

November 30, 2000
Re: IO-00-179

You inquired whether an organization known as the 100 Club may have the department's permission to use the fire department logo on its letterhead. The organization, a private non-profit corporation, was created to support the fire department through fund raising activities. I suggest that you also contact the Office of Law for an opinion on whether a private entity may use an official county logo.

I am enclosing for your information, advisory opinion 98-92, which addresses the prohibition endorsements of private entities by county agencies. This type of endorsement is generally prohibited by §3-104(a) of the Public Ethics Law. The use of the fire department logo on the letterhead of the private entity would certainly give the impression that the fire department endorses the organization. People receiving solicitations from this organization might reasonably assume that the fire department is requesting the funds or is involved in the solicitation in some way.

Since neither the county nor the fire department has any authority over the operations of the 100 Club, and since this private organization may conduct its fund raising activities without the usual conditions imposed by the ethics law, there is a possibility that the use of the fire department logo on the organization's stationery would create an appearance of a conflict of interest. Since it is the purpose of the ethics law to avoid even the appearance of impropriety in the conduct of the county's business, I would advise that you not give the 100 Club your permission to use the fire department logo.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director