

**FAIRFIELD COUNTY RURAL FIRE COMMISSION  
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES**

**SUBJECT: Operations at Structure Fires**

**PURPOSE:** To establish safe and effective fire suppression and control activities at structure fires.

**SCOPE:** This Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) applies to all personnel operating at structure fires, except for fires for which there is a specific SOG, such as for high rise fires.

**GUIDELINE:** The guideline of this department to provide the most advanced, tactically sound, and safest firefighting operations permissible based upon personnel, apparatus, equipment, and resources available at the time of the incident. It is further the policy of this department to conduct firefighting operations in a manner that recognizes hazards and prevents accidents and injuries.

**I. GENERAL**

- a. By necessity, some degree of flexibility must be allowed in most SOGs to provide for unusual or unforeseen situations that are all too common in the fire service.
- b. SOGs are not intended to deter or in any way detract from the initiative of firefighters, company or chief officers. Rather they should serve as a framework within which the initiative of all members should be exercised.

**II. SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

- a. Only members who are properly trained and approved by the Fire Chief may engage in structural firefighting operations. Members who engage in interior

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structural firefighting operations must receive hands-on training at least quarterly.

- b.** Members operating at structure fires shall maintain company integrity and accountability as required by the SOG on Accountability Procedures.
- c.** Members operating at structure fires shall wear SCBA as required by the SOP on Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus, and including compliance with the Operational Procedures.
- d.** Members operating in hazardous areas at working structure fires shall operate in teams of two or more.
  - i.** Team members operating in hazardous areas shall be in communication with each other through visual, audible, or physical means or safety guide rope, in order to coordinate their activities.
  - ii.** Team members shall be in close proximity to each other to provide assistance in case of emergency.
  - iii.** All teams entering a hazardous area at the working structure fire shall have at least one member equipped with a portable radio capable of communicating with the Incident Commander, the standby members (later the initial rapid intervention team, and rapid intervention team), and the Dispatch Center.
- e.** In the initial stages of a working structure fire when only one team is operating in the hazardous area, a minimum of four individuals is required, consisting of two individuals working as a team to enter the hazardous area and two individuals remaining outside the hazardous area for assistance or rescue.
  - i.** The standby members shall be responsible for maintaining a constant awareness of the number and identity of members operating in the hazardous area, their location and function, and time of entry. In addition, one of the standby members shall be permitted to perform

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other duties outside of the hazardous area, such as the incident commander, aide, etc. ***The standby member shall not be the pump operator as SC OSHA has determined that the pump operator's duties cannot safely be abandoned.***

- ii. The standby members shall remain in radio, visual, voice or signal line communications with the entry team.
- iii. Each standby member shall have full protective clothing, protective equipment, and SCBA immediately accessible if the event he/she is required to assist or engage in the rescue of personnel inside the hazardous area.
- iv. The assignment of any personnel as a standby member shall not be permitted if by abandoning their tasks to assist or perform a rescue they clearly jeopardize the safety and health of any firefighter working at the incident.
- v. No one shall be permitted to serve as a standby member when other activities in which they are engaged inhibit their ability to assist in, or perform, a rescue if such were to become necessary, or are of such importance that they cannot be abandoned without placing other firefighters in danger.
- f. During the initial stages of a working structure fire when only one company/crew is on scene, entry into the hazardous areas SHALL NOT BE MADE until a second company/crew arrives on scene.
- g. It is highly recommended that no two immediate family members from the same residents should enter a structure at the same time.

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**EXCEPTIONS:**

- i. INVESTIGATION MODE:** When companies/crews are dispatched to a building for alarm activation, investigation, or reported fire, and structure shall be permitted, provided a standby member remains outside.
- ii. MINOR FIRE:** Not **within** the definition of a “working structure fire”. When companies/crews are dispatched to a building for an alarm activation, investigation, or reported fire, and indications are that the fire is of a minor nature, entrance into the structure shall be permitted, provided a standby member remains outside.
- iii. IMMINENT LIFE THREATENING SITUATION:** If the first arriving company/crew/personnel finds an imminent life-threatening situation where immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury, entry into the hazardous area shall be permitted without regard to the “two-in, two-out” requirement.

  - **No exception shall be permitted when there is no possibility to save lives.**
  - **When actions are taken in accordance with this section, the company officer shall immediately inform the responding chief officer by radio so that necessary support and backup will be provided.**
  - **Any such actions taken in accordance with this section shall be thoroughly investigated by the Fire Department Safety Officer with a written report to be submitted to the Fire Chief.**

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- iv. FAST ATTACK MODE:** If the company officer of a first arriving company/crew with four personnel deems that the conditions then and there present, warrant making an immediate entry into the hazardous area, the officer may split his/her crew into a 2 person entry team, and a 2 person standby team. Such a tactical option may be appropriate when a significant delay is anticipated before the arrival of the next responding company/crew.
- h.** The “two-in, two out” requirement does not prevent a first arriving company/crew at a working structure fire, from making preparations to enter the hazardous area, including donning protective clothing, donning SCBA, performing reconnaissance, forcing entry, and stretching hoselines into the structure (although not into the hazardous areas). In addition, defensive operations from outside the structure may be initiated from a safe distance.

