

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

Volunteer Firefighting Policy

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Policy 5.50 be approved as presented in Attachment 1 to Report HR 2025-02 entitled “Volunteer Firefighting”, effective June 25, 2025.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to present the proposed Volunteer Firefighting Policy (Attachment 1), which outlines the expectations of Oxford County employees who also serve as volunteer firefighters with a local municipality.
- Provides information and guidance to employees and supervisory staff on when attendance at volunteer fire calls is permitted and the process to be followed.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Upon approval of this policy, Human Resources will ensure that staff is aware of the new policy through established communication mechanisms.

Financial Impact

The recommendation contained in this report has no financial impact.

Communications

The Strategic Communication and Engagement team will assist Human Resources in ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy through established communication channels.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council's vision of "Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future." These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being		Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities Goal 3.3 – Attract, retain and engage staff

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

Oxford County recognizes the vital role volunteer firefighters play in supporting our local communities. To address inconsistencies in how staff participation in emergency calls has been managed across the organization, a new corporate policy is being recommended. This policy aims to ensure a consistent and fair approach for all Oxford County employees who serve as volunteer firefighters.

Comments

The proposed policy, presented in Attachment 1, reinforces Oxford County's support for employees who also serve as volunteer firefighters—provided their absence does not compromise the safety of coworkers or the public, or create operational challenges.

The key objectives of the Volunteer Firefighter Policy include:

- Clarifying that an employee's ability to respond to a firefighting call depends on their role, location, and the nature of their current task. For instance, employees engaged in safety-sensitive work at the time of the call would not be permitted to leave.
- Defining the procedure for responding to a call, which involves obtaining prior approval from a supervisor and submitting a time-off request afterward.
- Emphasizing that County work responsibilities take precedence over volunteer firefighter duties, particularly in situations where the employee is performing essential or on-call services for the County.

CONCLUSIONS

Oxford County recognizes the importance of having a consistent approach regarding staff who also work as volunteer firefighters within their local municipalities. The inclusion of a specific policy with procedures to address who can attend calls and when, will provide needed clarity to supervisors and current and future staff who also serve as volunteer firefighters.

SIGNATURES

Departmental Approval:

Original Signed by:

Amy Smith
Director of Human Resources

Approved for submission:

Original Signed by:

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 Volunteer Firefighting Policy 5.50, June 25, 2025