



<b>General Order Number:</b> 08-18	<b>Effective Date:</b> January 2010
<b>Division:</b> Health and Safety	
<b>Chapter:</b> Safety and Investigation Team	
<b>By Order of the Fire Chief:</b> Marc S. Bashoor	<b>Revision Date:</b> N/A

**POLICY**

This General Order shall establish a Safety Investigation Team and the procedures for conducting an investigation of a serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious Departmental accident.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Serious Injury-** An injury sustained by a member of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department that could result in a loss of life, permanent disability, extended hospital treatment, or a prolonged recuperative period.

**Serious Accident** – A vehicle accident causing a serious injury, fatality, or excess vehicle damage.

**Safety Investigation Team (SIT)** - A designated team of individuals, appointed by the Fire Chief to conduct an investigation of the cause and circumstances of a situation that results in serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious accident. The responsibility shall include collecting and reviewing information on the incident, developing reports on causal factors, and making recommendations for policy and procedural changes intended to reduce the possibility of future occurrences.

The SIT is comprised of:

- Departmental Safety Officer (Chairperson) or Designee
- Emergency Operations Command Major or Designee
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Supervisor (or on-duty EMS officer at the time of the incident investigation)
- Fire investigator
- Local 1619 Representative (company level officer)
- A Volunteer Safety Officer
- Other individuals assigned by the Fire Chief with special qualifications

**PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES**

**1. Goals**

The goals of the Safety Investigation Team are:

- To determine the direct and indirect causal factors that resulted in a serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious accident in order to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature, including:



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- Identifying inadequacies involving apparatus, equipment, protective clothing standard operating procedures, supervision, training, or performance.
- Identifying situations that involve an unacceptable risk.
- Identifying previously unknown or unanticipated hazards.
- Identifying actions that must be taken to address problems or situations discovered in the investigation.
- To ensure that the lessons learned from the investigation are effectively communicated to prevent occurrences of a similar nature.
- To satisfy the requirements of the Public Safety Officer Benefit Program and other entitlements.
- To ensure that the incident and all related events are fully documented and evidence is preserved to provide for additional investigation or legal actions at a later date.
- To establish a custodian of documents or evidence and maintain a chain-of-custody.
- To utilize the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team (CISD) to work through issues with those involved.

The Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department will conduct an investigation of all serious injuries and line-of-duty fatalities utilizing the SIT. The Fire Chief may also direct the SIT to investigate incidents where no injury occurred, but where the potential for serious injury or death existed.

The Departmental Safety Officer must be notified immediately when an employee suffers a critical injury or a service connected death.

The SIT will be mobilized immediately when a serious injury or line-of-duty death occurs. The Departmental Safety Officer will serve as the team leader, unless specifically designated otherwise by the Fire Chief

All reports and recommendations, including the development of information that will reduce the occurrences of future incidents of a similar nature, will be submitted to the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief will determine how and when the report will be released. The information developed by the SIT may be used for training and safety bulletins.

### **2. General Provisions**

The Departmental Safety Officer will mobilize the SIT when notified by Public Safety Communications (PSC) of a service connected serious injury, line-of-duty death, or a serious accident involving an employee or member of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.

The team will meet at a location designated by the team leader, usually the incident scene.

The first arriving SIT member will report to the Incident Commander and ensure that the scene is properly secured as soon as the incident is under control. The SIT shall receive the full cooperation of the Incident Commander.



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The SIT shall conduct preliminary interviews and take statements from all personnel involved in the incident. All personnel shall cooperate with the SIT during the investigation. Failure to cooperate or interference with the investigation will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.

The on-duty EMS supervisor will establish a liaison with the receiving hospital and request appropriate tests (i.e., blood gases, toxicology, etc.), when required.

The SIT will impound and secure all protective clothing, SCBA, communication and other records, tapes, dispatch reports, incident reports, injury or casualty reports, and all other evidence or information that is pertinent to the investigation.

The scene should be photographed and diagrammed as soon as possible photographs and drawings shall be delivered to the team leader.

A final report of the incident will be prepared by the SIT for the Fire Chief. This shall be accomplished in a timely fashion, but not rushed so as to ensure a proper analysis of all information. The elements of the report may include, but are not limited to, those items outlined in Attachment I.

The Fire Investigations office will assign an investigator to assist and maintain a liaison. The SIT will cooperate with Fire Investigations and any other law enforcement agency involved in fire-cause determination or criminal investigations related to the incident.

The SIT will report directly to the Fire Chief: through the team leader. During the initial stages and throughout the entire course of the investigation, the SIT will:

- Cooperate with the Incident Commander
- Recommend the use of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team (CISDT)
- Utilize land line communication, as much as possible, to reduce radio traffic regarding the effected personnel.
- Issue no public statements unless directed and approved by the Fire Chief

**REFERENCES**

N/A

**FORMS / ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment #1 – Issues to Investigate

## ISSUES TO INVESTIGATE

### A. General Questions

1. Nature of injuries, their extent, expected outcome, extent of disability, etc.
2. Characteristics of the employee involved, i.e., length of experience, training, etc.
3. Description of the incident.
4. Characteristics of equipment being used, i.e. suitability and application.
5. Task(s) being performed at the time of injury/death.
6. Time factors (time of day, time of occurrence, time elapsed on duty during occurrences, etc).
7. Protective equipment used/preventive measures taken.
8. Summary of applicable laws, standards, policies, and procedures.
9. Factors, i.e. unsafe acts, hazardous conditions, management failures.
10. Recommendations to prevent recurrence.
11. Weather conditions, if applicable/appropriate.

### B. Questions on the condition of Safety Equipment

1. Breathing Apparatus
  - a. Was the victim wearing SCBA?
  - b. Was the face piece in place?
  - c. Was there pressure remaining in the air cylinder?
  - d. Were the valves in their normal positions?
  - e. Were the straps and other components in their normal use configuration?

- f. Was there any visible damage to the SCBA?
  - g. Were any components missing?
  - h. Where were they found?
  - i. How old was the SCBA?
  - j. When was the last test?
  - k. If needed, were the repairs made?
2. Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) and Radio
- a. Was the victim carrying a PASS device?
  - b. Was it turned on? How do you know?
  - c. Was it functioning when the victim was found?
  - d. Did the victim have a portable radio or any other equipment?
  - e. Where was it found?
  - f. Was it in operable condition?
3. Protective Clothing
- a. Was the victim wearing full protective clothing?
  - b. Was any protective clothing damaged?
  - c. Had the victim removed any item of protective clothing?
  - d. If answer to “c” above is yes, where was it found?
  - e. Did the victim have/wear all the required personal protective equipment?

Note: This list would apply to a firefighter who died in a fire suppression incident.  
A similar set of concerns would apply to any type of situation.