

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

# CODES OF PRACTICE

In accordance with the *Northwest Territories Safety Act and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*; and *Nunavut Safety Act and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*.

December 2017

# Firefighters



# Firefighters

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## FOREWORD

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) produced this industry Code of Practice in accordance with subsections 18(3) and 18(4) of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut *Safety Acts*.

The WSCC thanks the Governments of Alberta and British Columbia for contributing resources for the development of this Code of Practice. Portions of this Code are adapted from the *Alberta Code of Practice for Firefighters* as published by the Government of Alberta in May 2007 and the BC Office of the Fire Commissioner's *Fire Department Inspection and Audit Checklist* as published by the Government of British Columbia in November 2012.

This Code is in effect as published in the *Northwest Territories Gazette* and *Nunavut Gazette*, in accordance with the *Safety Acts* and *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulations*.

### IN EFFECT DATES:

**Northwest Territories:** 4 January 2018

**Nunavut:** 21 December 2017



Chief Safety Officer, WSCC

### Disclaimer

This publication refers to obligations under workers' compensation and occupational health and safety legislation as administered by the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

To ensure compliance with legal obligations, always refer to the most recent legislation. This publication may refer to legislation that has been amended or repealed.

Check for information on the latest legislation at [wsc.nt.ca](http://wsc.nt.ca) or [wsc.nu.ca](http://wsc.nu.ca), or contact WSCC at 1-800-661-0792.

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# 1 HOW DOES THIS CODE OF PRACTICE APPLY?

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) Codes of Practice provide practical guidance to achieve the safety requirements of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut *Safety Acts* and related *Regulations*.

As per subsection 18(3) of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut *Safety Acts*, "For the purpose of providing practical guidance with respect to the requirements of any provision of this Act or the regulations, the Chief Safety Officer may approve and issue such Codes of Practice as he or she considers are suitable for that purpose."

The WSCC Codes of Practice apply to workplaces in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The Chief Safety Officer approves Codes of Practice for use by all occupational health and safety (OHS) stakeholders. Codes of Practice come into effect in each territory on the day they are published in the *Northwest Territories Gazette* and *Nunavut Gazette*.

Codes of Practice do not have the same legal force as the *Safety Acts* and related *Regulations*. A person or employer cannot face prosecution for failing to comply with a Code of Practice. However, in legal proceedings under the *Safety Acts* and related *Regulations*, failure to observe a Code of Practice may be a consideration when determining whether a worker or employer complies with the *Safety Acts* and related *Regulations*.

Employers and workers should follow the WSCC Codes of Practice unless there is an alternative course of action that achieves the same or better occupational health and safety outcomes.

## **A Code of Practice**

- Provides practical guidelines.
- Adapts to individual work sites.
- May serve as evidence.
- Should be followed unless there's a better way.

## 2 DEFINITIONS

**Competent:** in respect of a function, task or duty, possessing the knowledge, experience and training to perform the function, task or duty.

**Due Diligence:** the level of judgment, care, prudence, determination, and activity that a person or organization should reasonably be expected to have or do under particular circumstances.

**Employer:** every partnership, group of persons, corporation, owner, agent, principal contractor, subcontractor, manager or other authorized person having charge of an establishment in which one or more workers are engaged in work.

**Equipment:** any mechanical or non-mechanical article or device, such as a machine, tool, appliance, apparatus, implement, service or utility, other than personal property owned by a person, unless that property is used in the carrying on of any work.

**Firefighter:** a worker who fights fires full-time, part-time or as a volunteer member of a fire department and does not exclusively fight forest fires.

**Fire Chief:** highest-ranking officer in the fire department and is directly responsible for the operation and control of all personnel and activities.

**Fire Marshal:** a Fire Marshal appointed under paragraph 2(1) of the Northwest Territories *Fire Prevention Act* or Nunavut *Fire Safety Act*.

**Hazard:** any situation, thing, or condition that may expose a person to risk of injury or occupational disease.

**Hazard Assessment:** the process followed to identify, assess, and eliminate or manage workplace hazards and risks to worker health and safety.

**Incident:** an occurrence arising in the course of work that could result in an injury or illness.

**Incident Commander:** the supervisor responsible for overseeing and managing incident objectives, personnel, and resources at an emergency response.

**National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):** a United States trade association, with some international members, that creates and maintains private, copyrighted standards and codes for usage and adoption by local governments.

**Organization:** a company, operation, undertaking, establishment, enterprise, institution, association, or a combination thereof that has its own management. An organization may be incorporated or unincorporated, public or private.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** any clothing, device, or other article intended for use by a worker to prevent injury or to facilitate rescue.

**Record:** a document that states results achieved or provides evidence of activities performed.

**Risk:** the chance or probability of a person getting harmed, or experiencing an adverse health effect if exposed to a hazard.

**SCBA:** a self-contained breathing apparatus.

**Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs):** general directions provided by an employer that establish a process which firefighters should follow during the course of their duties, including emergency incidents. Standard operating Guidelines are more dynamic and can be readily altered compared to Standard Operating Procedures.

**Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** an operational directive prepared by an employer that establishes a standard course of action for firefighters to follow in respect of emergency incidents to which firefighters could respond.

**Supervisor:** a worker who is authorized by an employer to oversee or direct workers.

**Work site:** a location where a worker is, or is likely to be, engaged in work, or a thing at, on, in, or near which a worker is, or is likely to be, engaged in work.

**Worker:** a person engaged in work for an employer, whether working with or without remuneration.

### 3 INTRODUCTION

#### CODE OF PRACTICE FOR FIREFIGHTERS

This Code of Practice specifically applies to the legislation outlined in Part 32 of the Northwest Territories (NT) and Nunavut (NU) Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulations. This part includes additional protection for firefighters in addition to the Safety Acts and other parts of the NT and NU OHS Regulations.

