
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report HRD-01-2020 Health and Safety Policy and Program For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 4, 2020



OBJECTIVE:

To inform Council of the County's 2019 health and safety performance, as well as to approve the 2020 Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT HRD-01-2020 Health and Safety Policy and Program Report be received;
2. AND THAT the 2020 Occupational Health and Safety Program be approved as outlined in Report HRD-01-2020;
3. AND THAT Policy No. 2019-01 be rescinded and replaced with the 2020 Occupational Health and Safety Policy, as outlined in Attachment 5 to Report HRD-01-2020.

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Reviewed by: Megan Jamieson, Director of Human Resources

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

Approved: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, 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 2019, 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.

The 2020 Occupational Health and Safety Program focuses primarily on program review and mental health strategies, with the goal of reducing occupational illness and psychological injury claims; including those claims related to first responder presumptive legislation – occupational cancers and occupational post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)/mental stress.

The 2020 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; support is provided to staff to encourage discussion around mental health; 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 2019, Council approved the Occupational Health and Safety Policy contained in Report CS-HR-04-2019. In the same report, Council was informed that the 2019 health and safety program would continue with the development of health and safety guidelines, 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 2019.

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:

2019 Health and Safety Initiatives Undertaken:

In 2019, the following health and safety initiatives were undertaken:

1. Developed and deployed ergonomics guideline and ergonomics training to ensure compliance with the Ministry of Labour blitz and to address musculoskeletal disorders within the County (#1 injury within Haldimand County).
2. First responder staff 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. Provided mental health training to all managers and supervisors through The Working Mind Program with the Mental Health Commission of Canada. Following the training, significant work was done with individual supervisors to work through speaking with their staff and helping those remain at work with mental health conditions.
4. Delivered a Supervisor training program through Officer Development sessions to Captains, Acting Captains and District Chiefs to create awareness around their roles and responsibilities within the fire services, even as volunteers.
5. Each JHSC undertook a variety of program development and training opportunities. To highlight a few of their achievements:
 - a. Fire – development of a comprehensive decontamination program to minimize the risk of exposures to toxins following a fire.
 - b. GVL – extensive review of resident action forms to address the root cause of the behaviour, provide a more clinical approach, increase support to staff and develop actionable changes; this new process will begin its roll out in the first quarter of 2020.
 - c. CUPE/Non-union – deployment of the ergonomic program with the addition of the committee participating in a “train the trainer” program to bring further expertise to their work location.
 - d. Paramedics – carried out workplace violence and harassment risk assessments across all ambulance bases.

6. Developed and delivered an interactive training for Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries and Forestry Operations students recognizing the new generation of staff being hired and how they learn best. This method was first implemented and was proven successful in reducing incidents in the Community & Development Partnerships division, as well as increasing their comfort level with importance of health and safety on the job.
7. A significant number of ergonomic assessments were conducted for both proactive and reactive reasons. In particular, assessments were completed for garbage disposal activities within parks and facilities, food preparation activities in the kitchen for staff at Grandview Lodge and safe operation of snowplows.
8. Audiometric testing was completed for over 90 staff members resulting in increased awareness of the damaging effects of noise, locations of high noise areas and the proper use of hearing protection.
9. A Ministry of Labour (MOL) education session was held on the topic of working contractor safety to aid staff in properly managing contractors and reducing risk/liability to the County.
10. A needle stick and sharps safety program was deployed to Roads Operations, Facilities, Parks, Cemeteries and Forestry Operations staff on the safe handling and disposal of needles and sharps found in the community. In addition, this program was rolled out with a variety of Community groups to ensure the safety of our volunteers.
11. Significant work was done with community groups to address increased education around health and safety hazards to our volunteers, such as working on ladders and near the road allowance.

2019 Health and Safety Performance

a. Statistics Showing Performance

A statistical summary of the County's 2019 health and safety performance, broken down by Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) employee group, relative to previous years on record, is contained in 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) since 2005. The total number of incidents has increased from 10 incidents in 2018 to 15 in 2019, as shown in the following table.

JHSC Group	2017	2018	2019
Fire	2	0	0
Paramedic Services	2	2	5
CUPE/Non-Union	4	3	5
Grandview Lodge	2	5	5
Total	10	10	15

It is worth noting that a number of these lost time incidents are related to occupational illness/injuries, including psychological injuries, exposure to external factors (chemicals, illness, bees) and surgery (all 3 employees who required surgery had significant pre-existing conditions which were major contributing factors). On the latter, staff worked closely with the WSIB in an attempt to prove if the pre-existing was a major contributing factor (the injury would not have occurred at work without it) to limit claim entitlement under WSIB benefits.

