

Tempe Fire Department Policies and Procedures

Evacuation

207.14

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines for conducting an evacuation of citizens during an emergency incident. The potential for evacuation should be considered during all emergency incidents. The key to an organized and manageable evacuation is to implement the incident management system early, initiate a plan, and continually update the plan.

PLAN

AREA OF EVACUATION

The area of evacuation should be identified by the incident commander and later by the planning section. The evacuation boundaries should follow streets and established roadways. A map should be utilized and distributed to all officers and agencies involved and provided to the evacuation branch.

In some situations, in-place sheltering can be used to protect the public rather than to initiate an evacuation. In-place sheltering can be considered during the following circumstances:

- The hazardous material has been identified as having a low or moderate level of health risk.
- The material has been released from its container and is now dissipating.
- Leaks can be controlled rapidly and before evacuation can be completed.
- Exposure to the product is expected to be short-term and of low health risk.
- The public can be adequately protected by staying indoors.

Command may need to provide instructions to the affected public regarding the need to stay indoors and in taking such protective measures as shutting down their evaporative cooling systems and sealing their buildings.

LEVELS OF EVACUATION

Experience has reflected three levels of evacuation. Each requires a different resource commitment. They include:

Site Evacuation

Site evacuation involves a small number of citizens. This typically includes workers at the site and persons from adjacent occupancies or areas. The citizens are easily evacuated and collected upwind at the perimeter area. Evacuation holding times are typically short, generally less than an hour or two, and citizens are permitted to return to their businesses or homes.

Intermediate Level Evacuation

The intermediate level involves larger numbers of citizens and/or affects a larger area. This level affects off-site homes and businesses and normally affects fewer than 100 persons. Persons may remain out of the area for two-to-four hours or more. Evacuation completion times will be somewhat longer but generally rapid. Collecting, documenting, and controlling the evacuees becomes more difficult. Off-site collection sites or shelter areas will need to be determined and managed. Some evacuees will leave the area on their own or be sent home by employers. Site perimeters become larger and perimeter security requires more resources. Close coordination with the police department and other agencies will be required.

Large-Scale Evacuation

A large or concentrated release of a hazardous substance may cause a large off-site evacuation. Thousands of citizens could be evacuated. Rapid initiation of the evacuation process may be required. Evacuees may be out of their homes and businesses for many hours if not days. Evacuation completion time frames will be extended. Evacuation shelters will need to be located, opened, and managed. Documentation and tracking of evacuees becomes more important as well as more difficult. Very close coordination with the police department and other agencies will be required. Site and evacuation perimeters become extended and require much more resources to maintain. Security of the evacuated area is always a concern. One of the City's Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) will be opened to support the evacuation and site operations.

There are no precise parameters differentiating one level of evacuation from another. The incident commander must implement a command organization that meets the needs of each particular incident.

DURATION OF EVACUATION

The evacuation should be sustained as long as the risk continues in the evacuated area. Caution should be taken when deciding to allow residents to return to their homes to ensure that the situation is truly under control. Re-evacuating is difficult to complete, as many residents will not want to go a second time. It can also be extremely hazardous. Evacuees must be updated with information as soon as possible and periodically throughout the incident.

RED CROSS RESPONSIBILITIES

Once long-term sheltering is identified, the Red Cross will manage shelters. Early notification is required. The Red Cross will need up to three hours to get adequate personnel, equipment, and supplies to the shelter sites.

Shelter site selection cannot wait on the Red Cross. Site selection must be made by the incident commander at the time evacuation is ordered and sites need sector officers assigned.

Some Fire Department resources will need to be committed to the shelters, particularly in the area of initial opening and staffing by a shelter crew, and later for potential emergency medical support and information management. An occupant services officers should also be assigned to each shelter.

COMMAND STRUCTURE

The planning section is responsible for all planning associated with the evacuation. The evacuation plan is communicated to the incident commander for approval or modification. The actual evacuation process would normally be managed in the operations section as an evacuation branch or sector. The evacuation branch must be provided with sufficient resources to effectively complete the task. Sector assignments within the evacuation branch will be assigned as necessary.

The following sections may be implemented:

- Operations

- Planning
- Logistics
- Administration

The following branches may be implemented:

- Evacuation
- Transportation
- Medical
- Haz Mat
- Fire
- Geographic Branches

The evacuation branch officer may be a police officer. Branches will be implemented as needed. Branch officers receive the plan and objectives from Command. Branch officers direct sectors in completing the plan and objectives. Separate radio channels may be required.

