



Division 08 **Health and Safety**

Chapter 18 – Safety and Investigation Team

March 2009

POLICY

This General Order shall establish a Safety Investigation Team and the procedures for conducting an investigation of a serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious departmental accident.

DEFINITIONS

Serious Injury- An injury sustained by a member of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department that could result in a loss of life, permanent disability, extended hospital treatment, or a prolonged recuperative period.

Serious Accident – A vehicle accident causing a serious injury, fatality, or excess vehicle damage.

Safety Investigation Team (SIT)- A designated team of individuals, appointed by the Fire Chief to conduct an investigation of the cause and circumstances of a situation that results in serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious accident. The responsibility shall include collecting and reviewing information on the incident, developing reports on causal factors, and making recommendations for policy and procedural changes intended to reduce the possibility of future occurrences.

The SIT is comprised of:

- Departmental Safety Officer (Chairperson) or Designee
- Emergency Operations Command Major or Designee

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Supervisor (or on-duty EMS officer at the time of the incident investigation)
- Fire investigator
- Local 1619 Representative (company level officer)
- A Volunteer Safety Officer
- Other individuals assigned by the Fire Chief with special qualifications

PROCEDURES

1. Goals

The goals of the Safety Investigation Team are:

- To determine the direct and indirect causal factors that resulted in a serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious accident in order to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature, including:
 - Identifying inadequacies involving apparatus, equipment, protective clothing standard operating procedures, supervision, training, or performance.
 - Identifying situations that involve an unacceptable risk.
 - Identifying previously unknown or unanticipated hazards.
 - Identifying actions that must be taken to address problems or situations discovered in the investigation.



- To ensure that the lessons learned from the investigation are effectively communicated to prevent occurrences of a similar nature.
- To satisfy the requirements of the Public Safety Officer Benefit Program and other entitlements.
- To ensure that the incident and all related events are fully documented and evidence is preserved to provide for additional investigation or legal actions at a later date.
- To establish a custodian of documents or evidence and maintain a chain-of – custody.
- To utilize the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team (CISD) to work through issues with those involved.

The Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department will conduct an investigation of all serious injuries and line-of-duty fatalities utilizing the SIT. The Fire Chief may also direct the SIT to investigate incidents where no injury occurred, but where the potential for serious injury or death existed.

The Safety Officer must be notified immediately when an employee suffers a critical injury or a service connected death.

The SIT will be mobilized immediately when a serious injury or line-of-duty death occurs. The Manager of the Risk Management Office (RMO) will serve as the team leader, unless specifically designated otherwise by the Fire Chief

All reports and recommendations, including the development of information that will reduce the occurrences of future incidents of a similar nature, will be submitted to the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief will determine how and when the report will be released. The

information developed by the SIT may be used for training and safety bulletins.

2. General Provisions

The Manager of RMO will mobilize the SIT when notified by Public Safety Communications (PSC) of a service connected serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious accident involving an employee or member of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.

The team will meet at a location designated by the team leader, usually the incident scene.

The first arriving SIT member will report to the Incident Commander and ensure that the scene is properly secured as soon as the incident is under control. The SIT shall receive the full cooperation of the Incident Commander.

The SIT shall conduct preliminary interviews and take statements from all personnel involved in the incident. All personnel shall cooperate with the SIT during the investigation. Failure to cooperate or interference with the investigation will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.

The on-duty EMS supervisor will establish a liaison with the receiving hospital and request appropriate tests (i.e., blood gases, toxicology, etc.), when required.

The SIT will impound and secure all protective clothing, SCBA, communication and other records, tapes, dispatch reports, incident reports, injury or casualty reports, and all other evidence or information that is pertinent to the investigation.

The scene should be photographed and diagrammed as soon as possible photographs



and drawings shall be delivered to the team leader.

A final report of the incident will be prepared by the SIT for the Fire Chief. This shall be accomplished in a timely fashion, but not rushed so as to ensure a proper analysis of all information. The elements of the report may include, but are not limited to, those items outlined in Attachment I.

The Fire Investigations office will assign an investigator to assist and maintain a liaison. The SIT will cooperate with Fire Investigations and any other law enforcement agency involved in fire-cause determination or criminal investigations related to the incident.

The SIT will report directly to the Fire Chief: through the team leader. During the initial stages and throughout the entire course of the investigation, the SIT will:

- Cooperate with the Incident Commander
- Recommend the use of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team (CISDT)
- Utilize land line communication, as much as possible, to reduce radio traffic regarding the effected personnel.
- Issue no public statements unless directed and approved by the Fire Chief

REFERENCES

N/A

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

N/A