

## **Occupational Health and Safety Report: End of Year 2020**

**Date:** August 31, 2021

**To:** General Government and Licensing Committee

**From:** Chief People Officer

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides information on the status of the City's health and safety system, specifically performance for 2020 and actions and priorities to address identified hazards.

There was a 9.7 percent increase in the number of lost time injuries (LTIs) in 2020 relative to 2019. This increase was primarily due to workplace exposures to COVID-19. There was a decrease in LTIs across all other categories primarily due to a delay in the resumption of services or decreased service delivery as a result of COVID-19. There was a 45.7 percent decrease in the number of recurrences and a 36.0 percent decrease in the number of medical aid injuries in 2020 relative to 2019.

The overall invoiced costs related to the City's current Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) firm number increased from \$32.3 million in 2019 to \$38.3 million in 2020. This increase in costs is primarily attributed to mental/emotional illnesses or disorders including traumatic mental stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in First Responders. Legislation introduced in 2016 presumes that if a first responder or other designated worker is diagnosed with PTSD by a psychiatrist or psychologist, the condition is work-related.

Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Paramedic Services created PTSD Prevention Plans that were submitted to and approved by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). The plans have been updated regularly and both services have focused on "Road to Mental Recovery" training, de-briefings after all traumatic calls and provision of a dedicated staff psychologist to support employees. Senior leadership in both services are fully committed to their mental health programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Chief People Officer recommends that:

1. City Council receive the End of Year 2020 Occupational Health and Safety Report for information.

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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There are no financial implications arising from the approval of this report.

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

## DECISION HISTORY

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At its meeting of February 1, 2 and 3, 2005, City Council approved the recommendation of the Employee and Labour Relations Committee that staff report regularly to Council on the functioning of the City's health and safety system. The direction was in response to changes in the Criminal Code with respect to health and safety.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc050201/pof2rpt/cl005.pdf>

## COMMENTS

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### Issue Background

Continuously improving health and safety performance and building a strong health and safety culture continue to be key priorities for the City. This report on the City's health and safety performance is intended to enable the Mayor and Councillors to monitor the City's performance.

### Injury and Accident Statistics

#### Lost Time Injuries, Medical Aid Injuries and Recurrences

Information regarding reported WSIB incidents (work-related injuries/illnesses), by division, for 2016 - 2020 is attached in Attachment 1. Information provided includes:

- **Number of Lost Time Injuries (LTIs):** injuries/illnesses in which lost time was approved by the WSIB or is awaiting WSIB adjudication, as the employee has lost time from work as a result of a reported workplace injury;
- **Number of recurrences:** injuries/illnesses that were approved by the WSIB or are awaiting WSIB adjudication, as the employee has lost additional time as a result of a previously reported workplace injury/illness;

- **No new incident has taken place;** and
- **Number of medical aids:** injuries/illnesses in which health care only was approved by the WSIB or is awaiting WSIB adjudication, as the employee has either sought medical aid but not lost time from work as a result of a reported workplace injury or lost time has not been approved by the WSIB.

Overall, there was a 9.7 percent increase in the total number of LTIs in 2020 relative to 2019. The primary contributors were exposure to infectious agents and exposure to traumatic or stressful events. Each is reviewed in more detail below.

Exposure to infectious agents increased from 39 in 2019 to 313 in 2020. The increase was primarily due to work-related COVID-19. Divisions that experienced the greatest number of COVID-19 related lost time incidents in 2020 were:

- Seniors Services & Long Term Care (191)
- Toronto Paramedic Services (25)
- Children's Services (22)
- Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (16)
- Toronto Fire Services (13)
- Toronto Public Health (12)

Actions taken to address identified hazards associated with work-related COVID-19 included:

- Administrative and engineering controls for essential services including physical barriers and touchpoint reduction strategies;
- Physical distancing workplace assessments, occupancy limits and signage;
- Infection prevention and control procedures including increased disinfection of high touch surfaces;
- Full personal protective equipment;
- Universal masking requirements; and
- Implementation of a daily screening tool.

