

Summary of the Training Center Governance Committee’s “2023 Safety Report.”

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Training Center Governance Committee: Created in 2015, the committee was created to “govern access, use, and future capital investments at the training facility for efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, economy, and continuity of operations.”

- Specifically focused on modernizing the “aging 1907 training facility” to better suit the needs of emergency responders.
- Within the Governance Committee, there is a Safety Subcommittee.¹
 - Evaluates safety standards at training facilities and makes recommendations. Reports to the legislature annually.
 - Reviews injury reports.

Joint Reporting Practices:

- Both Vermont Fire Academy and Police Academy utilize a standardized Injury Report Form.
 - Instructors must submit a report for any injury that occurred.
 - Reports are reviewed by the Safety Subcommittee and presented to the Training Center Governance Committee with recommendations to help mitigate future incidents.
- All OSHA 300 injuries are included in the Committee’s annual report.²

Vermont Fire Academy:

- Utilizes standards set by the National Fire Protection Association, coupled with Vermont Fire Service Training Council approved Standard Operating Guidelines.
- In 2023, there were 2 reportable injuries.
 - Both injuries were determined to have been unavoidable, as both were products of the inherent dangers of the job.
 - Prevention measures:
 - In 2020 a blood pressure screening program was introduced. This has worked to identify and resolve hypertension, which is a leading cause of death for firefighters.
 - Rehabilitation Policy: requires periodic rest periods and ensures regular health monitoring during strenuous training events.

¹ The committee consists of members of the Vermont Department of Labor, the Vermont Fire Academy, the Vermont Police Academy, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and the Vermont Agency of Administration.

² Injuries reportable to OSHA are classified as “those that result in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, one or more days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, diagnosis of a significant injury or illness, loss of consciousness, or death.”

- Scheduling changes that reduce danger of high-intensity training. This includes moving live fire exercises to the cooler months and spacing out strenuous training events.
- Cancer prevention. Measures include “separating, sealing, and segregating contaminated personal protective equipment.” Comprehensive information about contamination is given to trainees as well.

Vermont Police Academy:

- Utilizes standards set by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council, federal and state statutes and court decisions, and “nationally recommended best practices from a host of different law enforcement entities.”
- In 2023, there were a total of 35 injuries, 9 of which were OSHA reportable incidents.
 - 23 occurred during PT (physical testing) or training.
 - 9 occurred outside of PT or training.
 - Injury prevention measures:
 - Tracking all injuries, even if not OSHA reportable.
 - Physical training was “adjusted to elevate varying levels of physical fitness.”
 - Development of “care plans,” which allow trainees to leave following an injury and return where they left off.
- In 2023, there were a total of 19 instances of illness.
 - 14 were viral illnesses, 1 was mental health related, and 4 were allergen related.
 - There were 2 reported cases of COVID-19 in 2023. Remote learning was implemented promptly and impacts on recruits was minimal.
 - Illness prevention measures:
 - Mental health awareness has been introduced at orientations. This means giving trainees the tools to monitor their own mental health and strategies for dealing with any struggles they may face.
 - Funds were used to purchase COVID-19 related equipment, including sanitation measures, a medical room, and remote-learning tools.