

Operating Guideline # 1516

Attendance

June 1, 2022



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to describe the minimum attendance expectations of the department and to set out provisions for explained absence and attendance support measures for those persons employed/engaged as volunteer or part-time/paid-on-call firefighters.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

As an employee of the Township of Muskoka Lakes, every firefighter (a.k.a. - “Part-time” or “Paid-on-call” firefighter) is expected to report for duty as he or she is available. This includes maintaining satisfactory attendance at both training and emergency events. Those who maintain adequate attendance levels help to support a vibrant and effective department. In contrast, those who do not attend emergency activities and training on a regular basis fail in their obligations to the community and their fellow firefighters.

GUIDELINE:

1. “Acceptable” attendance levels for firefighters in terms of training, emergency incidents, and “other” departmental activities is generally a vague and elusive notion for most. “Acceptable” is determined on an individual basis and more appropriately might be viewed as “reasonable” given individual employment, familial and other commitments. “Reasonable” infers “fair” to both parties (employer and employee) however, and the Fire Chief has the sole responsibility and authority to be the arbiter of any disputes or disagreements in this regard.
2. Attendance monitoring is the responsibility of the District Chief(s) assigned to each station. Monthly audits will address both training and emergency response attendance, and where it becomes evident after six (6) consecutive months of poor attendance levels, the District Chief shall attempt to communicate with individuals who have shown concerning attendance levels. Attendance guidelines are set for a target of 25% of emergency incidents attended on a 6 month rolling average and 50% of scheduled training attended on a 6 month rolling average.
3. Attendance at regularly scheduled training sessions is particularly critical as all staff are expected to maintain and demonstrate adequate skill levels in all aspects of their job function. Staff members who are unable to attend training sessions at their assigned stations have the option of attending the other sessions offered the previous or following week, though attendance at their assigned station is routinely expected. Attendance at alternate training sessions should be communicated to the District Chief in advance of the scheduled training session where possible.

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4. Attendance for emergency incidents is necessary for the department to continue to operate efficiently. Emergencies occur 24 hours a day and any member who finds themselves unavailable to attend incidents for a prolonged period of time should evaluate their commitment to the department. Communication of issues that interfere with one's ability to attend incidents should be made directly to the respective District Chief.
5. Vacations and other routine absences are to be communicated in advance of the known absence to assist in response planning and attendance monitoring. These are easily communicated in the application "Who's Responding" by marking unavailable.
6. Members are encouraged to utilize the "Who's Responding" program and "app" as a means to regularly indicate their day-to-day availability. This is critical on weekends and during the summer months so that incident commanders can make timely and informed decisions about the need to upgrade responses or initiate mutual aid based on incident needs and circumstances.
7. Individual staff members may request a "Leave of Absence" (LOA) for "medical" or "personal" reasons where they are unavailable for extended periods of time (i.e. - greater than two months). All requests for a LOA shall be in writing and each is subject to approval by the Fire Chief. In addition, the Fire Chief may authorize an "administrative" LOA for any individual in circumstances that he or she deems appropriate.
8. A LOA may not exceed six (6) consecutive months in length, and no more than one (1) LOA shall be granted to any individual in any five (5) year period.
9. An LOA for "maternity" or "paternity" purposes are subject to the applicable legislation that may be in effect from time-to-time and are not subject to the restrictions as noted in sentence 7 or 8.
10. A member who is absent without permission or without notice (as noted in Sentence 5) for a period of 30 days or more, and who has made no attempt to contact their respective District Chief, shall be considered as having abandoned employment and will be subject to discipline including but not limited to "demotion", "suspension" and possible "termination".

RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of all MLFD members to comply with the provisions of this OG.

DEFINITIONS:

"Acceptable" means acceptable to the Fire Chief

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“Leave of Absence” means an approved period of permitted absence from departmental activities including training and emergency response.

“Satisfactory” means acceptable to the Fire Chief

REFERENCES:

- MLFD OG 218 - Operational Stress Injury, Chaplaincy Programs
- MLFD OG 230 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- MLFD OG 231 - Work Place Injury Illness Reporting