The Firefighter Code of Practice provides information to employers and workers on requirements that ensure procedures are in place to safeguard the health and safety of firefighters and the public.

Firefighters must follow all the requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulations*; this Code primarily focuses on the following:

- Part 32, Additional Protection for Firefighters, Sections 476 to 488

This code outlines hazard assessments, standard operating procedures, standard operating guidelines, policies, training, supervision, joint occupational health and safety committees, and equipment. Additional Codes of Practice and resources useful in developing firefighting procedures and policies include:

- Hazard Assessments
- Occupational Health and Safety Education – Supervisors
- Occupational Health and Safety Programs
- Confined Spaces
- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees
- Thermal Conditions
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Fall Protection PPE

The firefighting departments within the NT and NU are governed by two different sets of legislation, the *Safety Acts* and related *OHS Regulations* and the *NT Fire Prevention Act* or *NU Fire Safety Act* and associated *Regulations*. The *NT Fire Prevention Act*, *NU Fire Safety Act* and associated *Regulations* are not enforced by the WSCC; the legislation adopts codes and standards not listed in this Code of Practice.

Section 403 (2) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations* provides the only exemption to Firefighters:

“Workers trained as firefighters are permitted to perform work in flammable or explosive substance atmospheres.”



This Code of Practice highlights some common NFPA Standards; the WSCC does not require the use of any specific firefighting standard (NFPA or otherwise). However, the WSCC does direct fire departments to have or follow standards that meet the requirements of the NT and NU *Safety Acts* and *OHS Regulations*.

It is the fire department's responsibility to ensure a standard being followed meets legislated requirements within their jurisdiction. Standards listed in this Code are for guidance purposes only and since they are national standards, it can be expected that they may not meet all the requirements specific to the NT or NU's safety legislation.

## 4 LEGISLATION

### ***Safety Acts***

#### ***Northwest Territories and Nunavut***

##### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

4. (1) Every employer shall
  - (a) maintain his or her establishment in such a manner that the health and safety of persons in the establishment are not likely to be endangered;
  - (b) take all reasonable precautions and adopt and carry out all reasonable techniques and procedures to ensure the health and safety of every person in his or her establishment; and
  - (c) provide the first aid service requirements set out in the regulations pertaining to his or her class of establishment.
- (2) If two or more employers have charge of an establishment, the principal contractor or, if there is no principal contractor, the owner of the establishment, shall coordinate the activities of the employers in the establishment to ensure the health and safety of persons in the establishment.
5. Every worker employed on or in connection with an establishment shall, in the course of his or her employment,
  - (a) take all reasonable precautions to ensure his or her own safety and the safety of other persons in the establishment; and
  - (b) as the circumstances require, use devices and articles of clothing or equipment that are intended for his or her protection and provided to the worker by his or her employer, or required pursuant to the regulations to be used or worn by the worker.

### ***Occupational Health and Safety Regulations***

#### ***Northwest Territories and Nunavut***

##### **Occupational Health and Safety Program**

21. (1) An employer shall provide an occupational health and safety program under this section if
  - (a) there are 20 or more workers who work at the work site; or
  - (b) the employer is so directed by the Chief Safety Officer.

##### **Work if Visibility Restricted**

31. If visibility in an area at a work site is restricted by smoke, steam or another substance to the extent that a worker is endangered, an employer shall not require or permit the worker to work in that area unless the employer provides the worker with an effective means of communication with another worker who is readily available to provide assistance in an emergency.

##### **Committee and Representative**

37. An employer shall establish a Committee
  - (a) at a work site where 20 or more workers work or are likely to work for more than 90 days; or

(b) if so directed by the Chief Safety Officer.

39. If fewer than 20 workers work at a work site and there is no Committee, each employer shall designate not less than one worker as the occupational health and safety representative for the workers.

**Additional Protection for Firefighters**

476. In this Part,  
"firefighter" has the meaning assigned to it by subsection 14.1(1) of the Workers' Compensation Act;  
"firefighting vehicle" means a specialized vehicle that carries an assortment of tools and equipment for use by firefighters;  
"Fire Marshal" means the Fire Marshal appointed under paragraph 2(1)(a) of the Fire Prevention Act.
477. (1) The Chief Safety Officer may, at the request of the Fire Marshal, exempt a volunteer fire department from being required to comply with any provision of this Part.  
(2) If an exemption is given under subsection (1), it shall expire one year after the exemption is given.
478. (1) In this section, "standard operating procedure" means an operational directive prepared by an employer that establishes a standard course of action for firefighters to follow in respect of emergency incidents to which firefighters could respond.  
(2) An employer, in consultation with the Committee or representative or, if there is no Committee or representative available, the firefighters, shall develop a written plan that establishes procedures to be followed by firefighters in fighting fires.  
(3) A plan required by subsection (2) must include  
(a) identification of standard firefighting functions, including functions that must be performed simultaneously;  
(b) the minimum number of firefighters required to perform safely each identified firefighting function, based on written standard operating procedures;  
(c) the number and types of firefighting vehicles and firefighters required for the initial response to each type of incident;  
(d) the total complement of firefighting vehicles and firefighters to be dispatched in response to each type of incident;  
(e) a description of typical emergency operations, including alarm time, response time, arrival sequence and responsibility for initiating standard operating procedures necessary to protect the health and safety of firefighters;  
(f) a description of the incident management system; and  
(g) a description of the personnel accountability system.  
(4) An employer shall  
(a) ensure that a plan developed under subsection (2) is implemented;  
and  
(b) make copies of the plan readily available to firefighters.
479. (1) An employer shall ensure that

