

Meeting Minutes

Ontario Fire Service Advisory Committee (Section 21 Committee)

Thursday, February 29, 11:00 am – 4:30 pm

Friday, March 1, 8:30 am – 10:00 am (GTAA Fire Station Tour at 10:00 am)

Meeting Held In-Person at 2025 Courtneypark Dr East, Mississauga, ON L5T 1J3

Attendance:

Rob Grimwood	O AFC – Committee Co-Chair
Dan Worrall	OPFFA – Committee Co-Chair
John Plater	OPFFA
Adam Neal	OPFFA
Tim Sparks	OPFFA
Harry Baranik	O AFC
Aaron Burr ridge	O AFC
Jeff Kirk	O AFC
Cathy Hoffman	AMO (Virtual day 1) (Absent day 2)
Doug Kellam	Volunteer Firefighter
Andrew King	Volunteer Firefighter
John Snider	Office of the Fire Marshal (observer) (Absent day 2)
Erica Arsenault	MLITSD
Patricia Clausen	PSHSA (Facilitator)
Kayla Thomson	PSHSA (Minutes)

Regrets:

Mark Pankhurst AMO

Guests:

Rebecca Mukuna MLITSD Policy Advisor

Thursday, February 29, 11:00 am – 4:30 pm

Greetings – R. Grimwood

- R. Grimwood greeted the committee.
- The committee discussed locations of future meetings since the previous space will no longer be available. R. Grimwood suggested the possibility of hosting in Mississauga. P. Clausen also informed the committee that PSHSA head office in North York has a conference room and large training room we could potentially use if there is no training scheduled for meeting dates.
- For June, A. Burr ridge volunteered Ajax and the committee approved. Location details have been sent to the committee.

ACTION: K. Thomson to update future meeting invites to include that locations are to be determined and will continue to update as locations are finalized.

Review of Minutes from November 2023 Meeting – D. Worrall

- No changes.

Ministry Updates for Guidance Notes – E. Arsenault

- E. Arsenault informed the committee that 6-46 is now live and available for viewing online.
 - Update for the minutes: 6-46 is currently unavailable for viewing. We are hoping for an update during the June meeting.
- E. Arsenault informed the committee that 6-40 is in the process of going live.
 - Update for the minutes: Guidance note [6-40 Working at Heights](#) is now available.
- E. Arsenault also updated the committee on a new charting process to track changes to guidance notes.

Guidance Note Comments – E. Arsenault

Air Monitoring

- The committee approved the comment of updating the guidance note to reflect that volunteer departments must complete bump testing each and every time.
- The committee discussed different types of situations where you may not do bump testing such as when using CO detection devices that constantly monitor, among others.

Firefighter Safety Around Rail Lines

- This guidance note received a few comments, one in particular from a locomotive engineer referencing the Canadian Rail Operating Rules.
- The committee agreed that the rules mentioned in their guidebook should be what the guidance note has. If that's what conductors and rail staff are expecting of fire services, we should be doing that.
- The committee agreed that the verbiage "The Canadian Rail Operating Rules recommends" would be good for use in the guidance note.
- The committee discussed considerations for additional context within the note including the addition of a risk assessment and proceeding with caution. The committee agreed that just because a call was made to the rail company, does not mean all rail traffic was stopped. Firefighters still need to be on high alert of their surroundings.

ACTION: R. Grimwood completed edits during a committee break. E. Arsenault to send out for comment.

Live Fire Training

- Typo found. The committee agreed to make the change.
- The committee discussed the expenses of equipment and what is considered a priority for all firefighters to have during training, including the utmost importance of having a radio in case they are in distress. There have been situations in the past where not all firefighters had a way to communicate. When you are stuck with no way of asking for help, injuries or death can happen.
- Other comments submitted were to help with clarity. The committee approved of most of these comments, and they are reflected in the update.
- NFPA 1043 to be added to the references.

Marine Vessel

- Committee approved of the suggestions submitted.

