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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report HRD-02-2025 Health and Safety Policy and Program  
For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 4, 2025

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## OBJECTIVE:

To inform Council of the County's 2024 health and safety performance, as well as to approve the 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report HRD-02-2025 Health and Safety Policy and Program be received;
2. AND THAT the 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Program be approved, as outlined in Report HRD-02-2025;
3. AND THAT Policy No. 2024-01 Occupational Health and Safety Policy be rescinded and replaced with the draft 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Policy as shown in Attachment 6 to Report HRD-02-2025.

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**Reviewed by:** Katie Meyer, Manager, Human Resources

**Respectfully Submitted:** Megan Jamieson, CHRL, General Manager of Corporate & Social Services

**Approved:** Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report and its attachments presents an overview of the County's health and safety (H&S) performance trends. While there has been an increase in reported incidents, staff remain confident that the corporate programs continue to be successful in responding to new legislation and hazards introduced over the past few years. In 2024, significant effort was put towards modernizing corporate H&S and training policies, responding to Ministry of Labour investigations as a result of workplace incidents which resulted in significant injuries. Staff continued to demonstrate ongoing commitment to the H&S program by applying the principles of health and safety through return of comprehensive safety training delivery; engaging the Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC); and modernizing key H&S corporate policies. Staff have remained proactive in addressing evolving communicable disease/occupational illness requirements, particularly in healthcare settings, while also managing the risk of occupational illnesses within administrative and operations environments.

The 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) will focus on further enhancing health and safety practices and knowledge; revise the orientation process; and improve the accessibility of health and safety information. Additionally, the 2025 OHSP aims to reduce injuries/illnesses occurring within the County by: completing updates to corporate H&S policies/programs; engaging in a targeted strains/sprains initiative; utilizing the JHSC members to promote a health and safety culture; and continuing to train and engage all employees.

## **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 2024, Council approved the 2024 Occupational Health and Safety Policy as outlined in [Report HRD-01-2024 Health and Safety Policy and Program](#). In the same report, Council was informed that the 2024 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. Staff recognize 2024 continued to require a significant amount of work managing a high number of claims, many of which were related to an increase in the number of physical injuries, specifically strains and sprains in our healthcare settings. The current report provides a brief description of the legislation, statistics, and new initiatives to mitigate risk, as well as some statistics on overall health and safety performance of the various County operations in 2024.

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 for all 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:**

In 2024, the following health and safety initiatives were undertaken:

1. In collaboration with the JHSC, updated majority of Corporate H&S policies/procedures to align with best practice and applicable legislation – implementation to occur in early 2025.
2. Developed and implemented Grandview Lodge slips, trips and falls (STF) program to control primary cause of critical injuries in the healthcare sector.
3. Conducted a risk assessment of security measures at HCAB, introducing new controls measures and security protocols for the Haldimand County Administration Building.
4. Created and implemented an Emergency Manual to be used in work areas without written emergency procedures.
5. Concluded implementation of the Paramedic Peer Support Team program.
6. Finalized an improved reporting process for volunteer firefighters to enhance corporate tracking of hazardous physical and psychological exposures.
7. Developed supervisor-specific H&S orientation framework.
8. Revised the Wellness Committee Terms of Reference to align with the Net Better Off model, and holistic approach to employee health and wellness. Additionally, the composition of the Committee was revised to include representation from across the organization.
9. Developed and implemented H&S training programs delivered through Grandview's new learning management software, Surge Learning.
10. Responded to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) investigations and worked to comply with all written orders requiring a new footwear policy for Grandview Lodge and a written procedure for addressing slips, trips, and falls in the workplace.
11. Supported the Grandview Lodge Attendance Support Program (ASP) which resulted in a reduction of staff members in the attendance program.
12. Delivered health and safety training to targeted groups.
13. Developed an operations specific elevated work platform procedure to guide staff on the safe use of potentially hazardous equipment.

14. Updated and received JHSC approval of OPSEU terms of reference, to be submitted to the MLITSD for ratification.

## 2024 Health and Safety Performance

### a. Statistics Showing Performance

A statistical summary of the County's 2024 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, summarized below in Table 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). The total number of lost-time accidents has decreased from 48 claims in 2023, to 39 claims in 2024.

