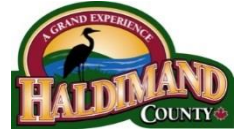

HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report HRD-04-2019 Health and Safety Policy and Program

For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 26, 2019



OBJECTIVE:

To inform Council of the County's 2018 health and safety performance, as well as to approve the 2019 Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report HRD-04-2019 Health and Safety Policy and Program be received;
2. AND THAT the 2019 Occupational Health and Safety Program be approved as outlined in Report HRD-04-2019;
3. AND THAT Policy No.2018-01 be rescinded and replaced with the 2019 Occupational Health and Safety Policy, as outlined in Attachment 5 to Report HRD-04-2019.

Prepared by: Katie Meyer, Health and Safety Coordinator

Reviewed by: Megan Jamieson, Director of Human Resources

Respectfully submitted: Cathy Case, General Manager of Corporate & Social Services

Approved: Donald G. Boyle, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The overall safety performance at Haldimand County continues to be successfully maintained, with slight changes, as new legislation has been introduced over the past few years. This confirms the County's safety programs are having the desired impact and the importance of continuing to adapt our safety programs as our workforce and legislation changes. In 2018, staff demonstrated ongoing commitment to the program by applying the principles of health and safety through prompt reporting of incidents, ongoing training efforts, safety discussions, Joint Health and Safety Committees, to name a few elements of the program.

The 2019 Occupational Health and Safety Program focuses primarily on physical and mental health strategies, with the goal of reducing occupational illness claims, including those claims related to emergency services workers' presumptive legislation – occupational cancers and occupational post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)/mental stress.

The 2019 Program also aims to mitigate the number of injuries/illnesses occurring within the County by: ensuring current policies/procedures/guidelines are effective and being enforced; utilizing the Joint Health and Safety Committee members to enhance health and safety culture; and continuing to train and engage all employees to further improve health and safety performance.

BACKGROUND:

Section 25(2)(j) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (the Act) requires employers to prepare and review, at least annually, a written Occupational Health and Safety Policy as well as to develop and maintain a health and safety program to implement that policy.

In 2018, Council approved the Occupational Health and Safety Policy contained in Report CS-HR-01-2018. In the same report, Council was informed that the 2018 health and safety program would continue with the development of health and safety policies and procedures, as well as the provision of a variety of health and safety related training, programs and communication initiatives. The current report provides a brief description of the results of those initiatives, as well as some statistics on overall health and safety performance of the various County operations in 2018.

Haldimand County is a Schedule 2 Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) employer, meaning that the County self insures the full cost of workplace injuries to our employees. As a result, it is imperative that the County has a strong health and safety program to minimize the risk and cost of workplace injury.

ANALYSIS:

2018 Health and Safety Initiatives:

In 2018, the following health and safety initiatives were undertaken:

1. Development and deployment of employee packages in the event of an incident/accident requiring medical attention. This streamlines the process for efficiency and consistency across all departments.
2. First responder staff and family members participated in a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symposium to raise awareness and educate those in high-risk jobs and their family members who can advocate for the first responder's health.
3. Updated Physical Demands Analysis at Grandview Lodge to align with current job duties.
4. Re-evaluated pre-hire physical exams with third party provider to better align with job requirements.
5. Developed new Cognitive Demands Analysis for various jobs to aid in the return to work process.
6. All County Joint Health and Safety Terms of Reference (4) were finalized, with Ministry approval, and implemented.
7. Grandview Lodge near miss forms pilot project implemented with success. This form is used to track resident behaviour for analysis by the JHSC to provide suggestions for approaching and dealing with difficult residents.
8. Ergonomic assessments conducted for both proactive and reactive. This year assessments were completed for administrative staff, kitchen and facilities maintenance staff.
9. Discomfort surveys and discussions took place with various Public Works staff to identify tasks which may place strain on the musculoskeletal system. Risk assessments were initiated to aid in education and recommendations to reduce the risk of injury. This new program will continue and will be enhanced through 2019.
10. Traumatic call/exposure reports completed for Emergency Services calls deemed as potentially traumatic (i.e. infant vital signs absent, fatality in motor vehicle accident, known patient fatality). In these cases, First Responders are debriefed on calls and assistance offered, as appropriate.

2018 Health and Safety Performance

a. Statistics Showing Performance

A statistical summary of the County's 2018 health and safety performance, broken down by Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) employee group, relative to previous years on record, is contained in the Attachments 1 to 4.

Attachment 1 provides a record of Lost Time Injury/Illness (where an employee sustained a work-related injury/illness which prevented them from attending work the day following the incident) by JHSC since 2005. The total number of incidents maintained at 10 incidents in 2018, as shown in the following table.

JHSC Group	2016	2017	2018
Fire	0	2	0
Paramedic Services	5	2	2
CUPE/Non-Union	2	4	3
Grandview Lodge	1	2	5
Total	8	10	10

It is worth noting a number of these lost time incidents are related to occupational illnesses including PTSD, mental stress and exposure to poisonous plants. On the latter, an immediate investigation into the location of poisonous plants was carried out with removal of identified plants to prevent any further exposures. Additional education and identification cards were provided to staff and students.

