

Polson City/Rural FIRE DEPARTMENT Operating Guidelines

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306.00 Initial Attack Firefighter Safety

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Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to establish policies and procedures for the Fire Department personnel when commencing interior fire fighting operations at structural fires where an Immediate Danger to Life and Health (IDLH) Atmosphere exists as defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Definitions:

Immediate Danger 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.

Working Structural Fire - Terminology used to identify any structure fire that meets the definition of an IDLH atmosphere.

Initial Stages of an Incident - Includes the period of an incident when tasks are being undertaken by the first arriving company with only one team assigned or operating in the IDLH atmosphere.

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 atmosphere.

Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) - A specifically designated rescue team at the scene of emergency incidents (beyond the initial stage of the operation) designed to provide personnel for the rescue of fire department members operating at emergency incidents if the need arises.

Policy:

1. At least four members shall be assembled before initiating interior fire fighting operations at working structural fires (except as noted in Section E.). At any time during an incident, the Incident Commander may request additional units/resources to maintain a safe emergency scene operation. On-scene operations shall be limited to those that can be safely performed by the personnel on the scene. The four members assembled for initial fire fighting operations can include any combination of members arriving separately at the incident. This policy is intended to complement the incident commander's use of discretionary judgment.

2. Whenever there is more than one team operating or assigned in the IDLH atmosphere, the incident shall no longer be considered in the "initial stage," and at least one RIT shall be required.
3. When a company arrives on the scene and determines that an IDLH atmosphere exists at a structure fire, the company officer shall advise the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) of a "working structure fire" as part of the situation report. ECC will notify the responding Chief or Asst Chief and dispatch other units as requested.
4. Members operating in the IDLH atmosphere area at emergency incidents shall operate in teams of two or more. Personnel are required to wear Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and shall at no time enter an IDLH atmosphere alone. Team members operating in an IDLH atmosphere shall be in communication with each other through visual, audible, physical, safety rope, or electronic means. Team members must be in close proximity to each other to provide assistance in case of emergency.
5. During the initial stages of an incident, two (2) of the required four person minimum on the scene must remain outside the IDLH atmosphere as standby persons.
6. One (1) of the standby persons must provide constant awareness and maintain communications with the members of the interior team. This member is to be equipped with the "Alpha" portable radio. The other standby person is permitted to perform other duties outside of the IDLH atmosphere, such as Apparatus Operator, Incident Commander, Medic and other positions. The duties of this standby person must not interfere with his/her ability to perform the duties of a standby person and assist in the event of an emergency.
7. The standby persons must have full protective equipment including SCBA necessary to enter a IDLH atmosphere readily accessible in the event that the team members operating in the IDLH area need rescue.
8. If a standby person(s) is required to enter the structure to rescue a team member(s), the standby person(s) must notify the ECC before entering the structure. ECC shall confirm that the responding chief officer is aware of the actions being taken.
9. Members who arrive on the scene of a "working structural fire" prior to the assembling of four persons may initiate exterior actions in preparation for an interior attack. These may include, but are not limited to, actions such as the establishment of a water supply; shutting off of utilities; placement of ladders; laying of the attack line to the entrance of the IDLH atmosphere; or exposure protection. (Except as noted in Section E.).
10. All first alarm units must verbally mark on the scene of structure fires. This verbal announcement is to inform the first arriving company(s) that additional personnel are on the scene.

Procedure:

Initial Stages of Operation

1. Non-Highrise Fires:

a. If a company arrives on the scene of a "working structural fire" with less than four persons on the scene, the company must wait until four persons are assembled on the scene before initiating interior fire operations in an IDLH atmosphere (except as noted in Section E.). Then the driver of the first unit and a member assigned by the company officer of the second unit will serve as the standby persons until the RIT Team is established.

b. When the first arriving unit is staffed with four (4) persons, the company officer will normally assign the driver and one firefighter as the standby persons until the RIT Team is established. Once the RIT Team is established in accordance with SOG 304.00 the standby person(s) will report to the Incident Commander for reassignment.

c. When an Engine arrives with a Truck or Rescue Squad and combined their total staffing is (6) persons or more, the company officers will normally assign the drivers of both units as the standby persons until the RIT Team is established. Once the RIT Team is established in accordance with SOG #304.00, the Truck or Rescue Squad driver will report to the Incident Commander for reassignment.

Highrise Fires: (Schools, Healthcare, Large Retail Stores, Courthouse)

1. When the first arriving unit arrives alone and is staffed with three (3) persons, the company officer shall utilize all assigned personnel to investigate the situation but not enter the IDLH atmosphere until another unit arrives on the scene. The second arriving suppression unit (normally the second arriving engine) will serve as standby persons until the RIT is established. Once the RIT Team is established in accordance with SOG #304.00 the standby persons will report to the Incident Commander for reassignment.

2. When the first arriving unit is staffed with four (4) persons, the company officer shall utilize all assigned personnel to investigate the situation. If the company officer determines that entry into the IDLH atmosphere is warranted before another unit arrives on the scene, two personnel must remain outside the IDLH atmosphere (floor below or in the enclosed stairwell) as the standby persons until another suppression or EMS unit arrives (normally the second arriving engine) to serve as standby persons until the RIT Team is established. Once the RIT Team is established in accordance with SOG #304.00 the standby persons will report to the Incident Commander for reassignment.

3. When an engine arrives with a Truck or Rescue Squad staffed with a total of six (6) or more persons, the company officers shall utilize all assigned personnel to investigate the situation. If the company officers decides to enter the IDLH atmosphere before another unit arrives on the scene, two personnel must remain outside the IDLH atmosphere (floor below or in the enclosed stairwell) as the standby persons until another suppression or EMS unit arrives (normally the second arriving engine) to serve as standby persons until the RIT Team is established. Once the RIT Team is established in accordance with SOG #304.00 the standby persons will report to the Incident Commander for reassignment.

Exceptions:

1. If, upon arrival at the scene, members find a 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 conducted in accordance with normal size-up indicators and fire-ground evaluation factors.

- 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 will have to 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 and etc.
- c. Vacant or Abandoned Structures - Entry into the IDLH atmosphere with less than the minimum four (4) persons on the scene is not allowed unless there are clear signs or a report from a responsible person on the scene that people are in the structure.

2. If, upon arrival at the scene, members find a situation where immediate action may prevent the loss of life or serious injury, and four members are not yet on the scene, the members should carefully evaluate the level of risk that they would be exposed to by taking such actions.

3. If the risk evaluation determines that the situation warrants immediate intervention to prevent loss of life and four persons have not yet arrived on the fire ground, the members must notify the Lake County Communications of their actions. Such action is intended to apply only to those circumstances when the member's training and experience indicate that the nature and extent of the fire call for such action to prevent the potential loss of life or serious injury.

Lake County Communications shall confirm that the responding chief officer is aware of the actions being taken by the first arriving unit.

4. If the decision is made to enter an IDLH atmosphere before four persons are assembled on the scene, the member making that decision must include a statement in the Incident Report Narrative describing the condition(s) that warranted such action.