**Table 1: Record of Lost Time/Illness for 2022-2024**

JHSC Group	Claim Type	2022	2023	2024
Fire	Total Claims	-	-	-
Paramedic Services	Total Claims	14	9	5
	COVID	5	5	-
CUPE/Non-Union	Total Claims	4	8	6
	COVID	1	-	-
Grandview Lodge	Total Claims	25	31	28
	COVID	18	23	3
	Occupational Illness	-	-	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>39</b>

The total lost-time claims in 2024 show a slight decrease from the 2023 calendar year. In contrast to previous years, this year there was a significant decrease in the proportion of lost-time incidents attributed to COVID-19. The significant reduction in COVID-19 claims is likely the reason for the lower total number of lost-time incidents in 2024. The 2024 calendar year did see an increase in non-COVID occupational illness claims, attributed to the respiratory illnesses and gastrointestinal/enteric outbreaks occurring at Grandview Lodge. The increase in communicable illness claims comes after the WSIB Communicable Illness Policy (15-03-15) was released in late 2023. Under this policy, workers are entitled to benefits, including loss of earnings, for communicable illnesses such as respiratory illness, influenza, COVID-19 etc., that arose out of the course of their employment. The provincial policy established a lower threshold of proof for a work-related communicable illness claim, with the exception of COVID-19; workers are not required to obtain corroborating medical documentation for certain illnesses that may be acquired from a workplace exposure. The Health and Wellness Team expected an increase in lost-time claims attributed to non-COVID illness exposures in 2024 due to this change and this was reflected in the data. To mitigate the risk, staff are collaborating closely with the JHSC and the Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Lead at Grandview Lodge to effectively respond to outbreaks and improve upon existing practices and procedures, for example, revising outbreak sanitation measures. Additionally, they work closely to ensure the implementation of effective programs aimed at preventing illness transmission, as well as efficiently tracking exposures to manage potential claims. Additional communicable illness lost-time claims related to a late December 2024 gastro/enteric outbreak at Grandview are not reflected in the above chart, as they are still being adjudicated by the

WSIB, so the numbers currently presented for 2024 may adjust to a higher number once the claim process is finalized.

The remainder of the lost-time claims were related to physical injuries, primarily strains/sprains/over-exertions, and slips/falls. A majority of these claims, particularly the strains/sprains/over-exertions came from Grandview Lodge, where unpredictable resident behaviour contributes to an environment where these types of injuries are more common. Grandview Lodge also saw an increase in slip/trip/fall accidents that resulted in modified duties or lost-time. Paramedics share a similar risk of strains, sprains and over-exertions, as they are also required to lift patients in uncontrolled and sometimes ergonomically hazardous environments. The majority of lost-time incidents in 2024 from the Paramedic Services were due to strains/sprains when lifting patients. Ongoing education to address these risks is an annual priority. A detailed explanation of the accidents by cause can be found in Section B.

Staff worked diligently on all lost time claims to immediately offer suitable modified duties, and to return the injured employees to work as soon as possible to remain engaged in the workplace.

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 County saw an increase in medical aid events, from 13 in 2023 to 22 in 2024. Despite the increase year over year, the total number of medical aid accidents in 2024 is consistent with overall trends dating back to 2014.

Attachment 3 outlines the total number of Reportable Incidents First Aid/Near Miss, unexpected events that may or may not have caused injury or damage, but did not require medical attention from a healthcare professional. Reporting of near miss incidents assists the County in prioritizing areas for future training and prevention measures. The number of incidents increased from 76 in 2023 to 81 in 2024. This can be attributed to the increased awareness staff have of the Haldimand County Employee Accident Report (EAR) process, particularly at Grandview Lodge. The reporting of minor accidents, near misses and workplace hazards is encouraged, and we are seeing more participation in reporting such incident types than in previous years.

## **b. Cause / Type of Accidents**

The cause/type of accidents that occurred in 2024 are provided in Attachment 4. The four most common accident types are explained below.

### **(I) Strains/Sprains/Over-exertions**

Strains, sprains and over-exertions were the most prevalent type of injury in 2024 which is consistent with previous years and provincial trends. The high prevalence can be seen across all four JHSCs, as it was the most common type of accident amongst all staff groups. At Grandview Lodge, many of the strains and sprains are related to resident lifting and unpredictable behaviour, as stated previously. Grandview experienced the highest number of these injuries in 2024. Within the Paramedic Services, patient and equipment lifts are the primary cause of strains and sprains. The overall number of strains and sprains within Paramedic Services was lower, which may be attributable to the ongoing provision of appropriate tools and lifts. Despite this, many of the accidents that did occur involved significant lost-time or modified work. The high prevalence of this type of injury has been ongoing for the past 10 years. Prevention efforts in 2025 will focus on addressing ergonomic hazards, specifically targeting Paramedic Services and Grandview Lodge.

