

Revised Resolution No. 17

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT: Health & Safety

**Re: Bill of Rights for Firefighters Participating in
Research as Human Subjects**

1 WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Health and
2 Human Services codified regulations to protect
3 human research subjects in the Code of Federal
4 Regulations, 45 CFR 46; and

5 WHEREAS, the Belmont Report, produced by
6 The National Commission for the Protection of
7 Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral
8 Research in 1979, established the basic ethical
9 principles and guidelines for the protection of human
10 subjects of research; and

11 WHEREAS, these principles are founded on
12 respect for persons, beneficence, and justice; and

13 WHEREAS, “respect for persons demands that
14 subjects enter into the research voluntarily and with
15 adequate information”; and

16 WHEREAS, showing lack of respect for persons
17 includes “withholding information necessary to make
18 a considered judgement, when there are no
19 compelling reasons to do so”; and

20 WHEREAS, respect for persons is clearly
21 communicated by regularly scheduled updates on
22 research progress and through timely delivery of
23 research results and which is certainly accomplished
24 when “...there is an adequate plan for debriefing
25 subjects, when appropriate, and for dissemination of

26 research results to them,”; and

27 WHEREAS, beneficence is an obligation for
28 scientists to make efforts to secure the well being of
29 research subjects by maximizing possible benefits;
30 and

31 WHEREAS, “research also makes it possible to
32 avoid the harm that may result from the application
33 of previously accepted routine practices that on
34 closer investigation turn out to be dangerous”; and

35 WHEREAS, in research, justice is considered in
36 the sense of “fairness in distribution” or “what is
37 deserved”; and

38 WHEREAS, “an injustice occurs when some
39 benefit to which a person is entitled is denied without
40 good reason or when some burden is imposed
41 unduly”; and

42 WHEREAS, the National Academies of Sciences,
43 Engineering, and Medicine developed a report on
44 Returning Individual Research Results to
45 Participants: Guidance for a New Research
46 Paradigm; and

47 WHEREAS, this report describes the concept of
48 “helicopter research”, where scientists “drop into
49 communities or people’s lives, engage with them in
50 often very personal ways, and then take off, never to
51 be heard from again”; and

52 WHEREAS, scientists engaging in “helicopter
53 research” publish research papers and present at
54 conferences for their own professional benefit, while
55 “leaving a sense of frustration and loss” in these
56 communities when they “take but do not share”; and

57 WHEREAS, scientists have often engaged in
58 “helicopter research” with firefighters who are
59 unaware of the fundamental principles described
60 above; and

61 WHEREAS, the National Institutes of Health has
62 emphasized the importance of Community Based
63 Participatory Research (CBPR) in human subjects
64 research to prevent disrespect for persons, lack of
65 beneficence, and injustices; and

66 WHEREAS, CBPR is a collaborative approach to
67 research where scientists and firefighters collaborate
68 as equal partners on all aspects of a research project
69 including but not limited to: developing research
70 aims, study design/execution, design of preventative
71 interventions, and dissemination of research findings
72 in a comprehensive format within an agreed upon
73 timeframe; therefore be it

74 RESOLVED, That in order to protect their
75 members participating in human subjects research, an
76 IAFF Local shall not endorse participation by their
77 members in a human subjects research study unless
78 the research is conducted utilizing a CBPR approach;
79 and be it further

80 RESOLVED, That the CBPR approach shall
81 include at least one member of the IAFF Local(s)
82 whose members are participants in an oversight
83 position with sufficient access and authority to
84 ensure protection of firefighter research subjects, and
85 if no member(s) of the participating IAFF local(s) are
86 available or willing to fill this position, a president of
87 a participating IAFF local may request that a District

88 Vice President appoint a District Representative to
89 fulfill the role; and be it further
90 RESOLVED, That the IAFF endorses the creation
91 and distribution of a “Bill of Rights for IAFF
92 Members Participating in Research as Human
93 Subjects” as stated below in order to protect
94 firefighters participating in human subjects research;
95 and be it further
96 RESOLVED, That this Bill of Rights can be
97 amended or expanded to increase protections for
98 firefighters participating in human subjects research;
99 and be it further
100 RESOLVED, That scientists must agree in
101 writing to abide by this Bill of Rights before an IAFF
102 Local endorses the participation of its members in
103 any research study; and be it further
104 RESOLVED, That IAFF Locals shall refuse to
105 participate in or endorse research conducted by
106 scientists who do not abide by this Bill of Rights; and
107 be it further
108 RESOLVED, That IAFF Locals shall report in
109 writing to the General President and/or his
110 designee(s), any scientist who fails to adhere to the
111 principles of this Bill of Rights; and be it further
112 RESOLVED, That the fundamental principles of
113 ethical human subjects research described above are
114 long established, and hence IAFF members can
115 report scientists retrospectively, for incidents that
116 occurred before the adoption of this resolution; and
117 be it further
118 RESOLVED, That such scientists, at a minimum,

