

# The Woodlands Fire Department Operational Guidelines

## F-04 - TACTICAL FIRE GROUND OPERATIONS

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### 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide a framework for fire ground operations that will result in greater standardization of operations and result in more predictable rescue and fire control activities and outcomes.

### 2.0 SAFETY

- 2.1 Fire Department personnel conducting fire ground operations will wear full protective clothing in accordance with Rules & Regulations, Section 6.17.
- 2.2 All teams will work in groups of two or more.

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The following operations will be initiated at any working fire event:

- A. Size-Up
- B. Accountability
- C. Rescue/Life Saving
- D. Exposure Protection
- E. Fire Control
- F. Ventilation
- G. Property Conservation

- 3.2 Size-Up

- A. The first arriving officer will give a size-up, which will include a building description (occupancy; size; # of stories), obvious fire conditions, and actions being taken. The term “working fire” should be relayed to Fire Com and other responding units immediately upon confirmation of active fire in a structure.

- 1) Example #1: Engine 101 on location, two story residence, investigating.
- 2) Example #2: Engine 102 on location, three story residence with smoke showing from the first floor. Engine 102 will be laying 5-inch and initiating primary search. E102 will have a working fire.

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- B. The first arriving officer will establish Command or pass Command to the next arriving officer.
- C. Additional arriving companies, upon receipt of assignment, will repeat their actions.
- D. Fast Attack – This tactic may be employed by the first arriving company officer. Determining factors as to fast attack or establishment of a permanent water source vary. Factors which may determine a fast attack include:
  - 1) Rescue of occupants
  - 2) Size and extent of fire
- E. On all confirmed structure fires, two (2) additional engine companies may be requested by the IC or the first arriving company officer to assure enough manpower is present on location to accomplish all critical fire ground activities and maintain at least one RIT.

### 3.3 Accountability

- A. Accountability shall be maintained in accordance with applicable Accountability guidelines.

### 3.4 Rescue/Life Saving

- A. It shall be general practice to extend a primary search in all involved and exposed occupancies that can be entered. The completion of the primary search process shall be reported to the IC.
- B. Rescue efforts should be extended in the following order:
  - 1) Most severely threatened
  - 2) The largest number of victims (groups)
  - 3) The remainder of the fire area
  - 4) The exposed areas

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- C. Victim Recovery: The fire department shall conduct a secondary search when the fire is under control or extinguished and assist in the recovery of any fire victims. The secondary search should be conducted by a different crew than conducted the primary search.

### 3.5 Exposure Protection

- A. Suppression measures shall be initiated that will limit the progression of fire. Exposures may be considered as uninvolved buildings in danger of fire spread, or uninvolved areas within the fire building that are in danger of fire spread.

### 3.6 Fire Control

- A. It shall be standard practice to attempt the stabilization of fire conditions by extending wherever possible an adequate fire attack and to support that attack with whatever resources and actions are required to bring the fire under control.
- B. Initial attack efforts must be directed toward supporting primary search/rescue operations. Fire location and extent should be determined prior to starting suppression operations.
- C. It is the responsibility of each company to provide for its own uninterrupted, adequate supply of water. This provision does not mean that they must lay a supply line.
- D. Master Streams – Operation of master streams should not take place in the same area of the involved building where interior fire attacks are in progress.
- E. Water Supply – At any fire that requires the use of large quantities of water, the San Jacinto River Authority should be notified.

### 3.7 Ventilation

- A. Ventilation of smoke and heat from exposed areas is a critical fire ground function. Proper and timely ventilation will increase survivability of victims, improve visibility, reduce heat conditions and flashover potential, and allow for more expedient fire control. The determination to use vertical, horizontal,

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positive pressure, or hydraulic ventilation techniques, or any combination thereof, will be dictated by fire ground conditions, and by the IC and/or crews assigned to ventilation tasks.

### 3.8 Property Conservation

- A. After assigning rescue and fire control tasks, it shall be standard practice to reduce property loss to a minimum.

### 3.9 Special Signals or Calls

- A. Master Stream Operations – Will be considered an order to leave building.
- B. Open Hydrant – Two short air horn blasts from engines needing water.
- C. Emergency Evacuation of Structure – One long air horn blast of at least 20 seconds duration. See Section 4.0.
- D. Signal 7-1 is a signal to all units and the dispatcher that the incident has been stabilized, and will be used only on multi-unit assignments. When using Signal 7-1, the officer will specify which companies, if any, are being held at the scene.

