**Protecting Children from Abuse Model FD & EMS Appendix**

*This model appendix for fire and EMS agencies is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization’s policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor.*

*Employers should adopt the MSI Protection & Safe Treatment of Minors model policy. This appendix contains best practices for fire and EMS agencies to protect children at non-emergency special events such as open houses, Touch-A-Truck, and child or family-focused fundraisers.*

*This model policy uses the word department. If this policy is for a different type of agency (district, squad, or company), use the ‘Replace’ function to change.*

**Purpose:**

Fire stations, fire apparatus, and fire-rescue equipment are exciting, especially for children. The department welcomes the opportunity to introduce families, school classes, and other groups to our firefighters, EMTs, and other responders. Our stations are open for drop-in and pre-scheduled visits from single families to large groups during regular business hours.

However, fire and EMS stations are not designed or intended for the safety of children and adults who are unacquainted with fire apparatus and equipment. A higher duty is placed upon the department when it invites the public into a workplace for the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse protection of especially children. This policy guides the actions of firefighters, EMTs, and other employees when children are in the fire station. This policy does not pertain to family members of firefighters on duty. The firefighter is responsible for the safety of their family members.

**Procedures:**

**Open houses, station tours, and fundraisers:**

When one or more unaccompanied children are in the fire or EMS station, firefighters and EMTs shall work as pairs when giving tours of the station. The tour shall be limited to apparatus bays and exterior areas, such as the front apron.

Firefighters should work in pairs for scheduled group tours and family open houses, but can count a parent, guardian, teacher/teacher aid, or group leader (such as a scout leader) as the second adult. A firefighter or EMT shall never leave a group with a child without a second adult.

If an unaccompanied child needs to use the restroom, the firefighter / EMT shall check that a restroom in a public area is vacant, and then wait outside the restroom with a second firefighter / EMT. Restrooms in the firefighter bunkroom, private offices, or locker rooms shall not be used.

If a child on a scheduled group tour needs to use a restroom, the firefighter shall ensure the adult leader checks that the public restroom is vacant and observe that the leader remains outside the restroom while the child is inside.

Before a scheduled group tour or open house, firefighters/ EMTs shall inspect the public areas, apparatus bays, parking lots, and other areas open to the public for hazards such as wet floors, accessible chemicals or tools, and proper lighting. If apparatus compartments or cabinets will be opened during the tour, they should be inspected and organized before the tour. If tools will be demonstrated, the tools shall be inspected before the tour, and a Safety Officer shall be assigned to oversee the set-up, safety zone, and use of the tool.

The department should consider creating a checklist of areas to be inspected and specifying the acceptable conditions.

Whenever possible, parents or guardians, teachers, or group leaders should assist children into the cab of the apparatus or the back of the ambulance. Firefighters should be in a position to assist if a child begins to fall. If parents or group leaders cannot physically assist children, such as those with a disability, firefighters or EMTs can assist the children, but the parent or leader must be in the immediate vicinity and able to observe the process.

If a child hesitates or refuses to leave the cab of a truck or the back of an ambulance, it must be up to the parent, guardian, or group leader to resolve it. Firefighters or EMTs should only intervene if the child’s safety becomes a concern, such as when the child starts to handle equipment that could injure them.

**Touch-A-Truck or Night Out type events:**

These events are usually held off department property in conjunction with other agencies.

Before the apparatus leaves the station, it shall be inspected, cleaned, and organized in anticipation of adults and children being in close proximity to it. Tools shall be secured in cabinets and compartments. A sufficient number of cones and/or caution tape shall be loaded to create a safety zone around the apparatus at the event.

When the Department apparatus is in position at the event, the senior member shall assume the role of Safety Officer. As Safety Officer, they shall establish a safety zone around the apparatus, access points, demonstration areas, and other safeguards. Cones, caution tape, and monitors shall be set to control the areas.

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