Unsheltered encampments

- The Committee accepted the change regarding fire investigators and inspectors being at encampments with their individual appropriate PPE because both roles have different

PPE. The committee will continue as a practice to separate the distinct titles in future guidance notes.

- The committee also agreed on the addition of “Included but not limited to” terminology being used.
- Another comment received included a full rewrite. The committee agreed to move the decision on this guidance note to the next meeting.

ACTION: H. Baranik, D. Kellam and J. Plater will do side by side to review the rewrite changes submitted and provide an update to the committee during the next meeting.

New Guidance Notes

3-3 Update Station Wear/Thermal Load/Breathability – T. Sparks/A. Burridge

- Committee went over the updates to the draft guidance note.
- Add [3-6 Polyfluorinated alkyl substances \(PFAS\) awareness](#) guidance note to the related section and reference to Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)’s [heat stress awareness guide](#).
- The committee also discussed adding verbiage to the note about an operating guide to help firefighters understand and alleviate heat and cold stress.

ACTION: T. Sparks and A. Burridge to make the above changes to the guidance note and submit to E. Arsenault for posting.

Unprotected Lightweight Construction – J. Snider

- Update to verbiage from should to shall.
- Change reference from OFMEM to OFM.

ACTION: E. Arsenault to make changes and send for posting

Cancer Communications Working Group – P. Clausen/K. Thomson/R. Grimwood/C. Hoffman/M. Pankhurst

- No update at this time from the working group. Meetings have fallen behind but they are looking to schedule a meeting between now and the June meeting.
- D. Worrall presented a report from the OPFFA titled “Advocacy for early disease detection and prevention”. The working group is looking to create a one-page infographic with cancer information similar to the above.
- E. Arsenault noted that they have a spreadsheet indicating incident reports to the ministry. This information can be discussed at meetings from now on surrounding what is currently happening. Unfortunately, these numbers only reflect reports from the ministry level, not WSIB claims.

ACTION: D. Worrall to join the working group. K. Thomson to schedule a meeting with the working group between now and June to discuss next steps.

PFAS Discussion – All

- The committee discussed the need for PFAS free firefighting foam and how the ones that claim to be PFAS free don’t seem to work as well.
- The committee also discussed what their individual departments use.
- R. Grimwood suggested finding out what foam the rail lines use as it could be PFAS free.
- A. Neal spoke about how Mississauga is currently testing certain equipment (station wear, helmet liners, gloves, etc.). Samples are being taken to a lab for various tests and

they will be getting back results with what chemicals are in those items and what the chemicals found mean for humans. This will give them clarity on what they surround themselves with and it gives them the opportunity to see how they could make the equipment safer.

PSHSA Update – P. Clausen

PSHSA provided updates on a few new offerings from PSHSA and a research opportunity from Queens University

Enabling Mental Illness Prevention in First Responder Workplaces (EMIP)

- Free sessions and resources:
 - **Course:** “[Managing Mental Health Stay at Work and Return to Work in First Responder Organizations](#)” This one-day course helps supervisors build a toolkit of resources to support healthy, safe and successful stay-at-work and return-to-work following an absence due to a mental health condition.
 - **Course:** “[R2 for Leaders – Building Resilient Organizations](#)” This one-day program helps organizational leaders understand what resilience is and how qualities for resilience can be used to increase organizational capacity and integrated within prevention programs to build a resilient organization.
 - **Assessment:** “[Occupational Stress Injury Resiliency \(OSIR\)](#)” Need help monitoring your organization's psychological health and safety efforts? PSHSA has the tool for you! The OSIR tool is a purpose-built and practical assessment that helps organizations understand risks for occupational stress injuries, identify approaches to build resilience and guide workplace psychological health strategy and action planning. For more information you can email OSIR@pshsa.ca.
- Not directly related to PSHSA but they wanted to share a Queens University research opportunity:




Research opportunity

- Participation will require a senior leader from each participating public safety organization whose role will be to:
 - share knowledge of how organizational factors are addressed within their organization
 - assist with recruitment of employees for surveys and focus groups
 - sharing of employee Wellness and work outcome data
 - providing consent for WSIB to share workers compensation data with the research team
- For more information contact Dr. Megan Edgelow at 613-533-6000 ext. 75593
workandmentalhealth@queensu.ca



Public Safety Personnel Mental Wellness: The Impact of Organizational Factors



Purpose of Research Study
To build an understanding of how **organizational factors** impact public safety personnel **mental wellness and work outcomes**.