Attachment 2 shows the total number of Medical Aid Injury/Illness incidents (where an employee sustains a work-related injury, requiring medical attention from a healthcare professional, but is able to immediately return to work on regular or modified duties). The number of incidents has significantly decreased from 38 in 2017 to 23 in 2018. This suggests effectiveness of the County health and safety programs, which aid in the reduction of injuries requiring medical treatment.

Attachment 3 outlines the total number of Reportable Incidents First Aid/Near Miss (an unexpected event that may or may not have caused injury or damage, but did not require medical attention from a healthcare professional). The number of incidents increased from 48 in 2017 to 51 in 2018, but continues to remain lower than in previous years. Many of these events are near misses, which demonstrates that employees are becoming more aware of their need to report, and can lead to correcting hazards before a real accident can happen, which is encouraged as part of the program. Of particular note, there was an increase seen in relation to First Responders and nursing staff being affected by traumatic instances seen in their respective lines of work. They now have a comprehensive debriefing program in place and assistance through EAP is encouraged. This program will continue to be broadened and enhanced through the drafted 2019 plan.

Overall incident rates (combination of all three attachments) has seen a significant decrease in 2018 with 84 incidents from 96 in 2017. It is notable that this is one of the lowest years in the County's' history.

b. Cause / Type of Accidents

The cause/type of accidents that occurred in 2018 is provided in Attachment 4. It is important to note two specific areas, Overexertion/Strain/Sprain and Mental Health, which have significantly contributed to the 2019 plan. Other leading types of incidents include slip, trips and falls, lacerations, resident actions towards employees and occupational illness.

(I) Overexertion/strain/sprain

As demonstrated on Attachment 4, “Overexertion/strain/sprain” injuries (together with “slip, trips and falls”) were the most prevalent reported injury types in 2018. Based on the noted experience, as well as an advisor from the Ministry of Labour regarding upcoming “blitz on ergonomics”, the 2019 program proposes an extensive focus on mitigating overexertion/strain/sprain type injuries. Our approach will expand outside of the office environment to capture those working in the field and/or with equipment. A “hands-on” approach will be carried out in work locations to educate employees not only of the ergonomic principals, but how they are applied to the specific job tasks and/or equipment. With the JHSC participating in train the trainer ergonomic programs, an enhanced safety culture and internal responsibility system will grow.

(II) Mental Stress Claims

Previous reports to Council described provincially approved legislation impacting the claim, adjudication and entitlement of mental health conditions as an occupational illness.

Bill 163 (2016) created a presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosed in first responders is work related. Once a Paramedic or a Firefighter is diagnosed with PTSD by either a Psychiatrist or Psychologist, the employee becomes entitled to WSIB benefits, without the need to prove a causal link between PTSD and a workplace event. In 2018, the County saw its biggest impact to date with 4 active claims. We continue to monitor claims as they arise, and have learned that these claims are unpredictable and that the return to work is complex.

In response, at the end of 2018, the JHSC endorsed a program to document employees who attended traumatic calls to ensure proper follow ups are completed and monitoring can take place. Statistics have shown that co-workers and family members can often notice the change in the First Responder even before they do when it comes to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and therefore, this program aims at raising awareness of symptoms at the onset. The administration of this program is now underway.

Bill 127 (2017) and related WSIB policy provides for a diagnosed mental health claim to be compensable, where the illness has arisen over time, with some direct linkage to the workplace. To date the County has experienced two claims under this legislation at Grandview Lodge which contributed to their overall reported lost time and modified duties performance.

In response, the Grandview Lodge JHSC will explore ways to mitigate the risk of mental stress claims, both traumatic and chronic, in long term care.

Staff anticipate that incidents related to mental stress generally will continue to rise given focused efforts provincially and locally on awareness. All JHSC’s will focus on proactive measures, where appropriate, and ways to break the stigma of asking for help before it becomes a complex claim.

c. Return to Work Accommodations

Further to Attachment 1, the following table shows the overall lost time hours since 2009. It is evident that our lost time experience has significantly increased over recent years; however, if we analyze our experience, of the combined 4594.5 lost time hours, 4374.5 hours are related to PTSD claims. This means, with the exception of PTSD claims, we have seen a decrease in lost time claims to a total of 220 hours between all JHSC’s.

Lost Time Hours by JHSC			
	Paramedic Services	Fire	CUPE/Non-Union
2009	2,811	0	1,838.25
2010	435.5	0	174
2011	527.5	30	456.5
2012	435.5	0	174
2013	227	0	42.5
2014	24	160	25
2015	370.5	0	18.5
2016	406.5	0	66
2017	413.5	8	56
2018	2663.5 (2567.5 PTSD related)	0	1931 (1807 PTSD related)

Although Grandview Lodge statistics are not available at this time, we have implemented a method to track these hours in 2019.

