

Tempe Fire Department Policies and Procedures
Rescue – Lost Firefighter
205.02
Rev 3-12-97

PURPOSE

The rescue of trapped or lost firefighters in a burning building is especially time sensitive. There is a very narrow "window of survivability" for a firefighter who is out of SCBA air supply or trapped by approaching fire. Individual firefighters must not delay reporting to command if they become lost, trapped or in need of assistance. Company officers must also not delay the reporting of lost firefighters or inability to complete accountability reports. Command and sector officers must always assume that the missing firefighter is lost in the building until the firefighter can be accounted for. Command must also restructure the strategy and action plan to include a priority rescue effort.

POLICY

This procedure identifies individual, company and command level activities for the search and rescue of a lost or trapped firefighter(s).

PROCEDURE

Lost or trapped firefighters

Rescue needs generally fall into two categories. Either the firefighter is trapped by a collapse, OR, lost in a smoke filled and burning building. The most significant problem and difference between the two categories are that the search area can be substantially larger for a lost firefighters than that encountered in a collapse situation. On the other hand, a collapse presents a major extrication situation. In some cases, lost or trapped firefighters may be able to radio to command that they are lost and in need of rescue, prior to being incapacitated. Other problems may include: a possible secondary collapse, separated and scattered crews and confusion of the last known location of the crew (or member). Early PAR's and information as to the number of missing firefighters, identities, and whereabouts are critical.

"MAY-DAY" Radio Message

The radio message "MAY-DAY" will be used by lost firefighters to report their status as being in trouble and needing rescue. Any member may use "MAY-DAY" to report a lost firefighter. Any report of "MAY-DAY" will receive priority radio traffic followed by the emergency traffic tone. The term "MAY-DAY" will be reserved ONLY to report lost or trapped firefighters. The "emergency traffic" announcement will continue to be used for other high risk hazards at the scene (i.e., evacuate, lines down).

Command Response to a Missing Firefighter(s)

The incident commander MUST ALWAYS assume that the missing firefighter is lost or trapped in the building until the firefighter is accounted for. Rapid, concise, decisions and actions must be taken to increase survivability. The following is a list of actions to be taken by Command for a reported missing or trapped firefighter. These are guidelines and do not necessarily need to be accomplished in the order listed. The first five (5) must be accomplished very rapidly.

1. Emergency Traffic

Immediately upon a report of a missing or trapped firefighter "Emergency Traffic" will be sounded to alert all personnel working on the fireground of the situation.

2. Change of Strategy to a Rescue Mode

The incident commander must restructure the tactical plan to include a high priority firefighter rescue effort. A rapid, well thought out, rescue plan must be developed and the command organization expanded. The plan and objectives must be communicated to other command staff and sector officers for implementation. When in the Rescue mode, Incident Command must have absolute priority on the tactical channel. The incident commander must insure a complete, coordinated and controlled search is conducted. Close coordination of all search efforts is a must in order to eliminate duplicate searches that waste time.

3. Immediately Request Additional Alarms

At least one additional alarm should be immediately requested including a medical component with appropriate transportation capability. Level two staging should be implemented. Technical Rescue Teams (TRT) and other specialized equipment should be requested at all structural collapses that have trapped firefighters.

4. Fireground Accountability

A Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) must be immediately requested from all companies operating on the fireground. Command cannot develop an effective rescue plan until accurate information is available on the number of missing firefighters/crews, their identify, and their last reported work area. Command will attempt to contact by radio a lost or missing firefighter by name when unable to account for all personnel on or in the fireground/hazard area.

5. Commit the Rapid Intervention Crew

Command will immediately send the rapid intervention crew(s) (RIC) to the most appropriate location to initiate search and rescue efforts (typically the last reported work area). The RIC team will be designated as "rescue sector" and coordinate activities at that location.

Due to the high risk nature of rescue operations, Command must establish another RIC to protect rescue crews. The RIC should stand-by at a location near the rescue operation. More than one RIC may be needed.

6. Withdrawal of Companies from the Affected Area

In some situations, such as collapse, crew members can get separated. The only practical method to obtain an accurate roll cal for a PAR may be to withdraw crews to the exterior. Withdrawal is a judgment call based on circumstances at the time, information available, and available resources. It may not be practical or possible to do in all situations. However, the absolute need for an accurate roll cal (PAR) and information on missing firefighters remains a critical priority.

