

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

FILED SENATE  
Apr 1, 2021  
S.B. 454  
PRINCIPAL CLERK

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SENATE BILL DRS35202-MLF-84A

Short Title: Arson Law Revisions.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Britt, Johnson, and Sawyer (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE BURNING OF COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES; TO AMEND THE OFFENSE OF ARSON OR OTHER UNLAWFUL BURNINGS THAT RESULT IN INJURY TO A FIREFIGHTER, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, FIRE INVESTIGATOR, OR EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN; TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE THROUGH THE OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL TO INVESTIGATE FIRES; TO REQUIRE CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD CHECKS OF APPLICANTS TO FIRE DEPARTMENTS; TO REQUIRE APPLICANTS TO DISCLOSE CERTAIN CRIMINAL CHARGES; AND TO PROHIBIT APPLICANTS CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES FROM SERVING AS VOLUNTEER OR PAID MEMBERS OF FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**PART I. BURNING OF COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES**

**SECTION 1.(a)** G.S. 14-60 is repealed.

**SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 14-61 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-61. Burning of certain bridges and buildings.**

~~If~~ Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, if any person shall wantonly and willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned, or aid, counsel or procure the burning of, any public bridge, or private toll bridge, or the bridge of any incorporated company, or any fire-engine house or rescue-squad building, or any house belonging to an incorporated company or unincorporated association and used in the business of such company or association, ~~he~~ the person shall be punished as a Class F felon."

**SECTION 1.(c)** G.S. 14-62 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-62. Burning of certain buildings.**

~~If~~ Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, if any person shall wantonly and willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned, or aid, counsel or procure the burning of, any uninhabited house, or any stable, coach house, outhouse, warehouse, office, shop, mill, barn or granary, or any building, structure or erection used or intended to be used in carrying on any trade or manufacture, or any branch thereof, whether the same or any of them respectively shall then be in the possession of the offender, or in the possession of any other person, ~~he~~ the person shall be punished as a Class F felon."

**SECTION 1.(d)** G.S. 14-62.1 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-62.1. Burning of building or structure in process of construction.**

~~If~~ Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, if any person shall wantonly and willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned,



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1 or aid, counsel or procure the burning of, any building or structure in the process of construction  
2 for use or intended to be used as a dwelling house or in carrying on any trade or manufacture, or  
3 otherwise, whether the same or any of them respectively shall then be in the possession of the  
4 offender, or in the possession of any other person, ~~he~~ the person shall be punished as a Class H  
5 felon."

6 **SECTION 1.(e)** G.S. 14-62.2 reads as rewritten:

7 "**§ 14-62.2. Burning of churches and certain other religious buildings.**

8 ~~If~~ Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater  
9 punishment, if any person shall wantonly and willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned,  
10 or aid, counsel or procure the burning of any church, chapel, or meetinghouse, the person shall  
11 be punished as a Class E felon."

12 **SECTION 1.(f)** G.S. 14-64 reads as rewritten:

13 "**§ 14-64. Burning of ginhouses and tobacco houses.**

14 (a) ~~If~~ Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater  
15 punishment, if any person shall wantonly and willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned,  
16 or aid, counsel or procure the burning of, any ginhouse or tobacco house, or any part thereof, he  
17 the person shall be punished as a Class H felon.

18 (b) The following definitions apply to this section:

19 (1) Ginhouse. – Any building or structure where cotton is ginned.

20 (2) Tobacco house. – Any barn, building, or other structure used for curing and  
21 aging tobacco."

22 **SECTION 1.(g)** Article 15 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes is amended by  
23 adding a new section to read:

24 "**§ 14-62.3. Burning of commercial structure.**

25 (a) Definition. – For purposes of this section, the term "commercial structure" means any  
26 building or structure that is not designed principally for residential purposes.

27 (b) Burning of Occupied Commercial Structure. – Unless the conduct is covered under  
28 some other provision of law providing greater punishment, if any person shall wantonly and  
29 willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned, or aid, counsel or procure the burning of any  
30 commercial structure or its contents, and the structure is occupied at the time of the burning, the  
31 person shall be punished as a Class D felon.

32 (c) Burning of Unoccupied Commercial Structure. – Unless the conduct is covered under  
33 some other provision of law providing greater punishment, if any person shall wantonly and  
34 willfully set fire to or burn or cause to be burned, or aid, counsel or procure the burning of any  
35 commercial structure or its contents, and the structure is unoccupied at the time of the burning,  
36 the person shall be punished as a Class E felon."

