

Fire Services – Illnesses and Absences (Full Time)

This report for information was prepared following the August 21, 2017, Emergency Services Committee meeting, where staff was directed to provide a report at the October 2017 meeting outlining a comparison of calls against: short and long-term lost time, the average use of sick days and WSIB lost time for full time firefighters. Additionally, the report will also include a comparison of Leaves of Absence and minimum staffing requirements against overtime.

Background

Greater Sudbury Fire Services is responsible for the delivery of Fire Protection and Prevention as defined by the Establishing and Regulating by-law (2014-84). The Fire Service provides both full time and volunteer levels of protection spread across 24 fire stations throughout the municipality. There are currently 127 full time staff, including 108 suppression firefighters, 2 training officers, 4 platoon chiefs, 8 fire prevention staff, 2 mechanical division staff, and 3 office clerk positions.

Sick Leave / Leave of Absence /Annual Vacation and Statutory Holidays

The collective agreement between City of Greater Sudbury and Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association IAFF Local 527, Article 11:01 Sick Leave of Absence states, "Each employee shall accumulate sick leave credits at the rate of one-and-a-half days for each calendar month of service with the Greater Sudbury Fire Department, such credits to be cumulative with no maximum." A sick leave day is one that an employee can utilize to maintain their regular earnings during days of absence for temporary non-occupational illness or injury. Sick leave may also be utilized for maintenance of personal health care, for compassionate family reasons or for emergency leave. Sick leave shall be deducted from the employee's banked accumulated credit as it is taken. Further outlined in the collective agreement, Article 13 Annual Vacation and Statutory Holidays and Article 14 Leaves of Absence (Pregnancy / Parental Leave) are days that are accrued under the terms outlined for each provision. Employees are entitled to their allotment as defined and mutually agreed upon. There are, on average, four firefighters off per day using Annual Vacation day, Sick Leave, or Leave of Absence.

WSIB (Occupational Injury or Illness)

A 'lost time' claim is created when an employee suffers a work-related injury/disease which results in: being off work past the day of injury, loss of wages or earnings, or a permanent disability or impairment. WSIB leave is maintained until such time as a review

of clinical information that determines when an employee is fit to return to their pre-injury work or suitable work is available. Under the direction of a physician and the employer, employees may have the opportunity to return to work in a modified position based on their clinical assessment. Modified work does not put an employee back in a suppression position for minimum staffing rather it places them in a supporting role.

Minimum Staffing Requirement

The collective agreement between City of Greater Sudbury and Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association IAFF Local 527, Article 8.02 Staffing states, "The parties agree that the Employer shall maintain a minimum of twenty-two (22) full time firefighters on each of the four platoons at all times. On duty suppression personnel shall only be assigned to in-service emergency vehicles, or be in training (within the confines of the geographical response area and available to respond) at all times." Once less than twenty-two (22) full time firefighters are not on the platoon due to Annual Vacation, Sick Leave, WSIB, or Leave of Absence, additional full time staff must be called in on overtime. In order to minimize overtime requirements and based on a three (3) firefighter average per shift off for Annual Vacation, a complement of twenty-seven (27) firefighters per platoon is optimal to cover the absenteeism due to Annual Vacation, Sick Leave, WSIB, or Leave of Absence. The following chart (figure 1) is a visual representation of the calls for service from 2013 to 2016 and compares that data with sick leave and WSIB days lost. (Zero WSIB days lost in 2014).

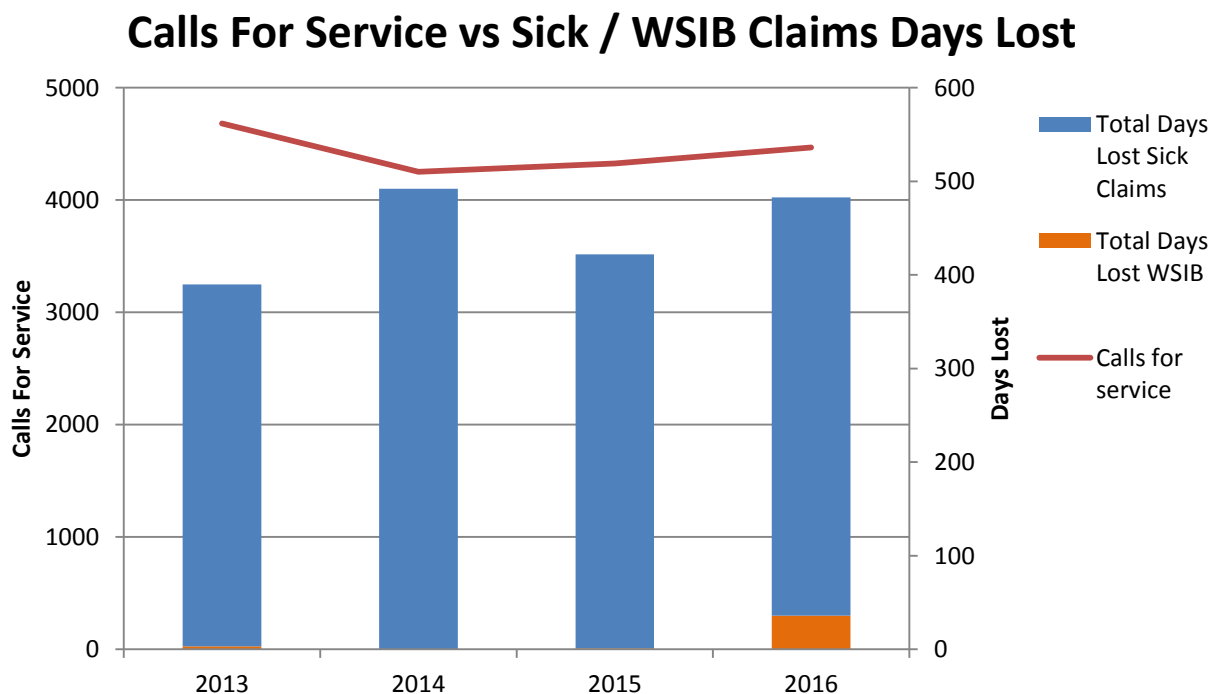


Figure 1

The four year average annual sick leave taken is 436 days which is approximately four days per firefighter per year and an average of one firefighter off on sick leave per day. Over the same period, calls for service average is 4432. Calls for service include all incidents that occurred in all stations as full time fire staff have the possibility of responding to any location at any time.