*Prior to the assembly of the entire firefighting team, a qualified incident commander may allow two or more employees to enter the IDLH atmosphere with one employee located outside the IDLH atmosphere until the arrival of additional employees, provided that the following conditions are met:*

- 1) The incident commander has completed the Incident Command System course or its equivalent as certified by the South Carolina Fire Academy;*
- 2) The employees who enter the IDLH atmosphere have completed the Basic Firefighter Course or its equivalent as certified by the South Carolina Fire Academy;*
- 3) The incident commander has determined that the standard staffing pattern is not feasible;*
- 4) The incident commander has determined that the entry can be made safely with the personnel on-site; and*

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- 5) *Arrival of additional employees to complete the standard staffing pattern is imminent.*
- h) Upon the arrival of the responding Chief Officer, the Chief shall be briefed by the company officer as to the deployment of personnel, companies and/or crews. In the event the company officer is inside the structure or otherwise unable to brief the Chief, the standby member shall brief the Chief as to the disposition of personnel to that point.
- i) Once a second company arrives on the scene, the incident shall no longer be considered to be in the “initial stages”, and at least one initial rapid intervention team (IRIT) shall be required. It is the Incident Commander’s responsibility to ensure that this requirement is met.
- j) During any Mayday or firefighter rescue operation, each crew/company shall remain intact for accountability purposes.

**2) RISK MANAGEMENT**

- a) At all times while operating at structure fires, the Incident Commander shall integrate risk management into the regular functions of incident command.
- b) The Incident Commander shall apply the following basic risk management principles:
- i) Life Safety
  - ii) Incident Stabilization
  - iii) Property Conservation
- c) In situations where the risk to fire department personnel is excessive, activities shall be limited to defensive operations.

**3) INITIAL RAPID INTERVENTION TEAMS & RAPID INTERVENTION TEAMS**

- a) An initial rapid intervention team (IRIT) shall consist of at least two members and shall be available in the early stages of an incident for the rescue of a member or a crew if the need arises.

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- b) In the early stages of an incident, the Incident Commander shall ensure that the initial rapid intervention team requirement is satisfied by one of the following:
- i) On scene members performing other functions but ready to redeploy to perform IRIT functions
  - ii) On scene members designated and dedicated as rapid intervention team.
- c) As the incident expands in size or complexity, **including any requests for additional companies**, the Incident Commander shall ensure that a RIT, or multiple RITs, are provided upon the arrival of these additional companies/crews.

***RAPID INTERVENTION TEAM:*** At least four personnel supervised by a company officer, fully equipped with appropriate protective clothing, SCBA and such other specialized equipment as are necessary given the specifics of the operation. The RIT should be located on scene, immediately available for the rescue of a member or company should the need arise. The Incident Commander should specifically designate one or more RITs commensurate with the needs of the situation. Once designated, RITs should not be deployed for other tasks.

#### **4. Personnel Accountability Report (PAR)**

- The Incident Commander (IC) shall be responsible for the overall accountability of all personnel assigned to the incident.
- The IC shall initiate personnel accountability at the beginning of the incident and maintain it throughout the duration of the operation.
- The IC shall maintain an awareness of the location and function of all companies assigned to the incident.
- Division and group supervisors shall directly supervise and account for all personnel operating within their division or group.

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- Company officers shall maintain an awareness of the location and condition of assigned company members.
- The IC shall be responsible for the accountability of personnel who are working independent of a company, division, or group, such as an incident safety officer or a fire engineer working at the pump panel.

### 5. PAR Benchmarks

The IC should attempt to conduct a PAR at 10-minute intervals. Timing and frequency may depend on the situation and needs of the incident. In addition, a PAR shall be conducted when or if the following events occur:

- Any sudden hazardous event (flashover, backdraft, structural collapse).
- Report of missing firefighter(s).
- Following an order to abandon or withdraw (Operational Retreat).
- A change from offensive to defensive operation.
- At the time the IC reports the fire or situation under control.

### 6. SIZE UP

- a. Upon arrival, the first arriving officer shall give a brief size up to Dispatch, including:
  - i. Construction
  - ii. Occupancy
  - iii. Status of occupants

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- iv. Visible smoke and fire conditions
- v. Establishing command
- b. Officers observing any additional pertinent conditions that pose a threat to the safety of firefighters, fire victims, or the prompt containment of the fire, shall report said conditions to Command, utilizing Dispatch as needed to relay the message. This would include:
  - i. Exposures threatened
  - ii. Hazardous materials present
  - iii. The presence of truss construction
  - iv. Structural defects
- c. Control of the utilities (including gas, water and electric) shall be at the discretion of the incident commander.
- d. Officers shall incorporate water supply considerations into their size up and decision making. The availability of water, quantity of water, and lag time in obtaining water must be factored into all strategic and tactical decisions. In particular, operations in areas without hydrants must be approached much more cautiously and in a calculated manner mindful that rate of application is more important than total gallons available.
- e. Officers shall also incorporate the availability of personnel and resources, including response times, into strategic and tactical decisions.

**7. REHAB**

- a. See SOG – 021

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**8. OVERHAUL AND SALVAGE**

- a. Overhaul operations consist of searching for and extinguishing hidden or remaining fires; placing the building, its contents, and the fire area in a safe condition; determining the cause of the fire; and recognizing and preserving evidence of arson. Salvage operations consist of those methods and procedures that further reduce fire, water and smoke damage during and after fires.
- b. **Safety Considerations**
  - i. **Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus:** Toxic fumes are almost always present during overhaul. These fumes come from such sources as smoldering wood and fabrics, decomposing insulation, pesticides, deteriorating polyvinyl chloride (PVC), plastics, and other hazardous materials present in the area. Toxic gasses such as hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide are abundantly present during overhaul due to partially extinguished and smoldering materials.  
  
Use of SCBA during overhaul is essential for ensuring firefighter health and safety. SCBA shall be worn "by all members inside a fire building while firefighting operations are taking place, until the fire is extinguished and the area has been thoroughly ventilated with fresh air."
- c. Multigas Detector Monitoring
  - i. All structure fires are to be monitored by utilizing one of the approved Multigas meters.
  - ii. SCBA is **not** to be removed until the atmosphere can be monitored, and deemed safe.