

Fire Protection and Prevention Act Regulations

Narrative

Ontario is committed to the safety of both firefighters, and the public. That is why it's critical that the framework for the delivery of fire services across the province meets the needs and circumstances of communities they serve.

Following recommendations from multiple coroner's inquests, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) formed a Fire Safety Technical Table (the Table) to provide recommendations on enhancing fire service delivery in Ontario. The Table includes municipal representation from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Town of Aurora, fire associations and representatives from career, composite and volunteer fire departments from both urban and rural communities.

To date, the work of the Table has been informing the development of regulations related to mandatory certification of firefighters, community risk assessments to inform the delivery of fire protection services, and public reporting of fire department response times.

In regards to mandatory certification, currently, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers must provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect their health or safety. Ontario voluntarily adopted National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards in 2013/14, although certification is not yet mandatory. NFPA uses codes and standards that are considered best practice, evidence based and are used throughout North America.

More than 80 fire departments (a mix of urban/rural, large/small, professional/composite and volunteer) are already voluntarily certifying to the NFPA standards and many are training to the NFPA standards, but not yet certifying.

Under the new regulation, certification for four firefighter roles – including basic fire suppression – would only apply to new hires. As such, the majority of existing suppression firefighters in Ontario will not need to certify to maintain their jobs in their current positions. Those seeking to advance to a higher rank (e.g., Fire Officer) would be required to certify.

Firefighters who need to be certified will be able to work under the supervision of another certified firefighter, via an internship program, while they complete their training. They will have up to two years (with the potential of a one-year extension, with the approval of the Fire Marshal) to complete their certification.

Firefighters not certified before being hired by a fire department would need to be enrolled in the two year internship program. Firefighters seeking to certify to NFPA 1001 Levels 1 and 2 (exterior and interior attack), would be required to train approximately 3 hours a week to achieve certification if the firefighter is enrolled in the two year internship program.

Those who have previously trained to the former Ontario standards may be eligible to have their previous knowledge or experience qualify them for alternative compliance to certification

(i.e., grandfathering). In these instances, fire chiefs would need to attest that training has been received by the firefighter and provide documentation, upon request.

The earliest that any part of the regulation comes into force is July 2019, with other parts coming in force in 2020 and 2021.

The government of Ontario will work closely with the Table and municipalities, especially those who represent small, northern and rural areas, to identify specific challenges and seek their input in developing an implementation model that would best address their needs in order to ensure successful implementation.