Exposure to traumatic or stressful events increased overall by 8.0 percent from 138 in 2019 to 149 in 2020. Divisions that experienced the greatest increases were:

- Toronto Fire Services (from 12 in 2019 to 22 in 2020)
- Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (from 6 in 2019 to 17 in 2020)

Actions taken to address identified hazards associated with exposure to traumatic or stressful events included:

- Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Paramedic Services created PTSD Prevention Plans that were submitted to and approved by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). The plans have been updated regularly and both Services have focused on "Road to Mental Recovery" training, de-briefings after all traumatic calls and provision of a dedicated staff psychologist to support employees. Senior leadership in both Services are fully committed to their mental health programs.
- Shelter, Support & Housing Administration developed a divisional workplace violence program that includes mental health supports including worker debrief sessions and Employee Assistance Program as program elements. Additionally,

division-specific mental health resources and broader mental health information is incorporated into orientation training. A Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Mental Health Working Group continues to explore additional mental health supports for staff.

There was a decrease in LTIs across all other categories primarily due to a delay in the resumption of services or decreased service delivery as a result of COVID-19.

### Recurrences

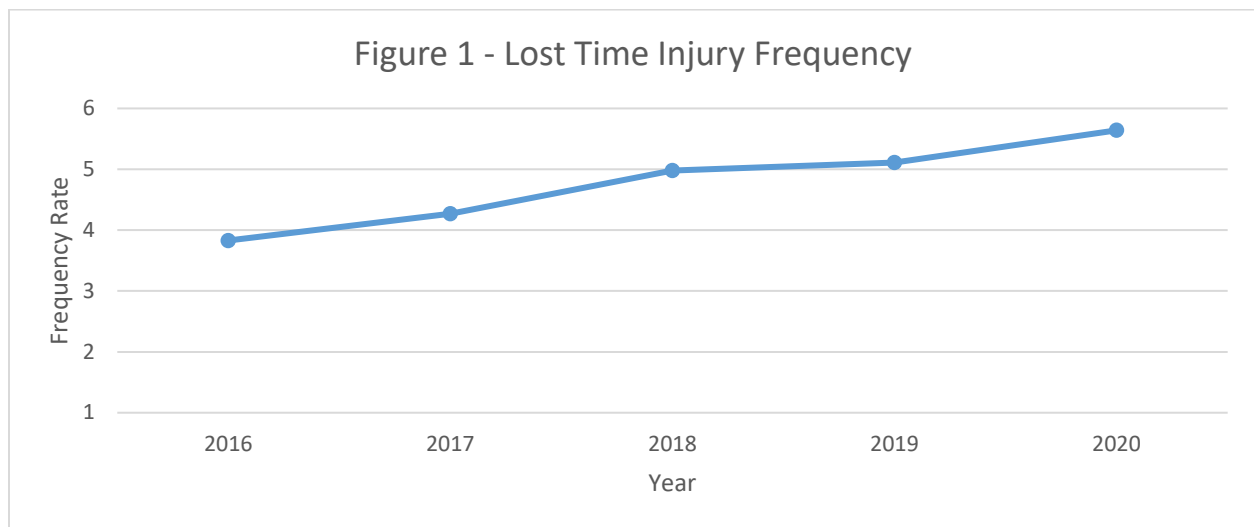
There was a 45.7 percent decrease in recurrences in 2020 relative to 2019, primarily in injuries resulting from exposure to traumatic or stressful events, slips, trips and falls and overexertion.

### Lost Time Injury Frequency

LTI frequency represents the number of LTI events (lost time approved by the WSIB or pending WSIB adjudication decision) per 200,000 hours worked (100 employee-years).

Figure 1 below shows the City's LTI frequency during 2020 relative to the frequency during the years 2016 to 2019.

The City's 2020 LTI frequency increased from 5.1 in 2019 to 5.6 in 2020.



