

Category 11: Health and Safety

Keeping employees/members healthy and safe is a major priority for any organization.

Having adequate programs and processes in place will help meet the goals of eliminating employee injuries and deaths, reducing liability to the organization and ultimately making the organization more effective and efficient.

Criterion 11A: Occupational Health, Safety and Risk Management

The agency's occupational health, safety and risk management programs protect the organization and personnel from unnecessary injuries, loss, and liability.

Summary:

The Meridian Fire Department's occupational health, safety, and risk management programs play a crucial role in protecting both the department and its personnel from unnecessary injuries, loss, and liability. These programs are designed to identify, assess, and mitigate potential risks and hazards associated with firefighting and emergency response operations. The programs provide protection through risk identification, training and education, safety procedures and policies, equipment inspections, health and wellness programs, incident reporting, and continuous improvement. Previously, aspects of risk management were handled separately through different divisions within both the fire department and the City of Meridian. The newly hired division chief of health and safety will bring all of these programs under one division umbrella to provide for greater and more efficient management, as well as improvement, of the department's many safety initiatives. These initiatives not only prioritize the safety and well-being of department personnel, but also promote effective emergency response, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Meridian Fire Department.

Performance Indicators:

11A.1 A specific person or persons are assigned responsibility for implementing the occupational health, safety and risk management programs.

Description

The division chief of health and safety is responsible for implementing and overseeing health, safety and risk management programs at the Meridian Fire Department. Under the supervision of the deputy chief of administration, the position is structured to follow National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500: *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs*. The division chief of health and safety supervises the incident safety officer program for emergency scene safety, the peer fitness trainers who assist firefighter physical fitness initiatives, and the peer support team for behavioral and mental health related matters.

Appraisal

Historically, health and safety program responsibilities have been assigned throughout the organization as collateral duties, secondary and supplemental to the primary duties of different roles and ranks in the Meridian Fire Department. While there has been strong organizational and cultural support toward health and safety, as the department has grown in size and call volume, program oversight has stalled and initiatives have stagnated. In 2023, the Meridian Fire Department appointed a division chief of health and safety to manage and improve the agency's occupational health, safety, and risk management programs to protect the organization and personnel from unnecessary injuries, loss, and liability.

Plan

The division chief of health and safety will have the responsibility for the implementation, management, operation, and revision of the department's risk management plan. Additionally, the division chief of health and safety will monitor internal operations and procedures to ensure compliance with rules, regulations, policies, and procedures, and evaluates the effectiveness of division policies and procedures and make recommendations and implement improvements.

References

- Division Chief of Health and Safety Job Description
- MFD Organizational Chart
- NFPA 1500: *Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs*

11A.2 The agency has policies and procedures for reporting, evaluating, addressing and communicating workplace hazards as well as unsafe/unhealthy conditions and work practices.

Description

The department is committed to a work environment that is safe and as free as practical from health and safety hazards. The city and the department work together to develop various policies and procedures specific to its operations to ensure safe working practices. Employees are empowered to directly address or report any hazardous or unsafe working situation or condition. Unsafe situations or conditions related to personal safety equipment, facilities, and apparatus maintenance may be reported through the chain of command, the city ticket system, or the fire department's *Vector Check It* daily equipment inspection software. When a situation arises that is an immediate danger to life and health, the chain of command may be circumvented and employees are encouraged to report the situation to the fire chief, human resources director, or the Compliance and Ethics Help Line. The department also uses summary reports, known as green sheets, to address and evaluate hazards and communicate lessons learned from structure fires or incident calls. The green sheets serve as an aid to provide factual information from incidents to enhance safety, training, and address workplace hazards.

Appraisal

The department's policies and procedures have produced a system where unsafe conditions are reported and inadequacies are addressed. The department's effort to implement the green sheet program has improved its ability to address and communicate workplace hazards and lessons learned. The growth of the fire department has inhibited the organization's ability to review and update these policies on a regular basis. Additionally, the lack of a full-time health and safety officer has constrained the organization's ability to evaluate, improve, and communicate workplace hazards as well as unsafe/unhealthy conditions and work practices in a timely manner.

