



Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association

Bylaws

Adopted August 19, 2026

ARTICLE I – NAME

This organization will be known as the Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association (hereinafter “Association”).

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The purpose and objectives of this organization are:

- To bring together persons interested in the saving of lives, protection of property, and prevention and extinguishment of fires for the residents of Berrien County
- To discuss ways and means for the betterment of the fire service and the reduction of unnecessary loss of life and property
- To exchange ideas on all questions affecting the safety of life and property and the promotion of legislation to this end
- The Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association is recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization by the IRS with further classification as a public charity under the IRC section 509(a)(2)

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

3.1 – Territory Limits

The territory of the Association will be the jurisdictional limits of Berrien County or an agency that, by mutual aid agreements, is directly associated with agencies located in Berrien County.

3.2 – Classes of Membership

The membership of this Association shall be divided into the following classes:

- A. Primary
- B. Secondary
- C. Associate
- D. Life

3.3 – Primary Members

Primary members include the following members of agencies who serve as a principal fire protection agency within the Association territory limits:

- A. The chief of the agency or chief officers as designated by the chief of a regularly organized public, private, governmental, or industrial fire department
- B. Fire commissioners/fire directors

C. Public safety directors and those chief officers, designated by the public safety director whose primary responsibility is devoted to fire administration and/or operations
All primary members shall have voting privileges.

3.4 – Secondary Members

Any lower-ranking officer in a supervisory capacity, or other agency member, of an organized public, private, governmental, industrial fire department, or public safety department when approved in writing by their agency chief officer (or equivalent), may serve as a Secondary Member if their agency is in good standing; see Article IV – Dues.

Secondary members may be delegated agency voting privileges by the agency chief officer (or equivalent) on an annual basis by providing a signed authorization letter (see Addendum 2).

3.5 – Associate Members

Associate members may include members of the following agencies:

- A. 911/Public Safety Answering Point ('Dispatch')
- B. Other fire-related service agencies (DNR, State Fire Marshal, firefighter training)
- C. Law enforcement agencies
- D. Affiliated medical agencies (ambulance, hospital, aeromedical, Medical Control)
- E. Specialized rescue agencies (hazmat, technical rescue, aerial)
- F. Support services (HART, Red Cross)

Associate members do not have voting privileges and are not required to pay dues.

3.6 – Life Members

An Association member who retires may be granted life membership in the Association. Life members shall not be required to pay dues or assessments and will not have voting privileges, nor be eligible to hold an office on the Executive Board. Life members shall be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of voting members present. Nominations for life members are evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Board.

3.7 – Suspension or Revocation of Membership

Any member who conducts themselves in a manner unbecoming to the Association, or counterproductive to the goals and objectives of the Association, may have their membership suspended or revoked by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of voting members present. If a motion is made for suspension or revocation, the vote will take place at the following regularly scheduled meeting. Any member's first suspension shall be for 30 days. The time frame for any further suspensions given to the same member shall be determined by the Executive Board.

3.8 – Membership List

A list of members will be maintained by the Treasurer/Secretary as Addendum 1. This list will include, at minimum, the following information for each member agency:

- A. Membership Class
- B. Agency Name
- C. Chief Officer Name (or equivalent)
- D. Delegated Secondary Member Name (if applicable)
- E. Membership/Voting Status

ARTICLE IV – DUES

Dues shall be collected annually by the Association given the following rules:

- A. All voting-eligible member agencies of the Association shall be required to pay dues.
- B. Dues amount shall be \$50.00 unless a different amount is approved before the regular November meeting.
- C. Dues invoices are to be distributed at the regular November meeting with a January 31st, of the following year, remittance deadline.
- D. Any member agency that is in arrears for dues past the January 31st deadline will not be entitled to vote on Association business until dues are paid.
- E. Any member agency who is in arrears for dues for one year shall, after notification of such delinquency and failure to pay such delinquent dues, be suspended from the membership of the Association. This shall be done by Executive Board Action.

ARTICLE V – MEETINGS

5.1 – Regular

Regular meetings of the membership of the Association shall be held on the third Wednesday of each month. If this meeting falls on a legal holiday, then an alternate meeting date shall be set by a majority vote of the qualified voting members present at the preceding meeting.

5.2 – Special

Special meetings of the membership shall be called by the President, or upon written request to the President, by five (5) or more members, in which case the request shall be made at least seven (7) days preceding such a special meeting.

5.3 – Executive Board

Meetings of the Executive Board shall be held on an as-needed basis, especially for time-sensitive matters, to properly conduct the business of the Association.

5.4 – Closed Session

Any regular or special meeting may go into a closed session if a motion to do so is made, supported, and approved by a majority vote of qualified voting agency members present. Only qualified voting agency members will remain in the room during a closed session, all other members and visitors will be asked to step out of the room until the closed session is completed. The closed session can be called for purposes of any sensitive matters that could be considered confidential or deemed necessary by the membership.

ARTICLE VI – QUORUM

At all meetings, other than Executive Board Meetings, in which Association business may be considered, a quorum shall consist of a minimum of one-third (1/3) of qualified voting agency members.

ARTICLE VII – VOTING

During Association business which requires a vote of the membership, the following rules will apply:

- A. Agency must be in good standing before the vote; see Article IV – Dues
- B. Only the highest-ranking member of an agency in attendance will be allowed to vote
- C. Only one vote per agency
- D. In the event of a tie vote for business, other than the election of officers, the President shall place the deciding vote

ARTICLE VIII – OFFICERS

8.1 – Executive Board

The Executive Board of the Association shall consist of:

- A. President
- B. Vice-President
- C. Secretary-Treasurer

8.2 – Terms

The term of office for all Executive Board Members will be two (2) years.

