

Operating Guideline # 231

Workplace Hazard, Exposure, Incident and Illness Reporting

June 3, 2022



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to outline the various reporting requirements attached to workplace hazard reporting, exposure reporting, injury incident reporting, and illness reporting.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

The need to promptly and accurately report workplace hazards, exposures, incidents and illnesses has its basis in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, particularly in Sections 51 and 52. Township of Muskoka Lakes Policy also reinforces the legislation by more fully describing the process to report these issues, this Operating Guideline helps explain the unique operational environment within the fire service.

GUIDELINE:

1. The Township of Muskoka Lakes has two forms and two health and safety policies relating to the issue of “reporting”. All of these are applicable to fire department staff members as well. All fire department staff should be familiar with these, and anyone appointed as a “Supervisor” must adhere to the provisions of the following:

- HS 1008 Incident Reporting and Investigation
- HS 015 Hazard Reporting

NOTE: For the purposes of this OG, the term injury has broad implications for the fire service. More specifically, it includes issues relative to mental illness such as Operational Stress and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

2. The completion of all requisite forms for WSIB and Township of Muskoka Lakes reporting provisions are the responsibility of the Supervisor (Captain, Lieutenant) supervising the individual concerned at the time of the incident. Where an illness or injury is reported “after the fact”, the Fire Chief or his designate shall complete the necessary forms.

NOTE: Human Resources staff members are available to assist/consult for any of the duties set out by Township of Muskoka Lakes Policies.

3. Fire department staff members are encouraged to report all exposures via the departmental “Exposure Report” as soon as practical following the exposure, but in every case, within 60 days of the event occurring. Examples include:

- Exposure to heat and products of combustion at structure fire/car fire/grass fire etc.
- Exposure to blood and bodily fluids at motor vehicle collision.
- Exposure to carbon monoxide while investigating a CO alarm activation.
- Exposure to traumatic event, suicide by hanging of a young adult.
- Exposure to multiple casualties at bus crash.

NOTE: Where an exposure report is submitted following a potentially emotionally charged event or one which may give rise to a heightened emotional response by one or more firefighters, the supervisors shall conduct wellness checks in accordance with the provisions of OG 230 (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and consider the need for post-incident

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intervention as outlined in OG 218 (Operational Stress Injuries; Chaplaincy Program/CISM Program; Employee and Family Assistance Program).

4. Exposure reports are to be forwarded to administration for recording and are to be reviewed by the JHSC (with personal identifiers removed) at their meeting following the exposure incident.
5. A member of the department who becomes ill or is injured outside of the fire department work environment to the extent that they are/will be absent and unable to attend any fire department function (training, response to emergency incidents) for greater than forty-eight (48) hours - (2) consecutive days - shall immediately report this to their District Chief or designate. The District Chief in turn is responsible to notify the Fire Chief or his designate.
6. Any member on a medical leave can not access the fire department facility, must suspend all response and training immediately. The employee must make every effort to get well and only concentrate on recovery. There should be no involvement or obligation for the employee to return to work, worksites, train, or do anything that distracts from recovery.
7. All employees returning from a medical leave must complete and file a return to work form that requires clearance from a medical practitioner.
8. During the time that the employee is on a leave, the employee file in Fire Pro will have 30 day check ins to confirm that the employee status has not changed. Using the "Time Off" function to monitor for medical leaves. The employee is responsible to update the fire department administration every 30 days to extend the leave.
9. Failure to update the fire department administration every 30 days will result in the employee status returning to a condition whereby the attendance policy may be contemplated for unapproved leave, resulting in possible discipline.

RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of all members to comply with the provisions of this OG and particularly that Company Officers (supervisors) and firefighters (workers) ensure that they adhere to their duties in accordance with the provisions of this document and the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

DEFINITIONS:

"Critical Injury" means an injury of a serious nature that places life in jeopardy; produces unconsciousness; results in a substantial loss of blood; involves the fracture of a leg or arm (but not a finger or toe); involves the amputation of a leg, arm, hand, foot (but not a finger or a toe); consists of burns to a major portion of the body; and/or causes the loss of sight in an eye.

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“Incident” means an undesired event which results in personal injury/illness, loss of production or service, or damage to equipment or property.

“Ill” or “Illness” means any medical condition (includes physical or cognitive illnesses) that could interfere with a firefighters ability to safely complete their duties.

“Injury” means any injury (includes physical or cognitive injury) however caused, that has the potential to interfere with a firefighter’s ability to safely complete their duties. Includes a condition that results from an exposure to a physical, chemical or biological agent, or any event which interferes with an individual’s normal physiological and psychological mechanisms to the extent that their health is impaired.