(II) Slips, Trips and Falls (STF)

Slips, trips and falls injuries were the second most prevalent type of accident in 2024. Similar to strains and sprains, these injuries were common amongst all JHSCs. Many of these incidents were related to slippery surfaces due to poor weather conditions or spills within the workplace.

Three of these 2024 STF accidents met the definition of a critical injury as defined by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and were required to be reported to the MLITSD. When a critical incident is reported, it automatically results in an investigation by Ministry inspectors. Each of these incidents were found to be a result of staff behaviour and inattention to the surrounding environment and/or equipment that needed minor modifications. Due to the seasonal risks associated with this type of accident (i.e. slippery conditions), annual prevention efforts include training and education to inform staff of the hazard, as well as regular parking lot maintenance. Prevention efforts in 2024 also included a Grandview Lodge specific STFs program to ensure all incidents receive prompt investigation and corrective measures.

(III) Workplace Violence

In 2024, there was a continued trend of high prevalence of workplace violence incident reports, with the majority of these incidents linked to resident behaviours at Grandview Lodge. Paramedics were also exposed to the risk of workplace violence due to their regular interaction with unknown patients in stressful/emotional situations. Additionally, some incidents occurred when children attending the 2024 Summer camp programs exhibited responsive behaviours towards camp staff. The majority of workplace violence incidents are reported out of precaution and were relatively minor in severity. Of the 21 employee accident reports (EAR) related to workplace violence, only one resulted in an employee requiring modified duties. Mitigating the risk of workplace violence will continue to be an objective in 2025, with a particular focus on Grandview Lodge and within camps. Efforts have been implemented and will continue to be monitored for effectiveness among paramedics as described in Section F.

(IV) Environmental Exposures

This incident category captures any exposure, including, hazardous plants, bugs, environmental conditions, noise, etc. Annual prevention efforts are included in seasonal summer staff onboarding, when most of these incidents tend to occur, as well as regular monitoring and education on noise exposure.

**c. Lost Time Claims**

Further to Attachment 1, Table 2 below illustrates the overall lost time hours since 2009. It is evident that the lost time experience has significantly increased over recent years. Since 2023, most groups have experienced a slight increase in lost time hours, except Paramedic Services, which saw a notable rise due to a new mental health/post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) WSIB claim. Once approved, such claims often lead to extended time away from work seeking treatment. Modified duties, which typically help reduce lost time, are less effective for this type of injury and not recommended by healthcare providers. Early identification remains the key focus when addressing the risk of mental injury within the workplace. The Employee Health and Wellness Team work in collaboration with the leadership team for the Paramedic Services to ensure traumatic exposures are recorded and tracked, which supports early identification of staff who may be at risk for mental injury. Additionally, the Paramedic Services leadership team continues to build upon and improve the Paramedic Peer Support Team to breakdown the stigma and promote open communication. While PTSD related lost-hours did increase in 2024, ongoing efforts to address mental health within the Paramedic Services are expected to lead to a long-term reduction in psychological claims.

Lost time claims for Grandview Lodge increased in 2024 due to a number of physical injuries, most of which were strains/sprains resulting in prolonged recovery times. Many of the lost hours for the Grandview Lodge group is tied to the approved acute recovery periods for the individually sustained injuries before a safe return to work is approved by the WSIB. WSIB has approved recovery time where an individual is deemed completely disabled during the acute recovery phase. This means there may be pain, mobility (following a surgery), and medication factors preventing the ability to return to work, even on modified duty.

Additionally, due to the difficulty obtaining timely medical interventions (physiotherapy, massage, speciality appointments), an increase in the number of staff across all staff groups, booking medical appointments during scheduled shifts was observed in 2024. Staff seeking follow-up medical attention while at work may have contributed to the increase in lost hours overall. Although staff are directed to book appointments outside of working hours, hours lost from work due to attending a medical appointment is considered lost-time and must be submitted to the WSIB.

The County continues to experience physical injury claims where a pre-existing psychological condition (non-occupational) hinders the staff members ability to recover for a safe and early return to work. Staff work closely with the WSIB to delineate between compensable and non-compensable injury/illness and challenges in return to work. It is evident that the spike in lost time hours over the past 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.