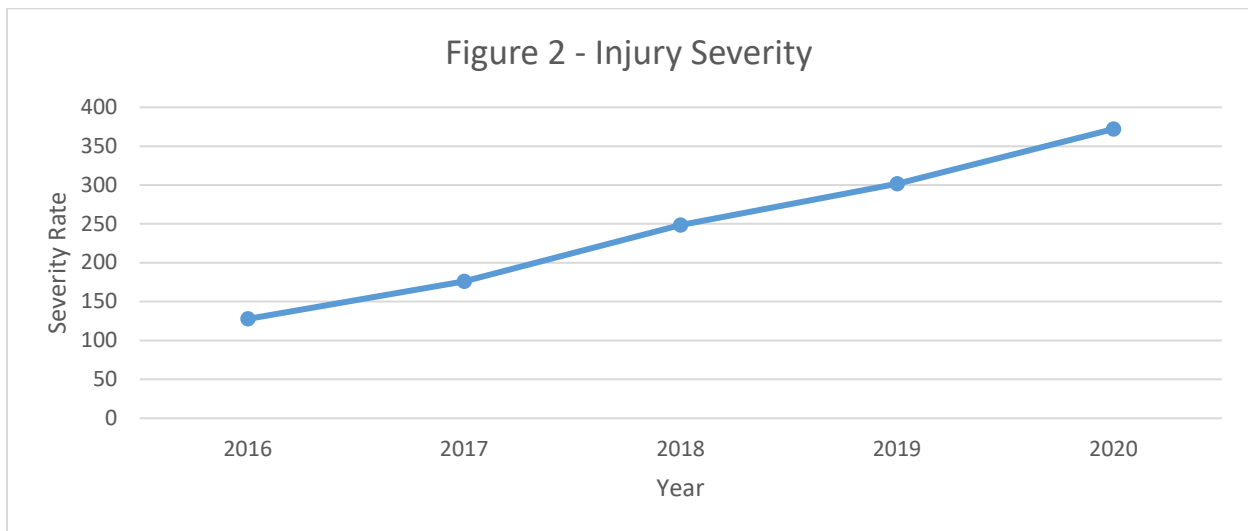
Frequency rates for divisions are reported in Attachment 2. It should be noted that in a small City division, a single LTI can result in a high-frequency rate,

### Injury Severity Rate

The injury severity rate is a standardized statistic that enables comparison, year-over-year, of the number of days lost relative to hours worked. The severity number represents the number of days lost per 100 employees in the year.

Figure 2 below shows the City's severity rate during 2020 relative to the severity for the years 2016 to 2019.

The City's 2019 injury severity rate increased from 301.8 in 2019 to 372.0 in 2020.