- (a) a firefighter receives training necessary to ensure that the firefighter is able to safely carry out his or her duties;
  - (b) training required by paragraph (a) is provided by competent persons; and
  - (c) written records are kept of training delivered to each firefighter.
- (2) An employer shall ensure that each firefighting vehicle used is operated by a competent operator.
- 480. An employer shall ensure that firefighting vehicles and other equipment for use in emergency operations are designed, constructed and operated so as to protect adequately the health and safety of firefighters and are maintained.
- 481. If equipment or personal protective equipment is carried within a seating area of a firefighting vehicle, an employer shall ensure that
  - (a) the equipment is secured
    - (i) by a positive mechanical means of holding the item in a stowed position, or
    - (ii) in a compartment with a positive latching door; and
  - (b) the compartment referred to in subparagraph (a)(ii) is designed to minimize injury to firefighters in the seating area of the vehicle.
- 482. An employer shall ensure that
  - (a) firefighting vehicles and firefighting equipment are inspected by a competent person for defects and unsafe condition as often as is necessary to ensure that the vehicles and equipment can be safely operated;
  - (b) if a defect or unsafe condition is identified in a firefighting vehicle or firefighting equipment,
    - (i) steps are taken, without delay, to protect the health and safety of firefighters who could be endangered until the defect is repaired or the condition is corrected, and
    - (ii) as soon as is reasonably possible, the defect is repaired or the condition is corrected; and
  - (c) written records are, in respect of inspections carried out under paragraph (a),
    - (i) signed by the competent person who performed the inspection, and
    - (ii) kept at the work site and made readily available to the Committee or representative and the firefighters.
- 483. An employer shall ensure that
  - (a) repairs to firefighting vehicles are made in accordance with the vehicle manufacturer's specifications and by qualified individuals; and
  - (b) written records are, in respect of repairs made under paragraph (a), kept at the work site and made readily available to the Committee or representative and the firefighters.
- 484. (1) Subject to subsection (3), an employer shall ensure that
  - (a) firefighting vehicles are provided with safe crew accommodations within the body of the vehicle and are equipped with properly secured seats and seat belts;

- (b) while a firefighting vehicle is transporting firefighters, each firefighter is seated and uses a seat belt when the vehicle is in motion; and
  - (c) firefighters do not ride on the tailstep, side steps, running boards or in any other exposed position on a firefighting vehicle.
- (2) If there is an insufficient number of seats available for the number of firefighters who are assigned to or expected to ride on a firefighting vehicle, an employer shall ensure that there is a safe alternate means of transportation for those firefighters.
- (3) Paragraphs (1)(b) and (c) do not apply if a firefighter is fighting a forest, prairie, grassland or crop fire, and the employer ensures that
  - (a) a restraining device is used to prevent the firefighter from falling from the firefighting vehicle;
  - (b) an effective means of communication between the firefighter and the operator of the firefighting vehicle is provided; and
  - (c) a firefighter does not operate the firefighting vehicle at a speed that exceeds 20 km/h.
- 485. An employer shall provide to a firefighter and ensure that the firefighter uses approved personal protective equipment, that is
  - (a) appropriate to the hazards that the firefighter could encounter; and
  - (b) adequate to protect the health and safety of the firefighter.
- 486. (1) In this section, "interior structural firefighting" means fighting fires inside buildings or enclosed structures.
  - (2) If firefighters are required or permitted to engage in interior structural firefighting, an employer shall ensure that
    - (a) the firefighters work in teams; and
    - (b) a suitably equipped rescue team is readily available outside the structure to rescue any endangered firefighter should a firefighter's SCBA fail or the firefighter become incapacitated for any other reason.
- 487. (1) If a firefighter is required or permitted to enter a structure, an employer shall
  - (a) provide the firefighter with an approved personal alert safety system device; and
  - (b) ensure that the firefighter uses the device.
  - (2) An employer shall ensure that each personal alert safety system device is tested not less than once each month and before each use, and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.
- 488. An employer shall provide for use by firefighters and ensure that the firefighters use approved safety ropes, harnesses and hardware that are
  - (a) appropriate to the nature of the conditions that the firefighter is expected to encounter; and
  - (b) adequate to protect the health and safety of the firefighter.

## 5 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS

The purpose of a comprehensive Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Program is to ensure that every firefighter leaves the scene of an emergency in a safe and healthy condition.

The Fire Chief, as head of the department, will need to sign off on a policy statement outlining the commitment the fire department and its supervisors have to the health and safety of workers. This policy statement will apply to all individuals working in the fire department, which can include support personnel who are not trained, or perform the same duties, as firefighters.

The policy statement will also include:

- The purpose of the OHS Program;
- The Internal Responsibility System and how everyone within the fire department contributes to and is responsible for the health and safety of everyone else within the fire department;
- Workers' rights to participate in health and safety, refuse unsafe work, and know hazardous conditions they could be exposed to;
- Workers' legislated duties to report hazards and incidents, correct unsafe conditions within their training, and work together with supervisors to prevent future incidents;
- Employers' legislated duties to follow-up on all reported hazards and incidents (including reporting to the WSCC); and
- Where workers can find health and safety information.

The OHS Program should include Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs), and policies for:

- Hazard and risk assessment performance;
- PPE provision, requirements, limitations, training, and safe use;
- Emergency Response Plans (ERP);
- Equipment maintenance;
- Facility maintenance and good housekeeping;
- Lockout/Tag Out;
- Communications;
- Orientations;
- Supervision;
- Safety meetings;
- Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees/Representative;
- Training;
  - NFPA standards, NT or NU standards, and any additional standards required by the fire department.
  - Live fire training evolutions.

NFPA 1500 might be a useful standard to assist fire departments develop occupational health and safety programs.