**Table 2: Overall Lost time Hours Since 2009 by JHSC**

Lost Time Hours by JHSC								
Year	Paramedic Services		Fire	CUPE / Non-Union		Grandview Lodge		
	Hours	PTSD Related	Hours	Hours	PTSD Related	Hours	Mental Health Related	Occup. Illness Related
2009	2,811.0	-	-	1,838.25	-	Not tracked	-	-
2010	435.5	-	-	174.0	-	Not tracked	-	-
2011	527.5	-	30.0	456.5	-	Not tracked	-	-
2012	435.5	-	-	174.0	-	Not tracked	-	-
2013	227.0	-	-	42.5	-	Not tracked	-	-
2014	24.0	-	160.0	25.0	-	Not tracked	-	-
2015	370.5	-	-	18.5	-	Not tracked	-	-
2016	406.5	-	-	66.0	-	Not tracked	-	-
2017	413.5	-	8	56.0	-	Not tracked	-	-
2018	2,663.5	96.0%	-	1,931.0	93.0%	Not tracked	-	-
2019	1,793.0	84.0%	-	656.5	35.0%	492.0	53.0%	-
2020	516.0	80.0%	-	2,184.5	60.0%	95.5	-	-
2021	517.0	-	-	2,624.0	70.0%	129.25	-	-
2022	1,723.0	92.0%	-	1,907.5	56.0%	537.0	-	-
2023	1044.0	78.5%	-	111.0	-	838.0	-	-



Lost Time Hours by JHSC								
Year	Paramedic Services		Fire	CUPE / Non-Union		Grandview Lodge		
	Hours	PTSD Related	Hours	Hours	PTSD Related	Hours	Mental Health Related	Occup. Illness Related
2024	2358.0	86.0%	-	119.0	-	* 1123.0	-	9.0%

\* Approved lost time hours claims related to GVL December 2024 occupational illness outbreak are not captured in the above numbers as they have not yet been processed with the WSIB.

**d. Return to Work – Modified Duties**

Under various legislation, including Human Rights, the County has the duty to accommodate injured/ill workers to the point of undue hardship. As a result, modified duties are offered to accommodate workplace injury related restrictions and to allow for the employee to return to work, in some capacity, as early as appropriate. In these cases, an injured employee may be brought back to work to perform alternate work duties above current complement. 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 and allows the employee to remain engaged in the workplace while also providing for meaningful work during their recovery.

As shown in Table 3 below (excluding indefinite lost time claims related to psychological injuries), the 2024 modified work hours increased in all work groups. The increase of modified hours can be attributed to a number of claims associated with a prolonged recovery, some of which have extended months past the original accident date. All work groups, excluding the fire department, experienced at least one accident that resulted in modified duties of at least 2 months or more. A single claim resulting in prolonged modified duties can significantly impact the overall hours.

Grandview Lodge’s modified work hours were much higher than other work groups in 2024. As previously stated, this is attributed to the number of injuries that required modified work to accommodate a longer than normal recovery time. This trend that can be attributed to the aging workforce and other contributing factors. As the workforce ages, there is a natural decline in physical resilience, making it more challenging for employees to recover as quickly from injuries. In addition to age-related factors, other elements such as multiple health conditions, and the demands of physically intensive work can also contribute to prolonged recovery periods. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing support, including tailored rehabilitation and return to work programs, as well as preventive measures to promote the health and well-being of staff, particularly those in physically demanding roles.

The Employee Wellness Representative worked closely with all injured individuals and the WSIB to customize a return-to-work program suitable for individual employees’ needs. It is their goal to return employees to their full duties as quickly and safely as possible. Outside factors such as treatment wait times, surgery dates and employee pre-existing conditions can influence recovery times and increase the modified hours.

**Table 3: Modified Work Hours by Class from 2009 to 2024**

Modified Work Hours by JHSC				
Year	Paramedic Services	Fire	CUPE / Non-Union	Grandview
2009	980.0	1,141.0	2,193.0	6,626.0
2010	252.0	1,317.0	1,917.0	1,624.0
2011	374.0	735.0	48.0	1,437.0
2012	160.0	0.0	0.0	994.0
2013	672.0	463.0	28.0	1,914.0
2014	36.0	358.0	0.0	3,543.0
2015	768.0	0.0	19.5	1,022.0
2016	980.0	0.0	52.0	395.0
2017	234.5	35.0	11.0	1,161.0
2018	234.0	0.0	68.0	716.0
2019	1,148.5	0.0	891.0 (97% related to 1 PTSD claim)	1,146.75
2020	1,601.0	0.0	236.0	537.5
2021	1,898.0	0.0	118.0	630.0
2022	329.5	0.0	33.0	3,678.75
2023	268.0	0	10.0	2814.0
2024	1363.5	0	499	5762.25

