

Operating Guideline # 706

Safety Officer

December 9, 2019



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to establish guidelines for the implementation of a Safety Sector and the appointment or utilization of a Safety Officer at certain emergency incidents and training sessions as well as to outline the duties of the Departmental Safety Officer/Safety Officer/Assistant Safety Officer at emergencies and in non-emergency activities.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

The health, safety and wellness of ALL members of the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department is the single most important priority of the department and the designation of an individual to spearhead and champion safety issues is viewed as a way to integrate this into the very culture of our organization. Recognizing that our collective safety is part of our daily routine also serves to support the notion of internal responsibility as espoused by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Regularly integrating the Safety Officer function into daily operations also serves to create a greater awareness of safety and serves to enhance safety on the fire ground, in the fire stations, and on the training ground.

Safety ought to be at the forefront of every decision we make as firefighters and the formalization of a "Safety Officer" will serve to help ensure that we maintain a collective mindset that embraces safety as *the* only way to conduct business here.

GUIDELINE:

General

1. A Safety Sector, under the direction of a Safety Officer will be established at any incident where, due to the size and/or nature of the incident, the Incident Commander deems it necessary. This request can be made via radio at the scene early to allow the trained personnel to respond.

Notwithstanding the generality of the foregoing, a Safety Officer should be appointed:

- a) at all working structure fires;
- b) at all emergency incidents involving air transportation or Airports;
- c) at all emergency incidents occurring at detention centres;
- d) at all water/ice rescue incidents;
- e) at all significant Haz-Mat incidents;
- f) at all multi-casualty incidents;
- g) at any site where the fire department has been asked to set up a helicopter landing zone;
- h) at all wildland fires that involve Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry assets;
- i) at all rail incidents;
- j) at any event which requires that the municipal emergency plan be implemented;
- k) at any prolonged incident where extreme climatic conditions are present (i.e. – wind gusts over 30 km/h, extreme temperatures -30 or plus 30 etc.); and/or
- l) any incident where the fire department is supporting complex police investigations (i.e. – sudden death investigation, body recovery operation, clandestine drug lab investigation etc.).

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Safety Officer Functions

2. At all operations, the Incident Commander shall assume the Safety Officer function unless otherwise designated to another individual.

3. The Safety Officer role should normally be filled by designating another officer to fill this role for a particular incident. NOTE that any firefighter with sufficient knowledge/training, skills and abilities may be assigned to the task in the role.

NOTE: "Assistant Safety Officers" may be appointed depending on the size or scope of the incident to assist the primary Safety Officer.

4. All sectors at the incident shall be notified by radio that a Safety Sector has been established and be given the identification of the person assigned as the Safety Officer.

5. The Safety Officer shall have a portable radio and be in contact with Incident Command at all times and operate under the Command System as Sector of Command. The Safety Officer – or Assistant Safety Officer(s) - shall wear a Safety Officers identification vest for ready identification. Regular communications between the Safety Officer and Incident Commander shall be maintained.

6. The Safety Officer reports directly to and is a function of Incident Command and shall conform to and support the departmental accountability system (SEE ALSO – MLFD OG 207 – Accountability System).

7. At all incidents the Safety Officer is responsible for:

- a) monitoring the incident for unsafe conditions or operations;
- b) to ensure that protective clothing and safety devices are worn and used properly by members of the department;
- c) ensuring that the department's operational guidelines are followed in order to promote safety of personnel;
- d) monitoring radio transmissions;
- e) advising the Incident Commander concerning the boundaries or zones at an incident site and liaising with the police to ensure members of the public are excluded from incident working areas.

8. The Safety Officer is responsible for the following additional duties at emergencies:

- a) checking utilities such as hydro, natural gas, propane fuel supplies etc. have been rendered safe;
- b) inspecting and monitoring the structural integrity of walls, roofs, floors etc.;
- c) observing and constantly monitoring smoke and fire conditions; and
- d) maintaining an awareness of firefighter work levels and assignments.

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9. In the event that a “Mayday” is transmitted by an individual or crew operating at an emergency incident, or where the Rapid Intervention Team is placed into operation, the Safety Officer shall immediately report in person to the Incident Commander and assist with the management of the “Mayday” or other emergency (SEE ALSO MLFD OG’s 817 – Mayday, and 208 – Rapid Intervention Team). The Safety Officer shall be responsible to investigate the circumstances of any “Mayday” or Rapid Intervention Team deployment and cause a report to be made to the Fire Chief and Joint Health and Safety Committee at the earliest opportunity.

10. The Safety Officer may alter, suspend or terminate any life threatening operation immediately ensuring that the Incident Commander is immediately notified of the decision and the reasons for it. All other safety issues identified shall be communicated to Incident Commander for direction.

11. The establishment of a Safety Officer at an incident in no way diminishes the responsibility of individual firefighters, sector officers or the Incident Commander for safety.

Departmental Safety Officer

12. The MLFD shall appoint one or more individuals as a designated “Departmental Safety Officer” as appropriate from time to time. This individual shall form part of the line officer group (Officers Leadership Team) and shall have the rank equivalency of a Captain.

13. A person appointed as the Departmental Safety Officer has the option to self-deploy to any incident that the department responds to but shall report to command upon arrival at the scene to confirm the establishment of the Safety Sector. (SEE ALSO MLFD OG 826 - Responding in Privately Owned Vehicles). All of the duties prescribed in sentences 2-11 above apply to the Departmental Safety Officer unless otherwise specified herein.

14. The Departmental Safety Officer shall be identified distinctly from all other officers by wearing a Safety Officers identification vest and helmet.

15. The Departmental Safety Officer shall have the following duties in addition to those undertaken at emergency incidents:

- a) attend departmental “Officer” meetings
- b) serve in an advisory capacity to the Joint Health & Safety Committee;
- c) assist with the investigation of any serious injury sustained by a member of the department;
- d) advance occupational health, wellness and safety programming;
- e) monitor departmental work practices and facilities for compliance with departmental and corporate health and safety policies and guidelines;
- f) monitor training activities (where available) to ensure adherence to policies, guidelines and industry safety practices including any training that requires the preparation of a Training Safety Plan in accordance with MLFD OG 1703;

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- g) assist in the delivery of safety related training; and
- h) undertake other safety themed activities under direction of the Fire Chief.

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:

“Departmental Safety Officer” means an individual appointed to fill the role of Safety Officer on a day-to-day basis as part of the contingent of line officers within the Muskoka Lakes Fire Department.

“Safety Officer” (or “Assistant Safety Officer”) means an individual appointed to the Safety Sector by the Incident Commander for a specific incident.

REFERENCES:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (RSO 1990, c. 0.1)
- MLFD OG 701 - Role and Responsibilities of the Incident Commander
- Section 21 Committee Guidance Note GN-2-4, Incident Safety Officer
- Fire Department Incident Safety Officer 2nd Edition, David W. Dodson
- MLFD OG 207 - Accountability System
- MLFD OG 208 - Rapid Intervention Team
- MLFD OG 817 - Mayday
- MLFD OG 826 - Responding in Privately Owned Vehicles
- MLFD OG 1703 - Training Safety Plan