

# ***The Need for Awareness!!***

## **Ministry of Labour Fire Service Section 21 Committee**

The Ministry of Labour Fire Service Section 21 Committee is formed under the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario. The committee deals with the specific Health and Safety needs of the fire service in Ontario. The OH&S Act does not always fit with what we do in the fire service, the committee deals with these situations.

The committee is comprised of: 4 OAFC Reps ; 4 OPFFA reps; 2 FFAO Reps; 2 AMO Reps. The committee also has a Ministry of Labour Provincial Specialist and a representative from the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office. The committee operates like a workplace Health and Safety committee with a co-chair from Management and Labour.

The committee develops Guidance Notes for specific tasks that are unique to the fire Service, and that the OH&S Act would not cover properly. The committee also advises the Minister of Labour regarding the Health & Safety issues in the fire Service. The Guidance Notes once passed by the committee and put out to the fire service will be the minimum that a Fire Department should be performing too. The Ministry of Labour Inspectors will be using the Guidance Notes in the enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act through inspections and accident investigations.

All Fire Departments must adhere to the Occupational Health and Safety Act including the Guidance Notes. If they fail to meet the requirements under the act, the worker, Supervisor, deputy chiefs, chiefs and upper management of the municipality may face penalties of fines and/or jail time. If the infraction is severe enough they may be criminally charged under Bill C45 for the failure to protect a worker.

It has come to the attention of the Section 21 committee that some Fire Departments do not know what the committee is, and are not following the Health and Safety guidance that is provide by the committee. This is a warning that all departments must follow the Act and Guidance Material set

out by the Ministry. The Fire Departments should have in place Standard Operating Guidelines or Standard Operating Procedures. These need to be updated and made aware to the personnel. The SOG's/ SOP's must be followed at all times even in training.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact myself or any other member of the S21 Committee.

Darren Storey  
Health and Safety Representative for FFAO