37  
38 **PART II. ARSON OR OTHER UNLAWFUL BURNING THAT RESULTS IN INJURY**  
39 **TO A FIREFIGHTER, LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, FIRE INVESTIGATOR, OR**  
40 **EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN**

41 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 14-69.3 reads as rewritten:

42 "**§ 14-69.3. Arson or other unlawful burning that results in serious bodily injury or physical**  
43 **injury to a firefighter, law enforcement officer, fire investigator, or emergency**  
44 **medical technician.**

45 (a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:

46 (1) Emergency medical technician. – The term includes an emergency medical  
47 technician, an emergency medical technician-intermediate, and an emergency  
48 medical technician-paramedic, as those terms are defined in G.S. 131E-155.

49 (2) Fire investigator. – The term includes any person who, individually or as part  
50 of an investigative team, has the responsibility and authority to determine the  
51 origin, cause, or development of a fire or explosion.

1 (b) Offense Involving Serious Injury. – A person is guilty of a Class E felony if the person  
2 commits a felony under Article 15 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes and a firefighter, law  
3 enforcement officer, fire investigator, or emergency medical technician suffers serious ~~bodily~~  
4 injury while discharging or attempting to discharge official duties on the property, or proximate  
5 to the property, that is the subject of the firefighter's, law enforcement officer's, fire investigator's,  
6 or emergency medical technician's discharge or attempt to discharge his or her respective duties.

7 (c) Offense Involving Physical Injury. – A person is guilty of a Class F felony if the  
8 person commits a felony under Article 15 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes and a firefighter,  
9 law enforcement officer, fire investigator, or emergency medical technician suffers physical  
10 injury while discharging or attempting to discharge official duties on the property, or proximate  
11 to the property, that is the subject of the firefighter's, law enforcement officer's, fire investigator's,  
12 or emergency medical technician's discharge or attempt to discharge his or her respective duties."  
13

### 14 PART III. COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE THROUGH OFFICE OF STATE FIRE 15 MARSHAL TO INVESTIGATE FIRES

16 SECTION 3.(a) G.S. 58-79-1 reads as rewritten:

#### 17 "§ 58-79-1. Fires investigated; reports; records.

18 ~~The Director of the State Bureau of Investigation, through the State Bureau of Investigation,~~  
19 The Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Marshal, the State  
20 Bureau of Investigation, and the chief of the fire department, or chief of police where there is no  
21 chief of the fire department, in municipalities and towns, and the county fire marshal and the  
22 sheriff of the county and the chief of the rural fire department where such fire occurs outside of  
23 a municipality, are hereby authorized to investigate the cause, origin, and circumstances of every  
24 fire occurring in such municipalities or counties in which property has been destroyed or  
25 damaged, and shall specially make investigation whether the fire was the result of carelessness  
26 or design. A preliminary investigation shall be made by the chief of fire department or chief of  
27 police, where there is no chief of fire department in municipalities, and by the county fire marshal  
28 and the sheriff of the county or the chief of the rural fire department where such fire occurs  
29 outside of a municipality, and must be begun within three days, exclusive of Sunday, of the  
30 occurrence of the fire, and the ~~Director of the State Bureau of Investigation, through the State~~  
31 ~~Bureau of Investigation,~~ Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of the State Fire  
32 Marshal, shall have the right to supervise and direct the investigation when ~~he~~ the Commissioner  
33 deems it expedient or necessary.

34 The officer making the investigation of fires shall forthwith notify the ~~Director of the State~~  
35 ~~Bureau of Investigation, Commissioner of Insurance,~~ and must within one week of the occurrence  
36 of the fire furnish to the ~~Director of the State Bureau of Investigation~~ Commissioner of Insurance  
37 a written statement of all facts relating to the cause and origin of the fire, the kind, value and  
38 ownership of the property destroyed, and such other information as is called for by the forms  
39 provided by the ~~Director of the State Bureau of Investigation.~~ Commissioner of Insurance.  
40 Departments capable of submitting the required information by the utilization of computers and  
41 related equipment, by means of an approved format of standard punch cards, magnetic tapes or  
42 an approved telecommunications system, may do so in lieu of the submission of the written  
43 statement as provided for in this section. The ~~Director of the State Bureau of Investigation~~  
44 Commissioner of Insurance shall keep ~~in his office~~ a record of all reports submitted pursuant to  
45 this section. These reports shall at all times be open to public inspection."