Target Population
10 public safety organizations in Ontario, stratified across sectors and geographic contexts.

Commitment
Employers taking part in study will participate in **structured interviews** (90 minutes). Employees will complete **surveys** and participate in optional **focus groups** (90 minutes). Employee wellness and work outcome data will be collected from employers along with worker's compensation claim data from WSIB.

Compensation
Employees who take part in this research by completing a survey will be entered to win a \$50 gift card. Two gift cards per organisation.

The main goal of this study is to build an understanding of how organizational factors impact public safety personnel's mental wellness and work outcomes. The four study objectives are:

- Determine the ways that public safety organizations in Ontario currently address organizational factors.
- Explore public safety personnel experiences of their organizations efforts to address organizational factors.
- Quantify the impact of organizational factors on public safety personnel's mental health and work outcomes.

- Develop a tool for public safety organizations to assess how effectively they address organizational factors and the potential impact of their efforts on employee mental Wellness and work outcomes.
 - Email workandmentalhealth@queensu.ca.
- Comments from the committee:
 - D. Worrall noted O AFC could help in promotion of PSHSA’s free course offerings. J. Snider also noted OFM could as well.
 - J. Snider on mental health secretariate in relation to PSHSA’s mental health course offerings: There is a commitment of just over 500k being spent right now on initiatives like: Peer support for chiefs, access to resilient minds for those who can’t afford it, Ontario Psychology Association to have special training for their therapists about the fire service and supporting O AFC in getting their peer support program up and running.

OPFFA Update – D. Worrall

- Outreach for blood screening is still being worked through.
- A professor at UIT spoke about cognitive abilities and heat stress. OHCOW has the calculations, but NIOSH has an app that locates where you are and pulls data for a better insight. They are looking to combine those data points and create one for firefighters wearing bunker gear so an accurate test can be had for climate inside of the gear.
- Firewell research is looking for any department to come in and do face mapping for N95 masks and fit. Please reach out to rachel.tyli@ontariohealth.ca to learn more and express interest.

O AFC Update – R. Grimwood

- Attended Queen’s Park met with the Solicitor General and spoke about fire department funding and the large difference in funding provided to police versus fire services.
- They spoke of wildlife firefighting and how fire season is getting longer and more serious. A lot of local fire services are not trained for or have the experience or equipment for fighting wildfires, but are being relied on more frequently.

Coroner LODD Process Update – D. Worrall/J. Snider

- The committee discussed how all the info is there, but where does the committee go next? The idea of a subcommittee to look at the info was suggested, especially since the committee is mentioned in the process.
- There is an issue where a coroner might not flag an individual as a firefighter unless the family specifically says it.
- This is a trial with the coroner’s office. Ad hoc terms of reference for use.

New Business

Response to Electrical Emergencies – J. Snider

- A 10-year cycle for the electrical safety handbook is being worked through and there have been conversations with ESA about revisions, but there is lots of work ahead.
- There needs to be more of a focus on electrical safety within all fire departments for new recruits. Some departments have specific training, but most do not, and if they do, it’s minimal. This is not just an issue with firefighters though, this is an awareness issue across the board.

Slow Down Move Over Updates – Dan

- Currently there is an environmental scan happening of the slow down move over law. This scan involves discussion with other provinces about speed reduction and if the number of injuries and near misses saw improvement.
- The Ministry may have stakeholders look at the law. It's scheduled for the summer so hopefully changes will be put through in the fall.

