

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 4-1

ISSUE: APPLICATION OF FIREFIGHTERS - PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT REGULATION

Ontario Regulation 714/94 “Firefighters – Protective Equipment” requires that firefighters who may be required to perform interior structural fire suppression duties be equipped with protective turn out clothing that meets or exceeds the requirements of CAN/CGSB 155.1-M88. This protective clothing commonly referred to as bunker clothing is primarily designed to protect firefighters during fire fighting operations.

There are good reasons at times for wearing bunker clothing for auto extrications, grass fires, medical emergencies and other responses. However, bunker clothing including other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may not be the most suitable protection for some activities particularly during the summer months. Joint Health and Safety Committees or Health and Safety Representatives should evaluate the appropriateness of using bunker clothing as PPE for non-fire incidents considering the potential for heat stress, reduced mobility and added weight. Where there is a regular need for PPE for which bunker clothing is adequate but not the most suitable, Joint Health and Safety Committees or Health and Safety Representatives should recommend alternative protection and guidelines for use.

It is not the intent of this Guidance Note to prohibit wearing of bunker gear during all non-fire fighting exercises. It is the intent of this Guidance Note to encourage Fire Departments to sit in consultation with their local Joint Health and Safety Committees or Health and Safety Representatives and agree on the operational guidelines of when and where bunker gear is to be worn and under what guidelines the Company Officer could exercise his/her own discretion.

When replacing protective turn out clothing it should be appropriately sized to the individual. CAN/CGSB 155.1-M88 addresses the criteria to ensure a proper fit.

The Fire Service Section 21 Committee recommends that fire departments, when purchasing new structural firefighting boots, gloves, protective hoods and head protection for structural firefighting, that the PPE meet NFPA 1971 – 2000 edition (Standard on Protective Ensemble for Structural Fire Fighting).