

**County of Henrico
Division of Fire**

By order of:


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Chief, Division of Fire



Title: EO-23

Rapid Intervention Team

Effective Date: January 15, 2008

Rescinds: June 1, 2003

PURPOSE: To provide guidelines for a system that will provide rapid assistance to firefighters who become trapped or lost. This policy will serve to comply with the National Fire Protection Association 1500 standard and the Virginia Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration for the interior structural fire attack.

GUIDELINES:

1. If a company arrives on the scene of a "working structural fire with IDLH" with less than four persons on the scene, the company will wait until four persons are assembled on the scene before initiating interior fire attack or entry into the IDLH atmosphere unless there is the probability of a victim rescue as outlined in Section IV - Exceptions. Two people can begin initial fire attack with two people outside the IDLH atmosphere to serve as the initial rapid intervention team. The four members assembled prior to initial fire fighting operations can include any combination of members arriving on the incident scene. One of the members outside can be assigned additional duties. The pump operator can be counted as one of the four as long as abandonment of the apparatus will not adversely affect firefighter rescue efforts. A reliable water supply adequate to contain the incident shall be established prior to utilizing the pump operator as a part of the initial rapid intervention team.
2. Until four firefighters are assembled, exterior operations shall commence immediately in accordance with standard practices for fire ground operations and can include, but not be limited to: establish water supply, deploy fire attack and exposure protection hose lines, utility control, ventilation, placement of ladders, forcible entry, exposure protection, and other exterior operations as deemed appropriate by the incident commander.
3. During the initial stages of an incident, at least one team of two will be designated as the initial rapid intervention team. One of these people may be the incident commander, firefighter/medic, or other department personnel, if necessary. The primary pump operator can be considered as part of the initial rapid intervention team as long as abandoning the apparatus does not adversely impact the safety of others or negatively affect the firefighter rescue effort.
4. During the initial phases, this team shall be identified and have the necessary equipment readily accessible to enter an IDLH atmosphere, should firefighter rescue be required.
5. As the incident progresses to the point of more than one interior team, an identified and dedicated Rapid Intervention Team shall be established and positioned immediately outside the IDLH atmosphere. If the incident is in a high or mid rise structure, large area facility, or other areas with multiple IDLH atmospheres, the incident commander shall establish the necessary number of rapid intervention teams so that firefighter rescue can be accomplished without a deployment

delay. A team should be considered for each remote access point on any large facility. The incident commander will be responsible for determining the number of teams needed based on the specifics of the incident.

6. The RIT shall be fully outfitted with protective clothing and SCBA with the air-mask in a ready to don position, a portable radio, and other required rescue equipment. Both team members will be dedicated to perform firefighter rescue and should not be assigned other duties unless a replacement team member is assigned. The team must be ready for immediate activation. A charged hose line should be dedicated to this team.
7. The RIT should: continually monitor radio traffic and the fire conditions; keep track of crews; provide means of access and egress especially laddering buildings; stage equipment as the incident progresses; and be an extra set of eyes for the IC and safety officer. These are a few steps that will prepare the team for immediate activation.
8. Two types of situations the RIT may encounter are firefighters trapped from building collapse and firefighters who become lost or disoriented. If a Rapid Intervention Team is required to enter the structure to rescue a firefighter, the emergency communications center shall be notified prior to entry. An announcement shall be made by the communications officer to all on scene and responding apparatus of the firefighter rescue in progress.

EXCEPTIONS -

1. If, upon arrival at the scene, members find an imminent life-threatening situation or probable life threatening situation where immediate action may prevent the loss of life or serious injury, such action shall be permitted with less than four persons on the scene when the probability of a rescue is made in accordance with normal size-up indicators and fireground evaluation factors. (Examples: report of persons inside, signs of persons inside, etc.).
 - a. Residential Occupancies - In the absence of a report from a responsible person on the scene that everyone is out of the residence, it is to be assumed that a life hazard exists until the primary search has been completed.
 - b. Business or Commercial (Non-Residential) Occupancies - The company officer shall evaluate the situation, considering the occupancy, time of day, day of the week, reports from persons on the scene, signs that persons may be inside the structure, etc. Entry may be considered if signs indicate a probable victim rescue.
 - c. Vacant or Abandoned Occupancies - In the absence of clear signs or a report from a responsible person on the scene that people are in the structure, it is to be assumed that no life hazard exists and interior attack shall not be initiated until the minimum four (4) persons arrive on the scene.
2. If members are going to initiate actions that would involve entering a structure because of a probable or eminent life-threatening situation where immediate action may prevent the loss of life or serious injury, and personnel are not on the scene to establish an initial rapid intervention team, the members should carefully evaluate the level of risk that they would be exposed to by taking such actions. In all cases, a minimum of two (2) people shall form the entry team.

3. If it is determined that the situation warrants immediate intervention and four people are not on the scene, the Incident Commander shall notify the Emergency Communications Center and the responding battalion chief of the intent to enter the building prior to the availability of a rapid intervention team.
4. Should immediate entry be required, the responding Battalion Chief shall acknowledge this action with the Emergency Communications Center. The Battalion Chief shall assure that all responding companies are aware of the entry of the initial team.

GUIDELINE EXCEPTION REPORTS -

1. Should this guideline be deviated from by the authority of the Incident Commander on the scene, the actions taken shall be documented on the fire incident report and forwarded through the chain of command to the fire chief. The narrative of this report shall be by the incident commander and outline the reasons, rationale, justification, and end result of the deviation from the normal accepted guideline. All information in the report shall be of enough depth so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of the actions taken.

DEFINITIONS -

Working Structure Fire - Any fire that requires the use of a 1-3/4 inch or larger fire attack hose line and that also requires the use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) for members entering the hazardous area. Terminology is also used to identify any structure fire that meets the definition of an IDLH atmosphere as identified for interior structure fire attack.

Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) Atmosphere - The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines an IDLH atmosphere for interior structure fires to be "an advanced fire that has spread inside of the building where high temperatures, heat, and dense smoke" are present.

Initial Stages of an Incident - Include the period of an incident where tasks are being undertaken by the first two arriving companies with only one team assigned or operating in the hazardous area.

Early Stages of an Incident - Includes the period of an incident following the initial stages of an incident. This period of the incident is indicated by having more than one team operating within the IDLH area.

Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) - A specifically designated rescue team with full protective clothing, portable radio, a charged hose line, and other needed rescue equipment at the scene of an emergency incident beyond the initial stage of the operation designed to provide personnel for the rescue of fire department members operating at the incident should the need arise.

Initial Rapid Intervention Team - A minimum of two firefighters present outside of the IDLH area of a working structure fire during the incidents initial stage. Equipment shall be readily available for use by this outside team should the need for rescue inside the hazard area be necessary. One of these personnel may be assigned more than one role during the initial stage, if the abandonment of that role to effect a firefighter rescue does not jeopardize other personnel operating on the fire ground.