REFERENCES:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (RSO 1990, c. 0.1)
- Township of Muskoka Lakes health and safety policies
- MLFD OG 218 – Operational Stress Injuries; Chaplaincy Program/CISM Program; Employee and Family Assistance Program
- MLFD OG 230 – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- MLFD PTSD Prevention Plan



MUSKOKA LAKES FIRE DEPARTMENT

Return to Employment Medical Screening

Medical Practitioner/Doctor: _____

Address/Telephone: _____

Firefighter Name: _____

Address: _____

The aforementioned is a current firefighter on medical leave with the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department. It is the intent of the following information to assist the Physician in determining the candidate's physical ability to conduct the activities associated with the position of a firefighter. In order for the firefighter to return to active full duty this form must be completed and returned to the Fire Chief

Firefighters Duties – General

Firefighters in Muskoka Lakes are part-time employees (frequently referred to as “volunteers”) of the Township of Muskoka Lakes. Firefighters, by the nature of their employment, are exposed to a wide variety of physical, emotional and cognitive demands. Day-to-day activities vary, but include station maintenance duties (such as conducting vehicle checks, equipment checks etc.), training activities which mimic emergency responses of all types (including structural firefighting, wildland firefighting, vehicle rescue, water and ice rescue etc.) and of course the response to actual emergency situations such as vehicle accidents, structure fires, hazardous chemical spills and medical emergencies. Firefighters are often required to enter oxygen deficient and/or toxic environments. In so doing, protective clothing and equipment must be worn, including self-contained breathing apparatus, helmets, boots, gloves, and special fire resistant turn-out clothing.

The total mass of the protective equipment is approximately 25 kg and is often worn while performing strenuous work and for periods of up to an hour or more with little opportunity to remove it and rest.

The atmosphere inside a burning building contains products of combustion, flames and heat; in addition, during fire extinguishment with water spray, steam is created, resulting in almost 100% humidity and elevated ambient temperatures.

With these conditions, compounded by the insulating properties of the protective clothing, natural body cooling efforts virtually cease to function, resulting in elevated body-core temperatures.

Many firefighters routinely exhibit early signs of heat exhaustion during strenuous fire attack procedures.

Firefighters are required to perform many tasks requiring a great degree of physical effort including:

- search for, and rescue victims, carrying or dragging them to safety;
- maneuvering fire hose which is heavy and hard to handle due to the nozzle reaction forces during water discharge (similar to dragging and holding 50 – 100 kg or more);
- carry, raise and climb ladders;

- climb flights of stairs to reach upper floors in high-rise buildings, carrying firefighting equipment up to 50 kg or more;
- lift, carry and operate portable pumps, electrical generators and power tools, etc. some of which the mass is from 20 kg to 50 kg or more;
- repetitive bending, lifting, swinging, pulling and pushing from various positions, including such as on a sloped roof, from a ladder, or in a crawling/crouching position; and
- selected firefighters are required to drive and operate fire apparatus such as cars, vans, rescue units, pumpers, tankers and aerial devices. Many of these units are considered heavy-vehicles, and require a skilled operator who is physically fit and alert.

Firefighters may be exposed to, and are expected to work in outdoor environments for prolonged periods and are exposed to cold temperatures in winter and hot temperatures in summer.

In addition to the physical demands, there are related psychological stresses, as firefighters never know when the next alarm will sound.

Depending upon the time of day or night, firefighters may go from a totally relaxed state, even sleeping, to a fully excited state when the alarm sounds. Research has indicated that heart rates can virtually double at this time.

Fire Prevention Division Duties – General

Firefighters often assist with fire prevention duties and may be assigned to assist with fire safety inspections, provide public education activities such as delivering lectures to selected audiences, fire cause determination or staff supervision activities. They are assigned to operate passenger type automobiles, SUV's or pick-up trucks and when conducting inspections, they can be required to walk long distances and/or climb stairs. Writing, note-taking and keyboarding skills are required to prepare inspection reports. Conducting thorough fire inspections requires a high degree of technical expertise and therefore staff assigned to conduct and supervise these activities may be subject to significant stress levels under certain conditions. Frequently, public education activities require that staff assemble large displays, carry fire extinguishers and other activities which may be physically demanding.

When conducting fire cause determination activities, fire prevention staff members may be required to wear special personal protective clothing including coveralls, work or rubber boots, gloves, helmets and respiratory protection (particulate filter masks) and enter buildings or sites that have a variety of post fire hazards such as burnt structural members, standing water, unstable footing etc. Post fire investigations may also require staff to perform heavy lifting or shoveling to move debris etc. Many of these activities occur outside of normal working hours.

Having read the foregoing, I certify that _____,
is fit to perform the duties of a firefighter to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of Medical Practitioner/Physician

Date

Patient Authorisation: This authorizes you to supply the above information to the Township of Muskoka Lakes/ Muskoka Lakes Fire Department.

Patient/Candidate's Signature