

**OKOLONA**  
**Fire Department**

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**MEMO**

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To: Everyone  
From: Rich Carlson, Fire Chief  
Date: August 1, 2007  
Re: Seatbelt Use

The fire department's General Safety Rules address wearing of seatbelts while in department vehicles or while on duty. The following is the Seatbelt Rule:

*"Seat belts shall be worn by all persons in a fire department owned vehicle whenever the vehicle is in motion. Fire department members riding in other vehicles not owned by the fire department shall also wear seatbelts when the member is in the discharge of their duties. (This is not applicable when the vehicle is being maneuvered on fire department property or when the member is in the rear of an ambulance and the member is providing medical care to a patient). The person in charge of a fire department vehicle is responsible to ensure all persons have their seatbelts fastened prior to movement of the vehicle."*

A significant cause of firefighter injury and fatalities is motor vehicle accidents. In about 1 out of 3 such accidents, firefighters were not restrained with seatbelts.

In order to ensure we are doing all we can for your safety, we are going to engage in some "tough love" and do some cracking down on wearing of seatbelts.

Therefore the following is effective immediately:

1. Donning of Personal Protective Equipment ("PPE") not including Self Contained Breathing Apparatus ("SCBA"):

No one shall board an apparatus to respond to an incident unless he or she has first donned the appropriate PPE (bunker pants, coat, and protective hood).

If an apparatus is on the road and an incident is dispatched, members on the apparatus shall remain seated with seatbelts fastened. Only after arriving at the scene shall members don PPE. The only exception is when responding to a fire with reported rescue. In this situation members may unfasten seatbelts and don PPE, and then re-fasten seatbelts upon donning PPE. Waiting to don PPE until just before arrival is preferred.

2. Donning of SCBA:

Members shall not don SCBA while the apparatus is en-route to an incident. Donning of SCBA shall not take place until the apparatus has arrived on scene, unless the member can don SCBA without unfastening or loosening their seatbelt. In other words, it is more important for

the firefighter to be wearing the seatbelt than it is to be wearing SCBA while en-route to an incident. The only exception is when responding to a fire with reported rescue. In this situation members may unfasten seatbelts and don SCBA, and then re-fasten seatbelts upon donning SCBA. Waiting to don SCBA until just before arrival is preferred.

### 3. Three Strikes and You are Out of the Safety Award Rule:

Any officer, sergeant acting in an officer or supervisory role or other firefighter acting in an officer role, shall monitor members for compliance with the Seatbelt Rule. Any officer, sergeant acting in an officer or supervisory role or other firefighter acting in an officer role who observes a member failing to comply with the Seatbelt Rule shall immediately correct the offending member.

Beginning September 1, 2007, any officer, sergeant acting in an officer or supervisory role or other firefighter acting in an officer role who corrects a member for not complying with the Seatbelt Rule shall inform the department safety officer (Assistant Chief Gosnell) via e-mail of who was corrected and when. There is no discretion to keep this between the officer and offender, reporting is mandatory.

The safety officer shall keep tally of occasions where a member failed to comply with the Seatbelt Rule. Each such occasion shall be known as a "strike".

Any officer, sergeant acting in an officer or supervisory role or other firefighter acting in an officer role who fails to correct an offender and to notify via e-mail, the safety officer of a violation shall himself be assigned a "strike".

Any member who accumulates three (3) strikes or more will be barred from receiving a Safety Award at the Awards Dinner. (Any members accumulating five (5) or more strikes shall be welcomed to my office for further discussion and appropriate action of a disciplinary nature).

Any Safety Awards not given as a result of receiving 3 strikes, will be given to other members, as chosen by lottery, who are eligible for the safety award.

Most of us like to be nice people and not get others in trouble. However in addition to this being a safety issue, I do wish to point out that no one instance will cause someone to not receive a safety award, or be subject to discipline. Rather it's the offender having a pattern of not wearing a seatbelt.