- First aid;
- Inspections;
- Investigations;
- Documentation; and
- Reporting forms.

The WSCC Code of Practice on [Occupational Health and Safety Programs](#) can assist fire departments with developing their own OHS Programs.

Adoption of another fire department's resources may assist a smaller department as they start the process of implementing their own OHS Program. If a fire department chooses this path they must review and adjust the adopted materials to ensure it reflects the hazards and operations of the smaller department.

## 6 HAZARD ASSESSMENTS

All employers in the NT and NU must conduct hazard assessments of worksites. Review the WSCC [Hazard Assessment Code Of Practice](#) for a more detailed breakdown. They must document the process, include how hazards will be eliminated or controlled, and ensure the findings are communicated to their workers. They are also responsible for regularly updating their hazard assessments to prevent them from becoming outdated and inefficient.

When it comes to hazard assessments, the firefighting industry is more complex than industries with predictable work sites; each call brings firefighters to a new environment with different hazards. Because of this, meeting hazard assessment requirements is different for firefighters, but still necessary. It is still possible to achieve an acceptable result respecting firefighter safety in advance of an emergency operation. This does not carry over to regular locations of work, such as the firehouse or training field. Areas where work is not of an emergency nature require a formal written hazard assessment.

All firefighters must receive instruction on how to identify the various hazards they may encounter and describe the actions to be taken that will limit or eliminate exposure to those hazards. This includes reporting the hazard, and controls put in place to the appropriate individual on scene. Training can be completed in accordance with various firefighter training standards and done either internally or externally. The training must meet or exceed the requirements of the NT and NU *Safety Acts* and *OHS Regulations*.

Employers are required to follow the hierarchy of the controls and either eliminate or control hazards to the lowest level possible. In the fire service, engineering and personal protective equipment (PPE) are effective and mandatory means for improving firefighter safety, but they are not always sufficient without additional administrative controls. Examples of administrative controls include the incident management system and personnel accountability system, which are commonly used by fire services in the NT and NU. Additional controls can be used as long as they control the risk to the appropriate level. The type and complexity of other controls depends on fire department's level of service.

Due to the emergency nature of firefighting, a written hazard assessment prior to the start of emergency work at an incident is not practical. This does not exclude firefighters from performing hazard assessments and implementing controls.



## 7 POLICIES, STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, AND STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

A fire department must develop policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and standard operating guidelines (SOGs) for fire suppression, rescue, extrication, or other emergency incidents to which firefighters could respond, or activities around equipment presenting potential hazards. SOPs are required procedures; the fire department must follow and operate according to an approved SOP. Incidents that fall outside of the SOP require an approved SOG, which gives direction on how the fire department and firefighters should respond but allows some flexibility depending on the situation. A fire department is not necessarily required to rewrite the SOPs, SOGs, or policies that it currently has in place; however, existing documentation should be reviewed, updated, and organized to ensure that it meets legislated requirements and addresses hazards specific to the department and service level.

NFPA 1561: Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management and Command Safety may assist fire departments in the planning stages for policy development that could enhance the safety of firefighters and others at the scene of an emergency.

Below is a planning process that must be followed, at a minimum, to ensure safe operations at an emergency incident firefighters are expected to respond to while maintaining compliance with the NT and NU *Safety Acts* and *OHS Regulations*. These points recognize that a fire department may perform any number or type of emergency services with varying degrees of complexity, based on the resources of the community and the technical expertise available within that fire department. The requirement to plan ahead for safety does not change based on the size or service level of the fire department.

1. Each employer must determine exactly what emergency service(s) the fire department will be authorized to provide, and identify the level or standard to which each service will be performed.  
This includes response to structural fires, and various rescue situations including technical rescue dangerous goods, chemical, biological, and radiological incidents, among others. A level of service matrix should be followed.
2. Once determined, the service level is committed to writing in the form of a bylaw or policy. The employer must then clearly communicate to workers what is expected from them as firefighters when responses are made. SOPs describe the authorized activities of the fire service and how the activities are to be performed. These documents form the basis of the written plan and must be reviewed at minimum once a year.

3. Establish a policy for ensuring the minimum training a firefighter must be given before being considered competent to perform certain functions during the response to an incident. Include a policy for new or 'rookie' firefighters, paid on call firefighters, and volunteer firefighters; what their role in a response would be, as well as methods for ensuring tasks are properly assigned during an emergency response.
4. Establish a policy for the incident management system to be followed at an emergency incident. Include:
  - Roles and responsibilities clearly defined for each firefighter attending the emergency scene;
  - Arrangement of effective communication to ensure firefighters understand their responsibilities;
  - Coordination to prevent conflicting activities and develop procedures so a proper sequence is followed for an assigned task. This becomes increasingly important should more agencies become involved at the scene, such as a mutual aid situation;
  - The individual(s) responsible for completing the site-specific hazard assessment and implementing controls prior to firefighters beginning their response at the scene; and
  - Assignment of competent firefighters in sufficient numbers to complete the tasks.
5. Establish a policy on the personnel accountability system to be used at each emergency incident. This documents how firefighters are tracked and kept safe during emergency responses, and how they make their presence known to the incident commander (incident commanders are considered supervisors). At minimum it must include:
  - How firefighters arriving at the scene of an incident are identified, including recognition of their competency levels ('rookie' markings, coloured bunker gear, etc.);
  - How firefighters are tracked when entering and leaving hazardous areas;
  - How firefighters and other support personnel are tracked. This can be done in multiple ways (tag in, electronic monitoring worn by the worker, physical tracking board, etc.); and
  - A policy for those who might have to be away from the main body of firefighters and are considered to be working alone. The employer must provide those firefighters with the means of contacting assistance should it be required and for the department to check on their status at reasonable intervals.