Plan

The division chief of health and safety will review all health and safety related policies in the next year and make updates as necessary. The department will also reevaluate the

current process for reporting and documenting workplace injuries and exposures, and work with human resources to develop a risk management plan and internal communication strategy for communicating workplace hazards.

References

- Standard Operating Policy 6.9 – Safety
- Standard Operating Procedure 6.9 - Safety
- AP105 - Fire Department Organization Structure/Chain of Command
- AP235 - Workplace Injury and Exposure
- AP630 - Use of Safety Belts
- AP640 - Driving Emergent and Non-Emergent Response
- AP655 - Personal Safety When Exposed to Traffic
- City of Meridian Support Ticket, screenshot
- Vector Solutions, *Check It*, screenshot
- Green Sheet, Structure Fire, 07/12/2022, 2324 East Franklin Road

11A.3 The agency documents steps taken to implement risk reduction and address identified workplace hazards.

Description

The department takes steps to identify workplace hazards and implement risk reduction initiatives. The department has worked closely with the Meridian Professional Firefighters Local 4627 (the union) to address the overall health and wellness of department members. Through the Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, the department and the union have implemented a program to provide mandatory medical and physical examinations, including regular cancer screenings. Additionally, the department has implemented a peer support program. One of the components of the peer support program involves *FireStrong*, a personalized online management platform that provides fire department members and their families 24/7 access to the peer support team, support resources, counselors, employee assistance programs, and chaplains. All members are required to report any injury or exposure potential and records are maintained by human resources. Members are also required to report any unsafe working condition to their superior per city policy.

Appraisal

The collaboration between management and the union related to health and wellness has created a strong organizational and cultural commitment to risk reduction. Some of the department’s efforts to implement risk reduction and address emerging workplace hazards have been limited based on organizational capacity. The city’s safety policies have served as a broad template for safety reporting in the department.

Plan

The department’s newly appointed division chief of health and safety officer will provide additional administrative support to the existing programs and conduct an overall hazard assessment to develop a strategy for implementing additional risk reduction initiatives. In the next year, the division chief of health and safety will develop a risk management program manual, identify workplace hazards (operational and non-operational), and help

the department create an internal risk reduction or safety policy, as well as an updated department near-miss reporting system.

References

- Meridian City Council Memorandum, IAFF Peer Support Training Program
- *FireStrong* screenshot
- Peer Support Training Plan
- Peer Support Team
- Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, Article 26, pg. 28

11A.4 The agency has established and communicated procedures and guidelines for preventing the transmission of blood-borne pathogens and other infectious diseases and reducing exposure to harmful chemicals. Guidelines should include an improvement of practices process.

Description

The department has established and communicated procedures and guidelines for preventing the transmission of blood-borne pathogens and other infectious diseases and reducing exposure to harmful chemicals. The department shares an Infectious Disease Post Exposure Policy and process with other Ada County/City Emergency Services Systems (ACCESS) departments and the Treasure Valley Emergency Medical Services System (TVEMSS). The department also has a carcinogen reduction operational directive which outlines the processes and expectations for decontamination of personal protective equipment (PPE) and cancer reduction at the department.

Appraisal

The Infectious Disease Post Exposure Policy was developed by ACCESS and TVEMSS agencies, with oversight from the Emergency Responders Health Center and local area hospitals. This cooperative effort ensured that all crew members who had an exposure followed the same guidelines and that every hospital system agreed to the same procedures and expectations. The department has had a carcinogen reduction directive since 2018 and has installed PPE extractors, diesel exhaust removal systems, and implemented clean-quarter rules in every fire station. In addition, all firefighters are issued two sets of turnout gear so that they always have a clean set available after fires, and installed an SCBA decontamination unit at the newly constructed station 6.

Plan

The division chief of EMS will continue to serve as the representative of the department at any meeting regarding county-wide infection control efforts, including any updates to the Infectious Disease Exposure Policy. The division chief of health and safety will review the department’s cancer reduction initiatives in the next year and make recommendations to

the chief for any new programs or updates. The department will conduct annual refresher training for blood borne pathogens and infectious disease.