46 SECTION 3.(b) G.S. 58-79-5 reads as rewritten:

#### 47 "§ 58-79-5. Commissioner of Insurance and Director of the State Bureau of Investigation 48 to make examination; arrests and prosecution.

49 It is the duty of the Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and  
50 the Director of the State Bureau of Investigation to examine, or cause examination to be made,  
51 into the cause, circumstances, and origin of all fires occurring within the State to which ~~his~~ his

1 or her attention has been called in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 58-79-1, or by  
2 interested parties, by which property is accidentally or unlawfully burned, destroyed, or  
3 damaged, whenever in ~~his~~his or her judgment the evidence is sufficient, and to specially examine  
4 and decide whether the fire was the result of carelessness or the act of an incendiary. The  
5 Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and the Director of the  
6 State Bureau of Investigation shall, in person, by deputy or otherwise, fully investigate all  
7 circumstances surrounding such fire, and, when in ~~his~~their opinion such proceedings are  
8 necessary, take or cause to be taken the testimony on oath of all persons supposed to be cognizant  
9 of any facts or to have means of knowledge in relation to the matters as to which an examination  
10 is herein required to be made, and shall cause the same to be reduced in writing. If the  
11 Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and the Director of the  
12 State Bureau of Investigation or any deputy appointed to conduct such investigations, ~~is~~are  
13 of the opinion that there is evidence to charge any person or persons with the crime of arson, or  
14 other willful burning, or fraud in connection with the crime of arson or other willful burning, ~~he~~  
15 the Director may arrest with a warrant or cause such person or persons to be arrested, charged  
16 with such offense, and prosecuted, and shall furnish to the district attorney of the district all such  
17 evidence, together with the names of witnesses and all other information ~~obtained by him,~~  
18 obtained, including a copy of all pertinent and material testimony taken in the case."

19 **SECTION 3.(c)** G.S. 58-79-10 reads as rewritten:

20 "**§ 58-79-10. Powers of Commissioner of Insurance and Director of the State Bureau of**  
21 **Investigation in investigations.**

22 The Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and the Director  
23 of the State Bureau of Investigation, or ~~his~~their deputy appointed to conduct such examination,  
24 ~~has~~have the powers of a trial justice for the purpose of summoning and compelling the attendance  
25 of witnesses to testify in relation to any matter which is by provisions of this Article a subject of  
26 inquiry and investigation, and may administer oaths and affirmations to persons appearing as  
27 witnesses before them. False swearing in any such matter or proceeding is perjury and shall be  
28 punished as such. The Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and  
29 the Director of the State Bureau of Investigation or ~~his~~their deputy ~~has~~have authority at all times  
30 of the day or night, in performance of the duties imposed by the provisions of this Article, to  
31 enter upon and examine any building or premises where any fire has occurred, and other buildings  
32 and premises adjoining or near the same. All investigations held by or under the direction of the  
33 Commissioner of Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and Director of the State  
34 Bureau of Investigation or ~~his~~their deputy may, in their discretion, be private, and persons other  
35 than those required to be present by the provisions of this Article may be excluded from the place  
36 where the investigation is held, and witnesses may be kept apart from each other and not allowed  
37 to communicate with each other until they have been examined."

38 **SECTION 3.(d)** G.S. 58-79-15 reads as rewritten:

39 "**§ 58-79-15. Failure to comply with summons or subpoena.**

40 The failure of a person to comply with a summons or subpoena of the Commissioner of  
41 Insurance, through the Office of State Fire Marshal, and the Director of the State Bureau of  
42 Investigation or ~~his~~their deputy under G.S. 58-79-10 shall be brought before a court of record  
43 and punished as for contempt in the same manner as if he had failed to appear and testify before  
44 said court of record."

45 **SECTION 3.(e)** G.S. 58-79-40 reads as rewritten:

46 "**§ 58-79-40. Insurance company to furnish information.**

47 (a) The chief of any municipal fire or police department, county fire marshal or sheriff,  
48 ~~or~~ special agent of the State Bureau of Investigation ~~Investigation, or the Office of State Fire~~  
49 Marshal may request any insurance company investigating a fire loss of real or personal property  
50 to release any information in its possession relative to that loss. The company shall release the

1 information and cooperate with any official authorized to request such information pursuant to  
2 this section. The information shall include, but is not limited to:

- 3 (1) Any insurance policy relevant to a fire loss under investigation and any  
4 application for such a policy;
- 5 (2) Policy premium payment records;
- 6 (3) History of previous claims made by the insured for fire loss;
- 7 (4) Material relating to the investigation of the loss, including statements of any  
8 person, proof of loss, and any other relevant evidence.