6. SOPs must include:

- Identification of the standard firefighting functions or evolutions expected of firefighters based on the emergency services to be offered, including functions or evolutions that must be performed simultaneously;
- The minimum number of firefighters required to safely perform each identified firefighting function or evolution. Include the specific firefighter safety procedures, first aid, and medical attention services to be followed at each type of emergency incident;
- Readiness of a reserve/rescue team assigned solely for the purpose of rescuing any endangered firefighters. Include what services, if any, can be completed in absence of a reserve/rescue team. The rescue team must be prepared in the event a fellow firefighter becomes incapacitated, their equipment fails, or for any other reasons the incident commander orders; and
- The number and types of firefighting vehicles, equipment, and firefighters required for the response to each type of incident firefighters are expected to respond. This includes SOPs for when minimum staffing or equipment levels cannot be met for the call-out. At times in smaller communities manning levels can fall below service requirements. It is vital to have a minimum staff SOP to prevent workers from performing functions or evolutions they are not equipped for.

SOPs must include tasks that require a firefighter to work alone. Examples of lone worker situations may include incident commanders, inspectors, investigators, and tanker operators.

Refer to number 17 in Appendix A – (Internal Compliance Checklist) for a listing of SOPs a fire department should have at a minimum.

## 7.1 HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Exposures may occur during response to an incident. The employer must ensure that a firefighter’s exposure to any substance listed in *Schedule O* of the *OHS Regulations* is kept as low as reasonably practicable and does not exceed the substance’s occupational exposure limit. A worker may not be exposed to a substance listed in Schedule O at a concentration exceeding its ceiling limit at any time. Firefighter exposure may not be a concern depending on the nature of the substance and if the firefighter is wearing an encapsulated suit.

Employers whose firefighters may be exposed to harmful substances must complete a hazard assessment as explained previously. Key requirements include identification of potential exposures, development of protective procedures, and training of firefighters in those procedures.

It is not necessary to develop a written SOP regarding every possible chemical a firefighter might be exposed to in service. It is expected that procedures will be developed and controls will be put in place that will protect the health and safety of firefighters when they respond at the stated service level.

The policy must also cover:

- the training and awareness levels to be received by each firefighter;
- the means by which firefighters can obtain the information on an exposure to any known substance and the decontamination requirements;
- limitations of his or her PPE;
- what the department does in the event of a response to an incident where there may be an exposure to that substance; and
- the location of Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) and similar resources (including who is in charge of collective SDS information at the scene where firefighters are responding).

Employers must have a plan in place to prevent firefighters from exposure to hazardous substances expected at the stated service level. They must also have a plan to address firefighters working near unexpected hazardous substances.

Should an exposure occur, there must be a SOP to reduce exposure from any contaminated PPE during and after the incident.

Decontamination facilities must be provided or arranged based on the potential exposures that firefighters might encounter based on a department's stated service level. This includes the ability to decontaminate their person, clothing, equipment, and apparatus. No firefighter can be permitted to leave any work site where there is a possibility that he or she may be carrying harmful substances on their person, clothing equipment, or apparatus.

All hazardous products used by a fire department must be used, stored, and handled in accordance with the WHMIS 2015 guidelines and SOP. [Schedule O](#) of the OHS Regulations provides contamination limits.

## 8 TRAINING

Three characteristics are used to describe a worker as competent:

- Knowledgeable;
- Trained; and
- Sufficient experience to safely perform the work.

The required training for a firefighter must:

- Be provided before the firefighter is allowed to engage in emergency operations, except for on-the-job training assignments conducted under close supervision;
- Be provided by a competent instructor;
- Educate the firefighter of their OHS rights and duties;
- Address occupational health and safety hazards associated with each of the operational assignments;
- Match the duties, functions, and role that the firefighter is expected to perform;
- Address procedures required to perform operational assignments including sudden changes in conditions;
- Address the incident management system and personnel accountability systems used by the fire department;
- Address the safe operation of equipment that is required to perform the operational assignments; and
- Include review of the SOP, SOG, and policies.

Records of the training provided to firefighters must be maintained and include at minimum: names of persons receiving training; nature of the training; dates when training was provided; and name plus qualifications of the training officer or training agency. It is recommended that each fire department have its own training and orientation checklist to ensure firefighters meet the training requirements necessary to safely perform the services that the fire department provides.

NFPA 1001: *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualification* identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career and volunteer firefighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature.

Firefighters must receive equipment-specific training in:

- The selection of appropriate equipment;
- The limitations of the equipment;
- Pre-use inspection;
- The use of emergency or self-rescue equipment (e.g. how the Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) functions and how to activate it manually);
- Skills required by the manufacturer's specifications for a firefighter to use the equipment, and the hazards specific to operating the equipment at the work site;
- The basic mechanical and maintenance requirements of the equipment;
- Loading and unloading the equipment; and
- Controls that minimize the firefighter's exposure to a harmful substance.

## 9 SUPERVISION

A supervisor is an individual that is authorized by the employer to oversee or direct workers. A supervisor can include individuals who supervise multiple firefighters at the scene of an incident (incident commander) or a single individual who directly supervises a 'rookie' firefighter. Other names for supervisors include fire chief, deputy chief, fire officer, lieutenant, or captain. All supervisors are required to take a [Supervisor Familiarization Course](#) as approved by the WSCC.

A 'rookie' firefighter cannot be deemed competent by a non-competent supervisor.