**e. Presumptive Liability Legislation Update**

In 2007, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA) was amended to create a presumption for firefighters to be covered under the WSIB for heart injuries and certain cancers without having to prove they are work-related. In 2025, there are now 19 identified cancer types that are covered under presumptive legislation. The prescribed years of service and approved types of cancer are regularly updated through legislation, which can have a retroactive impact on previously submitted claims. In 2016, under the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act, first responders (fire and paramedics) were provided coverage under the WSIB should they develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) without the need to prove a causal link between PTSD and a workplace event. To date, the WSIB has approved 29 presumptive liability claims filed by Haldimand County first responders related to presumptive cancers, heart disease, or PTSD. In 2024, there were some developments to our existing presumptive cancer/heart disease claims; however, no new illness claims were submitted or approved. One PTSD claim was submitted to the WSIB and approved for coverage in 2024.

**f. External Violence Against Paramedic Program (EVAP) – Continued Prevention**

In 2022, the Paramedic Services leadership team in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Team elected to get involved in a research study through Windsor University regarding violence towards paramedics. The Paramedic Services division adopted some of the tools provided by the research team, particularly the external violence incident report (EVIR). In 2024, the EVIR remained the primary tool used by Haldimand County paramedics to report concerning events of violence or harassment that



they experience during their jobs. Our participation in this study is designed to achieve two goals. First, Haldimand County is contributing to a body of growing evidence that paramedics are disproportionately exposed to violence and harassment in their line of work. Second, the program is designed to keep Haldimand County paramedics safe at work through the flagging of hazardous patients/addresses.

As part of the new External Violence Against Paramedics (EVAP) program introduced in 2023, 20 addresses have been flagged following paramedics being exposed to violence or abuse while responding to a call. When an address is flagged, any paramedic attending a subsequent call at the address will receive advanced notice that there is a potential for violence or harassment and additional safety protocols may be implemented (i.e. Police presence), when warranted, based on the severity of past events.

### **Proposed 2025 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 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Policy is included as Attachment 5. The CUPE/Non-union JHSC has reviewed the Policy and have recommended no changes to the currently approved 2024 Policy, for 2025.

The proposed Health and Safety Program has been developed for 2025 in consultation with the JHSC's. A gap analysis was conducted by staff, resulting in the identification of this year's initiatives. Specifically, the following plan has been established:

1. Complete remaining updates to Corporate Health & Safety Policies (6 remaining) to align with best practice and legislative changes (new or refresher training provided as necessary);
2. Implement and train staff on relevant H&S policies and programs;
3. Improve delivery of Corporate H&S policies and programs during onboarding of new hires to increase engagement with important concepts;
4. Develop healthcare specific strains/sprains and over-exertions initiative;
5. Develop and implement Grandview Lodge workplace violence program;
6. Targeted Wellness Committee initiatives focusing on mental health;
7. Finish ongoing modernization efforts with critical H&S forms so all reporting (incidents, injuries, inspections) can be completed online to allow for timely notice;
8. Develop and implement a Corporate Claims Management Policy and Program based on best practices;
9. Modernize emergency services PTSD prevention plan;
10. Support the development of a firefighter peer support team.

### **FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The proposed 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Program will not require any additional funds to implement as all anticipated expenditures can be accommodated within the established base budget. Should an unexpected issue arise during the year that requires additional funds, a report will be submitted to Council for specific consideration.

Approval of this report, specifically as it relates to the 2025 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 impact all areas of the Corporation. Managers, Non-Union Supervisors, JHSC representatives and select employees are required to dedicate time to contribute to 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

## **REFERENCES:**

1. [Report HRD-01-2024 Health and Safety Policy and Program](#)

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Total Number of Lost Time Accidents by JHSC from 2014-2024
2. Total Number of No Lost Time Accidents by JHSC from 2014-2024
3. Total Number of First Aid/Near Miss Accidents by JHSC from 2014-2024
4. 2024 Accidents by Cause
5. 2024 Occupational Health and Safety Policy
6. 2025 Draft 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Policy