The following chart (figure 2) is a visual representation of full time firefighter staffing and comparing days absent, which includes Annual Vacation, Sick Leave, WSIB, or Leave of Absence to overtime costs (budgeted and actual).

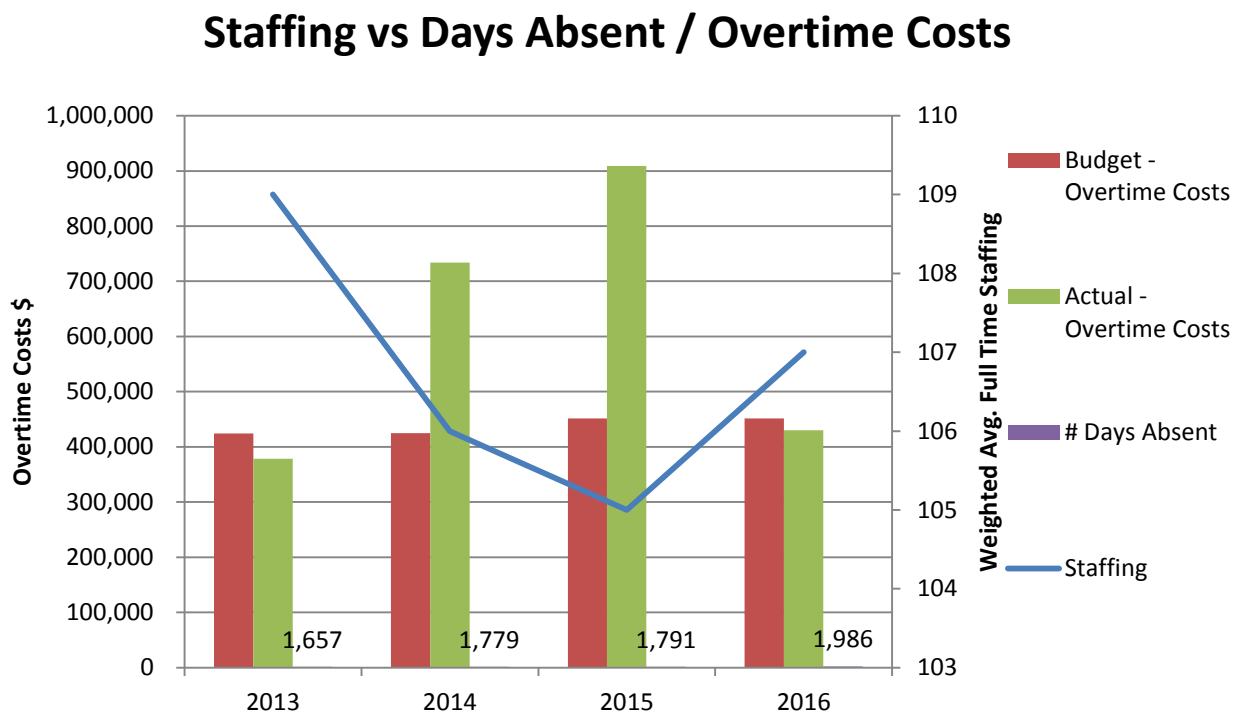


Figure 2

The above chart demonstrates a direct correlation between full time suppression firefighter staffing (minimum per platoon staffing) and the overtime costs generated. When there is a complement of less than 27 firefighters per platoon, which is less than 108 full time suppression firefighters, overtime costs are incurred to maintain the collective agreement minimum staffing levels of 22 suppression firefighters per platoon.

Staffing Adjustments

In 2014 through 2015 a pilot project and agreement between the City of Greater Sudbury and Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association IAFF Local 527, occurred in which two (2) additional training officers were put into place. These positions were taken from the full time suppression firefighters platoon system, effectively changing the

average staffing to 105 suppression firefighters and four training officers which also in turn reduced three of the four platoons to 26 firefighters, and one platoon remained at 27.

In 2015, the additional training officer pilot project was discontinued and a full time firefighter recruitment occurred. At the end of 2015 staffing was back to 108 suppression firefighters and only two training officers which in turn returned the four platoons to 27 firefighters.

Conclusion

Calls for service remain, on average, at 4432 per year and do not show any direct relationship with Sick Leave or WSIB lost time days. Recognition of post traumatic stress disorder as a very serious issue for emergency service employees and the implementation of programs such as the Peer Support Network (PSN) and Road to Mental Readiness training (R2MR), have had positive impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of the employees. Further there is an attendance management program in place for full time firefighters that aids in managing the use of Sick Leave.

The use of Sick Leave, Leave of Absence, or Annual Vacation days has little effect on overtime costs when staffing levels of 108 full time suppression firefighters are maintained. When levels fall below this threshold overtime costs increase directly related to the number of suppression firefighters required to meet the minimum complement of 22 on shift.

The balance of maintaining 27 suppression firefighters when using the average of 3 firefighters off on Annual Vacation and 1 firefighter on Sick Leave per day allows one additional firefighter buffer before the minimum of 22 is reached and overtime is required.