Employers must provide approved supervisor education training to ensure supervisors understand their roles and responsibilities to workplace health and safety. Supervisor responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Competently supervising work sites;
- Implementing written programs;
- Developing safety plans and ensuring plan roll-out;
- Ensuring firefighters are competent prior to beginning work;
- Ensuring firefighters understand their legislated safety rights;
- Ensuring firefighters have the ability to communicate any hazards or scenarios they consider unsafe and ask questions if they are unsure of how to safely complete a task;
- Monitoring firefighter safety performance;
- Ensuring firefighters use or wear PPE as required for the type of service being provided. Including self-rescue equipment such as the PASS;
- Performing formal hazard assessments and site-specific hazard assessments;
- Advising and resolving safety concerns according NT and NU safety legislation;
- Conducting inspections and addressing areas of non-compliance;
- Conducting investigations to incidents, including dangerous occurrences or near misses; and
- Ensuring firefighters properly conduct vehicle and equipment inspections;
- Knowing and complying with the *Safety Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice*, and their fire department's SOPs, SOGs, and policies;

An important part of demonstrating due diligence is accurate documentation of safe work practices.

- Having appropriate knowledge in:
  - Occupational health and safety programs;
  - The safe handling, use, storage, production, and disposal of hazardous substances;
  - The need for and safe use of PPE;
  - Incident emergency procedures; and
  - Department administration and record-keeping.

Supervisors are in a leadership role and act on behalf of the employer. They must meet employers' duties as specified in the *Safety Acts*. They must follow employer safety rules and be aware of the legislative requirements of the *Safety Acts* and *OHS Regulations*. Supervisors must also understand the rights and responsibilities of the firefighters they supervise and take every reasonable precaution to protect firefighters while ensuring safety violations do not occur.

Temporary or acting supervisors assume the exact same roles and responsibilities of a full time supervisor. Safety-related responsibilities of a supervisor are tied to the position and do not alter based on the length of time supervision of firefighters occurs.



## 10 JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

A Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) or Health and Safety Representative is required depending on the size of the fire department or if the employer is directed to establish one by the Chief Safety Officer. The JOHSC is a group of employer and worker representatives and serves an important role in the OHS Program. The JOHSC meets regularly to discuss and address health and safety concerns and is part of the process for identifying hazards in the workplace. The JOHSC is an essential element for bringing the internal responsibility system (IRS) into practice.

The *OHS Regulations* require all employers with 20 or more workers, including fire departments, to establish a JOHSC. The [Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees](#) Code of Practice provides information on the role of the JOHSC, as well as how to develop and maintain an effective committee.

JOHSC members must be provided time to participate in their committee duties by their employer. They must meet regularly and perform workplace inspections. For the firefighting industry this would include inspections of the fire hall, office areas, as well as maintenance shop and training locations.

The employer must respond to OHS concerns brought forward by the JOHSC.

The JOHSC must bring health and safety concerns and hazards identified during an inspection or investigation to the employer, including concerns and hazards that may require immediate corrective actions.

Duties expected of JOHSC members include:

- Facilitating cooperation between the employer and workers on safety concerns;
- Assisting development of department health and safety policies, SOPs, and SOGs;
- Evaluating the risk of incidents, illnesses, and injuries;
- Reviewing hazard and incidents reports;
- Making recommendations to the employer to control hazards;
- Monitoring and following up on hazard and incident reports;
- Responding to worker complaints, suggestions, and concerns concerning health and safety;
- Performing inspections and investigations;
- Promoting programs which can improve worker training and safety education;
- Consulting with professional and technical experts as required; and
- Monitoring the effectiveness of existing programs and procedures.

In some communities the fire department may not have 20 or more workers. In these situations, the employer shall designate a minimum of one worker to be an occupational health and safety representative. The representative serves the same role as the JOHSC, and meets regularly with the employer.

# 11 EQUIPMENT

All firefighting equipment must be inspected and maintained according to manufacturer’s specifications. It must be clearly marked with the limitations of the equipment based on current standards. Equipment must be used within known limitations and in a manner that does not endanger the health or safety of the firefighter or any individual at the emergency scene. This does not apply only to large apparatuses or powered mobile equipment. All firefighters must be trained in the selection, pre-use inspection, use and limitations of all their equipment including PPE. An example is the PASS: it must be tested not less than once each month as well as before each use.

## 11.1 INVENTIONS/MODIFICATIONS

Unique community/fire department inventions (including equipment alterations) should be avoided unless approved by the manufacturer. The implications must be understood, and caution exercised. When equipment is modified without the consent of the manufacturer or without certification by a qualified engineer, use may exceed the safe performance specifications which can injure workers, lead to equipment damage, and/or void warranty. It may also lead to non-compliance under the *Safety Acts* and *OHS Regulations*, and could result in the employer being held liable for any consequences resulting from use of the invention.

The fabrication of invented devices must be done by individuals who are capable of performing the work in a safe manner. Welding must be done by a competent welder; electrical work by a competent electrician or electronics specialist; final mechanical design by someone competent in assessing loads and forces; and non-destructive testing (NDT) by someone competent in NDT testing and evaluation, etc.

A simple invented device, when added to a system that controls the release of energy such as with hydraulic (fluid-powered) or pneumatic systems (air-powered), or “improves” the way that a system operates (supplied air respirators), can result in harm to firefighters.

For any existing equipment that is currently certified by a certification and testing body, manufacturer, or engineer that undergoes modification, the certification of that equipment will require review and renewal prior to use. The employer must either get the manufacturer to approve the new use or have a professional engineer certify the device as safe for use.

All fire department pumping apparatus, water tanks, ladder trucks, aerial devices, mini-pumpers, special services firefighting vehicles, and combinations of these must be designed and constructed in accordance with a commonly accepted firefighting industry standard which is in compliance with the *Safety Acts* and *OHS Regulations*.