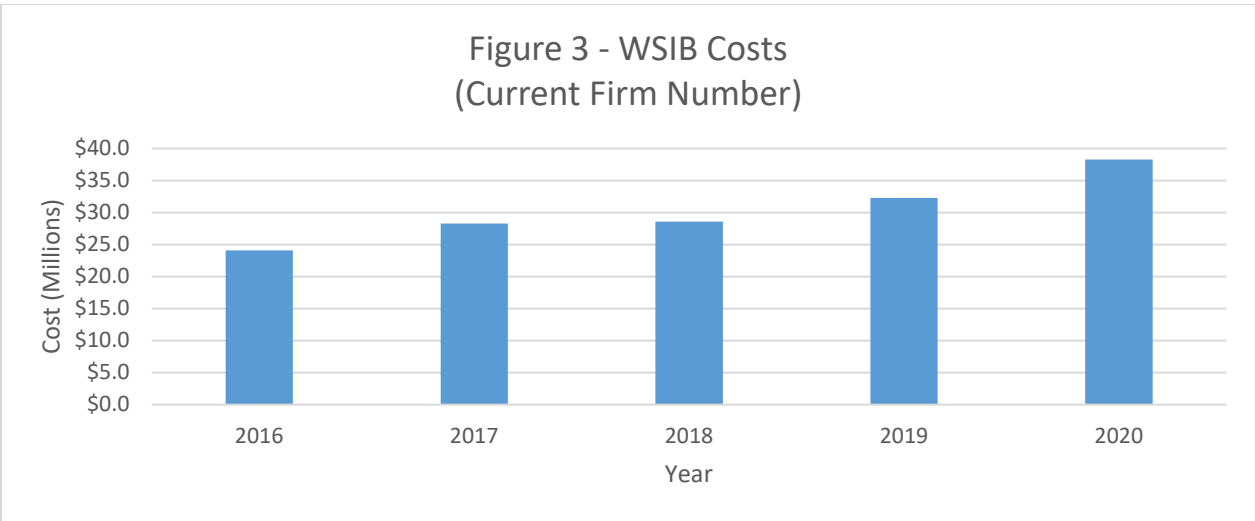
- Toronto Paramedic Services, Toronto Fire Services, Children's Services and Shelter, Support & Housing Administration experienced the highest rates of lost time severity in 2020.
- All four divisions experienced COVID-19 related absences that added to the overall number of LTIs and severity. Toronto Fire Services and Shelter, Support & Housing Administration continue to experience an increase in LTIs resulting from mental/emotional stress injuries.
- In addition, while Toronto Paramedic Services experienced a decrease in LTIs resulting from mental/emotional stress injuries, they experienced an increase in lost time severity. Mental/emotional stress injury claims result in lengthier recovery periods and are more challenging with return to work efforts.

### Injury and Accident Costs

Overall costs incurred under all City firm numbers from 2016 - 2020 are reported in Attachment 3.

- There was an increase in overall costs for all firm numbers from \$40.8 million in 2019 to \$46.5 million in 2020.
- For the former firm numbers, there was a decrease in costs from \$8.5 million in 2019 to \$8.1 million in 2020. This downward trend is forecasted to continue given the age of claims associated with the former firm numbers.

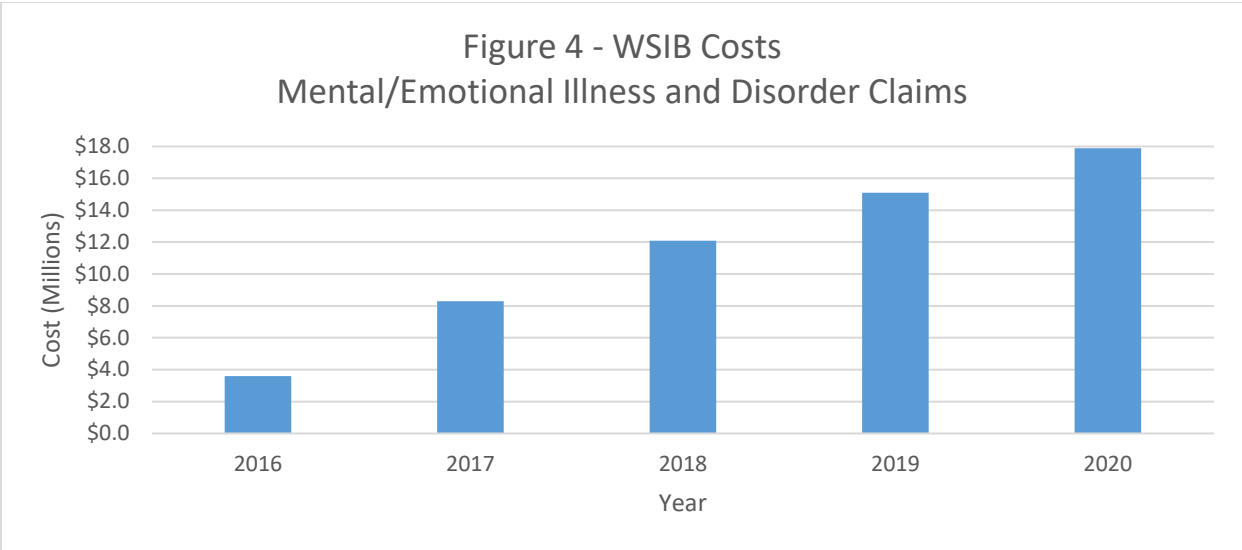
Figure 3 below shows the overall invoiced costs related to the City's current WSIB firm number.



