



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Progress On The Implementation Of A Program To Assist In Properly Installing Child Safety Car Restraints

Date:	April 23, 2007
To:	Community Development and Recreation
From:	Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services
Wards:	All Wards
Reference Number:	p:\2007\ClusterB\FIR\cd07006

SUMMARY

This report updates Council on a Toronto Fire Services pilot program to install child safety car restraints on a monthly basis in the East, South, North, and West commands. Toronto Fire Services (TFS) staff that are trained and certified by St. John Ambulance will be available to install car seats and meet the required standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fire Chief of Toronto Fire Services recommends that:

1. Toronto Fire Services staff be authorized to offer a program that assists in proper installation of Child Safety Car Restraints for citizens on a monthly basis in the East, South, North and West commands.
2. The pilot program will commence in September 2007 and a review of the program will be reported to the Community Development and Recreation Program following the one year pilot.

Financial Impact

The total cost of this pilot project is \$11,550.00 including all taxes and charges. The cost to the City for externally contracted training services to St. John Ambulance is \$1,550.00 or \$1,462.26 net of GST. Approximately \$10,000.00 in internal costs will be needed for preparing project brochures. The funds for this initiative have been included within the Recommended 2007 Operating Budget of Toronto Fire Services.

Fire Services has already incurred costs of \$800.00 or \$742.72 net of GST for the training of 40 Fire Service staff participating in the child car safety restraint project (at \$20.00 per individual). There will be 5 additional staff trained as instructors at a cost of \$750.00 total gross or \$705.55 net of GST (\$150.00 per individual). The total externally contracted training cost is \$1,550.00 or \$1,462.26 net of GST, and will be funded from the Training and Development – External account in FR0027 – Training - Operations. The amount of approximately \$10,000.00 needed to prepare brochures for the announcement of the project will be funded through the Advertising and Promotions budget in FR006 – Fire Prevention. Toronto Fire Services will report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee for consideration of a fee if the demand for car seats from the public expands the current capacity of the pilot project.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

Councillor Howard Moscoe requested Toronto Fire Services to develop a program to install child safety car restraints at fire stations across the City. The Community Development and Recreation Committee at the January 22, 2007 meeting requested that Fire Services initiate a program within six to nine months at some fire halls where at least one Fire Fighter on duty will be available to assist with the safe installation of child car seats. It was also recommended that Fire Services report within 3 months on the progress made to implement this program and include a review from the City Solicitor on any issues of liability with respect to the program.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Toronto Fire Services has participated in three Child Safety Car Restraint program clinics with the Toronto Child Safety Seat Coalition. The coalition is comprised of Toronto Police, Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Transportation. A segment of the National Fire Protection Association Risk Watch program addresses Child Safety Car Restraints.

COMMENTS

Requirements for Certified Fire Services staff to install car seats

Toronto Fire Services staff must be trained and participate in a two day program operated by St. John Ambulance who have the experience and ability to certify individuals who install car seats. The course cost for the training from St. John Ambulance is \$20 dollars per person. TFS currently has 40 fire inspectors who are trained.

Each installer is monitored for the first 20 inspections by external staff certified by St. John Ambulance. Only after the 20 installed monitored inspections are Fire Services staff certified to complete car seat inspections and installations on their own.

The car seat installation program is similar to first aid courses and certifies that TFS staff have been trained in child safety car restraint installation. Each participant who has a car seat installed or inspected by Toronto Fire Services staff will be required to sign a waiver including a release and indemnity for the benefit of the City and its staff and other parties involved in the program. It should be noted that when an individual leaves a Fire Services location and tampers with the seat belts or moves the car seat in and out of the car, the seat may not be reinstalled by the participant to the proper standard. The waiver points out that it is the participant's responsibility to see that the child restraint manufacturer's instructions are followed every time the child restraint is used.

To assist with monitoring the TFS program, after 6 months experience, approximately 5 members from the 40 installers will be selected to become instructors of Fire Services staff. This will provide TFS staff who can manage the quality of the Toronto Fire Services Child Safety Car Restraint program.