Sectors to be considered include:

- Public Information
- Geographic (multiple sectors)
- Police Liaison
- Staging
- Transportation
- Shelter
- Other Agency Liaison
- Other Sectors (as necessary)

COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

Command's responsibilities include the following items:

- Size-up the situation to determine the need to evacuate.
- Order evacuation.
- Provide resources required.
- Provide a ranking fire officer the responsibility of police liaison.
- Order the alert of other appropriate agencies.
- Expand the Command organization to meet the incident/evacuation needs.
- Communicate the evacuation plan to branches, sectors, and agency liaisons.
- Monitor, support, and revise the evacuation process as necessary.
- Evacuate persons from the greatest danger first.
- Assign specific areas to evacuate in order to avoid duplication or missed areas (use Fire Department maps).
- Provide the transportation necessary for evacuees.
- Provide continuing command of the evacuation, decommitment, and return of evacuees.
- Determine the need to implement a unified command structure involving other agencies. This would depend upon the nature of the incident.

POLICE RESPONSIBILITIES

A police representative will need to be assigned to the planning section and another to the evacuation branch as a liaison. The police liaisons will communicate with the police incident commander and keep other parties in the police department informed of the plan, progress, etc.

The police department will be an integral part of the evacuation process, as a large portion of the evacuation is

usually accomplished by them. Police responsibilities include:

- Provide a ranking officer to the incident Command Post.
- Provide a ranking officer to the evacuation branch/sector.
- Provide police resources needed for evacuation.
- Provide traffic control and traffic routing.
- Provide perimeter security.
- Provide evacuation zone security.
- Identify transportation needs.

COMMUNICATIONS

A separate radio frequency should be used for the evacuation branch. This should be assigned as early in the incident as possible.

FIRE ALARM ROOM'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Dispatch appropriate resources as requested.
- Notify the appropriate Fire and City officials.
- Notify the appropriate support agencies as requested or listed in the policies and procedures.
- Initiate recall of additional Alarm Headquarters staff to meet the demands of the incident.
- Notify the City telephone switchboard operator and provide the operator a status report. Update the operator as needed.
- Notify the hospitals in the area of evacuation (both those exposed and not exposed) and provide a status report and updates as needed (intermediate and large-scale evacuations).
- Update Fire administration staff of the status of the incident if it is during normal business hours. They will receive many calls from citizens requesting information.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Notify the news media and provide status reports and updates as necessary.
- Provide the media with consistent and accurate evacuation instructions as provided by Command.
- Utilize the media and coordinate evacuation notices through news media.

The incident PIO should be informed of the evacuation plan so that the media is aware of the areas to be evacuated, shelter sites and any evacuation instructions to the public. The PIO should make every effort to assemble the media at the scene to keep them away from hazards and out of the evacuation area. Residents may receive information from the media during the evacuation, so it is critical that the media information be accurate.

Also needed is a single phone number that should be released to the public for information.

EVACUATION BRANCH RESPONSIBILITIES

On large-scale evacuations, a branch-level position on a separate radio channel should be considered. Various sub-level sectors will also need to be established and report to the evacuation branch officer.

Typically, a large commitment of police officers will be required to accomplish an evacuation. The evacuation branch officer may be either a police or fire officer. The evacuation branch must obtain a ranking police official at his/her location in order to closely coordinate evacuation efforts. Evacuation responsibilities include:

- Obtain resources needed to evacuate.
- Establish sectors as needed.
- Provide sectors objectives and specific areas to evacuate (use Fire Department map sections).

- Provide sectors with shelter location and instructions.
- Provide sectors with evacuation instruction pads and written evacuation information for evacuees if possible (consider needs for multiple languages).
- Provide sectors with private vehicle routing instructions (out of the area).
- Obtain/provide ambulances, buses, or other transportation to those requiring transportation out of the area.
- Evacuate those at greatest risk first.
- Evacuate the greatest concentrated areas next (i.e., apartment complex).
- Consider individual sectors for large population occupancies (i.e., multi-story buildings, large apartment complexes, schools, etc.).
- As individual geographic or grid sectors complete their evacuations, terminate the sector identify and reassign resources to other developing sectors (for large-scale evacuation).
- Closely document and maintain records of the evacuation process to avoid duplication or missed areas.
- Document addresses and times for those refusing to leave.