The overall invoiced costs related to the City's current WSIB firm number increased from \$32.3 million in 2019 to \$38.3 million in 2020.

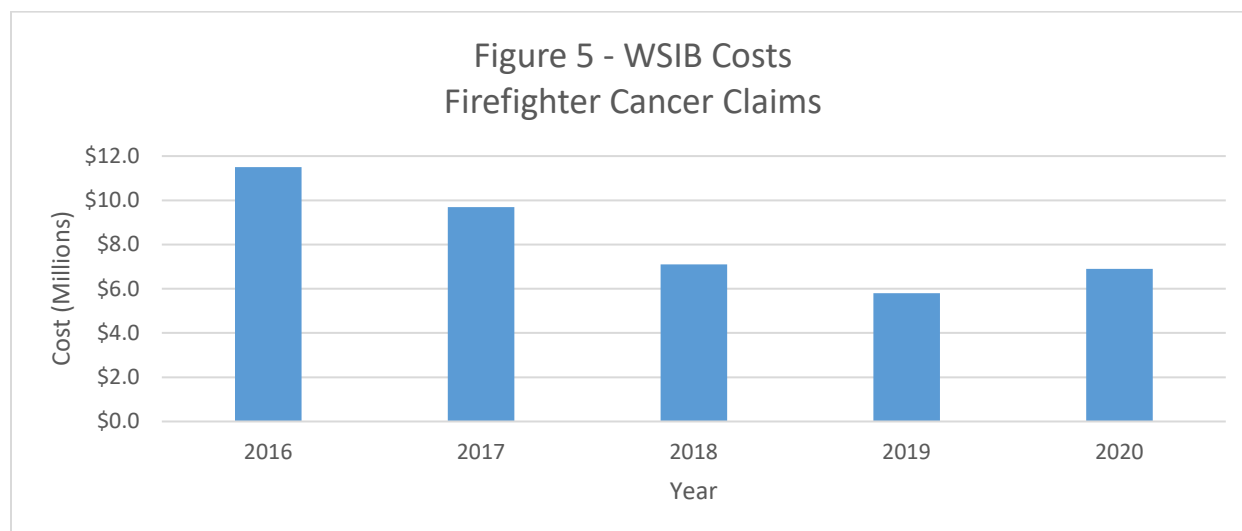
- The costs associated with claims for mental/emotional illnesses or disorders represent the largest portion of costs incurred in 2020, followed by those attributed to retroactive firefighter cancer claims.
- The costs associated with COVID-19 claims represented a total of \$1.1 million in 2020. As part of its financial relief package, the WSIB determined that costs associated with COVID-19 related claims would not be allocated at an employer level.
- As a result, the WSIB is in the process of reimbursing the City for its COVID-19 claim costs.

Figure 4 below shows the City's overall invoiced costs related to claims for mental/emotional illnesses or disorders.



- There was an increase of costs associated with claims for mental/emotional illnesses or disorders from approximately \$15.1 million in 2019 to \$17.9 million in 2020.
- The most significant increase in cumulative costs occurred in Toronto Paramedic Services and Toronto Fire Services. Much of this increase is a result of legislation introduced in 2016 that presumes if a first responder is diagnosed with PTSD by a psychiatrist or psychologist, the condition is work-related.
- PTSD claims are very costly due to the nature and cost of health services required, delays in gaining access to these services and the significant length of time it takes to achieve a return to work

Figure 5 below shows the City's overall invoiced costs related to firefighter cancer claims.