References

- AP235 - Workplace Injury and Exposure
- Infectious Disease Post Exposure – Form
- Infectious Disease Post Exposure - Policy
- Infectious Disease Post Exposure – Instructions and Reference Guide
- Operational Directive OD19-01, Carcinogen Reduction Procedures

CC 11A.5 The agency's occupational health and safety training program instruct the workforce in general safe work practices, from point of initial employment through each job assignment and/or whenever new substances, processes, procedures or equipment are introduced. It provides instructions on operations and hazards specific to the agency.

Description

The department provides ongoing occupational health and safety training to all employees. All new employees receive general training through their on-boarding process with the City of Meridian human resources department. The MFD training division provides further health and safety training for new hires related to operational hazards, including infection control, during the fire academy. Line personnel of all ranks receive ongoing health and safety training through position task books and through *Target Solutions*. *Target Solutions* supports continuing education based on NFPA standards and HIPPA and CDC guidelines, and helps deliver specific training on new procedures, equipment, or hazards.

Appraisal

The department has been effective in providing health and safety training to its employees. During the COVID-19 crisis, MFD used a variety of tools including *Target Solutions*, digital communications, and operational directives to quickly and efficiently implement new personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety protocols. In addition, members continued to receive their regular safety training through *Target Solutions* or through crew-based training. However, as the department has grown, oversight of safety programs such as peer fitness, cancer prevention, and peer support has waned, resulting in a downward trend of participation.

Plan

The newly appointed division chief of health and safety will increase the effectiveness of health and safety training by implementing a department-wide risk management plan (by end 2024) to address safe work practices, procedures, and specific hazards. In addition, the division chief of health and safety will provide oversight for the safety committee, peer support team, and peer fitness team to increase administrative support and focus, as well

as participation. They will work with command staff to improve hazard communications and after-action reviews. The division chief of health and safety will work with the training and EMS divisions to ensure safety training occurs at regular intervals.

References

- *Target Solutions*, Safety, screenshot
- Firefighter Cancer Reduction PowerPoint
- Probationary Firefighter Task Book, pg. 6, 17
- Company Officer Task Book, pg. 14
- Battalion Chief Officer Task Book, pg. 12

11A.6 The agency uses near miss-reporting to elevate the level of situational awareness in an effort to teach and share lessons learned from events that, could have resulted in a fatality, injury, or property damage.

Description

The City of Meridian and the Meridian Fire Department use a variety of methods to elevate the situational awareness of employees to teach and share lessons learned in an effort to limit the duplication of errors. The city provides a link to all employees to report potential hazards or incidents. The program is administered by the city safety program coordinator and is used to determine how to prevent a reoccurrence. Independently, the fire department generates summary reports, known as green sheets, which address and evaluate specific incident hazards and to communicate lessons learned. The green sheets serve as an aid to provide lessons learned from factual information after incidents to enhance safety, training, and elevate the level of situational awareness.

Appraisal

The city-offered near miss form has not received a submission from fire department personnel. The city safety program coordinator has been working to reconfigure the system to remove any personally identifying information from the submission to increase employee utilization. The fire department green sheet has not been used consistently across all three shifts, and no policy exists to outline its use.

Plan

The division chief of health and safety will work with the city safety program coordinator, the operations chief, and members of the organization to identify strategies to develop an integrated learning environment to help personnel turn shared lessons learned into actions that are applied consistently throughout the fire department. The plan will include a means to provide anonymous submissions for near-miss reporting and implementing the use of the Green Sheet across all shifts for all incidents of significance, through a policy or other directive.

References

- Green Sheet, Structure Fire, 07.12.2022, 2324 East Franklin Road

- Communication with City Safety Coordinator, screenshot

11A.7 The agency has a process in place to investigate and document accidents, injuries, legal actions, etc., to determine root cause. The agency's information management system supports this process.