d. *Modified Duties*

Modified duties are often approved to accommodate workplace injury related restrictions, in order that employees can return to work as early as appropriate. In these cases, an injured employee is brought back into work to perform alternate work duties while their regular position is being backfilled. If modified duties are not offered, and the employee is not able to work, then the number of lost time hours would be much higher. Additionally, any loss of earnings by virtue of the employee not being able to work as a result of a workplace injury, would need to be paid by the employer, plus a WSIB administrative fee (29.9% in 2018). Accordingly, offering modified duties encourages a cost-effective, safe and early return to work, allows the employee to remain engaged in the workplace, while also providing for meaningful work during their recovery. In 2018, 12 employees worked a total of 1018 hours on a modified duty basis, at a total cost of approximately, \$28,580, plus benefits. As shown in the table below, the 2018 modified work experience represented an improvement in lost time hours and most significantly an improvement in wage costs with a \$6,000 cost savings in 2018. Staff anticipate that 2019 will see an increase in modified work costs due to cases related to the PTSD presumptive and mental stress legislation, which may have an impact on these hours.

It is noteworthy that the hours worked on a modified basis following an injury varies by employee and can be categorized by division. Grandview Lodge contains the largest number of modified hours this year, up from last year, but still a big improvement from previous years. They continue to experience high numbers in modified work, likely due to the demanding tasks which may not be possible when physical restrictions present (ex. lifting restrictions), as well as 24/7 operational requirements. Accordingly Grandview Lodge has a comprehensive return to work program in place.

Modified Work Hours by JHSC				
	Paramedic Services	Fire	CUPE	Grandview
2009	980	1,141	2,193	6,626
2010	252	1,317	1,917	1,624
2011	374	735	48	1,437
2012	160	0	0	994
2013	672	463	28	1,914
2014	36	358	0	3,543
2015	768	0	19.5	1,022
2016	980	0	52	395
2017	234.5	35	11	1161
2018	234	0	68	716

Proposed 2019 Health and Safety Policy and Program:

Section 25(2)(j) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employers to review at least once annually, a written Occupational Health and Safety Policy as well as to develop a health and safety program to implement that policy.

A copy of the recommended 2019 Occupational Health and Safety Policy is included as Attachment #5. The JHSC Co-chairs, as well as the Senior Management team, have reviewed the Policy and have not recommended any changes over the currently approved 2018 Policy.

The proposed Health and Safety Program has been developed for 2019 in consultation with each of the JHSC's and those managers whose operations are directly impacted by the proposals. The initiatives focus on documenting health and safety practices, providing greater education to JHSC members to encourage them to be proactive in passing the knowledge in their work location, responding to changing legislation and promoting healthy practices to prevent injury or reduce time to recover from injury. Specifically, the following plan has been established:

1. Develop and role out an Ergonomics Program with a focus on Public Works to align with the Ministry of Labour blitz:
 - a. Develop a corporate ergonomics policy and program;
 - b. Conduct formal risk assessment on high risk activities;
 - c. Provide education to JHSC, Supervisors and staff through a train the trainer program.
2. Continue to research and implement a mental health prevention policy and program using the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace including training.
3. Create and formalize the following new policies and programs:
 - a. Fit for Duty
 - b. Claims Management Policy/Procedure including both occupational and non-occupational claims management practices.
4. Revise Employee Accident/Incident Reporting and Investigating Forms.

5. Continue to research and implement initiatives to address Volunteer Firefighter Presumptive Disability Claims and continue to research ways to minimize risk.
6. Ongoing research and initiatives to minimize the risk of First Responders developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as follows:
 - a. Expand exposure forms for all traumatic calls with ongoing follow up and tracking to identify first responders experiencing symptoms.
 - b. Develop a form to aid in claim management by providing education to those off work on what to expect with regards to ongoing benefits, seniority, letters and contact from Human Resources and the return to work opportunities available in Haldimand County.
 - c. Create an information page on the Staff Information Network (SIN) outlining resources available re: Boots on the Ground, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Peer Support.
 - d. Continue education regarding EAP at annual training sessions, education to families to aid in recognizing signs/symptoms and providing support.
7. Implement Health and Safety Training program to new supervisors, including those acting in supervisory roles.
8. Provide health and safety training to targeted groups by the Health and Safety Coordinator, via online training or facilitated professional.
9. Develop and deliver an interactive training for Facilities and Parks students (method implemented and successful in reducing incidents in the Community & Development Partnerships division.)

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed 2019 Occupational Health and Safety Program will not require any additional funds to implement as all anticipated expenditures can be accommodated within the base budget. Should an unexpected issue arise during the year that requires additional funds, a report will be submitted to Council for specific approval.

Approval of this report, specifically as it relates to the 2019 Policy and Program will meet Haldimand County's legal obligations under Section 25(2)(j) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Health and safety impacts all areas of the Corporation. Time will be required of Managers, Non-Union Supervisors, JHSC representatives and select employees to provide input to the preparation of risk assessments, development of policies/procedures and to participate in training and workplace inspections mandated by the County.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: Yes

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Total Number of Lost Time Accidents by JHSC from 2005-2018
2. Total Number of No Lost Time Accidents by JHSC from 2005-2018
3. Total Number of Incidents by JHSC from 2005-2018
4. 2018 Injuries by Cause
5. 2019 Proposed Occupational Health and Safety Policy