Would Your Department Pass the Dirty Dozen Test?

You *can* avoid the most common findings by the Department of Labor & Industries

The State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) conducts compliance inspections at fire districts and regional fire authorities across Washington State. These inspections are conducted to ensure that fire departments comply with WAC 296-305 which was last revised in January 2014. L&I inspections result from three things:

COMPLAINTS FROM CITIZENS & OTHERS	ROUTINE INSPECTIONS	FIREFIGHTER HOSPITALIZATIONS
		
These can be from concerned citizens, fire fighters who feel their safety is at risk, or from news reports of a fire scene. Sometimes these are the result of labor-management struggles with the intent being to discredit the fire district.	Several districts are randomly selected each year for review. Also, district accident history is factored into the equation which may prompt an inspection.	Hospitalization of a firefighter during a fire/EMS event.

To avoid getting a finding from L&I, fire districts and regional fire authorities should proactively review the safety posture of their facilities, practices on fire scenes and training/certification. For 12 common findings discovered during L&I inspections, check out the “Dirty Dozen” on the reverse side of this sheet. Feel free to use this as a checklist to review safety practices in your department.

If you do not have a copy of the latest version of the Safety Standards, please visit http://www.lni.wa.gov/safety/rules/chapter/305/WAC296-305.PDF to view/print; this site also provides contact information if you wish to order a hard copy of the standard.

Information contained in this document was provided by David Ellingson, WFCA Representative to the L&I Firefighter Technical Review Committee. Mr. Ellingson is a Fire Commissioner of the Poulsbo Fire Department in Kitsap County and is a WFCA Past President.

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The Dirty Dozen

1. Weight of engines and tender were not posted in view of the operators. Both weight and height of apparatus are required to be posted. Be sure to have a checklist for this when new equipment is purchased, windshields are replaced, or make sure permanent labels are installed so they do not fall off.

2. Ensure your respirator program is kept up to date, physicals are conducted and periodic maintenance and training requirements are met. This also applies to Chief Officers who may be required to use a SCBA as part of their assigned duties. There also needs to be an annual evaluation of your department's respiratory program conducted.

3. Modification of facilities/ equipment is important and structural additions must be properly engineered to ensure firefighter safety is not compromised. We can all think of creative ways of improving our ability to enhance our training environment or perform our daily functions, but before we make a modification, go through the proper channels to ensure design and life safety requirements are met.

4. Electrical systems need to be properly installed and maintained. Exposed electrical energized wiring and broken switch and outlet covers can present an immediate shock hazard. Ensure that repairs or modifications to building electrical systems are performed by qualified electricians in accordance with the National Electric Code. Electrical breaker panels need to have free access to them in case of emergencies. Maintain good housekeeping practices to keep areas in front of electrical panels free from obstructions.

5. Ensure nonskid is placed on the floor adjacent to where personnel disembark apparatus in equipment bays to prevent falls and injuries. Replace the nonskid if it is severely worn.

6. Know the hazards that exist in your fire district, develop accurate pre-fire plans, ensure you have the appropriate protective equipment for each hazard and personnel are properly trained. Good incident response management will quickly identify the hazard at the scene, take action to protect people who may be trapped as well as the first responders, initiate measures to eliminate the hazards. With the broad range of chemicals in use today, response plans must identify specific techniques to combat each chemical release.

7. PVC piping was found in compressed air systems that had been modified in fire stations. Compressor oils plus the heat from compressing air can cause a failure of the PVC pipe and when it fails, it breaks into sharp shards causing a significant safety concern.

8. All containers of chemicals must be labeled, even common household cleaning agents like Windex. Ensure MSDSs are available for all chemicals or that you have an electronic database for the MSDSs.

9. If axes are mounted on the outside of apparatus, there must be safety covers over the picks.

10. Check to make sure your accident prevention program is current. If you "borrowed" a plan from a neighboring district, be sure to tailor it to your district. Do not include a capability in your plan that you are not trained to perform.

11. If planning to use overhead storage areas or ceiling areas above offices, the load capacity (based on design limits) must be posted.

12. Ensure fall protection is provided for maintenance or training function where a fall condition over 10 feet exists. This also applies to trenches over 10 feet deep or maintenance/training on a roof. Portable barriers can be used if properly anchored.