Description

The department has an established process to investigate accidents, injuries, and legal actions to determine the root cause. The process includes reports of incidents, worker compensation paperwork, and other associated documentation. The process is supported by the department's administrative policies regarding workplace injury and exposure and discipline. The preparation of departmental investigations includes a summary of the incident, interviews, conclusions, recommendations, and the attachment of relevant documents. The department's documentation and investigative process contains a description of the sequence of events and overview of the causal chain analysis to determine the root or underlying causes of accidents, injuries, and illnesses. The department confers with the city attorney, retained counsel, and contracts with external, third-party investigators as needed. Documentation is retained for the required period of time and cataloged by administrative employees. Any accidents or major safety concerns are investigated following AP210 - Discipline policy.

Appraisal

The current investigative and documentation systems have been satisfactory and useful for the needs of the Meridian Fire Department. The formal approach to department investigations has focused on human error, rule breaking, and procedural mistakes. This approach may have missed the symptoms of systemic problems that everyone in the organization may be vulnerable to. The department has been unable to access data regarding type and frequency of injuries on a regular basis.

Plan

The department will work to develop an investigative process that incorporates understanding organizational decisions, culture, and operational conditions to focus beyond looking for where people went wrong. The process should identify methods to assess people's actions to learn more about the functioning of the entire system and learn valuable insights as meaningful lessons learned. The division chief of health and safety

will work with the human resources department to track injury reporting trends, including by station, location, activity, etc.

References

- AP235 - Workplace Injury and Exposure
- AP210 – Discipline

11A.8 The agency incorporates risk management practices to increase the level of decision making and the ability to identify unsafe conditions and practices during emergency operations.

Description

The department incorporates risk management practices to increase the level of decision making throughout the organization. The department has published the *Meridian Fire Department Ethos Manual* which outlines the guiding principles for all member to achieve the mission of the fire department. The *Ethos Manual* emphasizes a mission-driven culture to lower the risk to members and the organization by imbedding risk management decision making at all levels. During emergency operations, the department uses West Ada Emergency Operations Guideline 4.0, Strategy and Incident Action Planning, to identify and evaluate risk to make decisions. The EOG outlines the following risk management plan:

- We will risk our lives a lot, to save savable lives
- We will risk our lives a little, to save savable property
- We will NOT risk our lives, at all, for lives or property that are already lost.

Appraisal

The department has embodied a mission-driven culture as an institutionalized, long-term strategy for the organization. The department has been working to standardize risk management practices throughout the organization by inserting the beliefs and behaviors into leadership development, reading lists, training programs, operational updates, and promotional processes with increasing success.

Plan

The department plans to continue to integrate risk management practices and systems thinking at all levels of decision making in the fire department. The department will reinforce the tenants of a mission-driven culture in its recruiting, hiring, promotion, training, leadership, and operational practices. The plan is to shape the operational ethos at

all levels to reinforce the day-to-day culture and serve as a critical foundation for the department.

References

- *Meridian Fire Department Ethos Manual*, pg. 11
- West Ada Emergency Operations Guidelines-4.0, Strategy and Incident Action Planning
- Officer Development Program 2023
- Battalion Chief Officer Task Book, pg. 12
- MFD Full Academy Schedule, pg. 1
- MFD Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles

11A.9 The agency has adopted a comprehensive program to address direct- and cross-contamination of clothing, personal protective equipment, other equipment, apparatus and fixed facilities.

Description

The department has a comprehensive program to prevent cross-contamination of clothing, personal protective equipment, apparatus, and fixed facilities. The department utilizes a variety of controls to reduce or remove hazards. The department has implemented administrative controls in the form of policies and procedures for both bloodborne and carcinogenic related exposures. In 2018, the Meridian Fire Department introduced a carcinogenic reduction program to provide in-field guidance and quick access to gross field decontamination any time products of combustion are encountered. The program highlights the ongoing cleanliness of equipment and apparatus, SCBA cleaning (on-scene and post incident), personal hygiene, bags for contaminated gear, as well as a gross-decontamination bucket program. The department has also developed a station design for new facilities that incorporates engineering controls including decontamination protocols and equipment into the fire stations.

Appraisal

The implementation of new procedures and equipment to reduce or remove hazards has been positive for the Meridian Fire Department. Due to the rapid growth of the organization, training, quality control, and assessment of the programs have been difficult to supervise. The new programs have not been evaluated to determine if they have been institutionalized and achieving the intended outcomes.