9 (b) If an insurance company (or insurance agency) has reason to suspect that a fire loss  
10 to its insured's real or personal property was caused by incendiary means, the company shall  
11 furnish the State Bureau of ~~Investigation~~ Investigation, and the Office of State Fire Marshal, with  
12 all relevant material acquired during its investigation of the fire loss, cooperate with and take  
13 such action as may be requested of it by any law-enforcement agency, and permit any person  
14 ordered by a court to inspect any of its records pertaining to the policy and the loss.

15 (c) In the absence of fraud or malice, no insurance company (or insurance agency), or  
16 person who furnishes information on its behalf, shall be liable for damages in a civil action or  
17 subject to criminal prosecution for any oral or written statement made or any other action that is  
18 necessary to supply information required pursuant to this section.

19 (d) The officials and departmental and agency personnel receiving any information  
20 furnished pursuant to this section shall hold the information in confidence until such time as its  
21 release is required pursuant to a criminal or civil proceeding.

22 (e) Any official referred to in subsection (a) of this section may be required to testify as  
23 to any information in his possession regarding the fire loss of real or personal property in any  
24 civil action in which any person seeks recovery under a policy against an insurance company for  
25 the fire loss."

26 **SECTION 3.(f)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2021.

## 27 28 **PART IV. FIRE DEPARTMENTS/DISCLOSE CRIMINAL HISTORY AND PROHIBIT** 29 **MEMBERS FROM SERVING IF CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES**

30 **SECTION 4.(a)** G.S. 143B-943 reads as rewritten:

31 **"§ 143B-943. Criminal history record checks of applicants to and current members of fire**  
32 **departments and emergency medical services.**

33 (a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:

- 34 (1) Applicant. – A person who applies for a paid or volunteer position with a fire  
35 department or an emergency medical service.
- 36 (2) Criminal history. – A State or federal history of conviction of a crime, whether  
37 a misdemeanor or felony, that bears upon a covered person's fitness for  
38 holding a paid or volunteer position with a fire department. The crimes  
39 include, but are not limited to, criminal offenses as set forth in any of the  
40 following Articles of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes: Article 5,  
41 Counterfeiting and Issuing Monetary Substitutes; Article 5A, Endangering  
42 ~~Executive and Legislative~~ Executive, Legislative, and Court Officers; Article  
43 6, Homicide; Article 7B, Rape and Other Sex Offenses; Article 8, Assaults;  
44 Article 10, Kidnapping and Abduction; Article 13, Malicious Injury or  
45 Damage by Use of Explosive or Incendiary Device or Material; Article 14,  
46 Burglary and Other Housebreakings; Article 15, Arson and Other Burnings;  
47 Article 16, Larceny; Article 17, Robbery; Article 18, Embezzlement; Article  
48 19, False Pretenses and Cheats; Article 19A, Obtaining Property or Services  
49 by False or Fraudulent Use of Credit Device or Other Means; Article 19B,  
50 Financial Transaction Card Crime Act; Article 20, Frauds; Article 21,  
51 Forgery; Article 22, Damages and Other Offenses to Land and Fixtures;

1 Article 26, Offenses Against Public Morality and Decency; Article 26A, Adult  
2 Establishments; Article 27, Prostitution; Article 28, Perjury; Article 29,  
3 Bribery; Article 31, Misconduct in Public Office; Article 35, Offenses Against  
4 the Public Peace; Article 36A, Riots, Civil Disorders, and Emergencies;  
5 Article 39, Protection of Minors; Article 40, Protection of the Family; Article  
6 59, Public Intoxication; and Article 60, Computer-Related Crime. The crimes  
7 also include possession or sale of drugs in violation of the North Carolina  
8 Controlled Substances Act, Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes,  
9 and alcohol-related offenses such as sale to underage persons in violation of  
10 G.S. 18B-302, or driving while impaired in violation of G.S. 20-138.1 through  
11 G.S. 20-138.5.

12 (3) Current member. – A person who serves in a paid or volunteer position with  
13 a fire department or an emergency medical service.

