

# GUIDELINE FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONAL PLAN TO COVID-19, *ALERT LEVEL 3 & 4*

Fire Services Division

2021-03-12

## Introduction

As our Province recovers from the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, the NL COVID-19 Alert Level System was developed. The different levels of the system provide steps that will be taken as public health measures are relaxed. The Province will move through the Alert Levels gradually with continued monitoring of COVID-19 in our communities. *Alert Levels 3 & 4* will allow more social activities while minimizing the risk of outbreaks. Gatherings are expanded to 10 people provided physical distancing can be maintained. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/> The move to *Alert Levels 3 & 4* provides an opportunity for Fire Departments to resume in-house training while keeping in mind that we all have a role to play in reducing the spread of the coronavirus. This document will help guide Fire Departments through the process of adjusting back to in-house training.

### 1. PURPOSE:

Provincial Fire Departments *must* remain committed to safeguarding the health and safety of its members through the continuance of Personal Distancing, PPE and Cleaning Procedures, which meets or exceeds applicable Health and Community Services recommendations. The purpose of this document is to outline the Personal Distancing/PPE/Cleaning Program during the adjustment to *Alert Level 3 & 4* status, as outlined by the *Public Health Guidance Alert Levels*, to enable the Fire Departments to re-start in-house firefighter training.

### 2. USE:

#### Roles and Responsibilities

It is recommended that the Fire Chief appoint members to assist with Fire Hall decontamination and cleaning, as well as equipment checks at periodic intervals.

- In accordance with *Alert Level 3 & 4* requirements, the COVID-19 Protocol *must* continue in order to maintain the Respiratory/Sanitizing/Personal Distancing Protection and PPE Programs already in place.
- Fire Department members, members of mutual aid agencies and town employees who are required to wear Fire Department supplied respirators, and/or PPE, *must* abide by the SOPs which may be adopted and/or established by your Fire Department during this transition process.

## **Firefighter Self-Screening Checklist**

Firefighters **must** complete the self-screening checklist prior to attending firefighter training. There is a training questionnaire provided by the Department of Health and Community Services attached at the end of this document

\*If you answered “Yes” to two or more of the symptoms listed above, please visit <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/> and complete the Covid-19 Self-Assessment or contact 811 to see if you require further action.

### **3. PROCEDURES:**

#### **Program Administration**

- If you have COVID-19 symptoms, contact 811 or complete the online self-assessment tool.
- Anyone with flu like symptoms or are not feeling well **must** stay home until they are well. (Stay at home as much as possible, except to attend scheduled training or meetings in accordance with Alert Level 4 Guidelines)
- Any Firefighter or Officer who has travelled outside the Province or has been exposed to someone who has, **must** stay away from all firefighting activities/training/meetings and responses for 14 days, as recommended by the Health Authority. (Please notify an Officer of this activity)
- The Fire Hall **must** remain closed to all Public.
- Fire Hall gatherings are expanded to 10 people, provided physical distancing can be maintained and you are not required to self-isolate for any reason, otherwise the Fire Hall **must** remain closed to all Firefighters and Officers, with the exception of a required response call.
- At **Alert Level 4** All Fire Department practice sessions, general meetings and executive meetings are expanded to 10 persons provided physical distancing can be maintained and you are not required to self-isolate for any reason.
- At **Alert Level 3** All Fire Department practice sessions, general meetings and executive meetings are expanded to 20 persons provided physical distancing can be maintained and you are not required to self-isolate for any reason.
- Fund raising events and social activities should be postponed until further notice
- Only those members appointed by the Fire Chief, to periodically check on equipment and building services, are permitted in the Fire Hall, after the expanded session is completed. (no social gathering after expanded session)
- The Fire Chief/Training Officer and Instructors **must** have an emergency response plan, which includes actions to take in the event that a Firefighter or the Instructor becomes sick during the training session. This plan must include:

- Instruction to all Firefighters to go directly home, have no contact with their family or the public, and self-isolate.
- Instruction to Firefighters with symptoms to visit <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/> and do a self-assessment before calling 811.
- A process to notify the Fire Chief/Training Officer that training was suspended due to concerns of a symptomatic Firefighter or Instructor.
- Procedures to restrict access to the training room and any contaminated equipment, until the room and equipment can be disinfected.

#### **4. Selection of Appropriate PPE**

Physical distancing in the Fire Halls **must** be identified and assessed for the purpose of selecting appropriate respiratory protection devices, as well as additional PPE.

