

6-2 Working near water

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Background

Firefighters, in the course of their duties, may work near open water, such as fire fighting activities from shorelines, around wharfs and on docked boats.

Concerns/hazards

Firefighters may be exposed to the hazard of falling into water, resulting in injury or drowning.

Actions for employers

Employers should:

- develop and implement procedures for working safely around water
 - provide training in the unique aspects of working safely around water
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Precautions

Consider the following precautions, where firefighters are exposed to the hazard of falling into open water:

- a personal flotation device (PFD) that is properly fitted should be worn by personnel who may be near water or where there is an exposure to the hazard of falling into water

- a PFD should be worn while performing tasks such as line handling, particularly where the shoreline is slippery or steep, or where firefighters are engaged in work where they may be pulled into the water
- a life jacket or PFD should be approved by Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- PFDs should not be worn at the expense of wearing full protective clothing and a self-contained breathing apparatus
- safe working perimeters should be established to protect firefighters from the hazards of working close to the water without having the required PFD
- provide adequate access and egress for firefighters by providing additional gangways, ladders, or other devices
- provide for locating and rescuing firefighters who may fall into the water
- ensure firefighters working near water are tracked through accountability and entry control systems
- considerations should be given to Rapid Intervention Teams (RITs), development of an incident action plan and/or training safety plan

Applicable regulations and acts

Read:

- [*Occupational Health and Safety Act*](#)
 - clause 25(2)(a) for providing information and instruction to a worker
 - clause 25(2)(h) for taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers

Related

Read the information from Transport Canada on [Lifejackets and personal floatation devices](#).

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This **resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and its regulations and should not be used as or considered legal advice.**

Health and safety inspectors apply and enforce these laws based on the facts they find in the workplace.

We have included links to other websites, but this does not mean that we endorse their information as compliant with the OHSA or the regulations.