



PROCEDURES MANUAL

SUBJECT: Structure Fire Operations – Search and Rescue

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203.01.08 Structure Fire Operations – Search and Rescue

A. Purpose

To establish guidelines for search and rescue operations at structure fires.

B. Rescue

1. Initial efforts must be directed toward supporting rescue efforts and hose lines must be placed in a manner to:
 - a. Control interior access
 - b. Confine the fire
 - c. Protect avenues of escape, until the primary search is complete.
 - d. For residences, **usually** the best location of the first fire line is through the front door, protecting the primary access to the building and the stairs if present are usually in this vicinity.
2. Hose line placement becomes a critical factor in rescue operations and all operating companies must realize that the operation is in a rescue mode.
 - a. Immediate rescue attempts by the first due Engine Company without simultaneous stretching of a fire line should only be attempted in the most extreme circumstances. **Engines have to put water on the fire.**
 - b. Factors to consider for an immediate rescue:
 - i. Occupants endangered in immediate vicinity of the fire.
 - ii. Number of persons trapped.
 - iii. Occupants threatening to jump.
 - iv. Means of egress cut off by fire.
 - v. Ability to reach the occupants with ground ladders on the Engine Company.
 - vi. Anticipated arrival time of the first due Ladder Company.
 - c. When faced with endangered occupants, the Officer can:
 - i. Position a fire line between the occupants and the fire.
 - ii. Ventilate to draw fire, heat and smoke away from the

- occupants.
 - iii. Give verbal instructions on what to do and provide reassurance.
 - iv. Close doors to limit spread of smoke and fire.
 - v. Ensure all responding Companies are aware of the location of endangered occupants.
3. Normal means of interior access should be used to remove victims whenever possible.
 - a. For first, second and third floor removal, ground ladders are usually quicker and safer than aerial ladders.
Note: Firefighters must assist occupants down ladders.
 - b. Aerial ladders will have to be used on upper floors within reach.
 4. Unconscious victims will be difficult to remove via an aerial ladder. If possible, if removal is necessary via a ladder – select a ground ladder.
 5. Persons remote of the fire or in areas without excessive smoke conditions, should be sheltered in place. People presenting at windows or balconies should be instructed they are “OK” and to keep their door closed, close patio door and await assistance from the fire department. If in doubt, remove the occupant. If they are ambulatory, the internal means of removal is the best option provided it is clear.
 6. The most urgent reason for calling additional alarms is life safety.

C. Search

1. A primary search will be conducted at all structural fires, where it is possible to enter.
 - a. Primary search means that Companies have quickly gone through all affected areas and verified the removal and/or safety of all occupants.
 - b. Time is the critical factor in the primary search process.
2. Danger to occupants is most acute on the fire floor, the floor immediately above the fire, the stairways, the top floor, and then intermediate floors, in that order.
 - a. In High-Rise Fires, smoke may not always rise to the top of the structure. (*Reference to Section 203.01.20 High Rise Fires*)
 - b. All Stairways should be searched while ascending to the top floor.
3. If met with fire at the main entrance of a residential building, and persons are suspected to be trapped based on size-up, the inside ladder team will not wait to advance in behind the fire line.
4. The inside team will seek another means of access to rooms not yet involved in fire.

5. This deviation from standard procedures shall be communicated to Command including entry point and intended location.
6. VEIS may be the best alternative to reach the upper floor of a residential building.
7. Time of day play a critical role in search priorities.
 - a. During sleeping hours, a heavy emphasis must be placed on bedroom search.
 - b. Limited time shall be spent in Living Rooms, Dining Rooms, Kitchens and Utility Areas.
 - c. Consideration should be given to first floor bedrooms (if any).
 - d. When search of the first floor is complete, search teams shall make a rapid advance to the upper floors to search via the interior stairs or via ladders (Reference VEIS procedures in Drill Manual).
8. Search Assignments
 - a. First Engine Officer will search the room or fire area once the fire is knocked down
 - b. First Truck Company
 - i. "A" Team: The first Truck Company "A" team will search the fire area, unless victims are present or reported elsewhere, and then they will focus on that location, notifying Command as indicated above of variance.
 - ii. "B" Team: If there are victims present at windows needing rescue or reported occupants in spaces above the fire, the "B" team will work with the "A" team and deploy ladders to that area and search/remove occupants.
 - iii. In large multiple dwellings, the Officer may elect to take all members interior to assist with search. This action must be communicated to Command.
 - c. Second Truck Company
 - i. "A" Team: If first due Truck Company is searching fire area/floor, search floor above. If first due truck is rescuing occupants or conducting VEIS, search fire area/floor.
 - ii. "B" Team: If first due Truck "B" team is performing ventilation, place ground ladders to perform VEIS. If first due Truck "B" team is involved in rescue functions, prepare for ventilation.
 - d. Heavy Rescue Company
 - i. Search areas not searched by first and second Truck Companies. In private dwellings, it might be necessary to stage or perform VEIS if needed.
 - ii. In large multiple dwellings, immediately clear the "Attack" stairwell and then the "Rescue" stairwell of occupants by

searching from the fire floor to the top of the stairwell for victims.

9. Secondary search will be part of lengthy fire control activities and means that Companies thoroughly search the interior of the fire area after initial fire control and ventilation activities have been completed.
10. Secondary search should preferably be conducted by different Companies than those involved in primary search activities. Thoroughness, rather than time, is the critical factor in secondary search.
11. Companies assigned to search operations shall report their progress to Command. All clear benchmarks shall be announced as indicated in Section D of this procedure. Example: "Truck 20, primary search all clear on fire floor" and "Truck 21, primary search all clear on floor above".
12. All areas of the building must be searched when a fire is present. Even though visible smoke may not have spread to other areas, dangerous gases from the fire may have rendered the occupant(s) unconscious. This is especially important in multiple dwellings on the floors above the fire as these gases can accumulate by spreading in utility or pipe chases, garbage shafts, open windows, stairwells or other voids.
 - a. Depending on fire size and extent, it may be advisable to conduct this search as a secondary search with keys; rather than forcing doors to individual units.
 - b. If smoke is present in hallways – forcible entry is authorized into apartments. Force doors in a manner in which they can be controlled. Once entering the apartment to search shut the door to limit smoke damage.
13. When it becomes necessary to evacuate an entire building or area, the chalk marking system will be utilized to identify areas searched.
 - a. Every member shall carry a piece of dry chalk in their turnout coat pocket.
 - b. When an entire apartment or other area has been searched, an "X" will be placed on the door or the wall next to the door at eye level.
 - c. Once an entire floor has been searched an "X" will be placed on doors leading from stairways to the floor, and on the wall opposite elevators.
 - d. If chalk won't write on the surface, announce the search is complete to Command by specific area.
14. When sheltering-in-place, notify Command of the apartment number and the number of people sheltered-in-place. For example, (Truck 3, four (4) adults are sheltered-in-place in apartment 32 on the third floor".