

## FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE #1-1

### **ISSUE:    FIRE TRUCK OCCUPANT SAFETY** (previously known as DRESSING ON FIRE TRUCKS)

Collisions involving fire apparatus are a major cause of injury and death to firefighters.

Activities that require any occupant to leave their seated and belted position while riding on a moving vehicle, such as dressing in protective clothing, may result in serious injuries or death should the vehicle make a sudden stop or collide with other vehicles or stationary objects.

It is a good health and safety practice for apparatus occupants to remain seated, with the provided seat belt properly attached, until such time as the apparatus comes to a complete stop at the final destination.

There is an exemption in Regulation 613 (Seat Belt Assemblies) made under the Highway Traffic Act that states that a “firefighter occupying a seating position behind the driver’s cab in a fire department vehicle. ....is exempt” from wearing a seat belt “where the performance of work activities make it impracticable to wear a seat belt assembly”. However, the Section 21 Committee recommends as a good health and safety practice for seat belts to be worn while the vehicle is in motion. Employers would have to determine which work activities, if any, would exempt firefighters from wearing a seat belt.

Where firefighters are assisting Emergency Medical Services personnel in an ambulance attending to a patient, as stated above, the Section 21 Committee recommends as a good health and safety practice for seat belts to be worn while the vehicle is in motion. Employers would have to determine which work activities, if any, would exempt firefighters from wearing a seat belt.

In the event that an emergency incident is received when the fire truck is returning from an emergency or other duties that require the occupants to remove their seat belt and/or stand up to don bunker gear prior to responding, the vehicle should be safely pulled over to the side of the road and stopped to allow for the donning of the required protective equipment. Thereafter, it is a good health and safety practice for firefighters

to return to their respective seats and fasten their seat belts prior to continuing to the emergency response.

It is equally important that all items in the cab of every fire apparatus are positively restrained and secured at all times. Any item that is not properly secured and restrained will become a projectile in the event of a collision involving the fire truck. Fire departments should relocate any non-essential equipment out of the cab of fire trucks whenever possible.

Unrestrained SCBA can cause serious injury to vehicle occupants when the truck is involved in a collision. As required in Section 7 (4) of O. Reg. 714/94 (Firefighters - Protective Equipment), tools, self-contained breathing apparatus and other fire fighting equipment or paraphernalia carried in the cab of the fire truck shall be secured to fixed positions by positive mechanical means or stowed in compartments with positive latching doors.

All seat-mounted SCBA should remain restrained at all times in accordance with manufacturers' instructions when the vehicle is in motion. At no time should the cylinder restraint device be released until such time as the apparatus has come to a complete stop at the final destination.