

WSCFF Position Statement:

Single Role, EMS Only Employees

The Washington State Council of Firefighters and, more specifically, the EMS Standing Committee has become aware that departments across the state are evaluating the idea of hiring single role, EMS-only employees. We are also aware of a few departments that have already hired these employees.

The intent of this statement is to establish the WSCFF's position on the issue of single role, EMS-only employees. It is the position of the Washington State Council of Firefighters that hiring single role, EMS-only employees jeopardizes the wages, hours, and working conditions our members currently enjoy. Because of this, we do not believe our Locals should be allowing these types of employees to be hired. The WSCFF recognizes that we do have single role locals, such as King County Medic One. This statement is not directed them.

Over the years, the IAFF and its Locals have worked hard to portray our members as "all hazards responders". An all hazards approach to 911 calls results in a dynamic system that can easily adapt to the type of call at hand. It is our opinion that single role, EMS-only responders is a step backwards and puts an all hazards response system in jeopardy, and also devalues the work currently being done by WSCFF members.

Another significant concern of the WSCFF is that having single role, EMS-only makes our EMS system much more vulnerable to privatization. One of the main charters of the WSCFF is to protect and promote union jobs. As such, we are opposed to any position or system that puts union jobs at risk. The introduction of single role, EMS-only positions presents an increased risk some or all of a Local's work being transitioned to a private provider.

Wages are also another major concern of the WSCFF. The departments who are proposing hiring single role employees are proposing to pay them significantly less than our all hazards brothers and sisters make. Given that the vast majority of member responses are EMS related, single role, EMS-only responders may end up performing 85-90% of a department's work for only 60-70% of an all hazards member's wages. It is not hard to imagine how such a scenario has the potential to drive down wages for all our membership.

We all know it takes a significant number of firefighters to handle first alarm fires, and even more for multiple alarm fires. If our members are not providing an all hazards response, how are we going to justify having the proper number of firefighters on hand to mitigate major emergencies? We have repeatedly witnessed the difficult decisions that our members must make when arriving at fires with response complements that are too small.

Lastly, we believe in learning from history so that we do not repeat it. The Boeing Company provides a local example of an organization that introduced a tiered employee system. Their employees were stalwarts of the middle class in Washington, with good wages, great benefits, and job security. The introduction of Tier 2 and then Tier 3 employees had a tangible, negative

impact on wages, benefits, pensions, and even job security. Having multiple tiers of employees doing the same body of work only serves to drive down wages and threaten job security for all.

We ask that if your administration is considering hiring single role, EMS-only employees that you consider the points made above and hold the line on the body of work that is currently yours to keep. If you find yourself in a situation where you must consider these types of employees, please contact one of the members of the WSCFF's EMS Standing Committee. We can be of help with model contract language that can help protect your wages, hours, and conditions of employment that those before you have fought so hard to secure.