency. In addition, as public agencies which are subject to oversight from a legislative body and reportable to the public, I feel there is justification to extend the audit frequency for fire departments.

If these issues could be addressed along with those identified in your letter of July 8, I believe we could create a licensing system that not only provides for the necessary accountability, but gives a fire agency the flexibility needed to maintain a licensed pool of drivers.

If I may be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Randy Collins,
Vice President
Sonoma County Fire Chief's Association