

# **PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **VOLUME 1 – Operations Manual**

### **PREGNANT FIRE DEPARTMENT MEMBERS**

**MP103.02E 12/19– R**

#### **PURPOSE**

This procedure establishes guidelines relating to the safety of members of the Phoenix Fire Department who become pregnant, their fellow employees, and the public.

It is the policy of the Fire Department to provide equal employment opportunities to all members. At the same time, employment and assignment decisions will consider aspects of employment that may prove detrimental to the health, welfare, and safety of any member or THE PUBLIC.

#### **PROCEDURE**

The primary determination of duty assignments of pregnant members will be safety. The critical nature of emergency incidents makes it essential that each member be able to perform the full range of their position's duties. A pregnant member assigned to a line position in the Operations Division can present a high risk for injury to self, other members, the public, and possibly the unborn child.

Although it may be difficult to exactly determine the effects of various factors on the physical well-being of the pregnant member, and the safety of co-workers and the public, it is reasonable to establish a time-frame indicating when the member will either be assigned to an alternate duty position or take authorized leave. The determination as to when the member should be reassigned or go on leave will be based on medical advice and the member's present assignment.

Upon being informed by a physician that the member is pregnant, the member must contact the Fire Department Health Center, indicating the expected date of delivery. The Health Center will then work with the member to place them into an alternate duty position that is available and appropriate. The member will be allowed to leave the field and enter an alternate duty position as soon as possible due to the medical considerations mentioned below.

The member will notify their department head for time off during delivery of the baby and coordinate with Health Center physician to determine their work status. If they are returning to full duty the Health Center will advise the member on Re-Entry procedures. The member may ask for a fitness program the will be coordinated by the Director of Fitness and Wellness prior to starting the Re-Entry procedures. The program will last for no longer than 90 days, it is customized to the members needs and is included into the members alternate duty schedule. Once the program is complete the member will follow Re-Entry procedures in order to return to the field.

## MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following information is excerpted from "Reproductive Hazards of Fire fighting I and II," Melissa McDiarmid, M.D., et al., American Journal of Industrial Medicine, 1991.

### Medical Considerations of Firefighter Pregnancies

The job of fire fighting presents many potential hazards to healthy reproduction. It poses physical hazards such as drastic temperature variations, extreme and unpredictable physical exertions demands, and psychological stress. Firefighters may also be exposed to biological or radiation hazards. The fire environment may also produce a wide range of chemical agents, including irritant and asphyxiate gases and other toxins.

Human reproductive health, as it is affected by the work environment, is a relatively new area of study. The clearest connection between an environmental agent and adverse reproductive outcomes for both men and women is in the case of ionizing radiation, which is not a common hazard for most firefighters. Prolonged exposure to high ambient temperatures, however may also have a detrimental affect on fertility and pregnancy. High heat exposure has been related to infertility in men and may be linked to neural defects in babies of exposed mothers.

Chemical agents in the fire environment are numerous and unpredictable. The toxic effects of fire smoke have been tentatively linked to a number of physical problems, including respiratory disease, coronary artery disease and malignancies. Many chemical agents in the fire environment may also adversely affect reproduction. Carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen cyanide, acrolein and other aldehydes, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, nitrogen dioxide, and benzene are commonly produced in fire environments. Research shows that all of these compounds may have detrimental affects on reproduction. Pregnant women and their fetuses are especially affected by carbon monoxide exposures.

Although much more study is needed, existing research suggests that both men and women are vulnerable to reproductive toxicity in the firefighting environment. In addition, the potential hazards to developing fetuses pose special concerns for pregnant and firefighters.