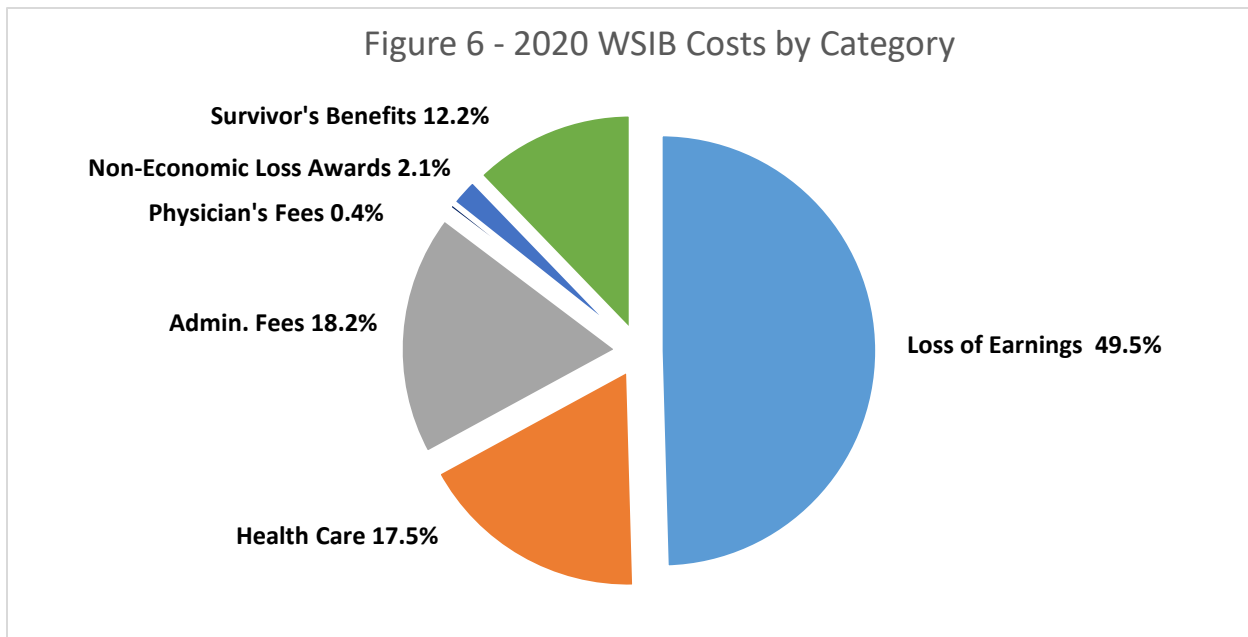


- There was an increase of costs associated with claims for firefighter cancer claims from approximately \$5.8 million in 2019 to \$6.9 million in 2020.
- Presumptive legislation regarding firefighter cancers was introduced in 2014 and rolled out incrementally over four years. While the number of new retroactive cases continues to decline, there was an increase in costs from 2019 to 2020 associated with survivor benefits. Toronto Fire Services remains committed to the prevention of future firefighter cancers.

Significant efforts have been made to invest in new and ongoing personal protective equipment (PPE). Work procedures are in place to isolate and launder bunker gear at the fire ground to prevent the spread of carcinogens, Fire Halls have also dedicated on-site washing machines to clean bunker gear. In addition, regular ongoing communications (e.g. training, posters, and safety meetings) reinforce PPE expectations.

Figure 6 provides the City's WSIB Current Firm costs by cost category in 2020. In 2020, costs increased across all categories, most notably in loss of earnings and survivor benefits.

Figure 6 - 2020 WSIB Costs by Category



Attachment 4(i) provides the current City's "WSIB Invoiced Costs" for 2020 for Divisions whose costs were less than \$50,000 and Attachment 4(ii) for Divisions whose costs were greater than \$50,000.