Plan

The newly appointed division chief of health and safety will conduct a review of all programs designed to address contamination. The review should include a method for improving processes and identifying practices to sustain, and practices to improve or initiate. In addition, the division chief of health and safety will review the emerging concern over per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in firefighter turnout gear and determine if the department should implement new policies or directives regarding PFAS exposures.

References

- AP235, Workplace Injury and Exposure
- AP660 - COVID-19
- Operational Directive OD19-01, Carcinogen Reduction Procedures
- New Station Furnishings, Fixtures, and Equipment Matrix, Decon

11A.10 The agency collects and maintains exposure records in accordance with local laws, regulations and/or current research.

Description

The department collects and maintains exposure records in accordance with statutory requirements using a tiered approach. The first tier involves the department’s internal administrative policy AP235 that guides members and supervisors on the department’s process for reporting and documenting a potential infectious disease exposure. This process involves the City of Meridian’s Human Resources Department that aids in managing exposure-related worker’s compensation and provides a trend analysis of injuries and exposures. The second tier incorporates the local community’s system wide policy that coordinates the Meridian Fire Department’s response to infectious disease exposures with the Ada County/City Emergency Services System (ACCESS). This second tier also includes the department’s physician advisor and current research from the Centers for Disease Control and the National Clinician Consultation Center. The third tier provides additional documentation to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Reporting to the state meets the official requirements governing the reporting, control, and prevention of reportable diseases and conditions within the State of Idaho.

Appraisal

The department has met all local and federal statutory requirements for exposure reporting and records retention. The department has not evaluated other programs that may supplement documentation and records management for a more comprehensive system of exposure records.

Plan

The department will continue to work with human resources, ACCESS, the State of Idaho, and the department’s physician advisor to identify and comply with law and regulations, and to research enhancements to the exposure reporting and records maintenance to improve data accessibility. Additionally, the newly appointed division chief of health and safety will work with department administration, the division chief of EMS, and representative members from the line staff to investigate and evaluate alternatives for a

more complete system integration of exposure records, including national databases and firefighter exposure tracking applications, to be completed by the end of 2024.

References

- AP235 - Workplace Injury and Exposure
- MFD Records Retention Schedule 2021
- Infections Disease Post Exposure - Form
- Infections Disease Post Exposure - Policy
- Infections Disease Post Exposure - Instructions
- Idaho Significant Exposure Information Request Form
- Confidential Exposure Records – Names Redacted
- HR Provided Trend Analysis

11A.11 The agency has established procedures to ensure effective and qualified deployment of an Incident Safety Officer to all risk events.

Description

The department has established procedures to ensure an incident safety officer is deployed to all high-risk events. The department's training captains are cross trained as incident safety officers and required to respond to certain call types as dispatched. The training captains have an essential job qualification to maintain an incident safety officer certification meeting National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1521: *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications*. Additionally, the department position task books for battalion chief, operational captains, and department officer development programs include objectives to ensure the ability to request an incident safety officer, and provide for the responsibilities of that position. Those responsibilities include managing incident rehabilitation, medical surveillance, injury reporting, and post-fire exposure prevention. The Ada County Fire Response List outlines specific call types that receive an incident safety officer as a part of the response matrix throughout the county.

Appraisal

The growth of the department has impacted the organization's ability to ensure consistent response from the training captains as incident safety officers. In 2023, the department has onboarded 35 new members into the agency from recruit firefighters through the rank of deputy chief. This growth has required the training captains to focus on new hire and lateral fire academies, shifting their focus from direct operational support.

Plan

The newly appointed division chief of health and safety will work with the operations chief and the training division to review the incident safety officer program. The review should include a method for improving processes and identifying practices to sustain, and to improve or initiate, such as establishing an on-call process, identifying a safety officer per shift, examine FRL and call back procedures, and identifying alternative safety officer options.

References

- Ada County Fire Response Lists
- Training Captain Job Description
- Officer Development Program – Incident Safety Officer Presentation
- Battalion Chief Officer Task Book, pg. 12
- Captain Task Book, pg. 12
- ISO Training Certification Example

11A.12 The agency establishes and consistently follows procedures for maintaining accountability of all personnel operating at all risk events.