## 11.2 MAINTENANCE

During maintenance, and should equipment be damaged or fail to perform properly, proper lockout/tag out procedures must be in place. Locking out is required and includes the servicing, repairing, testing or adjusting of machinery, equipment, or powered mobile equipment. Normally fire departments do not do any of these activities during emergency operations; however, if essential equipment at the scene fails and it requires onsite repairs, a SOP including lockout/tag out must be in place.

The employer must ensure that equipment is locked out and remains locked out during maintenance or repair.

Preventative maintenance saves time, money, and extends equipment life while minimizing unexpected malfunction. Employers are required to ensure equipment is properly maintained. Smaller communities with unpredictable staffing may require an external provider to conduct maintenance should a qualified individual be unavailable (e.g. a heavy-duty mechanic can service an emergency vehicle but a certified emergency vehicle technician would be required for pump maintenance).

Equipment that is not properly maintained is a hazard to firefighters who use it and the community that relies on the firefighting service. Equipment that has been inspected and found to be damaged must be tagged out and not used until serviced in accordance with the fire department's SOP, SOG, or policy.

## 11.3 OPERATION

This section applies to the safe operation, fuelling, and inspection of all fire department vehicles, including apparatus, cars, trucks, boats, and off-road vehicles such as snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, etc.

Firefighters assigned to operate this type of equipment must be competent and authorized by the employer to do so. Inspections and maintenance, including pre- and post-trip inspections, in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications, are required on all vehicles. Records must be maintained.

A visual inspection, also known as a circle check, looks for obvious mechanical problems, equipment clearances, closeness to other equipment or structures, and other firefighters.

The operator must complete a circle check prior to operating the vehicle.

Equipment that must be carried in the passenger compartment must be stored or attached in a way so that it will not become a projectile in a collision or emergency stop.

Vehicles not normally used to transport firefighters require inspection and a competent operator as well. For example: a vehicle used to transport equipment on behalf of the fire department or community; the Fire Chief using a personally-assigned vehicle as a 'response unit'; or a worker transporting bottles of compressed breathing air, fire hose, etc., from the fire station to the fire scene.

Operators are in charge of the safe operation of the vehicle, and the safety of the firefighters occupying it. They must only operate the vehicle if trained, competent, and authorized.

#### **Seat belts at all times**

An employer must ensure that every firefighter wears a seat belt when being transported in a vehicle.

## **11.4 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

Based on the hazard assessment, the employer must ensure that required personal protective equipment (PPE) for the service level is available, maintained, tested, and used.

The protective clothing firefighters wear, also called bunker gear or turnout gear, is required to perform fire rescue. Fire-rated rescue PPE consists of a helmet, protective hood, bunker pants and coat, gloves, boots, eye, hearing, and respiratory protection as well as a PASS. The PASS is built into a breathing apparatus or attached to the firefighter.

The hazard assessment may indicate the need for equipment beyond fire-specific PPE; below is not an exhaustive list:

- Barrier devices to protect against exposure to blood and bodily fluids;
- Eye/face protection during vehicle extraction;
- Balaclava under headwear as protection against thermal conditions;
- Skin protection against contact with chemicals;
- Protection against contact with an operating chainsaw; and
- Various other hazardous activities which will require additional levels of protection.

*NFPA 1851: Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting Scope may assist in determining need for garments, helmets, gloves, footwear, and interface components.*

The employer must be able to demonstrate that acceptable protection levels for the hazards faced by their firefighters have been provided.

The use of clothing and equipment that complies with NT or NU safety legislation and standards issued by CSA, ANSI, NFPA or other recognized agencies should be identified in departmental purchasing policies and procedures.

Care must be taken not to assume that equipment certified or intended to protect against one hazard can effectively protect against another. For instance, bunker gear provides effective protection against the hazards of structural firefighting conditions but adds to the hazard level a firefighter faces when dealing with a water rescue or a confined space. PPE must be provided based on the updated hazard assessment and services the fire department is expected to provide.

Employers must ensure firefighters that require respiratory protective equipment have gear that provides an effective face seal and fits them properly. Fit testing must be provided to all firefighters and equipment must be made available in the correct sizing. Most respiratory equipment requires the person using the PPE to be clean-shaven where the face piece seals to the skin of the face; the fire department may require a policy on facial hair to outline this requirement.

Firefighters must use the provided PPE; this includes any individual exposed to the hazards of the workplace (including incident commanders). All PPE requirements, assignments, and maintenance must be documented.

## 11.5 RIGGING

Ropes, cables, and all equipment associated with lifting personnel or materials must be inspected, maintained, used only by competent workers, and be adequate to protect the health and safety of the firefighter.

Maximum load ratings of all rigging must be available to firefighters at the scene of the emergency. Any SOPs adopted by fire departments must follow the manufacturer's specifications for the equipment and follow industry best practices.

The use of 'home made' or makeshift rigging components that are load bearing is prohibited.

The employer must ensure the rigging components (safety ropes, harnesses, and hardware) are appropriate for the service level and adequate to protect the safety of the firefighters using it. The safety factor of a rope is not to be used as a reserve for additional capacity. Only use a rope within its safe working load as determined by the manufacturer's specifications.

Only firefighters with appropriate belaying, rappelling, and inspection training and are deemed competent by the employer are permitted to inspect, maintain, and use this equipment. If a technical rope rescue is required, the rescue team members on standby at the scene must also be competent should a firefighter require rescue.

