

## **What Does It Mean to Be Boarded?**

Many of our members facing retirement or dealing with long term medical issues ask us how the evaluation process occurs. There are a number of Boards which can appear to be a bewildering maze for the individual facing this process. In this column we would like to clarify some of the terms.

The BHS Physician Board (previously referred to as the 3-man/physician Board) consists of FDNY Medical Officers who concur on a members' fitness for duty or duty determination. The BHS Full Board is also considered a BHS Board but is reserved for complex medical issues. A member is recommended for a BHS Physician Board evaluation for any of the following:

- a.) A member is on Light Duty or Medical Leave greater than 60 days.
- b.) A member has had extensive surgery.
- c.) A member is contemplating or has submitted a disability retirement application.
- d.) A member is returning from a leave (ie. Personal leave, military leave, or reinstatement) at least 1 year in duration.
- e.) At the discretion of the medical officer, if additional input is desired for complicated cases or decisions.
- f.) Whenever a member has an illness/injury that is considered permanently disabling by our Medical Officers.

An order for a BHS Physician Board appearance is initiated by an FDNY Medical Officer. Once a board is ordered, notification of an appearance date is made by mail through the BHS Medical Board Coordinator. The normal duration between the date the Medical Officer orders a board and the actual appearance date is 4 to 8 weeks. After the member is seen at the board, the minutes of the report are transcribed with a final report completed 3 to 5 weeks after the board date.

The member is responsible for the submission of all pertinent information prior to their appearance at the BHS Physician Board; this includes hospital records, surgery records, outside consultant test results and reports. If the Board deems the injury/illness to be temporary, the member will be re-evaluated. The Board will summarize the medical plan for follow up evaluation/treatment and a date for re-evaluation by the Board will be issued. The member is responsible for providing requested medical reports.

If the BHS Physician Board deems a member to be permanently disabled then the designated given is Recommended Limited Service, or RecLSS. The disability case is now automatically OPENED and the member may submit a Disability Retirement Application to the retirement desk. If the member DOES NOT submit a disability retirement application, the Bureau of Personnel will submit a Fire Commissioners' Application for Disability on their behalf.

The Pension Board, better known as the Article 1B Pension Board is comprised of three non Departmental physicians who evaluate the FIRE disability cases and make a recommendation regarding whether a member is disabled due to work (Accidental), non line of duty (Ordinary) or not disabled (Denial). The board may also send the member out to be evaluated by another independent consultant or for further testing before making a final decision. This board meets weekly.

Once the Article 1B Pension Board makes a determination, the record is sent to the Board of Trustees for finalization. The Board of Trustees meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from the Mayor's Office, the City Comptroller, Fire Commissioner, the UFOA, the UFA and MEBA. The disability pension determination is finalized there, or may be referred back to the Article 1B Pension Board for additional clarification or if additional information is needed for re-evaluation. A disabled member is then entitled to apply for a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Members should apply via the EEO office.