## 4.0 EMERGENCY EVACUATION

- 4.1 The EMERGENCY evacuation of a structure is an evacuation that is initiated by the IC or the ISO because conditions are believed to pose an immediate and direct threat to the safety of personnel.
- 4.2 An EMERGENCY evacuation should not be confused with an orderly withdrawal from positions that is ordered during a shift from an offensive to a defensive mode of operation, or other non-critical adjustment of forces.

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### 4.3 Retreat and Evacuation

A. If conditions are such that total EMERGENCY evacuation of the building is necessary, the IC or the ISO shall initiate the retreat signal. The retreat signal shall be as follows:

- 1) The initiating officer shall broadcast “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” over the fire ground radio frequency(s). On hearing the “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” broadcast, all others on the frequency shall maintain radio silence. As an example, the officer shall then broadcast the message, “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC – ALL PERSONNEL EVACUATE THE BUILDING.” The IC will then advise Fire Com to broadcast alert tone and give the message to evacuate.
- 2) On hearing the “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC – ALL PERSONNEL EVACUATE THE BUILDING” message, all apparatus drivers or their designees shall immediately activate the air horns on the apparatus, giving a single blast for a minimum of twenty (20) seconds. Evacuation shall not be delayed by equipment withdrawal. After exiting the structure, all personnel shall go to a point outside the Hazard Zone where a PAR shall be conducted.

### 5.0 HOSTILE OR HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS

5.1 Post-Control and Extinguishment – No one shall enter a hostile or hazardous area without SCBA until the carbon monoxide level is 100 ppm or less as indicated by a CO meter, and as authorized to do so by the ISO and/or IC. Hostile or hazardous areas shall be defined as any structure, area, or condition that may cause risk of bodily harm to entering said structure, area, or condition, or any condition exposing one to risk.

### 6.0 INCIDENT REHABILITATION

#### 6.1 Responsibilities

A. Incident Commander: The IC shall consider the circumstances of each incident and make adequate provisions early in the incident for the rest and rehabilitation

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for all members operating at the scene. These provisions shall include: medical evaluation, treatment and monitoring; food and fluid replenishment; mental rest; and relief from extreme climatic conditions and the other environmental parameters of the incident. The rehabilitation shall include the provision of Emergency Medical Services.

- B. Division/Group Officers: All Division/Group Officers shall maintain an awareness of the condition of each member operating within their span of control and ensure that adequate steps are taken to provide for each members safety and health.
- C. Personnel: During any emergency incident or training evolution, all members shall advise their Division/Group officers when they believe that their level of fatigue or exposure to heat or cold is approaching a level that could affect themselves, their crew, or the operation in which they are involved. Members shall also remain aware of the health and safety of other members of their crew.

### 6.2 Operation of Rehabilitation Group

- A. Responsibility: The IC will establish a Rehabilitation Group when conditions indicate that rest and rehabilitation is needed for personnel operating at an incident scene. A member will be placed in charge of the Group and shall be known as the Rehab Group.
- B. Location: The location for the Rehabilitation Area will normally be designated by the IC. If a specific location has not been designated, the Rehab Group shall select an appropriate location based on the site characteristics and designations below.
- C. Site Characteristics
  - 1) It should be far enough away from the scene that members may safely remove their PPE.
  - 2) It should provide suitable protection from the prevailing environmental conditions.
  - 3) It should allow for prompt reentry back into the emergency operation upon complete recuperation.

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- 4) Consideration should be given to multiple Rehab Groups for use in large situations.
  
- D. Rest: The “two air bottle rule,” or 45-minutes of work time, is recommended as an acceptable level prior to mandatory rehabilitation. Crews previously uncommitted or those released from the Rehabilitation Group shall be available in the Personnel Resource Area (if established) to ensure that fatigued members are not required to return to duty before they are rested, evaluated, and released by the Rehab Group Supervisor.
  
- E. Personnel with direct involvement of patient care, or exposure to victim bodily fluids, shall only be the recipient of rehab supplies. Decontamination of contaminated personnel must occur prior to accessing rehab supplies.