

Operating Guideline # 827

Minimum Staffing

December 12, 2024



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to outline initial response staffing minimums before vehicles depart the station.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

Ontario does not have legislation that mandates a minimum number of firefighters on a fire truck. However, the Fire Marshal's office has provided guidance on the minimum number of firefighters that should be on a fire truck in Ontario:

For initial response "A minimum of four firefighters is considered a self-sufficient unit that can perform many emergency response tasks without additional resources."

For fire suppression the fire marshal communicate has said "Initial crews with fewer than four firefighters should not attempt interior suppression or rescue operations, except in limited circumstances."

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710 standard is used to determine how to properly staff fire trucks, fire halls, and ambulances. This standard recommends that fire engines and ladders should have a minimum of four firefighters.

A number of court decisions have recognized that while firefighting is one of the most dangerous occupations in North America, firefighters should be provided the safest possible working environment. Thus, staffing affects not only the public safety but also the safety of firefighters and as such is a condition of employment.

In Corporation of the City of Owen Sound and Owen Sound Professional Fire Fighters Association (International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 531), 2020 Carswell Ont 1124 (rendered January 27, 2020), a majority of a Board of Arbitration (Board) chaired by Arbitrator Slotnick granted the City's proposal to decrease the minimum number in the staffing provision to four was granted.

Keeping the above in mind, Muskoka Lakes must have a minimum safe level of firefighters respond to varying degrees of fire incidents. We also must defend the need for 4 seating and 5 seating apparatus that we need to perform our duty effectively.

GUIDELINE:

General

1. Responses in any four, five, six seating pumper or tanker will only commence once three firefighters are on board, one having the proper and valid license classification for the vehicle.
2. Responses in any two, three seating pumper or tanker will only commence once two firefighters are on board or more, one having the proper and valid license classification for the vehicle.

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3. Responses in any rescue or command vehicle will only commence once two firefighters are on board, one having the proper and valid license classification for the vehicle.
4. Responses in any fire boat or rescue boat will only commence once two firefighters are on board, all having the proper license classification for the vessel (PCOC) and are wearing PFD's and can swim.
5. Responses in any fire department ATV will only commence with one firefighter that has the proper training for the ATV documented by the training department. The second firefighter may have to stay back to allow a paramedic to attend with the driver firefighter.
6. The only exceptions to the above must be announced and approved on the radio system by the fire chief or designate and will be subject to review at a later date.
7. Responses in Chief Cars may commence with one on board.

RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of all members to comply with the provisions of this guideline 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.

REFERENCES:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (RSO 1990, c. 0.1)
- S.21 Committee Guidance Note 2-01 Incident Command
- S.21 Committee Guidance Note 2-02 the Buddy System
- S.21 Committee Guidance Note 2-03 Communications
- S.21 Committee Guidance Note 2-04 Incident Safety Officer
- S.21 Committee Guidance Note 6-11 Rapid Intervention Teams
- Fire Command, The Essentials of Local IMS, Second Edition, Alan Brunacini