7. Do Not Abandon Firefighting Positions, Provide Re-Enforcement

Abandoning firefighting positions during the rescue effort should be avoided. Command and crews should take aggressive measures to protect trapped or missing firefighters from the effects of the fire. Efforts should be concentrated on re-enforcing existing positions and keeping the fire out of the rescue area and providing appropriate ventilation and lighting. In some situations it may be appropriate to write off some areas of the building in order to relocate companies and crews to better protect the rescue effort.

8. Establish Treatment and Transportation Sectors

The incident commander must have treatment personnel in a position to immediately treat any rescued firefighters. A transportation sector must also be in place to coordinate activities with the treatment sector officer. Adequate transportation resources must be requested.

9. Assign a Chief Officer to the Rescue Sector

A chief officer should be assigned to direct the rescue sector and rescue operations. Depending on the size of the rescue area and the complexity of operations, more than one chief officer may be needed to fill additional support positions or sectors. The sector officer will assign specific areas or grids of the building to each rescue team (company) to conduct searches before entering the building. Search efforts must be closely coordinated between sectors and Command must be kept informed. Rescue sector should coordinate with Command the use of additional resources such as a Thermal Imaging Camera, Firebird 1, Target Exiting Device, etc.

10. Assign a Safety Sector

Rescue operations are high risk. The rescue operation may be taking place in a post-collapse environment or a flashover may have occurred. A Safety Sector in the affected area will help control risk taking. A Safety Sector must be implemented. A chief officer should assume this sector as soon as possible. Other Safety Sector responsibilities will be to conduct an assessment of the hazards, thus, allowing time for the rescue sector officer to concentrate on the critical rescue effort. These sector officers must work hand in hand to insure that a safe and effective rescue operation is conducted.

11. Expand the Command Organization

With additional resources enroute, along with the critical rescue needs, the command organization must expand ahead of the demand. The incident may eventually escalate to a Branch level operation. The incident commander must be proactive and aggressive in developing and expanding the command organization.

12. Special Call Staff Officers

Additional staff officers will be needed to fill key sectors and command team positions. Command should special call additional support, and initiate a call back of all off duty chief officers.

13. Unlock All Doors, Open If Appropriate

All doors in the immediate area should be unlocked or forced open, and at least the immediate interior area quickly searched. In most cases the doors should be left open to provide an emergency escape route, unless doing so will have negative effects on the fire. In all cases, the doors must remain unlocked.

14. Ventilate/Maintain Tenability/Lighting

Reducing smoke conditions, through effective ventilation, improves the air quality for any victims, and will enhance search and rescue capabilities through increased visibility of the interior. Both vertical and positive pressure ventilation should be aggressively employed. Early lighting of operations (both interior and exterior) needs to be included.

15. Establish a Structural Stability Sector

All personnel must watch the structural stability of the building throughout the rescue effort. Where a structural collapse has occurred, or the fire or other event has compromised the integrity of the building, the rescue area must be made safe to operate in. A Structural Stability Sector needs to be

established as early as possible. The sector shall consist of the Special Operations Chief, a TRT Officer, and C957 if available.

16. Strong Supervision

Strong supervision and control will be required by all officers. Emotions will be very high. Firefighters in this situation will tend to want to freelance or take higher risks. Company officers must maintain accountability and control of all assigned personnel, and ensure companies in their assigned areas performing assigned functions.

17. Media Control

Command shall assign a public information officer, preferably a chief officer to deal directly with the media. The Media Officer shall request that they not identify the involved individual(s) until the family has been contacted.

