

**FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
EXPLORING
PROGRAM GUIDELINES**



FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES EXPLORING PROGRAM POLICIES

1 Safety Issues

There are some issues and hazards specific to Fire and Emergency Services Explorer programs that must be considered when organizing a post. These issues are fairly unique compared with other types of Explorer posts, being a direct result of the post's affiliation with the department and the potential for hazards.

Before engaging in any training activity or direct operational activities with the department, Exploring and/or department officials should investigate the legalities of Explorers participating in such activities. Most states have child labor laws that define what minors under the age of 18 may and may not participate in. Even though the individual may not be an actual member or employee of the department, these regulations may still apply. The following is a general list of guidelines that should be used for the formation of a post Explorer safety policy. As with any program, extremes of temperature, humidity, and other atmospheric conditions should be considered during any activity.

One issue that requires particular attention is what the Fire and Emergency Services Explorer will be allowed to do at the emergency scene. Many departments allow Explorers to respond on the apparatus with trained personnel. A solid policy must be established as to what the Explorer may and may not do once he or she arrives on the scene.

All policies must fit with departmental regulations, Learning for Life regulations, and state laws. All of these issues should be resolved in the post bylaws before Fire and Emergency Services Explorer activities begin. If you have any questions about the safety of an activity not listed, contact your local Learning for Life office.

- Explorers may not be substituted for trained personnel.
- Explorers must be equipped with personal protective equipment that is appropriate for the activity being done.
- Explorers may be mobilized only as a post, with required leadership. Explorers are not on call as individuals.
- Explorers who ride on apparatus or other department vehicles must be seated and must wear a seat belt.
- Explorers may not drive department vehicles.
- Explorers may not climb aerial ladders.
- Explorers may not climb ground ladders that exceed 35 feet in length, or not supported against a structure.
- Explorers may not enter or perform ventilation procedures on a burning structure.
- Explorers may not use any tools or gloves on energized electrical equipment.
- Explorers may not operate cutting torches.
- Explorers, 16 years of age or older, may operate hydraulic rescue tools or equipment. (see policy)
- Explorers may not handle life nets.

Exceptions: Using an official training facility, the use of aerial ladders with the appropriate safety equipment, and entering a controlled burn building is approved.

2. Policy Statement on Blood-borne Pathogens

Questions have been raised regarding the position of Learning for Life on OSHA's Regulation for Blood-borne Pathogens (29 CFR Section 1910.1030) as it relates to Exploring adult volunteers, youth members, and participating organizations.

This position statement is for those individuals who may be exposed to blood and body fluids; specifically, members of posts with specialties in medicine, fire rescue, law enforcement, etc.

- I. The OSHA rules apply only to employees in jobs that involve "occupational exposure" to blood-borne pathogens. They do not apply to situations or posts involving volunteers.

- II. However, we recommend the following in instances where youth and/or adults may be exposed to blood or body fluids.
 - a. The participating organization and its leaders should always explain and make clear the possible degree of exposure to blood or body fluids as a result of Exploring activities.
 - b. As a precaution, adult volunteers and youth members should consider getting a hepatitis B vaccination. The cost of the shots will not be borne by Learning for Life, nor is the participating organization required to underwrite the cost.
 - c. However, the participating organization may arrange to have hepatitis B vaccinations given at a reduced rate or free of charge.
 - d. If vaccination is recommended, any adult volunteers and youth members who decline the shots, either at the full cost to them, at a reduced rate, or free, should sign the refusal waiver (which you may [download](#)). A declination file must be maintained for five years.

III. Learning for Life also recommends the following:

Treat all blood as if it were contaminated with blood-borne viruses. Do not use bare hands to stop bleeding; always use a protective barrier. Always wash exposed skin areas with hot water and soap immediately after treating the victim. The following pieces of equipment are to be included in all first aid kits and used when rendering first aid to those in need:

- a. Latex or vinyl gloves, to be used when bleeding is being stopped or wounds are being dressed.
- b. A mouth-barrier device, for rendering rescue breathing or CPR.
- c. Plastic goggles or other eye protection, to prevent a victim's blood from getting into rescuers' eyes in the event of serious arterial bleeding.
- d. Antiseptic, for use in sterilizing or cleaning exposed skin areas, particularly if no soap or water is available.

3 [Safety First Guidelines](#)