

Occupational Safety and Health, SOG 248
OPERATING AT EMERGENCY INCIDENTS

1. Scope. This standard applies to members operating at an emergency incident. It was promulgated to:
 - A. Prevent accidents, injuries, and deaths that might result from an unsafe act while members are operating at an emergency incident.
 - B. Define the minimum personnel requirements for the safe conduct of emergency scene operations.
2. Guidelines.
 - A. No member shall commence or perform any firefighting or rescue function or evolution that is not within the established safety criteria of the department.
 - (1) Activities that present a significant risk to the safety of a member shall be limited to situations where there is a potential to save endangered lives.
 - (2) It is unacceptable to risk the safety of a member when there is no chance of saving lives or property.
 - (3) In situations where the risk to a member is excessive, activities shall be limited to defensive operations.
 - B. When an inexperienced member is working at an incident, direct supervision by an experienced officer or member shall be provided.
 - C. Members operating in hazardous areas at emergency incidents shall operate in teams of two or more. Team members operating in hazardous areas shall be in constant communication with each other through visual, auditory, or physical means or through the use of a safety guide rope so as to coordinate their activities. Team members shall remain in close proximity to each other to provide assistance in case of emergency.
 - D. An interior firefighting effort at a working structural fire shall not take place until a minimum of six firefighters are present.

- (1) When only four firefighters are present, two members shall work as a team in the hazardous area and two members shall remain outside the hazardous area and be available for entry into the hazardous area if assistance or rescue is required.
 - (2) A working fire is defined as a fire that requires the use of a 1 1/2 - inch or larger attack line and the use of SCBA.
- E. The standby members shall be responsible for maintaining a constant awareness of the number and identity of the members operating in the hazardous area, their location and function, and their time of entry. The standby members shall remain in radio, visual, voice, or signal line communication with the team.
- F. One standby member shall be permitted to perform other duties outside of the hazardous area, such as serving as an apparatus operator or incident commander, provided that constant communication is maintained between the standby member and members of the team in the hazardous area.
- (1) The assignment of personnel to other duties shall not be permitted if the abandonment of their assignment would jeopardize the safety and health of any firefighter working at the incident.
 - (2) The assignment of personnel to other duties shall not be permitted if their assignment inhibits their ability to assist in or perform a rescue.
 - (3) Standby members shall have full protective clothing and SCBA available to them as defined by SOG 240 - Protective Clothing and Equipment.
- G. Exception: Rescue operations may be undertaken prior to the assembly of four firefighters if there is an imminent life-threatening situation and immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury. No exception shall be permitted when there is no chance of saving lives.
- H. When a second team is assigned to or begins operating in the hazardous area, the incident commander shall designate at least one rapid intervention team ("RIT") to stand by in the event that a rescue becomes necessary.
- (1) The RIT shall consist of at least five members. The team shall have full protective clothing and SCBA available to them as defined by SOG 240 - Protective Clothing and Equipment.

- (2) During the initial stages of an incident, the RIT may NOT be used to perform other functions such as performing a rescue, if so required.
 - (3) As an incident grows in complexity, the number of RITs shall be increased proportionately and shall be dedicated solely to this responsibility.
 - I. At least one ambulance shall stand by during all working incidents and be available to treat injuries and to provide transport, if necessary.
 - J. Members operating from aerial devices shall be secured to the device by an approved safety harness.
 - K. Apparatus shall be used as a shield against oncoming traffic wherever possible.
3. Emergency Communications.
- A. RITs shall be provided with portable radios and shall monitor the fireground frequency.
 - B. The term Mayday shall be used by anyone on the scene who becomes aware of or is involved in a life-threatening situation.
 - C. The term emergency shall be used by anyone on the scene who needs to communicate an urgent message.
 - D. During Mayday or emergency traffic conditions, all other incident radio traffic shall immediately stop.
4. Responsibilities.
- A. It shall be the responsibility of each member to fully comply with the provisions of this standard.
 - B. Officers shall be responsible for keeping their crews together and for ensuring that they do not expose their crews to unnecessary risks.
 - C. The incident commander shall be responsible for ordering sufficient resources to ensure that all emergency incident functions are performed in a safe manner.