8.3 – Qualification of Officers

The President and Vice President of the Association shall be elected from the ranks of the primary members. The Secretary-Treasurer shall be elected from either the primary or secondary membership or may be contracted, if necessary.

8.4 – Removal from Office

An Executive Board member whose conduct is unbecoming to the Association, counterproductive to the goals and objectives of the Association, or is absent from three (3) meetings in a calendar year may be removed from office by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of members present. If a motion is made to remove an Executive Board member, the vote will take place at the following regularly scheduled meeting.

Upon removal of an Executive Board member, the position shall be declared vacant and filled in accordance with 8.5.

8.5 – Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in any Executive Board position, the vacancy shall be filled by a majority vote of qualified voting members present at the next regular meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Nominations to fill the vacancy may be made from the floor at the meeting where the election is held. Nominees must meet the eligibility requirements outlined in 8.3.

The individual elected shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

8.6 – Resignation

An Executive Board member may resign from office by providing written notice to another Executive Board member. Upon receipt of such resignation, the position shall be considered vacant and filled in accordance with 8.5.

ARTICLE IX – DUTIES OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

9.1 – President

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association, shall appoint all committees, and perform such other duties as may be incidental to the office or which may be required by the Association. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees with the power to vote only in case of a tie vote. The President shall have the power to call special meetings. Special meetings shall be limited to such issues that must be resolved before the next regular meeting.

9.2 – Vice President

The Vice President shall perform the duties of the President during the absence of, or inability of, the President to act. The Vice President shall also assist the President in any way possible with the balance of the Association.

9.3 – Secretary-Treasurer

The Secretary-Treasurer shall perform all the duties which usually pertain to this office or as directed by the Association, including but not limited to:

- Keeping a record of the proceedings of the meetings of the Association
- Receiving and responding to all communications about the business of the Association
- Collection and recording of dues and all monies collected and expended and shall report such receipts and expenditures of monies at each regular meeting
- Deposit all monies received in the name of the Association to a financial institution account approved by the Association

ARTICLE X – ELECTION OF OFFICERS

10.1 – Nominations

During the regular November meeting of even-numbered years, the Executive Board will ask the body for nominations for each executive officer seat. Members must be present to be considered for nomination.

10.2 – Election

The election of officers shall be conducted at the December meeting of even-numbered years. Election shall be by written ballot, which lists members from the November nominations. The nominees may be elected by unanimous consent if all seats are uncontested.

10.3 – Tie-Breaker

In the event of a tie vote, a second ballot shall be taken listing only the members included in the tied vote. This process shall be followed until a majority vote prevails.

10.4 – Installation of Officers

The newly elected officers shall be duly installed at the beginning of the January meeting immediately following the December election.

10.5 – Deferred Nominations or Elections

If unable to hold nominations at the November meeting and/or elections at the December meeting due to lack of quorum, or for any other unforeseen circumstances, nominations and elections are to take place at the next regularly scheduled association meeting.

ARTICLE XI – COMMITTEES

Committees of a special or temporary nature shall be named by the President as the occasion requires.

ARTICLE XII – AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

The bylaws may be amended or altered at any regular meeting by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the qualified voting members present, provided that previous notice of the proposed alterations or amendments has been mailed/mailed to the membership at least thirty (30) days before the meeting. Bylaws shall be reviewed by a special committee of no less than three (3) qualified voting agency members every three (3) years.

ARTICLE XIII – AUTHORITY

The Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association provides leadership and coordination on countywide collaboration, including mutual-aid planning, shared operational guidelines, training initiatives, and regional strategic priorities. The Association may develop countywide standards adopted for use through mutual-aid or other cooperative agreements approved by participating agencies.

Member agencies retain authority over their internal operations, and nothing in these bylaws shall be construed as expanding the Association's authority beyond those agreed-upon cooperative arrangements.

ARTICLE XIV – USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

14.1 – Purpose

The purpose of this Article is to establish clear guidance for the use and management of social media accounts operated on behalf of the Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association. This Article is intended to ensure that Association-managed social media platforms are used in a professional, consistent, and responsible manner that supports the mission and objectives of the Association.

14.2 – Use of Social Media

The Berrien County Fire Chiefs Association may utilize social media platforms as a means of communicating information related to fire service cooperation, public safety education, training opportunities, and other matters consistent with the mission and objectives of the Association. All Association-related social media activities shall be conducted in a manner that is professional, accurate, and appropriate for public release.

14.3 – Authorized Users

Only individuals authorized by the Association President, or by a majority vote of qualified voting members, may post, manage, or monitor content on behalf of the Association.

Authorized individuals shall ensure that all content conforms to the standards of this Article. Content that is unclear, sensitive in nature, or outside the routine scope of Association communications shall be approved prior to posting.

14.4 – Content Standards

Content posted through Association-managed social media platforms shall support the mission of the Association and reflect positively on the fire service. Information that is confidential, preliminary, or sensitive shall not be posted without appropriate approval from the affected agency or the Association President. Content that is abusive, discriminatory, misleading, inflammatory, or otherwise inconsistent with the professionalism of the fire service is prohibited.

Association-managed social media platforms shall not be used for political purposes, including the endorsement or opposition of candidates for public office, or for legislative advocacy, unless such use has been formally approved by a majority vote of qualified voting members.