

# New Firefighter Health and Safety Policy

## Statement of Intent

The health and safety of new members of any fire department providing fire and emergency services to the Municipality of the County of Kings is based upon the expectation that every person attains an appropriate level of competency in the duties and tasks they are expected to perform as a firefighter before they engage in those duties.

## Enabling Legislation

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) Section 294 – Registration of a Fire Department establishes the requirement that a fire department register with the municipality it serves. Upon receiving a registration form declaring the services a fire department offers to provide, a municipality's responsibility in accepting that registration is established in Item 3 which states:

- *The Municipality is satisfied the fire department is capable of providing the services it offers to provide. (MGA – Section 294, Registration as a Fire Department, 2A)*

The specifics on the manner in which a municipality must be “satisfied” is provided in the MGA Appendix for Part 10 – Fire and Emergency Services. The appendix provides a sample registration form and describes the level of detail necessary for registration as follows;

- *Registration must include the list of equipment, education, training, and experience that enables the fire department to provide the services.*

To summarize current legislation, the purpose of municipal registration is establishing the levels of service a fire department offers to provide so that the Municipality can determine and choose the services it needs and can afford. Registration also places a responsibility on the Municipality to “satisfy” itself that each fire department has the necessary equipment and each firefighter attains the appropriate level of competency to perform the duties and functions it registers to provide.

To further assist municipal registration review, firefighter competency is defined in *NFPA 1500: Firefighter Occupational Health and Safety Reference Guide for Nova Scotia*, issued in 2003. The Office of the Fire Marshal and the Fire Services Association of Nova Scotia jointly created this firefighter health and safety reference guide, modeled on the NFPA 1500 Standard, defining a competent person as;

*“A person who is qualified because of that person’s education, training, and experience to do the assigned work in a manner that will ensure the health and safety of the individual firefighter and every other person providing fire and emergency services”. Nova Scotia Update, 2003, NFPA 1500; Section 1.5 Definitions*

As presented, both the MGA and provincial NFPA 1500 Health and Safety Reference Guide establishes the fundamental principle that all firefighters must be educated, trained, and provided ongoing professional development appropriate to the duties and tasks they are expected to perform.

The education and training necessary for a firefighter to attain the appropriate level of competency places a responsibility on the fire department to provide training that is suitable and appropriate to the types of services they registered to provide. Equally, each firefighter is responsible to engage in the education and training programs offered through their fire department. As education and training are delivered over time, a firefighter should perform only those duties for which they are trained. When training has not prepared a firefighter for a task or emergency, each firefighter has a right to refuse any work they consider to be unsafe. In Nova Scotia, unsafe work is defined as work for which a person feels they are not adequately trained or do not have the appropriate equipment. The principle that all firefighters must be educated and trained coupled with the right to refuse unsafe work is an integral part of this policy.

## **Health and Safety of New Firefighters**

This policy establishes that every registered fire department endeavours to provide adequate and timely education and training of all new members appropriate to the services each firefighter is expected to perform.

This policy further establishes that it is not appropriate or acceptable for any new firefighter to perform any duty at any fire or emergency operation for which they are not educated, trained, or equipped to provide. Fire and emergency services include, but are not limited to;

- Structural Firefighting – Offensive or Defensive
- Medical Response
- Hazardous Materials, Ice and Cold Water Rescue, and Rope Rescue responses
- Motor Vehicle Accidents, especially Highway Traffic Control and Management

## **Responsibilities**

The methods to achieve the intent of this policy are the responsibility of each fire department. The education and training program should be described in the fire departments health and safety guidelines. The responsibility to review and approve funding for a health and safety program as intended by this policy is that of the Municipality.

## **Education and Training Curriculum**

This policy further establishes that each fire department endeavours to follow an accredited education and training program for the health and safety of new firefighters. Recommended training materials are those available through the Nova Scotia Firefighters School, *Essentials of Basic Firefighting and Fire Department Deployment*, latest edition, the provincial *Fire and Emergency Services Traffic Management Guideline*, and *NFPA 1500; Nova Scotia Fire Department Health and Safety Reference Guide* available through the Office of the Fire Marshal.

**End of Policy**