**Chapter 2: Fire Fighter Safety**

**Chief Concepts**

* Every fire fighter and fire department must have a strong commitment to safety and health. Safety must be fully integrated into every activity, procedure, and job description.
* Each year, fire fighters are killed at emergency incidents, in fire stations, during training, and while responding to or returning from an emergency. Even one death is too many.
* The majority of all fire fighter deaths are caused by heart attacks or strokes.
* Motor vehicle collisions are a major cause of fire fighter fatalities. Always wear your seat belt each and every time you are in a motor vehicle.
* Fire fighters must always consider three things when ensuring safety at the scene:
	1. Personal safety
	2. Safety of other team members
	3. Safety of everyone present at the scene
* A successful safety program must have four major components:
	1. Standards and procedures—Regulations, ranging from NFPA standards to provincial/territorial regulations to local laws, govern the fire department’s SOPs and SOGs on ensuring a safe work environment.
	2. Personnel—From teams working together to safety officers, personnel ensure that a fire department’s safety program is implemented correctly.
	3. Training—Training does not end with this course. To ensure that you attain and maintain a high level of skill and knowledge, you must seek out additional courses and training opportunities throughout your career.
	4. Equipment—To ensure safety, equipment must be properly maintained, and fire fighters must be trained how to use it correctly.
* The 16 fire fighter life-safety initiatives describe the steps that need to be taken to change the current culture of the fire service to help make it a safer place for all fire fighters.
* Safety and well-being are directly related to personal health and fitness. You should eat a healthy diet, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, and sleep for 7 to 8 hours a day, whenever possible.
* A well-rounded fitness routine includes weight training, cardiovascular workouts, and stretching.
* EAPs are available to provide fire fighters with confidential counselling, support, or assistance in dealing with a physical, financial, emotional, or substance abuse problem.
* Each year, up to 10 percent of fire fighter fatalities occur during training exercises. Do not attempt anything you feel is beyond your ability or knowledge. If you see something you feel is unsafe, say something.
* Four general principles govern emergency-vehicle operation:
	1. Emergency-vehicle operators are subject to all traffic regulations, unless a specific exemption is made.
	2. Exceptions are legal only when operating in emergency mode.
	3. Even with an exemption, the emergency-vehicle operator can be found criminally or civilly liable if involved in a crash.
	4. An exemption does not relieve the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with reasonable care for all persons using the highway.
* Emergency driving requires good reactions and alertness. Driving while impaired or distracted is unacceptable and illegal. Your driving record, both on duty and off duty, will impact your career as a fire fighter.
* Safe driving practices will prevent most vehicle collisions. Anticipate the road and road conditions. Make allowances for weather conditions. Learn where the greatest risks are located on your routes. Be alert for the presence of other emergency vehicles.
* The personnel accountability system tracks personnel and assignments at the emergency scene. Several types of systems are acceptable—from paper assignments to display boards to laptop computers and electronic tracking devices.
* The electric power supply should be turned off to safely secure the scene for fire fighters.
* Do not try to move a heavy object alone; ask for help.
* A fire fighter who experiences chest pain or discomfort should stop and seek medical attention immediately.
* A CISD is a forum in which firefighting and EMS personnel can discuss anxieties, stress, and emotions triggered by a difficult incident.
* The fire station is just as much a workplace as the fire ground. Be careful when working with power tools, ladders, electric appliances, pressurized cylinders, wet floors, and hot surfaces.
* An accident or injury, regardless of when or where it happens, can end your firefighting career.