



# COMMUNIQUÉ

OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL  
BUREAU DU COMMISSAIRE DES INCENDIES

January 31, 2024

No. 2024-02

## Mutual Aid Participants

Recently, the Office of the Fire Marshal has received multiple inquiries regarding the option of including First Nations fire departments in the regional Mutual Aid Program. It is the Fire Marshal's position that First Nations fire departments and other non-municipal fire departments can be included in Ontario Mutual Aid Plans to further supplement local response capabilities. Examples of other non-municipal fire departments include:

- Federal-based fire departments (Department of National Defence and federal airport fire departments);
- Industrial fire brigades; and
- Cross-border (provincial and federal) fire departments.

In some circumstances, fire departments may determine it is appropriate for there to be automatic aid agreements with these non-municipal fire departments which can include a cost-recovery arrangement or fee for service. Automatic aid or other fire protection agreements are not part of an Ontario Mutual Aid Plan.

Fire departments that are not municipal fire departments may be subject to different legal and statutory considerations. This does not prevent participation in Ontario's Mutual Aid Plans; however, these considerations need to be taken into account by all parties to the Mutual Aid Plan prior to it commencing.

Other considerations, such as liability and workers' compensation, may be necessary to support the inclusion of other fire departments to ensure they are properly covered to work in the intended capacity. The need for these additional items would be determined by the non-municipal fire department.

Mutual Aid Plans are an important tool in the success of Ontario's fire service Mutual aid responses are designed to supplement local emergency responses when an emergency exceeds the capacity of a local department. By design, Mutual Aid Plans are reciprocal in nature and provided at no cost for the participating agencies.

Please contact your local Fire Protection Adviser for additional support or if you have any questions.