14 (b) When requested by a designated local Homeland Security director, a local fire chief  
15 of a rated fire department, a county fire marshal, an emergency services director, or if there is no  
16 designated local Homeland Security director, local fire chief of a rated fire department, county  
17 fire marshal, or emergency services director, when requested by a local law enforcement agency,  
18 the North Carolina Department of Public Safety may provide to the requesting director, chief,  
19 marshal, ~~director~~, or agency an applicant's or current member's criminal history from the State  
20 and National Repositories of Criminal Histories. The local Homeland Security director, local fire  
21 chief, marshal, director, or local law enforcement agency shall provide to the North Carolina  
22 Department of Public Safety the fingerprints of the applicant to be checked, any additional  
23 information required by the Department of Public Safety, and a form signed by the applicant to  
24 be checked consenting to the (i) check of the criminal record and ~~to the~~ (ii) use of fingerprints  
25 and other identifying information required by the State or National Repositories. The fingerprints  
26 of the individual shall be forwarded to the State Bureau of Investigation for a search of the State  
27 criminal history record file, and the State Bureau of Investigation shall forward a set of  
28 fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a national criminal history record check.  
29 The local Homeland Security director, local fire chief, county fire marshal, emergency services  
30 director, or local law enforcement agency shall keep all information pursuant to this section  
31 confidential. The Department of Public Safety shall charge a reasonable fee for conducting the  
32 checks of the criminal history records authorized by this section. The requesting local Homeland  
33 Security director, local fire chief, county fire marshal, or local law enforcement agency may  
34 charge an applicant or current member the fee amount charged by the Department of Public  
35 Safety for the criminal history record check of the applicant or current member.

36 (c) All releases of criminal history information to the local Homeland Security director,  
37 local fire chief, county fire marshal, emergency services director, or local law enforcement  
38 agency shall be subject to, and in compliance with, rules governing the dissemination of criminal  
39 history record checks as adopted by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. All of the  
40 information the local Homeland Security director, local fire chief, county fire marshal,  
41 emergency services director, or local law enforcement agency receives through the checking of  
42 the criminal history is privileged information and for the exclusive use of that director, chief,  
43 marshal, or agency.

44 (d) If the applicant's or current member's verified criminal history record check reveals  
45 one or more convictions ~~covered under subdivision (a)(2) of a crime listed in subsection (a)~~  
46 ~~this section, then the conviction shall constitute~~ constitutes just cause for not selecting the  
47 applicant for the position or for dismissing the current member from a current position with the  
48 local fire department or emergency medical services. ~~The~~ Except as provided in subsection (d1)  
49 of this section, the conviction shall does not automatically prohibit volunteering or employment;  
50 however, the following factors shall be considered by the local Homeland Security director, local  
51 fire chief, county fire marshal, emergency services director, or local law enforcement agency in

1 determining whether the ~~position applicant~~ shall be denied or the current member dismissed from  
2 a current position:

- 3 (1) The level and seriousness of the ~~crime;~~crime.
- 4 (2) The date of the ~~crime;~~crime.
- 5 (3) The age of the person at the time of the ~~conviction;~~conviction.
- 6 (4) The circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime, if  
7 ~~known;~~known.
- 8 (5) The nexus between the criminal conduct of the person and the duties of the  
9 ~~person;~~person.
- 10 (6) The prison, jail, probation, parole, rehabilitation, and employment records of  
11 the person since the date the crime was ~~committed;~~ and committed.
- 12 (7) The subsequent commission by the person of a crime listed in subsection (a)  
13 of this section.

14 (d1) An applicant is prohibited from serving in a paid or volunteer position with a fire  
15 department if the applicant's verified criminal history record check reveals a conviction of arson  
16 or another felony conviction involving burning or setting fire under Article 14, Article 22, or any  
17 other Article of Chapter 15 of the General Statutes. A local Homeland Security director, local  
18 fire chief, county fire marshal, or local law enforcement agency, as applicable, shall request, and  
19 an applicant shall disclose, any pending felony charges involving burning or setting fire under  
20 Article 14, Article 22, or any other Article of Chapter 15 of the General Statutes. Upon becoming  
21 aware of pending felony charges, through the required disclosure or by other means, a local  
22 Homeland Security director, local fire chief, county fire marshal, or local law enforcement  
23 agency shall not offer the applicant a paid or volunteer position, except as provided in subsection  
24 (f) of this section.

