
S.O.P. #: 400-30

SUBJECT: POST INCIDENT WALKS

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE: To educate residents about important fire and life safety issues following significant emergency incidents in the community, when interest is high. Raising awareness of fire and life safety issues prevents or reduces the number and severity of fire and non-fire related injuries and fatalities.

Section 1: When to Conduct a Post-Incident Walk

A. A walk should be conducted following these incidents:

1. Civilian fire fatalities,
2. Significant burns, injuries, or property damage, or
3. Situations where a walk may alleviate concern and confusion about an incident and the related circumstances.

B. A walk should be conducted in the community where the incident occurred within forty-eight (48) hours of the incident. This timeline will be enforced regardless of which shift is working.

Section 2: Preparation

A. The primary Battalion Chief or Division Chief on the incident initiates the walk. The BC or DC will notify the following:

1. The BCoFD Public Affairs Section, 410-887-2892; or the on-duty PIO, available through ADO.
2. Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighter's Association's Public Fire Safety Education Committee (BCVFA-PFSE). Committee members are available by pager or through ADO.
3. The Fire Marshal's Office (FMO), available at 410-887-4880 or through ADO.
4. Relevant career and volunteer fire companies.

NOTE:Initial contact with these stakeholders should be made between 0800-2100 hours.

B. The walk should be scheduled on a day and at a time when people are likely to be home.

C. The walk should be designed to reach as many people affected by the emergency as possible and should cover a two to four block radius surrounding the incident location.

D. The BC or DC should consider presenting the information provided during the walk at a community association/organization meeting or event.

Section 3: Responsibility

- A. The first due career company will coordinate overall career apparatus participation.
- B. BCVFA-PFSE Committee will contact volunteer companies to participate in the walk and provide literature, and other supplies.

NOTE: Do not install smoke alarms in rental dwelling units. Landlords are required by Baltimore County Code to provide working hardwired, electrical smoke alarms. (Contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 410-887-4880 for more information.)

- C. The Fire Marshal's Office will provide literature, handouts, and personnel as resources allow.
- D. The Fire Department PIO will coordinate media coverage, if appropriate.
- E. For post-incident walks involving calls to which the Baltimore County Police fire investigators responded, the first due career Fire Company should contact the primary fire investigator for the most current information. This information may include cause and point of origin of the fire, presence of smoke alarms in the affected occupancies, and other facts that can be legally shared and are outside of any ongoing criminal investigations. Refer to SOP 400-15 for guidance on releasing information to the media and public.

Section 4: Conducting the Walk

- A. All participating companies will meet at a pre-arranged location at least 15-20 minutes before beginning the walk and will remain in service throughout the walk. At least one member will remain with the apparatus and will be prepared to answer questions.
- B. Assign specific companies to cover specific streets or buildings. Personnel will work in pairs or, if necessary because of safety concerns or size of the audience, in larger teams.
- C. Brief all personnel on the latest accurate information. All personnel involved with the walk should have the same information and convey the same messages. Do not speculate if you are unsure about any aspects of the incident.
- D. Choose a theme for the walk. You will not have time to talk about every facet of safety with everyone. You will usually have time, however, to talk about smoke alarms and a second topic relevant to the emergency that prompted the walk; e.g., cooking safety, electrical fires, smoking-related fires, children using matches and lighters, heating and alternative heating source fires, or other injury prevention topics. The theme typically will be directly related to the incident that triggered the walk. Contact the FMO or BCVFA-PFSE office for assistance, if needed.

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- E. Explain the purpose of the visit to residents. Distribute literature and discuss smoke alarms and the theme of the walk. Ask residents if they have a working smoke alarm. If the answer is no, give them one and complete all necessary forms, including waivers. Provide assistance to residents who have alarms but ask you to check to make sure they are in working order.
- F. If time permits, gather after the walk at the initial meeting location to debrief. Solicit ideas for improving future walks.
- G. Personnel must follow up on resident inquiries to which answers could not be immediately provided. Respond to residents within 24 hours.