Description

The department follows procedures for maintaining accountability on all incidents as identified in the West Ada Emergency Operations Guidelines (EOGs). EOG 1.6. outlines how accountability should be maintained at three different levels within the incident command structure. At the task level, personnel are expected to enter and exit the hazard zone together and maintain voice, visual or physical contact at all times. At the tactical level, a supervisor is designated to track personnel whenever two or more units are assigned to operate in the same geographical area. At the strategic level, the incident commander is responsible for tracking personnel using the passport accountability system, personnel accountability reports, and roll-calls.

Appraisal

Accountability of personnel has most often been managed at the task and tactical level within the department. As incidents grow in size and complexity, incident commanders have developed a provisional level of accountability wherein they use the daily rosters as an alternate to the passport system until they are able to incorporate that system. The daily rosters are not currently shared to and from neighboring districts, disrupting the continuity of accountability during the escalation of incidents involving mutual aid.

Plan

The newly appointed division chief of health and safety will conduct a review of all programs designed to maintain accountability of personnel during incidents. The review will include the Meridian Fire Department battalion chiefs, the deputy chief of operations, the training division, as well as identify key stakeholders throughout the response community. The process of review will involve a method for improving processes and identifying practices to sustain, and practices to improve or initiate.

References

- West Ada Emergency Operating Guideline - 1.6, Accountability

Criterion 11B: Wellness/Fitness Programs

The agency has a wellness/fitness program for personnel. The agency specifies and communicates the provisions if employees/members do not comply with the wellness/fitness program.

Summary:

The Meridian Fire Department demonstrates a commitment to fitness and wellness through a variety of programs. Many members of the department are peer fitness instructors and help manage the Meridian Fire Fit website, which provides both on and off-duty fitness programming for its members. Participation in a fitness program is mandatory for all union line personnel. The department also equips all stations with a full complement of functional fitness equipment including barbells and plates, squat racks and benches, dumbbells and kettlebells, and a variety of other equipment. The department also has a dedicated peer support team comprised of members from the line and administration. The department uses the Meridian Fire Department *FireStrong* website to provide a single dedicated portal where members can access all of the department's and city's mental health and wellness resources, including employee assistance programs, counseling, family counseling, peer support team members, and others.

Performance Indicators:

CC 11B.1 The agency provides for initial, regular, and rehabilitative medical, and fitness evaluations.

Description

The department partners with Emergency Responders Health Center LLC (ERHC) to provide medical and fitness evaluations for initial hires and regular members. ERHC employs board-certified physicians who are knowledgeable and familiar with occupational medicine specific to firefighter health and wellness. New hires are required to complete a pre-employment physical and be medically cleared by ERHC physicians as a contingency of their job offer, as well as to complete a fitness evaluation as part of the new hire academy. In addition, ERHC handles all work-related injuries, injury rehabilitation, and medical clearance for return to work programs for injured members. All line personnel undergo regular (annual or biannual) fitness evaluations through ERHC, which include cardiac stress tests as well as cancer, audiology, and spirometry screenings.

Appraisal

Through close partnerships with EHRC and Meridian Firefighters Local 4627 (the union), the department has created a trustworthy and mutually beneficially medical and physical evaluation process. The close relationship between the department and EHRC allows for members who are injured on duty to receive timely and appropriate care, expediting their return to full health. Guidelines regarding physical evaluations and work injury have been governed by the Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, and return to work guidelines have been governed by operational directive. All eligible members have completed biennial screenings in the last two years.

Plan

The department, in partnership with EHRC, will continue to assess the existing medical screening and fitness testing and provide a gap analysis between the current programs and those outlined in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1582: *Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments*. This process will

include a trend analysis of department injuries and input from members on how to reduce accidents and injuries. The department may consider developing policies to provide further direction for annual/biannual physical and medical evaluations and develop minimum performance standards to help ensure that each member can meet the physical demands of their job description. The division chief of health and safety will also evaluate the physical requirements of Chief and administrative level positions not governed by the contract and develop a fitness and wellness policy with input from those members.

