

**Date:** 05/11/2019

**To:** Chair and Directors, Committee of the Whole

**And To:** John MacLean, Chief Administrative Officer

**From:** Stuart Larson, Manager of Protective Services

**Date of Meeting:** Committee of the Whole\_Nov14\_2019

**File:** 7150-01

---

## **Item for Discussion:**

Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for Independent Society Run Volunteer Fire Departments

## **Background:**

With the implementation of the OFC Playbook in 2015, there have been concerns with regards to who is the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for independent society run volunteer fire departments, and what liability, if any, the CRD is willing to accept for emergency response agencies that we are not the AHJ over.

Staff has been in contact with the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC), who have confirmed that the Playbook is applicable to all fire departments and fire services, including municipal and regional district fire departments, fire brigades, volunteer fire departments, and fire departments established as a society under the Society Act (B.C.). As the CRD does not collect taxation and support the independent society fire departments (11) within the regional district, the CRD is not considered the AHJ.

However, the following topics warrant discussion from the Committee:

1. Known independent society fire departments who are not in compliance with mandated industry standards, are identified in our 911 Dispatch System Agreement, and some are listed in our First Responder Agreements and mutual aid agreements. To the person calling 911 for assistance, they expect that the responders are adequately trained and equipped for the purpose required. Could the CRD be liable if something happens and the department has no insurance, or found to be not in compliance through an insurance claim?
2. Although the CRD does not provide any financial support through the collection of taxation to these departments, there are some that the CRD does issue annual Grant in Aid funding. In doing this, we are acknowledging, and supporting, the groups in their functions. Does this financial assistance make the CRD liable?
3. These society run fire departments are trying to provide emergency assistance in their communities for all the right reasons, but they need to understand what their legislated requirements are in providing those services. Like municipal and regional district fire departments, they are still required to meet WorkSafe BC standards, NFPA and the Fire Services Act regulations, and the minimum training

requirements identified in the OFC Playbook. How does the CRD communicate what is required to these groups without bringing them under our governance or responsibility?

**Attachments:**

None