

Many female firefighters also pointed out that their departments or unions often chose to ignore their reproductive-health concerns and pregnancy-leave options because there were so few females overall. Also, their gender was a discriminatory factor in making departmental decisions. - [Reproductive Health Concerns Among Female Firefighters. Kehler, Jahnke](#)

1. Change "if available" modified duty to "guaranteed modified duty" for the duration of the pregnancy and for as long as needed postpartum up to one year

- **Study Excerpt:** Reproductive Health Concerns Among Female Firefighters. Kehler, Jahnke.

It was also reported that when firefighters declared pregnancy and could no longer work active duty, they were unfairly treated. Some departments, due to budget restrictions and department size, forced pregnant firefighters to use sick time, vacation time, or take unpaid leave during the rest of their pregnancies.

- **Comparable:** [Alameda Fire](#), II. Options, 3. An employee who opts to continue to provide emergency services and fire suppression duties is entitled to move to a temporary modified duty assignment at any time during the pregnancy with the approval of the Department.

2. Accrue 24 hours/month sick leave versus our current 12 hours/month. Family planning shouldn't be determined by how much sick and vacation leave you have accrued. The state and federal leave options are not sufficient to accommodate pregnant firefighters who may need bed rest and/or new parents requiring recovery and bonding time.

- **Study Excerpt:** Reproductive Health Concerns Among Female Firefighters. Kehler, Jahnke

Many firefighters reported delaying becoming pregnant during their careers. Reasons for delaying pregnancy were trying to save up or bank sick time so that they could accrue time off in the pregnancy or postpartum period, to get past their probationary period, or because they were trying to get promoted. These planned delays in pregnancy were reported to cause fertility issues in some cases, especially for those firefighters who waited until their 30s to try and conceive. This situation was said to have caused additional stress, uncovered fertility-treatment bills, and questioning by females of whether a career in the fire service was worth it.

- **Comparable:** [Redmond Fire Department](#)

- **Attachment:** Redmond Fire (Article 22 Sick Leave Accrual Rate)

3. Fertility Benefits. With an increasing amount of research regarding firefighter reproductive health becoming available, it is clear that the profession can have harmful impacts to a firefighter's fertility. At this time there is a lack of education and a lack of assistance/support in circumstances where a firefighter cannot conceive. It is our recommendation that the following be offered:

- A. Initial physical assessment of reproductive health for new firefighters and a one time assessment for active firefighters
- B. Optional annual physical assessment of reproductive health throughout the reproductive years of a firefighter's career
- C. Infertility treatment limited to the diagnosis and treatment of underlying medical conditions
- D. Artificial insemination and ovulation induction – 6 attempts in the lifetime of the employee
- E. Advanced reproductive technology to include:
 - 1. Mature oocyte or semen cryopreservation – 4 rounds in the lifetime of the employee
 - 2. In vitro Fertilization (IVF) – 3 rounds in the lifetime of the employee
 - 3. Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) – 3 rounds in the lifetime of the employee
- F. Medication coverage with a copay of \$75

- **Study Excerpt:** Reproductive Health Concerns Among Female Firefighters. Kehler, Jahnke

*Providing information and education to health-care providers about the essential job tasks of fire fighting could help close this knowledge gap (FEMA, 1996). Although our research has focused on the female firefighter, much of this evidence is not limited to females. For example, as noted previously in the study, **toxic exposures may also increase the risk of birth defects among children of male firefighters** (Olshan et al., 1990).*

4. Paid Paternity Leave.

- **Study Excerpt:**

Evidence suggests that showing employees that their health and safety and the health of their families are valued improves employee morale and retention (NIOSH, 2015). Pregnancy among female firefighters tends to be treated as a sickness and not a condition, and many female firefighters are forced to save sick time and vacation time to use once

*they become pregnant due to a lack of or poor policy provisions. This situation has obvious negative retention and recruitment implications, since the ability to utilize sick time for its actual purpose is impacted. Similarly, taking vacation time to have a child loses the designation and purpose of this time off from work. Study participants' statements clearly suggest that **making female firefighters use their sick times and/or vacation times as "pregnancy policies" negatively impacts firefighter recruitment and retention**; it makes more traditional jobs with clear maternity- and pregnancy-leave policies more appealing than working for the fire service. Female-firefighter retention may be improved if better policies regarding pregnancy and maternity leave are implemented. In addition, to potentially increased retention, departments may also benefit financially. Research suggests that implementing successful health systems (such as a pregnancy policy) could reduce injury and illness costs and have a high return on investment (NIOSH, 2015).*

- **Comparable:** Seattle Fire Department - All employees experiencing a qualifying *parental* event are eligible to take 12 weeks of paid leave, triggered by the event.
- Reference: [Paid Parental Leave City of Seattle](#)

5. Donation Request for The Beltane Guild

- To date, The Beltane Guild has provided (9) grants to firefighters in need of fertility treatment. Each grant is \$500. While this is a small amount relative to the astronomical costs of fertility treatment (roughly \$30,000), we are able to show support to our Brothers and Sisters during a very difficult and stressful time.
- [The Beltane Guild](#) is also providing a website to host reference materials that assists fire departments across the country in writing or revising their Family Planning Policies.
- Recently, The Beltane Guild, in coordination with over twenty firefighters and three research doctors, has tackled the task of writing a "Gold Standard Family Planning Policy." We expect to have a finalized Family Planning Policy soon, as well as a Resource Guide that will have information regarding:
 - PFML
 - FMLA
 - Fitness During and After Pregnancy
 - Firefighter Exposure Risks for Firefighters Relative to Reproductive Health