### Critical Injuries

Occupational health and safety legislation stipulates requirements for reporting fatalities and critical injuries to the Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). A critical injury is an injury of a serious nature that:

- (a) places life in jeopardy,
- (b) produces unconsciousness,
- (c) results in substantial loss of blood,
- (d) involves the fracture of a leg or arm but not a finger or toe,
- (e) involves the amputation of a leg, arm, hand or foot but not a finger or toe,
- (f) consists of burns to a major portion of the body, or
- (g) causes the loss of sight in an eye.

In 2020, information on the fatality of a Toronto Water construction crew member was provided to the Ministry. No work-related causes or factors contributed to the incident.

There were eleven (11) work-related critical injuries reported to the MLTSD in 2020. Of these,

- six (6) involved fractures,
- six (6) involved one or a combination of slips, trips, and missteps that resulted in falls,
- two (2) involved loss of consciousness
- and one (1) involved a stabbing.

Attachment 5 provides further information for these critical injuries.

An additional three (3) incidents were reported to the MLTSD as critical injuries, although no work-related causes were noted (e.g. loss of consciousness).



All of these incidents were investigated in the workplace. Information regarding these incidents and any actions taken to prevent a recurrence are shared with joint health and safety committees (JHSCs) or health and safety representatives.

## **MLTSD Orders/Visits without Orders**

The MLTSD issued ten (10) compliance-based orders to the City during 2020. This was an increase from five (5) orders in 2019.

The orders related to:

- Administrative posting requirements and procedures
- Hazardous Materials
- Instruction/Training

All orders were complied with.

There were eighty-three (83) MLTSD visits to City facilities/work operations that did not result in orders during 2020. The top three reasons that initiated these visits were in response to:

- Reports of occupational illnesses/outbreaks
- Critical injuries/serious incidents
- Complaints

## **MLTSD Initiatives**

### **Upcoming Provincial Health and Safety Initiatives**

In response to COVID-19, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development plans to adjust the current 2020-21 health and safety compliance initiative schedule. Further updates will be provided as necessary however, they have communicated that the current focus is on workplace COVID-19 safety plans to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

### **Key City Health & Safety Initiatives**

The primary focus for 2020 was COVID-19 Related Health & Safety policies, protocols and tools for the protection of employees. These elements of a COVID-19 Safety Plan included:

- PPE Task Force to prioritize PPE and confirm requirements
- Mask/Face covering policy for City workplaces
- Online screening tool for COVID-19 and decision guide for managers
- Physical distancing and touchpoint reduction strategies for the workplace
- Strategies to increase physical distancing in vehicles
- Protocols for enhanced disinfection and cleaning
- Revised JHSC inspection checklist to include COVID-19 workplace safety requirements
- Workplace signage and posters for facilities and offices including occupancy limits, infection control reminders and directional flow

- Ergonomic provisions and guides to support remote work
- Online learning courses developed to meet the needs of redeployed and remote work employees

In addition, to address mental health resilience over time, City of Toronto increased psychological benefits to \$1000 per year (previously \$300). Green Shield offers services through BEACON, a virtual (text messaging) mental health service, offering therapy with a registered mental health professional.

In 2020, the City launched a Mental Health & Wellness strategy which included:

- Moving the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services to a virtual environment and expanded access to a diverse network to provide culturally sensitive supports
- Increased communication of mental health supports, new resources for staff and managers and 16 online learning modules

Although some planned health and safety initiatives were delayed, work continued on:

- The MLTSD Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Prevention Initiative including updated guidelines and templates for the annual MSD Divisional Program Report and completion of the e-learning module
- Joint management and labour review and submission of JHSC Terms of Reference for Multi-Workplace JHSCs in City divisions

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Omo Akintan  
Chief People Officer

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Incidents (January – December)  
by Division

Attachment 2 - Lost Time Injury Frequency by Division

Attachment 3 - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Costs for all Firm Numbers

Attachment 4 (i) - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Invoiced Costs <\$50,000

Attachment 4 (ii) - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Invoiced Costs > \$50,000  
Attachment 5 - Critical Injuries reported to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills  
Development in 2020