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 is a record low, showing a decrease from 23 in 2018 to 18 in 2019. This suggests effectiveness of the County health and safety programs, which aid in the reduction of injury severity even with the increase to lost time claims.

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 51 in 2018 to 68 in 2019, but highlights the changes in our reporting protocol which is designed to eliminate the more complex and costly claims – psychological injuries. Many of these events are exposure reports where the employee exhibited symptoms following the exposure to the traumatic incident/call. It is noteworthy that Emergency Services experienced a particularly traumatic end to 2019, at which time significant work was put into supporting these employees to encourage them to remain engaged in the workplace. In addition, many of these are also near misses from GVL, which demonstrates that employees are becoming more aware of their need to report and participate in identifying triggers/care plan changes to resident action, as well as to identify hazards. Overall incident rates (combination of all three attachments) have seen an increase in 2019 with 91 incidents from 84 in 2018; however remains lower than historical experience. Education and support will continue to be provided to staff in an attempt to decrease the psychological injuries, which are a driving factor in the increase of incidents and costs.

b. Cause / Type of Accidents

The cause/type of accidents that occurred in 2019 are provided in Attachment 4. It is important to note two specific areas - Over exertion/strain/sprain and psychological injury/illness (includes PTSD, chronic/traumatic mental stress), which have significantly contributed to the 2020 plan. Other leading types of incidents include environmental exposures such as bee stings, heat stress and noxious weeds, as well as slips, trips and falls.

(I) Over exertion/strain/sprain

As demonstrated on Attachment 4, “Over exertion/strain/sprain” injuries were the most prevalent reported injury types in 2019. Staff developed an ergonomic guideline and training program through 2019 with a focused roll out to CUPE/Non-union staff. The training program educated supervisors, as well as engaged the JHSC in a ‘train the trainer’ program to ensure each division had someone knowledgeable when looking at equipment and processes. Staff provided a “hands-on” approach in work locations to educate employees not only of the ergonomic principles, but how they are applied to the specific job tasks and/or equipment. A Ministry of Labour audit was conducted in spring of 2019, where staff spent several days reviewing programs, accident investigations and observing work within Public Works Operations. Staff are happy to report the MOL made no recommendations, orders or fines, noting that Haldimand County has an effective program and thorough understanding of mitigating these hazards. Over exertion/strain/sprain continues to be the leading cause of injury across municipalities. As we prepare to move into the new Haldimand County Administration Building (HCAB), a great focus will continue with ergonomics for all staff, as well, we will continue to work through the ergonomics program with the Emergency Services and Grandview Lodge JHSC’s.

(II) Mental Stress Claims

Bill 163 (2016) created a presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosed in first responders is work related. Previous reports to Council described provincial legislation related to these types of claims. 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 which continued through 2019. In addition, Bill 127 (2017) introduced traumatic and chronic mental stress entitlement to first responders and front-line nursing staff. In 2019, we saw 3 new active claims (1 PTSD and 2 traumatic mental stress) and several closely monitored and supported employees to mitigate 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, in 2019 the County introduced, with endorsement from the Paramedic JHSC, a program to document employees who attend traumatic calls to ensure proper follow up is completed and monitoring can take place. Reports were 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 is offered, as appropriate. First responders are then monitored and flagged if repeated exposure reports are completed for the same individuals.

A new pay code was developed to monitor first responders who are sent home by the Deputy Chief, Paramedic Services or Chief, Emergency Services following a particularly traumatic incident. Typically, with a physical injury, we would require the individual to seek medical attention; however, sending a first responder to the hospital was found to be ineffective, especially at times where we might be sending the first responder to the same facility that they have just delivered an injured patient to. Instead, a debrief is carried out and arrangements made to ensure the first responder has the appropriate support in place when they arrive home. A total of 58.50 hours have been used by 7 employees resulting in a cost of \$2,331.27. It is important to note, the supportive environment which surrounds this program has been recognized by the WSIB for its efforts in creative and compassionate accommodation.

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 end the stigma of asking for help before it becomes a complex claim.

(III) Environmental Exposures: Noxious Weeds

Staff worked closely with the JSHC to develop a noxious weeds identification program, particularly to aid students and those not familiar to the known high-risk areas. In addition, staff will review protocols for early detection and noxious weed control in the spring.

Return to Work Accommodations

Further to Attachment 1, the following table shows the overall lost time hours since 2009. It is evident that the lost time experience has significantly increased over recent years; however, if analyzed, 68% of the combined 2941.50 lost time hours are related to psychological injury claims. It is evident that the spike in lost time hours over the past two years is directly linked to the legislative changes related to presumptive liability, mental health regulations and a better acceptance of mental health issues in general. It is also noteworthy that a significant number of lost time hours in 2019 were associated with 3 employees requiring surgery, all with pre-existing conditions, combined with a workplace incident (two

from exiting a vehicle and one from pushing a box with their foot). Despite the increase overall in recent years, the 2019 hours are a significant decrease of 1653 hours, from those reported in 2018.

