



EULESS FIRE DEPARTMENT

215.0

Operations

Date Issued: 11/1995

Date Revised: 06/2015

Tactical Guidelines: Search and Rescue Operations

Approved By:

Fire Chief

I. Objectives

Search and rescue should be performed according to an efficient, well-planned procedure, which includes the safety of company members. *The objective at all structure fires or other disasters involving structures must include, as the first priority, searches for occupants or victims, not create additional ones by neglecting the safety of the company members.* Departmental safety practices and procedures will be strictly adhered to at all times.

II. Implementation

Sufficient numbers of search teams must be promptly assigned to search all portions of a building that are in hazard due to fire and into which firefighters can gain access. If fire conditions are so advanced or the condition of the building is so poor that Company members have a good chance of losing their lives, rescue should not be attempted. *Under such conditions it is unlikely the victim would be alive.*

III. Search Plan

Upon Arrival: Report on conditions; Size up the rescue problem; request additional resources as needed, institute primary search and initial fire control operations.

Prior to entering the search area, all search team members should be familiar with a specific search plan, including the overall objective, a designation of the search area, individual assignments, etc. This may require a brief conference among crew members before entering the search area to develop and communicate the plan.

Individual search activities should be conducted by two or more members where possible.

Company officers must maintain an awareness of the location and function of all members within their crew during search operations.

A brief look around the floor below the fire may provide good reference for the search team, as floors in multi-story occupancies usually have a similar layout.

If company members are operating without a hose line, lifelines or anchors should be used when encountering conditions of severely limited visibility.

It is standard operating procedure to extend a primary search in all involved and exposed occupancies which can be entered. Incident Command (IC) must structure initial operations around the completion of

215.0

Tactical Guidelines: Search and Rescue Operations

the primary search. Primary search means companies have quickly gone through all affected areas and verified the removal and/or safety of all occupants.

IV. Time Factor

PRIMARY SEARCH

Time is the critical factor in the primary search process. Successful primary search operations must necessarily be extended quickly and during initial fire stages.

The Incident Commander and operating companies cannot depend upon reports from spectators to determine status of victims. Control forces should utilize reports as to the location, number, and condition of victims and supporting primary search efforts and must extend and complete a primary search wherever entry is possible.

It should be the responsibility of the companies assigned to primary search to notify the Incident Commander and relay findings when primary search has been completed.

Once the primary search has been completed and transmitted the Incident Commander must maintain control of access to the fire area. **Beware of occupants (and others) re-entering the building.**

Incident Command must make specific primary search assignments to companies to cover specific areas of large-complex occupancies and maintain on-going control of such companies until the entire area is searched. When primary search companies encounter and remove victims, Incident Command must assign other companies to continue to cover the interior positions vacated by those companies.

All initial attack efforts must be directed toward supporting rescue efforts and hose lines must be placed in a manner to control interior access, confine the fire, and protect avenues of escape. Hose line placement becomes a critical factor in these cases and Incident Command and all operating companies must realize that the operation is in a rescue mode. It may be necessary to buy rescue time.

Normal means of interior access (stairs, halls, interior public areas, etc.) should be utilized to remove victims whenever possible. Secondary means of rescue (platforms, ladders, fire escapes, helicopters, gravity/nets, etc.) must be utilized in their order of effectiveness.

When search is completed the room shall be marked (See section VII – Identification, of this document).

SECONDARY SEARCH

The rescue functions that follow lengthy fire control activities will be regarded tactically as presenting a secondary search. Secondary search means that companies thoroughly search the interior of the fire area after initial fire control and ventilation activities have been completed. Secondary search should be preferably completed by different companies than those involved in the primary search activities. Thoroughness, rather than time, is the critical factor in secondary searches.

V. Communications

Crews performing search operations will be designated as "PRIMARY SEARCH GROUP" or "SECONDARY SEARCH GROUP."

The completion of the primary search is reported utilizing the standard radio reporting term "PRIMARY SEARCH CLEAR". It is the responsibility of Incident Command to coordinate primary search assignments, secure completion reports from interior companies and to transmit the "ALL CLEAR" report to Fire Alarm. Fire Alarm will record the time of this report from Incident Command.

215.0

Tactical Guidelines: Search and Rescue Operations

VI. Critical Factors

The stage of the fire becomes a critical factor that affects the rescue approach developed by Incident Command. The following items outline the basic Command approach to fire stages:

In smoke showing and working fire situations, fire control efforts may be extended simultaneously with the rescue operations in order to gain entry and control interior access to complete primary search. In such cases, Incident Command and operating companies must be aware the operation is in a rescue mode until primary search is complete, regardless of the fire control required. In working fire situations, primary search must be followed by a secondary search. Any area of inaccessibility is to be reported to the Incident Command.

In cases of fully involved buildings or sections of buildings, immediate entry and primary search activities become impossible and survival of occupants is improbable. Incident Command must initially report fully involved conditions and that he will not report "ALL CLEAR". As quickly as fire control is achieved, Incident Command must structure what is in effect a secondary search for victims.

In some cases, occupants are safer in their rooms than moving through contaminated hallways and interior areas. Such movement may also impede interior firefighting.

VII. Identification

Marking Utensil

- A. The marker will be made of chalk.
- B. One marker will be issued to each firefighter assigned to station duty.
- C. Extra markers for replacement will be available from each Station Officer.

Application

The following guidelines are to be followed during its application in search and rescue procedures:

- A. Company members making a primary search of a room or apartment will write a capital P, then a dash, then their company assignment approximately 12" to 18" in height on the door when initiating a primary search of a room or apartment (e.g.: P-E551). This will signify that a firefighter(s) and/or victim(s) are still in the room, and that a primary search is under way.
- B. When the primary search is completed, the company members will draw a straight line under their original mark. The straight line will signify that the search is complete.
- C. Company members making a secondary search of a room or apartment, will write a capital S, then a dash then their company assignment, directly below the straight line of the primary search marking, when initiating a secondary search of a room or apartment (e.g.: S-E552).
- D. When the secondary search is completed, the company members will draw a straight line under their original mark. The straight line will signify that the search is complete.
- E. In the event a door has burned off or is missing, it will be necessary to make the markings as close to the door area as possible on the outside of the room or building.
- F. All doors should be closed and unlocked upon leaving a room or apartment to protect from the spread of fire until controlled ventilation can take place.

215.0

Tactical Guidelines: Search and Rescue Operations

**VIII.
Assignments**

Rescue efforts should be extended in the following order:

- A. Most severely threatened.
- B. The largest number (groups).
- C. The remainder of the fire area.
- D. The exposed areas.

**IX.
Treatment**

Incident Command must structure treatment of victims after removal. Multiple victims should be removed to one location for more effective treatment. Incident Command should coordinate and utilize paramedic capabilities wherever available and assign treatment companies or personnel as required to the Medical Group.

**X.
Officer's Discretion**

Incident Command may use discretion in those situations where exceptions to the above procedure appears necessary.