

Department of
Veterans Affairs

Memorandum

Date: OCT 18 2012
From: Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N)
Subj: Phase-Out of Staffing Equivalencies for VA Fire Departments
To: Network Director (10N1,2 4,5,10,11,12,16,19,23)

1. The Veterans Health Administration currently operates 20 VA fire departments. The requirements for VA fire departments are found in VA Manual MP-3, Part III, Chapter 4. One of the requirements is that at least 4 trained firefighters per shift be maintained when outside fire company assistance is not available or the response time is considered inadequate.

2. VHA leadership originally approved a minimum 3-person staff equivalency for certain facilities based on the presence of other fire safety features. Facilities granted the 3-person staffing equivalency were:

Togus, ME; Canandaigua, NY; Butler, PA; Martinsburg, WV; Chillicothe, OH; Battle Creek, MI; Tomah, WI; Alexandria, LA; Little Rock, AR; Ft. Harrison, MO; Hot Springs, SD; and Ft. Meade, SD.

3. VHA senior leadership recently reviewed the practice of maintaining staffing equivalencies at VA fire departments and decided to phase out this equivalency option. VISN Directors are asked to ensure that VA fire departments that were granted a 3-person staffing equivalency develop an action plan to meet the full staffing requirement.

4. Each action plan shall:

- a. Ensure that the VA fire department requirement of at least 4 trained firefighters on duty during each shift shall be maintained at all times (24/7/365), regardless of absences for leave or illness;
- b. Include appropriate discussions with the applicable local employee unions before implementation;
- c. Be implemented no later than January 25, 2013.

5. Directors are asked to provide a copy of each staffing requirements action plan **no later than November 16, 2012**, to David Klein, Acting Director, Occupational Safety, Health, and GEMS Programs (david.klein5@va.gov).

6. Questions may be directed to Virgil Hall at virgil.hall@va.gov or 765-661-3300.



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