Lost Time Hours by JHSC				
Year	Paramedic Services	Fire	CUPE/Non-Union	Grandview Lodge
2009	2,811	0	1,838.25	Hours not tracked
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 (96% PTSD related)	0	1931 (93% PTSD related)	
2019	1793 (84% PTSD related)	0	656.50 (35% PTSD related)	492 (53% mental health related)

c. 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 to 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. 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, in addition to a WSIB administrative fee. 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. As shown in the table below, the 2019 modified work experience increased as a result of promptly engaging staff in modified work or staff at work programs which have proven to increase the probability of returning in a full capacity. A large portion of the modified duties cost can also be attributed to employees with psychological injuries (captured in the 2018 lost time statistics) returning to accommodated work. Staff note that 2019 was a successful year in reducing lost time costs due to psychological claims, returning 4 front line workers with complex claims, ending 1 complex claim and mitigating the onset of extensive claims with several others. We anticipate that 2020 will bring additional modified work costs due to cases related to the PTSD presumptive and mental stress legislation, which may cause these hours to continue to trend upward.

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 an improvement from previous years. They continue to experience high numbers in modified work, likely due to the typical demanding tasks of the job, 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				
Year	Paramedic Services	Fire	Non-Union/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
2019	1148.50	0	891 (97% related to 1 PTSD claim)	1146.75

The 2019 Health and Safety Program has focused on providing greater education to JHSC members to encourage them to be proactive in passing on the knowledge of their work location, responding to changing legislation and promoting healthy practices to prevent injury or reduce time to recover from injury. Through the development of the Committee in Train the Trainer programs, Haldimand County successfully passed a large scale MOL blitz resulting in no orders and recognition for our effective H&S programs.

A new position commenced in fall of 2019, Employee Wellness Representative, which focuses on aiding supervisors in the administration/management of WSIB claims. In the spring of 2019 Grandview Lodge saw an almost complete change in management team (notably 42% of the injuries also occurred during this time). The WSIB process has recently been reassigned to the Human Resources division. Over the remainder of the year, staff worked with new supervisors and GVL staff to develop the process for managing claims. In 2020, the Employee Wellness Representative will develop a stronger presence and greater support in return to work throughout the corporation, including Grandview Lodge.

Proposed 2020 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 2020 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 recommended minor changes to align the health and safety language with that used in our programs and training, over the currently approved 2019 Policy.

The proposed Health and Safety Program has been developed for 2020 in consultation with each of the JHSC's and those managers whose operations are directly impacted by the proposals. The initiatives focus on reviewing health and safety practices and providing greater education to all staff on mental health and psychological injuries in the workplace, with a focus on the new HCAB. Specifically, the following plan has been established:

1. Conduct ergonomic assessments for all staff working in HCAB to promote proper use of adaptable workstations for the physical and psychological well-being of staff.
2. Continue implementing a mental health prevention program using the National Standard of Canada on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, including all staff training in The Working Mind.
3. With finance, conduct a WSIB actuarial study and propose strategies to ensure proper funding of future WSIB liabilities.
4. Develop Job Hazard Assessments (JHA) for all positions at Grandview Lodge to aid in the education and review of mitigation strategies related to job hazards.
5. Create and begin formalizing the following new policies and programs:
 - a. Fit for Duty
 - b. Needle sticks and Sharps
 - c. Claims Management Policy/Procedure including both occupational and non-occupational claims management practices.
6. Provide health and safety training to groups targeted by the Health and Safety Coordinator, via online training or facilitated by a professional.
7. Revise workplace inspection templates and investigate launching digital workplace inspections and tracking for future implementation.
8. Review and revise Health and Safety Policies and programs to reflect the changes within the Corporation and move towards a comprehensive health and safety manual.
9. Revise corporate health and safety orientation to address the organizational changes and opportunities to provide a more comprehensive training, particularly for those going into supervisory roles for the first time and/or in an “acting” capacity.
10. Continue to research and implement initiatives, as necessary, to address Volunteer Firefighter Presumptive Disability Claims and continue to research ways to minimize risk.
11. Continue ongoing research and initiatives, as necessary, to minimize the risk of First Responders developing psychological injuries/illnesses.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed 2020 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 2020 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 into the preparation of risk assessments, development of policies/procedures and participation 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 2006-2019
2. Total Number of No Lost Time Accidents by JHSC from 2006-2019
3. Total Number of Incidents by JHSC from 2006-2019
4. 2019 Injuries by Cause
5. 2020 Proposed Occupational Health and Safety Policy