25 ~~(e) The local fire department or emergency medical services may deny the an applicant~~  
26 ~~or current member the position or dismiss an applicant or a current member who refuses to~~  
27 ~~consent to a criminal history record check or use of fingerprints or other identifying information~~  
28 ~~required by the State or National Repositories of Criminal Histories. This refusal constitutes just~~  
29 ~~cause for the denial of the position or the dismissal from a current position. The emergency~~  
30 ~~medical services may extend a conditional offer of the position pending the results of a criminal~~  
31 ~~history record check required by this section.~~

32 (f) The local fire department shall deny an applicant the position and may dismiss a  
33 current member who refuses to consent to a criminal history record check or use of fingerprints  
34 or other identifying information required by the State or National Repositories of Criminal  
35 Histories. This refusal constitutes just cause for the denial of the position or the dismissal from a  
36 current position. The local fire department ~~or emergency medical services~~ may extend a  
37 conditional offer of the position pending the (i) results of a criminal history record check  
38 ~~authorized~~ required by this section. section or (ii) final disposition of felony charges disclosed as  
39 required by this section or otherwise discovered.

40 (g) For purposes of this section, "local fire chief" shall include the fire chief of any bona  
41 fide fire department certified to the Commissioner of Insurance with at least a Class 9S rating for  
42 insurance grading purposes; "county fire marshal" shall include only fire marshals who are paid  
43 employees of a county; and "emergency services director" shall include only emergency services  
44 directors who are paid employees of a city or county."

45 **SECTION 4.(b)** G.S. 153A-233 reads as rewritten:

46 **"§ 153A-233. Fire-fighting and prevention services.**

47 A county may establish, organize, equip, support, and maintain a fire department; may  
48 prescribe the duties of the fire department; may provide financial assistance to incorporated  
49 volunteer fire departments; may contract for fire-fighting or prevention services with one or more  
50 counties, ~~cities, or cities or other units of local government~~ government, incorporated volunteer  
51 fire departments, or with an agency of the State ~~government, or with one or more incorporated~~

~~volunteer fire departments; government; and may for these purposes appropriate funds not otherwise limited as to use by law. A county shall ensure that any county, city or other unit of local government, or incorporated volunteer fire department with whom the county contracts for fire-fighting or prevention services shall obtain a criminal history record check of any person who applies for a paid or volunteer position providing fire-fighting or prevention services. The criminal history record check shall be conducted and evaluated as provided in G.S. 143B-943.~~ The county may also designate fire districts or parts of existing districts and prescribe the boundaries thereof for insurance grading purposes."

**SECTION 4.(c)** G.S. 153A-234 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 153A-234. Fire marshal.**

(a) A county may appoint a fire marshal and employ persons as his assistants. A county may also impose any duty that might be imposed on a fire marshal on any other officer or employee of the county. The board of commissioners shall set the duties of the fire marshal, which may include but are not limited to:

- (1) Advising the board on improvements in the fire-fighting or fire prevention activities under the county's supervision or control.
- (2) Coordinating fire-fighting and training activities under the county's supervision or control.
- (3) Coordinating fire prevention activities under the county's supervision or control.
- (4) Assisting incorporated volunteer fire departments in developing and improving their fire-fighting or fire prevention capabilities.
- (5) Making fire prevention inspections, including the periodic inspections and reports of school buildings required by Chapter 115 and the inspections of child care facilities required by Chapter 110. A fire marshal shall not make electrical inspections unless he is qualified to do so under G.S. 153A-351.

(b) The fire marshal shall obtain a criminal history record check of any person who applies for a paid or volunteer position with the fire department. The criminal history record check shall be conducted and evaluated as provided in G.S. 143B-943."

**SECTION 4.(d)** G.S. 160A-292 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 160A-292. Duties of fire chief.**

(a) Where not otherwise prescribed, the duties of the fire chief shall be to preserve and care for fire apparatus, have charge of fighting and extinguishing fires and training the fire department, seek out and have corrected all places and conditions dangerous to the safety of the city and its citizens from fire, and make annual reports to the council concerning these duties. If these duties include State Building Code enforcement, they shall follow the provisions as defined in G.S. 143-151.13.

(b) The fire chief shall obtain a criminal history record check of any person who applies for a paid or volunteer position with the fire department. The criminal history record check shall be conducted and evaluated as provided in G.S. 143B-943."

**SECTION 4.(e)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to applications submitted on or after that date.

**PART V. SAVINGS CLAUSE AND EFFECTIVE DATE**

**SECTION 5.(a)** Prosecutions for offenses committed before the effective date of this act are not abated or affected by this act, and the statutes that would be applicable but for this act remain applicable to those prosecutions.

**SECTION 5.(b)** Except as otherwise provided, this act becomes effective December 1, 2021, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.