## APPENDIX A – INTERNAL COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

	Non-Compliant	Compliance Pending	Fully Compliant	N/A
1) Is there a fire department establishment bylaw?	NO		YES	
2) Is that bylaw current, and does it reflect all services being provided by the fire department?				
3) Are the fire protection district boundaries clearly defined?				
4) Are the different service boundaries defined? Note: This applies where services are contracted to certain lands; specified areas, industrial sites, etc. It is not intended to refer to areas served under mutual aid agreements.				
5) Does the governing body have a contract fire protection area?	NO		YES	
(a) The documents are current.				
(b) The documents are specific to the service provided.				
(c) Contract area maps are in place.				
6) Are there written mutual aid agreements in place? If yes, are the following covered:	NO		YES	
o Chain of command				
o Common terminology				
o Inter-department training				
o Inter-departmental communications				
o Maps (are they current?)				
o All of the above outlined in a SOP or SOG				
7) Are the following types of records regularly updated?				
(a) Apparatus maintenance, including inspection and repair.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(b) List of apparatus.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(c) Maintenance records, including annual pump tests.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(d) Driver training records.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(e) Drivers abstract and license.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(f) Vehicle pre-trip inspection.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(g) Vehicle post-trip inspection.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(h) Trip log.      YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				

		Non-Compliant	Compliance Pending	Fully Compliant	N/A
(i) Weekly air brake checks.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(j) Vehicle weights.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(k) Overweight permits (if required).	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(l) Practice (training) attendance.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(m) Equipment maintenance (including SCBA, turnout gear, ropes, gas testing equipment, PASS alarms).	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(n) Hose testing.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(o) Ladder testing.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(p) Fire prevention and inspections.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(q) Incidents and reporting to WSCC.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
(r) Training records, including new firefighter and officer.	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>				
8) Are minimum standards and qualifications established for all firefighters and officers approved by the governing body? List the standards.					
9) Is a Hazard Assessment completed for each task?					
10) The NT or NU Safety Acts and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations are accessible.					
11) Does a senior officer conduct a formal post-incident critique (i.e. lessons learned) for major incidents and all calls that resulted in an incident or a 'near miss'? Does it include an incident report to the WSCC?					
12) Does the senior officer submit an incident report to the WSCC?					
13) The findings from the incidents are documented and effectively communicated.					
14) Are there written hiring practices for new recruits? They must include the following:		NO		YES	
o Probation period with performance assessment					
o The tasks permitted of probationary members clearly defined and explained to probationary members and firefighters					
15) Do you have a junior firefighting program?		NO		YES	
16) Written policies have been developed providing restrictions of duties for junior firefighters and probationary (rookie) members.					



	Non-Compliant	Compliance Pending	Fully Compliant	N/A
17) Are the following areas covered by a Standard Operational Procedure or Guideline? If so, list the SOP or SOG.				
(a) Apparatus – vehicle response safety.				
(b) Apparatus – warning devices.				
(c) Apparatus – operation and placement.				
(d) Chain of command.				
(e) Dangerous goods.				
(f) Disaster planning and response.				
(g) Dispatch procedures.				
(h) Electrical emergencies.				
(i) Emergency planning.				
(j) Emergency response to fire scene.				
(k) Entry into buildings (including rescue).				
(l) Managing and tracking firefighters at an emergency incident (accountability).				
(m) Exposure to blood borne pathogens and reporting system.				
(n) Firefighter training standard.				
(o) Fire suppression – vehicle.				
(p) Ground ladders.				
(q) Hazardous materials and substances.				
(r) Hose.				
(s) Hydrants.				
(t) Incident Management System.				
(u) Incident safety.				
(v) Medical examinations and health monitoring (i.e. hearing test, lung function, etc.).				
(w) Health and safety provisions during salvage and overhaul, specifically:				
o Air quality				
o Physical condition of firefighters				
o Site structure stability				

	Non-Compliant	Compliance Pending	Fully Compliant	N/A
(x) Manage stress arising from an incident that is likely to cause adverse health effects to firefighters.				
(y) Personal protective equipment.				
(z) Rescue team.				
(aa) Respiratory protection program.				
(bb) Safety.				
(cc) Self-contained breathing apparatus.				
(dd) Special operations such as:				
○ Hazardous materials				
○ Confined space				
○ First responder				
○ Auto extrication				
○ High angle				
○ Trench or excavation				
○ Swift water				
○ Flat water				
○ Ice rescue				
○ Building collapse				
(ee) Buildings seven stories up or higher				
(ff) Firefighting underground.				
(gg) Firefighting over water.				
(hh) Traffic control at incidents.				
(ii) Use of alcohol and drugs.				
(jj) Vehicle air brake systems.				
(kk) Vehicle response safety.				
(ll) Operating vehicles in emergencies, including mandatory use of seat belts.				
(mm) Operating vehicles in non-emergency situations including mandatory use of seat belts.				
(nn) Personal accountability system.				

	Non-Compliant	Compliance Pending	Fully Compliant	N/A
(oo) Effective voice communication with firefighters inside buildings.				
(pp) Water supplies.				
(qq) Wildland/urban interface.				
(rr) Work site safety.				
(ss) Investigation of accidents.				
(tt) Occupational Health and Safety Program.				
(uu) Supervision of workers.				
18) Are SOPs or SOGs specific to the regulatory bylaw that define the extent of involvement of firefighters in the following types of incidents? If so, list the SOP or SOG.				
FIRE				
○ Wildland				
○ Structure				
○ Multi-story				
○ Involving hazardous materials				
○ Offensive or defensive firefighting				
○ Response out of district				
○ Mutual aid				
○ MEDICAL				
○ First responder level				
RESCUE				
○ Auto				
Water				
○ High angle				
○ Confined space				
○ Hazardous materials				
19) Are SOPs, SOGs, and policies dated and signed by the current Fire Chief?		NO		YES

# Firefighters

Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission  
Northwest Territories and Nunavut

WSCC Emergency Reporting  
24-hour Incident Reporting Line

**1 800 661-0792**

**WSCC**



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