References

- Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, Article 26, pg. 28-29
- Emergency Responders Health Center - Contract Agreement
- Operational Directive OD22-01, Return to Work after Extended Leave
- NFPA 1582: *Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments*

11B.2 The agency provides personnel with access to fitness facilities and equipment.

Description

The department provides personnel with access to exercise facilities at each station. Each facility offers a variety of cardio and strength equipment to support cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility. The City of Meridian provides a facility in City Hall for administrative employees. The Meridian Fire Department and Meridian Professional Firefighters Local 4627 have developed and adopted a fitness and exercise program for all firefighting personnel. In accordance with the Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, participation in the program is mandatory for all employees who respond to emergency incidents. On duty workouts are outlined on the local’s webpage, meridianfirefit.com.

Appraisal

The department has provided high-quality fitness facilities and equipment to all personnel. Staff input and participation from the peer fitness trainers has guided the inventory and overall programing of the fitness facilities and equipment. The department has not identified a comprehensive plan for maintenance or a replacement plan for fitness equipment.

Plan

The department plans to continue to provide high-quality, well-maintained fitness facilities and equipment. Stations 7 and 8, currently under construction, will each feature a dedicated workout room and a full complement of fitness equipment. The division chief of health and safety will work with the peer fitness trainers and city facilities manager to identify a maintenance and replacement schedule for fitness equipment at the fire stations.

References

- Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, Article 26, pg. 28-29
- Fitness Equipment by Station

- City of Meridian Standard Operating Policy 6.2.7, Use of Fitness Facility in City Hall

11B.3 The agency makes available wellness/fitness training to all employees/members.

Description

The Meridian Fire Department makes wellness/fitness training available to all employees/members. The Meridian Fire Department and Meridian Professional Firefighters Local 4627 have a developed and adopted fitness and exercise program for all firefighting personnel. In accordance with the Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, participation in the program is mandatory for all employees that respond to emergency incidents. On-duty workouts are outlined on the local's webpage, meridianfirefit.com. The Meridian Fire Fit webpage provides a sample on-duty workout, workouts for off-duty days, and nutrition information. The department also has a number of peer fitness trainers that are educated through the Wellness Fitness Initiative developed by the International Association of Fire Fighters and International Association of Fire Chiefs. Employees may contact a peer fitness trainer through the Meridian Fire Fit website. Peer fitness trainers are available to provide support for personal fitness programs, conduct fitness assessments, design comprehensive exercise programs, teach corrective biomechanical techniques, establish follow-up criteria, identify health risk factors, and provide education regarding nutrition. Additionally, the Emergency Responders Health Center (ERHC) provides personalized feedback based on department provided medical and physical exams to aid in the creation of an ongoing customized fitness plan. The department has also contracted with Nicoletti-Flater to provide mental wellness and resilience trainings to the peer support team. Employees may access peer support team members and other wellness-related resources at Meridian Fire Department's *FireStrong* webpage.

Appraisal

The department's wellness and fitness training programs have been well-utilized by department members. The department has developed and supported wellness/fitness training with on-duty physical fitness programs, wellness programs and expects employee participation. Trained personnel, appropriate equipment, and facilities have been provided.

Plan

The department plans to continue to evaluate the existing programs and identify industry best practices for continuous improvement.

References

- Meridian Fire Fit Website, screenshot
- Meridian Fire Strong Website, screenshot
- Peer Fitness Trainer List - <https://www.meridianfirefit.com/contact-trainers/>

11B.4 The agency provides an employee/member assistance program with timely access to critical incident stress debriefing, peer support and counseling, and other behavioral health resources.

Description

Together, the City of Meridian Human Resources Department and the Meridian Fire Department provide employee assistance programs (EAPs) with timely access to critical incident stress debriefings, peer support and counseling, as well as other behavioral health resources. The City’s EAP program is provided through BPA Health delivering a variety of resources including free and confidential counseling and financial services, online seminars, and e-learning courses for employees and their family members. Additionally, the Meridian Fire Department has developed partnerships with Nicoletti-Flater and *FireStrong* to provide member and family access to in-house Peer Support Team members and Licensed Professional Counselors. The Peer Support Team members are available to provide support and debriefings and are the first point of contact in determining next steps and resources for members and their family so that they receive timely access to the personalized support they need.

