



## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SECTION**

**Toronto Fire Services Designated Officer Program**  
Captain Randy Gwyn R.N.  
Infection Control Practitioner/Designated Officer

### **Role of the TFS Designated Officer**

Firefighters face many occupational risks in the conduct of their duties. One area of risk is the possible occupational exposure to communicable diseases.

Reducing the risk of workplace exposure to communicable diseases involves adherence to the basic principles of infection control. These risks are further reduced when firefighters have a good understanding of how diseases are spread and how the consistent use of protective equipment can help break “the chain of disease transmission”.

Unfortunately when these measures fail there must be a structured, efficient and confidential system in place to ensure that the firefighter’s health and concerns are properly dealt with. In addition, the D.O. will act as a liaison to outside agencies if notification of a possible firefighter exposure originated elsewhere, for example if notification came from the hospital where the patient was taken.

### **The components of a D.O. role are as follows:**

1. Encourage reporting;
2. Assess and document each reported incident;
3. Advise the reporting F.F. regarding the probable risks and make appropriate referrals.

4. Assist with staff training.

**To do this the D.O. will:**

- Be aware of what information should be obtained from Firefighter's who believe they have been exposed to a communicable disease.
- Be able to assess whether or not an exposure has occurred.
- Understand the procedure to follow if a possible exposure has occurred;
- Be able to inform the F.F. of the possible risks related to the communicable disease and advise them to seek appropriate medical care.

**Firefighter's Responsibilities**

Each individual Firefighter shall:

- Be aware of risks of exposure to the selected communicable diseases.
- Prevent exposure by using universal precautions and appropriate procedures and/or personal protective equipment.
- Comply with workplace health and safety policies.
- Report exposures immediately by contacting Communications at 416-338-9000 and requesting the Designated Officer.

\* Note: All Designated Officers and alternates are working under the direct guidance and Medical Authority of Toronto Fire Services' Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Noah Forman.