

S.O.P. #: TACTICAL OPERATIONS MANUAL #28

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Objective: To define clear and concise terminology, that describes the type of removal and withdrawal of firefighting personnel from an IDLH environment or emergency scene when a building or an area becomes unsafe to occupy by firefighters.

Scope: Application of these tactical guidelines provide Command with mechanisms for withdrawal of personnel from IDLH environments. At all times Command retains the authority to deviate from these tactical guidelines to address specific incident needs. Transmissions of orders to withdraw are to be initiated by the Command. The department will recognize three specific types of retreat: Tactical Withdrawal, Emergency Evacuation, and Abandon Your Position.

Section 1: Tactical Withdrawal

Definition: Tactical Withdrawal is the organized and systematic removal of firefighting personnel from an Interior/Offensive IDLH environment.

1. Command may order a Tactical Withdrawal of personnel:
 - a. From the entire building or structure, such as when changing the overall strategy of the incident from “offensive mode” to “defensive mode”.
 - b. From a localized potentially hazardous area within a building or structure, such as a room with a weakened floor.
 - c. Command may consider Tactical Withdrawal of personnel during a MAYDAY operation thus, limiting the exposure of fire crews while supporting the ongoing RIT operation. In most cases however, suppression efforts must continue to ensure the safety of the MAYDAY and ensuing RIT operations. It is imperative that all personnel recognize that a MAYDAY does not imply a Withdrawal!
 - d. Command may order a Tactical Withdrawal in other instances deemed necessary.

Command Procedures

- A. Command shall recognize the need to implement a Tactical Withdrawal to ensure the safety of firefighting personnel operating on/at the incident scene.
- B. Notification of a Tactical Withdrawal will be made as follows:
 1. Command will alert all companies on the scene and announce the impending course of action over the fireground talkgroup(s).

Example: “Command to all units, I am ordering a Tactical Withdrawal from Division 3. All units operating on Division 3 are to withdraw immediately.”

Example: “Command to all units. I am ordering a Tactical Withdrawal of the Bravo/Charlie corner of Division 3 to the Alpha/Delta corner. All units operating on Division 3 relocate to the Alpha/Delta corner immediately.”
 2. Command will organize the Tactical Withdrawal taking into consideration removal of companies from areas of highest danger to areas of lesser danger.
 3. If the situation warrants, Command may have Fire Dispatch initiate the alert tone and repeat the notification. Command shall notify Dispatch of the conclusion of the Tactical Withdrawal, and all firefighting personnel have been accounted for.

Dispatch Procedures

- A. When/if directed by Command, Fire Dispatch will
 1. Initiate the “Alert 3 Informational” tone.
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2. Notify the appropriate personnel of the required action and monitor the talkgroup for further instructions and/or other safety issues, i.e., MAYDAY during the Tactical Withdrawal.

Operational Procedures

- A. Division, Group and Company Officers will direct their crews as ordered to efficiently facilitate the order.
 1. Crews shall withdraw from the area/building as directed in a swift but orderly manner, typically from the top floor down and taking with them all tools and equipment (as conditions warrant).
 2. Crews operating hose lines shall make every attempt to protect the means of egress for firefighters operating on or above the fire floor until they are safely withdrawn.
 3. Crews operating remote from a hose line (Truck and Squad crews) shall withdraw immediately after the Tactical Withdrawal is ordered.
- B. Once a Tactical Withdrawal has been carried out, Company Officers will conduct an immediate PAR of their personnel.
 1. The only notification necessary to Command from Division, Group and/or Company Officers will be if they are missing personnel.

Section 2: Emergency Evacuation

Definition: An Emergency Evacuation is the immediate and rapid evacuation of firefighting personnel from an Interior/Offensive IDLH environment.

1. Command may order an Emergency Evacuation of personnel from a building when personnel are in imminent danger of injury or death because of, but not limited to, an impending structural collapse, increased fire behavior (i.e., back draft or flashover condition), other hazardous situations (i.e., major gas leak, etc.) requiring the immediate evacuation of firefighting personnel.