119 will be sent Letters of Concern by the IAFF,
120 specifically identifying past departures from these
121 well-established scientific practices, along with a
122 copy of this Resolution demanding compliance with
123 its terms in the future, to protect IAFF members; and
124 be it further

125 RESOLVED, That the “Bill of Rights for
126 IAFF Members Participating in Research as Human
127 Subjects” is as follows:

128 (a) This Bill of Rights was created in order to
129 protect IAFF members who choose to participate
130 in human subjects research by making them aware
131 of fundamental principles that must be followed
132 in research as outlined in the code of Federal
133 Regulations 45 CFR 46, the Belmont Report, the
134 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering,
135 and Medicine report on Returning Individual
136 Research Results to Participants: Guidance for a
137 New Research Paradigm, and the principles of
138 Community Based Participatory Research
139 (CBPR).

140 (b) These fundamental principles are as follows:

141 (c) Respect for Persons – Respect for persons
142 demands that firefighters enter into research
143 voluntarily and with adequate information about
144 who is conducting the research, where the
145 research is being conducted, and the research
146 aims

147 (d) Where scientists are aware that firefighters
148 have not been provided with adequate information
149 or have been misled, respect for persons demands

150 that scientists take action to adequately inform
151 firefighters.

152 (e) Beneficence – Scientists are obligated to make
153 efforts to secure and advance the well being of
154 firefighters at large by maximizing the possible
155 benefits of research.

156 (f) Maximizing the possible benefits of research
157 includes reporting back research findings to
158 firefighters in a comprehensible format within a
159 timeframe agreed upon by both firefighters and
160 scientists before collection of biological or
161 environmental samples.

162 (g) At the time of study enrollment, scientists
163 shall provide firefighters with a written and verbal
164 statement that includes:

- 165 i. Whether or not they currently have funds to
166 analyze the biological or environmental samples
167 they intend to collect.
- 168 ii. A plan with a timeline to report back
169 aggregate and individual (where possible)
170 research results to firefighters.
- 171 iii. A plan to develop preventative interventions
172 based on research results to better firefighter
173 health and safety.
- 174 iv. How to file a complaint with the Institutional
175 Review Board (IRB) governing the study, and
176 how to file a complaint with the agency funding
177 the study (e.g. NIEHS, NCI, FEMA, NSF, etc.).

178 (h) Justice – In research, justice is considered in
179 the sense of “fairness in distribution” or “what is
180 deserved” and an injustice occurs when some

181 benefit to which a person is entitled is denied
182 without good reason or when some burden is
183 imposed unduly.

184 (i) Scientists shall not publicize or publicly
185 present research findings in any official format
186 before reporting those research findings back to
187 firefighters, so as to ensure firefighters always
188 hear interpretable results first from scientists
189 and without any delay.

190 (j) Community Based Participatory Research
191 (CBPR) – CBPR is a collaborative approach to
192 research where scientists and firefighters
193 collaborate as equal partners on all aspects of a
194 research project including but not limited to:
195 developing research aims, study design/execution,
196 design of preventative interventions, and
197 dissemination of research findings in a
198 comprehensible format within an agreed upon
199 timeframe.

200 (k) “Helicopter Research” – The concept of
201 helicopter research is one where scientists drop
202 into the daily lives and operations of firefighters,
203 engage with them in often very personal ways
204 such as collecting blood and urine samples, and
205 then take off, never to be heard from again,
206 violating the principles of respect for persons,
207 beneficence, and justice.

208 (l) Scientists engaging in “helicopter research”
209 publish research papers and present at conferences
210 for their own professional benefit, while leaving a
211 sense of frustration and loss among firefighters

212 when such scientists take what they need, but do
213 not share research findings.
214 (m) In order to ensure respect for persons,
215 beneficence, and justice, and to prevent
216 “helicopter research”, IAFF locals
217 should refuse to participate in or endorse research
218 that does not utilize a CBPR approach.
219 (n) Helicopter research in any format is
220 unacceptable, and should be reported to the
221 General President of the IAFF and/or his
222 designee(s) in writing; and be it further
223 RESOLVED, That the GP will charge staff to
224 immediately begin the process of working through a
225 similar Bill of Rights for Canadian locals, given the
226 cross-border differences. That Bill of Rights will
227 come up at the 2026 convention for consideration,
228 along with any revisions to the US version, if needed.

Submitted by: Metro-Dade Firefighters, IAFF Local 1403
Los Angeles County Fire Fighters Local 1014

Cost Estimate: **None**

Annual or Perpetual Designation: **N/A**

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Adopt as Revised
CONVENTION ACTION: Adopted as Revised and
Amended