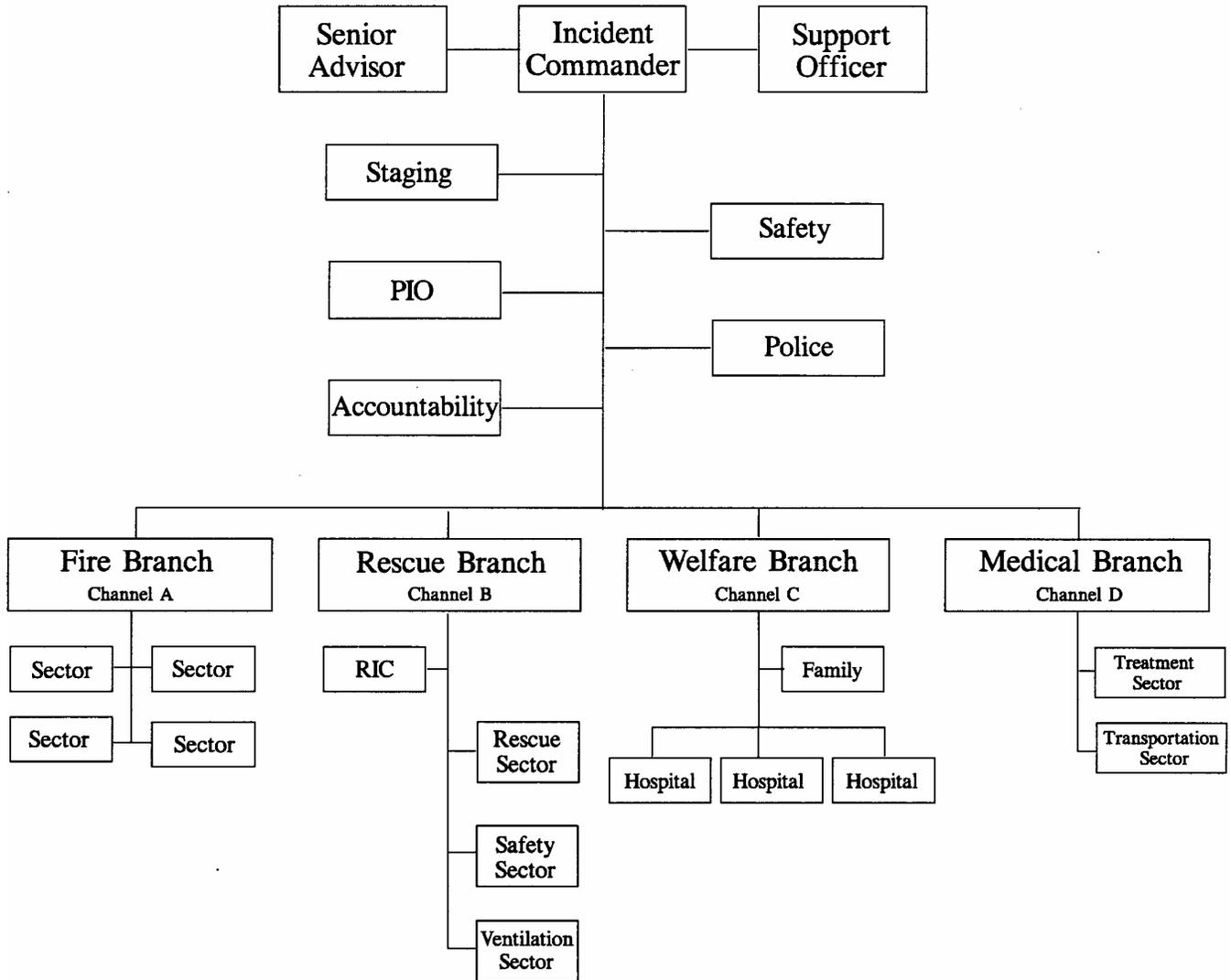
18. Welfare Sector/Branch

A welfare sector or branch will need to be established early to address the family or families of lost or missing firefighters. A chief officer, company or other unit can be used to make contact with family of involved individuals.

19. Monitoring All Radio Channels

Command must ensure that dispatch and deployment monitors all radio channels (1-10). Should a lost firefighter declare an emergency on a channel other than the fireground tactical channel, Command must immediately be directed to the lost firefighters channel for direct communication. Command must monitor channels 11 and 12, as they are portable to portable.

Expanded Command – Branch Organization



General Considerations

When searching for a lost member, rescue crews should consider the following:

- Visible sightings or trapped firefighters such as arms or legs.
- Knowledge of their last known location.
- The sound of the PASS devices audible tones.
- Shouts for help from the collapsed area.
- Tapping noise, etc.
- Sounds of portable radio broadcast in the collapse area.
- Breathing, moaning sounds.
- The sound of the SCBA alarm bell sounding.
- Radio request for help from within the collapse area.
- Tracing attack hoselines into the collapse area.
- Tracing of life lines into the area.
- Evidence of building structures or locations that were described by lost firefighters.
- Flashlight beams.
- Location of ladders, fans, lights, or other equipment being used by missing firefighters.
- Open or unlock all doors.
- Search hallways before interior rooms.
- Search exterior walls (interior sides) before searching interior spaces.
- Search large interior spaces in a detailed grid pattern.
- Ensure all areas are searched.
- Take one RIC - SCBA Kit for each lost firefighter in the search area.
- Use life lines when searching "off hoselines" to ensure safety of rescuers.