Command Procedures

- A. Command shall recognize the need to remove all firefighting personnel from the structure to ensure their safety from the impending situation. Command will alert all companies on the scene and announce the evacuation.

Example: "Command to all units, I am ordering an Emergency Evacuation of the building. All units evacuate the building immediately."
- B. Apparatus operators will sound their air horns for a period of 30 seconds.
- C. Command will direct the Emergency Evacuation.
- D. Command shall notify Dispatch of the conclusion of the Emergency Evacuation event, and all firefighting personnel have been accounted for.

Dispatch Procedures

- A. When directed by Command Fire Dispatch will:
 1. Initiate the "Alert 2 Warble" tone.
 2. Notify all personnel of the required action.
 3. Monitor the talkgroup for further instructions and/or other safety issues, i.e., MAYDAY during the Emergency Evacuation.

Example: "Attention all units operating on Fire Box 6-2, Command has ordered an Emergency Evacuation."

Operational Procedures

- A. Division, Group and Company Officers will direct their crews as ordered to efficiently facilitate the order.
 1. Crews shall immediately evacuate from the building as directed in a swift but orderly manner, leaving hose lines and equipment in order to exit the IDLH rapidly. Crew integrity shall be maintained and other firefighters encountered while evacuating will be advised of the Emergency Evacuation.
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The only exception to this order will be those crews that may be directed by Command to temporarily hold their position to protect crews during their Emergency Evacuation!

- B. Once an Emergency Evacuation has been carried out, Company Officers will conduct an immediate PAR of their personnel.
1. The only notification necessary to Command from Division, Group and/or Company Officers will be if they are missing personnel.

Section 3: Abandon Your Position

Definition: An immediate retreat in a direction away from an incident to a safe distance or, a position of cover, leaving all apparatus and equipment behind. This is primarily designated for defensive operations.

1. Command may order this upon discovery of, or the incident develops into an uncontrollable situation that may result in catastrophic consequences to personnel due to, but not limited to, discovery of an explosive device, a possible impending BLEVE, or an uncontrollable chemical chain reaction.

Command Procedures

- A. Command shall recognize the need to remove/relocate all firefighting personnel from the exterior of the structure to ensure their safety from the impending situation.
- B. Notification to abandon your position will be made as follows:
1. Command will alert all companies on the scene and announce the impending course of action over the fireground talkgroup(s).
Example: "Command to all units. Abandon your position immediately. All personnel are to move away from the incident immediately."
- C. Command shall organize and direct the removal of firefighting personnel from the area of danger.
- D. Upon reaching a safe position, Command will advise dispatch of the revised Command Post.
- E. Command shall notify Dispatch when all companies have been relocated to a safe area and all firefighting personnel have been accounted for.

Dispatch Procedures

- A. When directed by Command Fire Dispatch will:
1. Initiate the "Alert 2 tone and Warble" tone.
 2. Notify all personnel of the required action.
 3. Monitor the talkgroup for further instructions and/or other safety issues, i.e., MAYDAY during the Abandonment of Position.
Example: "Attention all units on Hazmat Box 57-1, Command has ordered Abandon Your Position."

Operational Procedures

- A. Division, Group and Company Officers will direct their crews as ordered to efficiently facilitate the order.
- B. Crews shall retreat from the area/building as directed in a swift but orderly manner.
- C. Emergency personnel operating at the scene will immediately abandon their positions, leaving apparatus, hose lines and equipment. Although every effort shall be made to stay together, crew integrity cannot be guaranteed under these circumstances.
- D. Once the abandon your position order has been carried out, Company Officers will conduct an immediate PAR of their personnel.
1. The only notification necessary to Command from Division, Group and/or Company Officers will be if they are

missing personnel.

Operational Considerations

- A. When Command orders a Tactical Withdrawal, Emergency Evacuation, or Abandon Your Position, you should consider the following:
1. Review, evaluate and revise the Incident Action Plan.
 2. Implementation of Level II Accountability.
 3. Expand the Incident Command Organization as needed to assist with increased level of accountability and supervision.
 4. Requesting Fire Dispatch to institute a “Command Restricted Talk Group”.