- Full turn-out gear **must** be worn at all practical exercises (**no exceptions**)
- Due to the B117 variant of COVID-19 the use of a 3-layered non-medical mask and eye protection shall be worn when in close contact with other members (avoid close contact with others if at all possible).
- Sanitization of response personnel and PPE **must** remain mandatory immediately after each training session, meeting or practical exercise
- All used PPE shall be bagged and set aside for disposal immediately after each session
- During training exercises, Firefighters and Officers **must** segregate from the general public and maintain a physical distance of 2 meters from other responders where appropriate

#### **5. Cleaning and Sanitizing**

Firefighters and Officers are reminded to follow the SOP's for Hygiene and De-con of equipment and PPE, both in-house and when returning to the Fire Hall.

- Frequent hand washing is recommended by the health authority
- The use of hand sanitizers is also a strong recommendation and should be utilized
- Clean cab initiative **must** be followed for all units
- Firefighters will be appointed by the Chief or Officer In Charge to sanitize the apparatus and Fire Hall appropriately once all equipment is back in a state of readiness and members have left the Fire Hall

#### **6. In-House Training**

Quality training sessions prepare individuals and departments for the emergency that is around the corner. In-house training is the key fundamental activity Fire Departments use to learn and practice skills. In-house training is also an opportunity to review policy, standard operating procedures and guidelines, and record the positive effects, as well as the items that need more work. This is part of the continuous evaluation process.

With the Province's move to **Alert Level 4**, Fire Departments can now provide in-house training to their members by performing theory-based and practical skills training evolutions, but under a new set of guidelines. It is vital to follow these guidelines and maintain physical distancing and PPE procedures.

### **Operation 2020**

Fire Departments, currently enrolled in the Operation 2020 Training Program, can review the theory-based presentations and practical training exercises and continue with instructional training for each chapter within the required times and continue to record each Firefighter's participation and completion of the material presented.

- Sign-in to Resource One and download the presentations and instructors' content (*Lesson Plans are vital to overall instruction*)
- Arrange for Firefighters to gather at the Fire Hall –
  - **Alert Level 4** -keeping your attendance to a maximum of nine (9) Firefighters and one (1) Instructor (*a reasonable instructor to Firefighter ratio is 1:9. If more than one instructor is required, a 2:8 ratio may work*) at each session in accordance with the **Alert Level 4** guidance procedures
  - **Alert Level 3** -keeping your attendance to a maximum of nineteen (19) Firefighters and one (1) Instructor or eighteen (18) firefighters and two (2) instructors at each session in accordance with the **Alert Level 3** guidance procedures.
- ❖ Remember that in either level, your combined number of instructors and firefighters/students may not exceed the maximum gathering allowance (10 for **Alert level 4** and 20 for **Alert level 3**)
- Instructors **must** follow the lesson plans to ensure consistency of training delivered to all members, as they may be attending different sessions, with different instructors
- Continue to record participants' progress and submit to Fire Services Division

### **IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting 7<sup>th</sup> Edition**

For those Departments not participating in the Operation 2020 Training Program, every effort should be made to register with Fire Service Division as outlined in correspondence previously sent as well as the on-line explanation sessions conducted throughout the Province by the Fire Commissioner.

For those Departments that have achieved Firefighter I and II levels for interior operations, the current edition of the Essentials can be utilized to refresh members with updated theory sessions and practical skills that will ensure your Department is current on changes made within the firefighting field.

### **Fire and Emergency Service Instructor Based Training**

If your Department has a qualified FESI instructor, course materials offered by Fire Services Division will be made available. These courses may include, but are not limited to:

- Hazardous Materials
- SCBA
- Vehicle Extrication
- Vehicle Traffic Management

In-house training is also an opportunity to review policy, standard operating procedures/guidelines (SOP's/SOG's) and record their effectiveness, as well as the items that require additional work. This may also include, but is not limited to:

- First Aid Training
- Pre-incident Planning
- Developing New SOP's/SOG's
- Fire/Incident Debriefing
- Vehicle/Equipment Familiarity
- Accountability Training
- Communications Training

### **In-Station Training Session**

When conducting training within the Fire Hall, the importance of physical distancing is vital

- Training sessions **must** be scheduled in advance with only those attending entering the Fire Hall - to a maximum of 10 in attendance. This would include Instructor(s)
- As the Firefighters arrive, they are assigned to a seat and it **must** be the only seat they use for the duration of the session
- Students **must** be strategically spaced in accordance with the Health Authority's ***Physical Distancing Policy***
- Instructor(s) **must** follow physical distancing procedures
- A safety talk will be required before the training session begins (ground rules set and followed). Safety talk should include the following, but not limited to:
  - Physical Distancing procedures
  - PPE requirements
  - Cleaning and sanitizing
  - Fire Hall and classroom occupancy
  - Evacuation procedures
  - Attendance form (sign-in / sign-out)
- When the session is completed, arrangements **must** be made to sanitize the room/area or portion of the Fire Hall that was utilized and occupied
- Where printed materials are required for classroom use, they **must** not be reused in future training sessions, and only Instructors should pass out worksheets to individual Firefighters. (Firefighters **must** not handle materials used by other Firefighters).

