

# Tempe Fire Department Policies and Procedures

## Pregnant Fire Department Members

### 105.14

#### Rev 5-11-07

## PURPOSE

This procedure establishes guidelines relating to the safety of members of the Tempe 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 must consider all aspects of employment that may prove detrimental to the health, welfare and safety of any member and/or member of the public.

## PROCEDURE

The primary determination of duty assignment for 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 Emergency Services 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 a non-emergency response position or take authorized leave. **The determination as to when the member should be reassigned or placed on leave will be based on medical advice and the members present assignment.**

Upon confirmation of pregnancy by a physician, the member must notify the Fire Department Personnel Officer in writing indicating the **expected date of delivery**. The Personnel Officer will notify the Fire Department physician at the Phoenix Health Center who, will consult with the member's personal physician to determine when the member will be assigned to a non-emergency response position. Once the member has been reassigned they will remain in the new assignment throughout the duration of the pregnancy, until placed on authorized leave, or released to full duty by their physician. **However, at any time, upon request by the member, the fire department will immediately assign them to light duty.**

## MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

The job of firefighting presents many potential hazards to healthy reproduction. It poses physical hazards such as drastic temperature variations, extreme and unpredictable physical exertion 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 asphyxiant 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 effect on fertility and pregnancy. High heat exposure has been related to infertility in men and may be linked to neural defects in the 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 encountered in the fire service may also adversely affect reproduction. Carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen cyanide, acrolein and other aldehydes, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride, nitrogen dioxide and benzene are all commonly produced in fire environments. Research shows that all

of these compounds may have detrimental effects 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 firefighters.