INFORMATION AND NOTIFICATION

The police department and fire companies should be used for resources/staffing to conduct a walk-through or drive-through in the area to be evacuated. Fire companies should be assigned to hazardous areas with police assigned to safe areas. The officers should provide residents with information about the situation and be told that they are being evacuated, to where, and why. It is necessary to inform the residents of shelter areas being established to minimize confusion and anxiety.

WHO SHOULD BE EVACUATED

All residents living/working in the area identified should be evacuated. In the event that a resident decides not to evacuate, they should be specifically informed of the risk and, if they still refuse, left to stay. The evacuation branch is to be notified and a note of the citizen's address made for further follow-up.

Evacuations follow somewhat of a triage philosophy -- we'll evacuate the greatest number for the greatest benefit. Individual refusals will be left to fend for themselves. There simply may not be enough time or resources to initiate forced removal of persons from their homes.

ON-SITE NOTIFICATION TO EVACUATE

Door-to-door notification is time-consuming. In many cases, adequate resources and time is not available to do this type of face-to-face notification. Use of sirens, air horns, and PA systems will speed the alert process.

When making door-to-door evacuations:

- Be in uniform.
- Wear your helmet.

Face-to-face notification should include the following instructions:

- There is an emergency.
- You are in danger.
- Leave immediately.
- Go to shelter (location).
- Take (_____) route out of the area.
- Do you need transportation?
- Give the citizen the evacuation instruction sheet.
- Consider multi-lingual needs.

Evacuees should be advised to take the following items:

- Wallet/purse.
- House and car keys.
- Money.
- Eyeglasses.
- Medications.
- Proper clothing.
- Family pet.

In other situations, where immediate and rapid evacuation makes door-to-door notification impossible, use the following notification method:

- Use three (3) five-second blasts of the siren while on the "YELP" setting.
- Follow the standard evacuation instruction over PA system (see instructions above).
- Use maximum volume on PA system.
- Proceed slowly to maximize notification.
- Initiate notification at the beginning of each block and each 50 yards after that.

Once each assigned grid of objectives is complete, report completion to the evacuation branch/sector officer.

TRANSPORTATION BRANCH/SECTOR

A transportation sector should be established within the evacuation branch. Ambulances and other transport vehicles and buses should be staged in the event that a citizen may need transportation to a shelter or other location. Non-ambulatory people must be located and information provided to the transportation sector so that they are not overlooked in the evacuation.

- Obtain buses (start with a minimum of two) and other vehicles that can be used for transportation.
- Stage all transportation resources.
- Put one firefighter (or police officer) on each vehicle equipped with a fire or police department radio.
- Coordinate the evacuation sector (or evacuation branch/sector) - the pick-up points or addresses of those citizens needing transportation.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC) OPERATIONS

If a significant or major evacuation occurs, the City's EOC will go into operation. The EOC's objective is to use the City's resources to support the incident.

Command should be prepared for this support and potential policy direction in regards to the incident and evacuation operations.

If the EOC is in operation, the planning section is responsible for briefing and maintaining communication with the EOC. A cellular telephone link may be required.

Responsibilities of the planning section's EOC liaison officer are:

- Obtain a cellular telephone or other communications link with the EOC.
- Obtain an immediate status report from Command and provide that report to the EOC fire officer.
- Provide an immediate report to the EOC on any changes in plans, strategy, problems encountered, etc.
- Provide progress reports every 30 minutes unless the EOC requires more frequent reports.
- Act as the communications link from EOC to Command.
- Provide command with direction, policy information, etc., that is communicated from the EOC.

Once established, the EOC will usually remain in operation for the duration of the evacuation. Command will

maintain an EOC liaison and a communication link with the EOC throughout the evacuation, including decommitment and return of evacuees.

RETURN EVACUEES

The decision to return evacuees to their homes will be the responsibility of the Fire Department incident commander. If the EOC is operating, the decision to return evacuees will be made by the EOC staff. No other City agency will be authorized to order the return.

The planning section will jointly develop a return plan for evacuees.

Returning evacuees may require that some transportation be provided. A transportation sector should be reactivated to organize these needs.