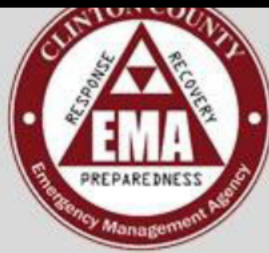


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Classification Note: [REDACTED]

Prepared by: Clinton County Emergency Management Agency (EMA)

Purpose: Prepared for internal public safety planning. Portions may qualify as security records under R.C. 149.433(A)(1). Any public records request must be routed to EMA for review under R.C. 149.43 and 149.433 (redactions applied where permitted).

Ohio Senate Bill 195 – Rural Fire District Impact

Date: 12 January 2026

Purpose:

- Assess the operational and staffing impacts of Ohio Senate Bill 195 and the associated elimination of the 36-hour Volunteer Firefighter (VFF) certification on rural and volunteer fire districts.
- Identify structural risks to interior firefighting capability, mutual-aid reliability, and community fire protection.
- Provide county-level planning insight for elected officials, emergency management, and fire leadership.

Background

- Ohio Senate Bill 195 implements recommendations from state and national fire service bodies by aligning firefighter certification with NFPA 1010 professional standards.
- The Ohio Division of EMS has approved a Volunteer Firefighter Certification Transformation that permanently ends the 36-hour Volunteer Firefighter (VFF) pathway on June 30, 2030.
- After that date:
 - No new 36-hour VFFs may be certified
 - Any expired VFF certification cannot be reinstated
 - New firefighters must qualify as Firefighter I, Firefighter II, or Exterior Support only
- Rural Ohio fire protection is historically built on the 36-hour VFF model, which allowed community members to serve as interior firefighters with modest time and financial burden.
- The replacement Exterior Support Person credential explicitly prohibits interior firefighting and limits members to scene support, traffic control, rehab, and hazardous materials awareness.

Problem Statement

- Senate Bill 195 raises firefighter training standards without providing a rural workforce replacement model.
- The elimination of the 36-hour VFF creates a capability gap between:
 - [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Operational Impact – Staffing Trajectory

Entry-Level Firefighter Pipeline

Category	Pre-2030	Post-2030
Entry firefighter	36-hour VFF	FF I / FF II only
Time to deploy	Weeks	Months
Training cost	Low	High
Attrition risk	Moderate	High

- Rural departments should expect [REDACTED].
- Slower onboarding [REDACTED]

Interior Firefighting Capability

- Existing FF I/II members age out or reduce participation faster than new ones can be trained.
- Many new recruits [REDACTED].
- By 2035, many rural departments will experience:
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED].

Exterior-Only Fireground Expansion

- Exterior Support becomes the default certification.
- Results in:
 - More personnel on scene
 - Fewer personnel capable of entering structures
 - This creates scene control without suppression capability — a false appearance of coverage.

Mutual-Aid System Failure Risk

As interior staffing declines:

- Automatic mutual aid becomes the primary response, not backup
- Simultaneous incidents (storms, harvest fires, winter weather) will overwhelm regional capacity
- Rural counties will experience:
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]k
 - [REDACTED]

Insurance & Community Risk

Reduced interior capability impacts:

- Fire spread and property loss
- ISO Public Protection Class
- Long-term homeowner insurance costs
- Rural residents will pay higher premiums for less protection.

Governance & Liability

- Incident Commanders must strictly restrict non-FF I/II personnel from interior operations.
- Any deviation becomes defensible negligence, not operational tradition.
- Fire districts become legally exposed for:
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]

What Senate Bill 195 Does Not Provide

The certification transformation does not include:

- Rural staffing impact analysis
- Funding or tuition offsets
- Guaranteed FF I/II training access
- Mobile or regional academies
- Hybrid interior models for low-density districts
- Staffing minimum exceptions

This is a standards-forward policy, not a capacity-protective policy.

Bottom Line

Without mitigation, Senate Bill 195 will:

- Eliminate the last low-barrier interior firefighter pathway
- [REDACTED]
- Increase mutual-aid dependency
- Increase property loss and insurance costs
- [REDACTED]

This is not a safety upgrade.

It is a coverage reduction for rural Ohio.

References:

- Firefighter and Fire Safety Inspector Training Committee. (2024, August 21). *Ohio Volunteer Firefighter Certification Transformation Proposal*.
- Ohio General Assembly. (2025–2026). *Senate Bill No. 195: Revise volunteer fire department and volunteer firefighter law* (136th General Assembly, Regular Session).