

(S. B. 161)

(No. 265-2018)

(Approved December 15, 2018)

AN ACT

To add a new subsection (u) and renumber current subsection (u) as subsection (v) in Section 3.04 of Act No. 20-2017, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety Act,” in order to empower the Puerto Rico Commissioner of the Firefighters Corps to manage the vehicle fleet of the Bureau and provide that every fire engine shall be outfitted with the necessary rescue equipment, including extrication equipment, subject to fund availability; and for other related purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

The Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps was created to provide citizens with adequate security and protection against fires. Through Act No. 20-2017, as amended, which creates the Department of Public Safety and incorporates the relevant agencies into a single government body, the reciprocal duties of the officials of the Bureau of the Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps and the owners, administrators, and occupants of buildings, structures and lots, among other things, are more clearly established.

Since the creation of the former Firefighters Corps, and more recently the Bureau of the Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps by virtue of Act No. 20, *supra*, its members have been known not only for coming to the aid of people who are victims of a fire, but also for helping people involved in serious accidents where there is a risk of fire, or people trapped in vehicles. In order to rescue trapped people, the necessary extrication equipment must be available in order to handle these emergencies.

Unfortunately, in recent months, there have been accidents where the lack of extrication equipment in the fire engines has caused serious injuries to the victims. In many instances, the members of the Bureau of the Firefighters Corps must wait for other agencies to obtain the extrication equipment necessary to perform the rescue, which has caused complications that have resulted in the death of the accident victim.

Act No. 20-2017, *supra*, failed to incorporate Section 25 of Act No. 43 of June 21, 1988, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps Act,” thus eliminating the authority of the Bureau of the Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps to manage its fleet. The aforementioned Section established the authority of the Puerto Rico Fire Chief to manage the agency’s vehicle fleet. Depriving the Bureau from such authority has resulted in unnecessary delays in the process of acquiring, repairing and maintaining vehicles, as well as in an increase in related costs.

In view the foregoing, this Legislative Assembly deems it necessary to outfit every fire engine with the equipment necessary to perform rescues, including extrication equipment, subject to fund availability. Furthermore, this Legislative Assembly deems it necessary to reinstate the Bureau of the Puerto Rico Firefighters Corps authority to manage its fleet.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- A new subsection (u) is hereby added to Section 3.04 of Act No. 20-2017, as amended, to read as follows:

“Section 3.04.- Commissioner of the Firefighter Corps; Duties and Powers.

The duties and powers of the Commissioner of the Firefighters Corps shall include the following:

(a) ...

(u) The Puerto Rico Commissioner of the Firefighters Corps is hereby empowered to manage the vehicle fleet of the Bureau. Upon the Secretary of Public

Safety's authorization, the Commissioner shall be responsible for acquiring and overseeing the proper maintenance and repair of the Bureau's vehicle fleet. Moreover, the Commissioner shall organize auto repair shops or contract with private repair shops for the maintenance and repair vehicles in service and those henceforth acquired. The Commissioner of the Firefighters Corps may adopt the regulations established by the General Services Administration of the Government of Puerto Rico for such purposes and shall abide by the fiscal rules of the Department of the Treasury. Fire engines shall be outfitted with rescue equipment and extrication equipment, subject to fund availability, state, federal, special appropriations or other funds.

Section 2.- Current subsection (u) of Section 3.04 of Act No. 20-2017, as amended, is hereby renumbered as subsection (v).

Section 3.- Effectiveness

This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following **Act No. 265-2018 (S. B. 161)** of the **4th Regular Session** of the **18th Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico**:

AN ACT add a new subsection (u) and renumber current subsection (u) as subsection (v) in Section 3.04 of Act No. 20-2017, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Department of Public Safety Act,” in order to empower the Puerto Rico Commissioner of the Firefighters Corps to manage the vehicle fleet of the Bureau and provide that every fire engine shall be outfitted with the necessary rescue equipment, including extrication equipment, subject to fund availability; and for other related purposes.

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 18th day of April, 2022.

Mónica Freire-Florit, Esq.
Director