
Section: 2.10 Rules of Engagement / Risk Management

Effective Date: 09/04/2007

Revision Date: 04/12/2006

Approved by: SMFD Officers 04/26/06

SCOPE

This guideline applies to all South Metro Fire Department personnel.

PURPOSE

This guideline is intended to provide parameters for decision making and action, especially at incidents to minimize the potential for the injury, duty related illness or death of a Fire Department member.

This guideline is also intended to identify “rules of engagement” for incidents that pose a safety risk to members responding.

This guideline is not intended to limit the discretion and initiative of fire officers and fire firefighters working to reduce the loss of life and property. Exceptions to this guideline, based on training, education, experience and risk/benefit analysis are permitted.

PROCEDURE

- A. Though the mission of the Fire Department involves response to emergency incidents, the preservation of the life (including those of Fire Department members) is paramount.
- B. A basic level of risk is recognized and accepted, in a measured and controlled manner, in efforts that are routinely employed to save lives and property; however
 - 1. No level of risk to responders is acceptable in situations where there is no potential to save lives or property.
 - 2. Fire department members should not make entry into an unshored collapsed structure or trench for other than immediate life safety reasons, and then only with appropriate training and equipment.
- C. A higher level of risk is acceptable only when there is a realistic potential to save known endangered lives.
 - 1. This elevated risk should be limited to operations that are specifically directed towards rescue and where there is a realistic potential to save person(s) known to be in danger.
- D. Evaluation of safety conditions should be an on-going and a part of all tactical and strategic decision making at an incident or training session simulating incident conditions.
- E. Communication of safety related information is required by ALL members:
 - 1. Members functioning in a supervisory role at the scene of an emergency should accept and act upon all safety related information as soon as practical to make the scene safer.
 - 2. The questioning of orders or directives that appear to the recipient to be unsafe is REQUIRED, PRIOR to taking such actions.
 - a. If an action appears to be unsafe it is to be questioned IMMEDIATELY.
 - b. The questioning of orders or directives should address a stated concern, therefore giving the supervisor information to assess the question.
 - c. If there is a continued lack of agreement on whether to proceed based on the safety risks:
 - i. The action should not be taken by the work group with the question; and

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- ii. The next level of supervision is to be immediately notified of the issue in question; and
 - iii. Alternate methods of accomplishing the task in question should be considered.
- d. ANY MEMBER is authorized to not follow a directive that is in violation of a safety related SOP or standard practice.

RESPONSIBILITY

A. All members are responsible for:

- 1. Their own safety as well as the safety of those working with them.
- 2. Continuously identifying unsafe actions.
- 3. Reporting unsafe actions to their immediate supervisor or nearest most accessible IMS management element.
- 4. Maintaining a knowledge of safety related SOPs and standard practices, so as to minimize the potential for the injury, duty related illness or death of themselves or those they work with.

B. Supervisory personnel are responsible for:

- 1. Conducting a risk assessment at every incident, with an associated plan to minimize those risks.
- 2. Maintaining a knowledge of safety related SOPs and standard practices, so as to minimize the potential for the injury, duty related illness or death of those that they supervise.

C. Incident Commanders are responsible for:

- 1. Evaluating the level of risk at every incident to include the following as a minimum:
 - a. The presence, survivability and potential to rescue human life.
 - b. The presence of savable property that requires minimal risk to responders.
 - c. The presence of conditions that could create a risk to responders including the presence of hazardous environments, unstable structures, chemicals, biological agents (including contagious diseases) or explosive devices.
 - d. The "mechanism of incident" or the cause of the incident and the potential that the cause of the incident itself may manifest itself in a way that will increase the risk to responders, such as unstable weather patterns, unruly patients or growing civil disturbances.
- 2. Re-evaluating incident conditions as often as necessary, but not less than every ten minutes.
- 3. Assigning a Safety Officer and Assistant Safety Officer(s) as necessary in conformance with Department SOPs.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A. Risk Assessment for Firefighting should include the following as a minimum:

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1. Building/Container Characteristics
 - a. Construction type and size
 - b. Structural condition
 - c. Occupancy and/or contents

2. Fire Factors
 - a. Location and extent of fire
 - b. Estimated time of involvement
 - c. Smoke conditions
 - Volume
 - Velocity
 - Color
 - Density

3. Risk to Occupants
 - a. Known or probable occupants
 - b. Occupant survival profile

4. Firefighting Capabilities
 - a. Available resources
 - b. Operational capabilities and limitations

B. Risk Assessment for Emergency Medical operations should include but not be limited to:

1. Survey the scene for:
 - a. Traffic hazards
 - b. Structural hazards
 - c. Environmental hazards
 - d. Visible signs of violence or potential violence, especially situations that could escalate to involve responders.
2. Survey the patient for:
 - a. Weapons or other items that could injure responders

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- b. Obvious signs of blood borne pathogens
 - c. Hazardous behaviors such as spitting and biting or other violent actions
 - 3. Evaluate information acquired for:
 - a. Unseen hazards to responders
 - b. Potential situations that could pose a risk to responders
- C. Risk Assessment for Hazardous Material operations should include but not be limited to:
 - 1. Identification of chemicals or materials involved
 - 2. Potential that chemicals or materials involved may increase the risk to responders if they escape their current container or react to the surrounding environment
- D. Risk Assessment for Technical Rescue operations should include but not be limited to:
 - 1. Evaluation of training and equipment of the members on scene to affect rescue
 - 2. Evaluation of the availability of "non-entry" rescue options
 - 3. Evaluation of time invested in rescue operations and the viability of rescue vs. the need to shift to recovery operations