Appraisal

The Meridian Fire Department’s Peer Support programs have provided meaningful assistance to department employees and their families. As the department has grown in size and volume, it has been identified that peer team members and command staff are not able to maintain a high level of situational awareness to offer support as quickly as they have been in the past.

Plan

The newly appointed division chief of health and safety will conduct a review of all employee assistance and support programs designed to support critical incident stress debriefings and behavioral counseling resources. The review should include a method for improving processes and identifying practices to sustain, improve, or initiate and involve members from the peer support team and partner/affiliated agencies that are also providing similar resources. Specifically, the division chief of health and safety will evaluate the

benefit of quick-access job aids and a process to aid in the timely notification of members of the peer support team and command staff as appropriate.

References

- City of Meridian Employee Assistance Program Summary
- Peer Support Team
- Peer Support Team Training Overview
- MFD *FireStrong* Website, screenshot

11B.5 The agency provides for cancer and behavioral health screenings and a cardiac assessment.

Description

The Meridian Fire Department has partnered with Emergency Responders Health Center (ERHC) to provide medical evaluations for initial hires and regular members. The evaluations include cancer and behavioral health screenings, and a cardiac stress assessment. ERHC employs board-certified physicians who are knowledgeable and familiar with occupational medicine specific to firefighter health and wellness. New hires are required to complete a pre-employment physical and be medically cleared by ERHC physicians as a contingency of their job offer. All line personnel undergo regular (annual or biannual) evaluations through ERHC, which also include cardiac stress tests as well as cancer and behavioral health screenings. In the state of Idaho, cancer is considered an occupational injury under certain circumstances for firefighters and so special attention is given to cancer screenings and prevention during pre-employment and annual health screenings.

Appraisal

Through close partnerships with EHRC and Meridian Firefighters Local 4627, the department has created a trustworthy and mutually beneficial medical and physical evaluation process. Guidelines regarding physical evaluations have been governed by the Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, as well as state legislation regarding presumptive illness. The fire department and the union have discussed expanding services for cancer and behavioral health screenings and cardiac assessment.

Plan

The department, in partnership with EHRC and the union, will continue to assess the existing medical screening program and provide a gap analysis between the current programs and those outlined in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1582: *Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments*. This process will focus on research related to wellness, understudied populations, cardiovascular health, cancer, mental health, reproductive health, occupational medical

evaluations, fatigue, sleep disorders, and work environment. The division chief of health and safety will work with EHRC physicians to examine the feasibility of adding ultrasound screening to the biennial department physical.

References

- Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627, Article 26, pg. 28-29
- Emergency Responders Health Center – Contract Agreement

CC 11B.6 A formal and documented appraisal is conducted, at least annually, to determine the effectiveness of the wellness/fitness programs and its impact on meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

The department conducts a formal program appraisal annually to determine the effectiveness of the wellness/fitness program based on the program's goals. The appraisal is conducted by the division chief of health and safety with input from the peer fitness and peer support teams to evaluate the effectiveness of the associated programs and provide recommendations based on the department's goals and objectives. Appraisals are conducted according to Administrative Standard Operating Guidelines (ASOGs).

Appraisal

Previously, many aspects of the department's wellness and fitness programs were managed by multiple department programs and divisions, and were evaluated during annual reports or committee meetings by those respective groups. The department has evaluated the effectiveness of the wellness/fitness initiative through its first annual program appraisal conducted by the division chief of health and safety, an external stakeholder process, the strategic planning process, and staff input. Through evaluation, the department determined that strategic level improvements could be made to support and improve the department's wellness/fitness programs and reduce accidents and injuries to firefighters.

Plan

On an annual basis, the division chief of health and safety will conduct an annual appraisal to reflect the program performance goals and risks, in accordance with SOGs. Through the budget process, with the peer fitness and peer support team's input, programs will be supported that reflect the agency's goals and objectives.

References

- Annual Program Appraisal 11B.6 Health and Wellness