Clarification of Car Seat Installation

The Inspection of a child safety seat includes the correct placement of the seat in the motor vehicle, the correct angle of the seat within the vehicle, the correct use and path of the restraint belts, the correct location of the vehicle seats and advice on the how to ensure the child is not injured due to loose objects left within the car. All of these items are handled by the inspector and the inspector will provide assistance and instruction in each of these areas. We do not alter the motor vehicle, including installation of anchor bolts, in any way. The training from St. John Ambulance does not authorize the insertion of such anchor bolts. If this were required, the participant would be instructed to have the bolt installed by an authorized car dealership.

Trained staff will inspect and assist in the installation as per the manufacturer's instructions. If at any time a seat is found to be incompatible or cannot be installed we inform the participant and suggest that they purchase a new seat. Further, staff does not provide any assistance in the selection of car seats.

Pilot Program Child Safety Car Restraints Schedule in four Fire Services command locations

To commence the pilot program, TFS will choose four strategically placed fire facilities to service the East, West, North and South areas of the city. The locations will be picked based on:

- Availability of parking area to assist with the installation or checking car seats; and
- staff that can be scheduled at the location who will not respond to an emergency and leave numerous citizens left waiting for staff to return to install the car seat.

It is very difficult to schedule operational Fire Fighters to install a car seat because they can be out of the station or called out to an incident without consideration for having to meet a time frame to greet the public at the station to assist with the installation of car seats.

The locations are in North Command Fire Station 121, 10 William Carson Cr. (South of Yonge & 401). In the South Command at Fire Station 321, 231 McRae Dr. (East of Laird Dr.). In the East Command at the Scarborough Fire Museum, 351 Birchmount Rd. (North of Danforth Rd.). In the West Command at Station 423, 358 Keele St. (South of Dundas).

Monthly clinic in each command area

The car seat clinic will be held the first week of every month in the East Command, second week of every month in the West Command, the 3rd week of every month in the North command and the 4th week of every month in the South Command. This will provide 12 clinics per year in each command.

The clinics will operate from 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon and appointments can be made through a central phone number. Advertisements introducing the program will be sent to appropriate City Departments and the school boards.

Fire Prevention staff will be used as the car seat inspectors and installers. This will allow staff to be present for the duration of the car seat clinic. If operational Fire Fighters were used at a clinic they would not be available for the prescribed installation hours when responding to emergencies. However, the Fire Prevention and Public Education staff will be assisted by operational Fire Fighters if they are available and not responding to an emergency.

Liability associated with installing and examining the installation of child safety car restraints

Toronto Fire Services staff will be trained on car seat inspections and installations through the St. John Ambulance course that is recognized for its training courses.

Police, EMS and Ministry of Transportation staff have been trained by the St. John Ambulance. Toronto Fire Services staff will also follow the St. John Ambulance guidelines of installing 20 car restraint installations under the guidance of an instructor before they are able to commence car seat installations and inspections on their own without supervision.

Depending on the facts of the case, there is the potential risk of liability on the part of the City in offering this program given the reliance on Toronto Fire Services staff in inspecting and installing car seats in the event of injury or death of a child following an inspection and/or car seat installation by Toronto Fire Services staff. However, Toronto Fire Services will take steps to help mitigate this potential risk such as ensuring that Toronto Fire Services staff obtain appropriate training on car seat installation and follow appropriate guidelines, appropriate documentation is made of the advice given on car seat installations, and all participants who have seats inspected and/or installed by Toronto Fire Services staff are required to sign an appropriate waiver. It should be noted that there is potential risk associated with this program notwithstanding the waiver to be signed by participants since depending on the facts a court may not uphold the waiver.

The report has been reviewed with Insurance and Risk Management and the City's comprehensive general liability insurance policy would extend to cover the child restraint inspection program operated by trained Fire Services staff.

This report was written in consultation and reviewed with Legal Services.

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SIGNATURE



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