

The Woodlands Fire Department Operational Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The Operational Guidelines presented in this document represent an effort over the course of many years to provide for the health, safety, and well-being of the employees of The Woodlands Fire Department, as well as to provide for the safety of the public as we carry out our mission of providing superior emergency services. It has long been established that adherence to defined operational guidelines will provide for greater consistency of performance when responding to requests for help, as well as to provide for a more stable, predictable working environment.

As part of an ongoing effort to assess and improve performance, a committee was established by the Fire Chief in January 2007 to review and update all Operational Guidelines of The Woodlands Fire Department. The committee has been tasked not only with reviewing and updating existing guidelines, but also to analyze and determine whether new guidelines are needed, or whether existing guidelines are obsolete. The members of the committee are selected from differing shifts and levels of the rank structure to provide a more diverse perspective when addressing our operating methods.

Though the individual members of the committee may change over the years, the committee itself has been permanently established and charged with ensuring that all Operational Guidelines are reviewed on an annual basis and updated when needed. This annual review will ensure that our Operational Guidelines do not become obsolete, and that as industry trends and best practices change, so will we.

One of the first goals set forth by the OG Review Committee was to identify those guidelines that are most critical to the mission of the Fire Department that all employees on all levels must be thoroughly familiar with. The committee established a color-coded OG prioritization system with which to categorize and file guidelines: red being most critical, yellow being important, and green being those less critical which can be referenced as needed. Next it was decided that the fragmented structure of the OG's could be better organized. A file management system has been developed to categorize guidelines by their function. The basic categories created are: Administrative, Fire, EMS, Motor Vehicle, Personal Protection, Haz-Mat, Technical Rescue, and Special Responses. This filing method keeps like subjects grouped together for easy reference.

Finally, the committee believes that the guidelines should allow flexibility for the company officers, who are responsible for on-scene rapid decision making. When possible, the guidelines were edited to allow decision makers room to fit actions to specific needs. The guidelines are exactly that – something that should be followed most of the time, but that can be deviated from if the company officer can justify deviance. It is every fire department employee's responsibility to know these operational guidelines and apply them then on a daily basis when performing their assigned jobs.