Skin Cancer Updates – D. Worrall

- There is an app D. Worrall discovered that allows you to take a picture of your skin and AI will flag if the picture is concerning or not. From there you can schedule doctors' and specialists' appointments. They have done some testing through their service, and they have had success.
- The app uses WSIB and gets paid by OHIP and is covered under telehealth.
- D. Worrall is getting more info and if there can be a training tool created for the service.
 - If you are interested in learning more and downloading the app, [please visit the Skinopathy website](#).

Hamilton Medical Surveillance Tour – J. Plater and D. Worrall

- J. Snider and D. Worrall went to Hamilton to see what they do for medical surveillance. Essentially, they fill out questionnaires for mental health and do regular testing. Overall, it looks like a great program and to get approvals for funding and such, they need to provide some sort of ROI. This is a great example for that.

Firefighter Representation on the Committee

- Wildland, industrial, airport, etc. firefighters are welcome to join as guests or observers.
- Committee discussed the idea of setting aside a day of our meeting to discuss their issues.

Friday, March 1, 8:30 am – 10:00 am (Tour at 10:00 am)

Lithium-Ion Guidance Notes – E. Arsenault

Batteries

- The committee discussed small changes to grammar and clarity.

Energy Storage Systems

- The committee discussed small changes to grammar and clarity and a thorough breakdown of some of the content into a more digestible copy.
- Context for certain terminology was added.
- The committee discussed removing bullets that reference vehicles specifically. There is a [separate guidance note for vehicles \(6-19\)](#).

ACTION: A. Neal and D. Kellam to do side by side with 6-19 and this storage device guidance note.

Policy Update – R. Mukuna

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act Amendments

- On November 14, 2023, Bill 149 (Working for Workers Four Act, 2023) was introduced in the Legislature.
- The proposed changes to Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 are set out in Schedule 4 of Bill 149.

- The proposed changes would allow for “super indexing” increases to Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits above the annual rate of inflation to increase pay for injured workers, along with improving cancer coverage for firefighters.
- The Bill is currently before the Legislature and is posted on the [Legislative Assembly site](#).
- Questions:
 - What happens to existing helmets?
 - A firefighting helmet is different from a water rescue helmet. Intent is to say to a fire chief that they can’t just buy a regular firefighting helmet, there are different standards that send you to different helmets for different circumstances, you can’t just use the same one because it can’t protect you in the same way for different jobs.
 - You can buy NFPA approved helmets, but a firefighting helmet isn’t appropriate for technical rescue.
 - Housekeeping items are also to be fixed on their end.
 - Are multiple sets of bunker gear needed?
 - Properly fitted bunker gear is important as well as having offset sizes to fit anyone. We don’t want anyone getting injured as a result of wearing bunker gear that doesn’t fit them. The majority of departments don’t have second sets of bunker gear for everyone, but there tends to be spare gear in all different sizes as back up.
 - We aren’t saying you need second sets, but we are saying that you can’t have people wear contaminated gear.
 - Drying rack = 5 hours drying time. No drying rack = 24 hours
 - Unhidden costs throughout all sectors. It’s not just the fire service that has this issue (I.E. even working at heights. They must replace gear every few years depending on manufacturers recommendations).
 - Aerial devices, do they meet the requirements?
 - They all meet requirements. You cannot buy a fire truck in Canada that does not meet standards. Even if you buy in the US, it must meet our standards before use.
 - What is an accountability and entry control system?
 - Accountability systems track which firefighters are on the scene. And entry control systems track which firefighters are working in an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) area, who they are working with, what task they are performing and how long they have been using their air supply.
 - These systems are used to manage a firefighter emergency/mayday.
 - When you mean disaster planning, we think public emergency. Is this public or staff?
 - Public emergency. D. Worrall also pointed out that the section mentioning this can be removed now.
- There will be a working group meeting (R. Grimwood, D. Worrall, A. Burrige, D. Kellam and E. Arsenault) to answer any questions from R. Mukuna.

ACTION: R. Mukuna to send questions to working group. Working group to meet and discuss questions and get back to R. Mukuna in writing.

2024 Meeting Dates

June 13 and 14, 2024 – Ajax (Location details sent to committee)

September 16 and 17, 2024 – TBD

November 28 and 29, 2024 – TBD