- Firefighters should use their own learning equipment each day including manuals, worksheets, calculators, notebooks, pens, pencils, etc., and these items should not be shared with other Firefighters. (This may require Firefighters to have their own individual copy of the IFSTA *Essentials* if being utilized - Available through the NLAFS - (709) 424-6500)

## Outside Station Training Sessions

When conducting training outside, the importance of physical distancing is vital

- A predetermined site that is isolated from members of the public **must** be established by the Fire Chief and/or the Training Officer in coordination with the Instructor(s)
- Training sessions **must** be scheduled in advance with only those pre-registered attending - to a maximum of ten (10) in attendance. This would include Instructor(s)
- As the Firefighters arrive, they **must** be instructed to retrieve their appropriate PPE and equipment from the Fire Hall, abiding by the physical distancing policy
- All equipment **must** be handled with the use of nitrile gloves or Firefighter gloves
- Crew cabs **must** be limited to numbers that can physical distance, while inside the units. (*The use of personal vehicles to travel to and from the site may be an option, keeping in mind that structural firefighting clothing or equipment should not be transported in personal vehicles*)
- Firefighters awaiting assignments or practical skills participation **must** be strategically spaced, in accordance with the Health Authority's Physical Distancing Policy
- Firefighters assigned tasks or practical skills exercises shall be rotated through each station or skill exercise, abiding by the physical distancing procedures for the duration of each session
- Instructor(s) **must** follow the physical distancing procedures
- A safety talk will be required before the training session begins (ground rules set and followed). Safety talk should include the following but not limited to:
  - Physical distancing procedures
  - PPE requirements
  - Cleaning and sanitizing
  - Attendance form (sign-in / sign-out)
- When the session is completed, arrangements **must** be made to sanitize vehicles and equipment that was utilized and occupied

## 7. Program Evaluation

It is recommended that the Fire Chief and Executive keep in touch with Firefighters through social media, phone calls, email and texting. Fire Department business and training may continue in accordance with the Public Health Guidance.

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/alert-system/alert-level-4/>

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/alert-system/alert-level-3/>

For the safety of everyone, their families and the citizens we protect, we all need to work together and abide by the guidelines set herein.

***Note:*** Please review the sample training session outline provided on the following page.

## **Sample Training Session: Ground Ladders**

**Reference Material:** IFSTA *Essentials of Firefighting*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (Chapter 8).

**Objective:** This lesson describes different types of ground ladders and the parts of a ladder. The lesson also covers the proper methods of carrying, placing, raising, and working from a ground ladder. Sections I through IV is a group session.

**Section I: Parts of a ladder:** Review the parts of a ladder in the position on the apparatus or set-up a staging area on the apparatus bay floor or outside.

**Section II: Ladder Types:** Compare and discuss the uses for single ladders, extension ladders, and roof ladders.

**Section III: Ladder inspection, Cleaning and Maintenance:** Describe and discuss the process of cleaning, inspecting, and maintaining a ladder. Compare and contrast inspection requirements for different types of ladders.

**Section IV: Ladder Safety:** Describe and discuss safe practices for using ladders. Discuss how to avoid electrical hazards when raising a ladder.

**Note:** At this point, the instructor has reviewed sections I through IV and providing an opportunity for questions and discussion. The next series of sessions, sections V through IX, involve physical skills and heightened awareness for safety. The instructor will describe the procedure, have the procedure demonstrated for continuity and then provide time to practice. At any point in the sections V through IX, where the firefighters cannot maintain social distancing, follow the PPE recommendations outlined in this guide.

**Section V: Carrying Ladders:** The Process of Carrying a Ladder: To accomplish this skill remove the ladder from the apparatus or from a staging area. How can you determine the appropriate size ground ladder to use for a situation?

**Section VI: Placing Ground Ladders:** The Proper Procedure for Placing a Ground Ladder: What factors affect ground ladder placement? During the placement of a ladder, where it is a two (2)-firefighter carry, the risk of narrowing the social distancing protocol is present. This section shall require proper use of PPE.

**Section VII: Securing Ground Ladders:** The proper procedure for securing ladders covers two methods, heeling and tying in. Tying in a ladder reduces the risk of narrowing the social distancing protocol. Using the heeling method shall require proper use of PPE.

**Section VIII: Ladder Raises: Methods for Raising and Lowering Ladders:** What methods can be used to raise a ground ladder with either one or two firefighters? This section shall require proper use of PPE.

**Section IX: Working from a Ladder: How to Work from a Ladder:** What steps should be taken to safely climb a ground ladder? This section shall require proper use of PPE.