

ORDINANCE 26-11

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM IN COMPLIANCE WITH NEW JERSEY CHILD LABOR AND SAFETY LAWS

WHEREAS, the Borough of Runnemede seeks to encourage youth participation in public safety through structured and supervised programs; and

WHEREAS, the Borough recognizes the need to ensure such participation complies with all applicable State and Federal laws governing minors in the workplace, including safety restrictions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Runnemede, County of Camden, State of New Jersey, as follows:

SECTION 1: ESTABLISHMENT

A Junior Firefighter Program is hereby established within the Runnemede Fire Department, subject to all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing minors.

SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY

- A. Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and under 18 years of age.
- B. Applicants must obtain and maintain a valid New Jersey Working Papers Certificate (Employment Certificate for Minors).
- C. Applicants must have written parental/guardian consent, including acknowledgment of potential risks and prohibited activities.
- D. Applicants must be enrolled in school and maintain satisfactory academic standing, defined as maintaining passing grades in all courses and meeting the academic requirements set by the school.
- E. Applicants must be residents of the Borough or otherwise approved by the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief may grant exceptions for non-residents with a documented justification.

SECTION 3: LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- A. All participation shall comply with:
 - 1. New Jersey Child Labor Laws (N.J.S.A. 34:2-21 et seq.)
 - 2. New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development regulations
 - 3. United States Department of Labor Hazardous Occupations Orders (HO 17 – Firefighting Prohibition)
 - 4. New Jersey PEOSH (Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health) standards
 - 5. Any applicable federal employment protections for minors under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- B. Under no circumstances shall Junior Firefighters engage in activities deemed hazardous or prohibited for minors under these laws.

SECTION 4: PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

Junior Firefighters shall not:

- A. Engage in interior structural firefighting or enter any Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) environment.

- B. Operate or ride on fire apparatus during emergency response except under strict supervision and in non-emergency training or approved mutual aid exercises; all exceptions must be documented by the Fire Chief.
- C. Use power-driven rescue tools, including but not limited to hydraulic cutters/spreaders, chainsaws, or similar equipment.
- D. Participate in roof operations, ladder operations at working fires, confined space entry, trench rescue, or technical rescue operations.
- E. Respond to emergency incidents during hours prohibited by New Jersey Child Labor Laws on school nights.
- F. Perform any duty that would violate federal Hazardous Occupations Orders.
- G. Be exposed to vehicular or traffic hazards without appropriate safety measures, including PPE and adult supervision. For vehicular hazard protection, a high-visibility vest that is ANSI/ISEA compliant is required when operating near traffic. Reflecting striping on turnout gear is required to be worn at night in order to add visibility.
- H. Respond to emergency incidents outside the geographic boundaries of the Borough of Runnemede.
- I. Respond to incidents on limited-access highways, including but not limited to the New Jersey Turnpike, or any roadway designated by the Fire Chief as a high-speed or high-risk traffic environment.

SECTION 5: PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

Junior Firefighters may:

- A. Participate in training exercises, provided such training is non-hazardous, age-appropriate, and compliant with NFPA youth safety standards (e.g., NFPA 1201, NFPA 1452).
- B. Assist with apparatus cleaning, equipment maintenance, and station duties.
- C. Support rehabilitation (rehab) functions at incident scenes in a clearly designated safe zone. A safe zone is a designated area at or near an incident where firefighters and personnel can operate without immediate danger from fire, collapse, smoke, or other hazards.
- D. Participate in fire prevention programs, public education, and community events.
- E. Observe emergency scenes from a designated safe area under direct adult supervision.

SECTION 6: HOURS AND SCHOOL RESTRICTIONS

- A. Participation shall comply with New Jersey limits on working hours for minors, including:
 1. No participation during school hours.
 2. Restricted hours on school nights.
 3. Compliance with maximum weekly hour limits as defined by New Jersey law.
- B. Academic performance shall be monitored. Participation may be suspended or terminated for declining grades.
- C. Junior Firefighters shall not participate in overnight duty crews, sleep-in assignments, or any activity requiring overnight presence at the fire station.

SECTION 7: YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

- A. Junior Firefighters must be under the direct supervision of an active adult member at all times.

- B. A designated Junior Program Coordinator shall oversee compliance, training, and safety documentation.
- C. Any adult member assigned to supervise or regularly interact with Junior Firefighters shall be subject to appropriate background checks, including criminal history review, in accordance with Borough policy and applicable law.
- D. Such adult members shall complete youth protection and appropriate conduct training prior to supervising Junior Firefighters.
- E. The Fire Department shall implement practices designed to minimize one-on-one, unsupervised contact between adult members and Junior Firefighters, except where unavoidable in the course of operations, and in such cases, reasonable safeguards shall be implemented.
- F. At no time shall a Junior Firefighter be left alone in a fire station or other Borough facility with a single adult member without notice to and availability of other members or supervisors.

SECTION 8: TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- A. Mandatory completion of:
 - 1. Fire Department orientation
 - 2. Basic safety training
 - 3. Hazard awareness training
- B. All training shall comply with PEOSH and NFPA youth safety guidance. Ongoing refresher training shall be conducted at least annually or as required by updates to NFPA/PEOSH standards.

SECTION 9: INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

- A. Junior Firefighters shall be covered under the Borough's workers' compensation and liability insurance, where permitted by law.
- B. The Borough shall ensure compliance with all insurance requirements related to minors, including volunteer accident coverage if applicable.
- C. All parental/guardian consent forms must include acknowledgment of insurance coverage and associated risks.

SECTION 10: DISCIPLINE AND REMOVAL

- A. Members may be suspended or removed for:
 - 1. Violation of safety rules
 - 2. Academic issues
 - 3. Conduct unbecoming a member as determined by the Fire Chief.
- B. Disciplinary actions shall follow a documented procedure: notice of violation, opportunity to respond, and written record. The Fire Chief shall have final authority over disciplinary actions.

SECTION 11: TERMINATION

Participation shall terminate upon reaching 18 years of age or earlier at the discretion of the Fire Chief.

SECTION 12: RECORDKEEPING

- A. The Fire Department shall maintain records of:
 - 1. Training completed

2. Hours of participation
 3. Incidents and safety violations
 4. Parental consent and medical clearance forms
- B. Records shall be maintained for a minimum of five (5) years or as required by law.

SECTION 13: SEVERABILITY

If any section is deemed invalid, the remainder shall remain in effect.

SECTION 14: EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall take effect upon final passage and publication in accordance with law.

NOTICE

The above ordinance was introduced and passed on first reading at a meeting of the Borough Council of the Borough of Runnemede held on the 28th day of April, 2026, and will be taken up for final consideration and passage at a meeting of the Borough Council of said Borough of Runnemede, 24 N. Black Horse Pike, Runnemede, New Jersey, on the 26th day of May, 2026, at which time and place all persons interested will be heard.

Beth Miller, Borough Clerk
Upon First Reading