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S.O.P. #: TACTICAL OPERATIONS MANUAL # 34  
SUBJECT: APARTMENT OPERATIONS  
DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

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## Apartment Fire Operations

**Objective:** To provide a standardized and consistent approach to structural firefighting strategies and tactics in apartments and to identify specific hazards and tactical considerations. To establish a universal method by which we recognize and refer to the different types of occupancies and construction; recognizing that how a building is configured has a tremendous impact on firefighter safety and tactics.

**Scope:** Application of these guidelines facilitates the following objectives:

- The appropriate placement of apparatus
- The rapid and efficient deployment of crews
- The implementation of the correct mode of attack
- The identification and control of flow paths
- A coordinated ventilation and fire attack

Officers who deviate from these guidelines to address specific incident needs when conditions or situations warrant must immediately notify the incident commander of their actions. The following priorities will guide decision making during the incident:

- Life Safety
- Incident Stabilization
- Property Conservation

When operating at structure fires, the following tactical goals apply:

### **S.L.I.C.E.R.S**

- Sequential Actions: To take place in order
- Size up
- Locate the Fire
- Identify and Control Flow Path
- Cool the Space from the Safest Location
- Extinguish the Fire

Actions of Opportunity: May occur at any time

- Rescue
- Salvage

Although these strategies are prioritized, they do not dictate which tactics should be used to accomplish those strategies. For example, while Rescue is always the primary strategy, extinguishment tactics may be the means by which rescue is accomplished and the most appropriate tactic often satisfies or facilitates multiple strategies.

An Incident Commander must assign resources only to the highest, uncompleted objectives until sufficient resources arrive to meet those strategies and move down to lower priority strategies. If there are too few resources to confine a well-involved vacant building that threatens exposures, the initial companies cannot be assigned confinement tactics until sufficient resources are directed toward exposure protection. Directing insufficient numbers of resources to accomplish multiple strategies assures that none of the strategies will be met.

### Section I: Definition

- A. **Garden Apartment:** This is a generic used term for apartment buildings. These are typically 2 to 4 story units with 2 to 4 apartments on each floor. The primary door to each unit opens up into a common stairway. Garden Apartments vary in their construction methods depending on the year it was built. They can range from Type III construction being built in the 40's and 50's to Type V construction currently being built.
- B. **Center Hallway Apartment:** Center hallway type structures, hotels, apartment houses, and condominiums are characterized by a hallway in the middle of the building with units on either side. The enclosed hallway accesses these units. Center Hallway Apartments vary in their construction methods depending on the year it was built. They can range from Type I construction being built in the 60's to Type V construction currently being built.
- C. **Divisions:** A Division is the organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area above grade.
- D. **Subdivisions:** A Subdivision is the organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area below grade. Subdivisions shall be referred to as subdivision 1 and so on for each floor below grade. **Language Change: The terms Terrace and Mezzanine are inappropriate terminology when referring to subdivisions. See Appendix A**

### Section II: Tactical Considerations

- Life Safety
- Check attic and cockloft areas early
- Reflex time: The span between unit arrival and mounting an effective attack
- Request additional resources early
- Open up concealed spaces/Pipe chases
- Long hose stretches: Depending on the length of the hose stretch, seriously consider teaming up two engine companies to stretch and place the initial hoseline. Consider 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Engine companies working together to get 1<sup>st</sup> line in service
- FDC connection and high-rise pack
- Identify additional means of getting hose stretches to upper floors. No more than two lines should enter through the same opening
- Stairway construction (open vs closed)
- Common areas: Storage and laundry areas
- Apparatus placement ensure placement of first engine and truck is suitable to meet the needs of the incident.
- Self-closing doors or ensure units doors are **closed** to prevent fire spread. All crews' medic and suppression companies shall be inspecting properly working door closures and reporting and deficiencies.
- Identify the locations of fire walls or fire separations
- Interconnections of buildings can create a major fire spread from building to building
- Combustible siding may aid in fire spread
- Pull fire alarm to alert residents
- Consider that exiting civilians can hinder operations and that sheltering in place may be a better option.
- Ventilation coordination between command, interior crews and vent group
- Salvage/property conservation

### Section III: Hazards

- **Life safety:** Large number of occupants and the rapid way in which fire may spread. Limited egress from apartments they normally only have one stairway leading to the outside
- **Fire Spread:** Rapid fire spread can be through hidden pipe chases, vent shafts or spread through open attic or cockloft spaces. Rapid fire spread can jump floor to floor through auto exposure from the exterior. Fire spread can also occur through walkways from building to building and stairways
- **Collapse:** The construction methods used in building apartment buildings is such that collapse is possible and imminent.
- **Balconies:** Exterior balconies can be constructed of wood or concrete. Railing system is normally weak due to lack of maintenance and weather. Balconies can either be recessed or cantilevered. Instability and collapse should always be considered.
- **Pitched roofs over flat roofs:** Older apartment buildings built with flat roofs may have pitched roofs added over them. This presents a challenge for ventilation of the structure.

- **Building terrain:** Terrain concerns focus around buildings that are set back from the street or accessible area and those surrounded by sloped topography. This becomes an issue when using ground ladders. Consider varying terrain and its relationship with divisions.
- **Common Areas:** These areas can carry a heavy fire load and threatens all residents. Common areas are Laundry rooms, Storage areas and parking areas
- **Parking garages:** The probability of having an automobile fire inside an adjoining an occupied structure, as well as having structural compartmentalization issues in a residential building. (i.e. block walls separating occupancies)
- **Glass wall stairway enclosures:** Breaking of the glass should be your last option to ventilate stairway. The panes of glass maybe tempered or plate glass. If glass must be broken firefighter safety must be a priority. Shards of glass can rain down on firefighters and civilians causing injury. This glass can also damage fire hoses.

#### **Section IV Size up**

Size-up is the process of gathering information that will assist firefighters and fire officers in making efficient, effective, and safe decisions on the fireground.

- Brief initial report
- A size up includes a 360-degree view of the building
- Identify building construction type
- Identify inside or end of group apartment
- Identify conditions (working fire, smoke showing, nothing evident)
- Action taken
- Identify strategy
- Assume Command
- Request additional resources
- Identify rescue needs or shelter in place
- Identify below grade units
- Utilize updated pre-incident fire surveys

#### **Section V: Operations**

##### **1<sup>st</sup> Engine**

- Water Supply: Advise water source. Consider heavy water or dual lines under water supply
- Command: Follow size up process Section IV
- Initial attack line: The officer shall order the stretch of the appropriate hand line or master stream
- Life safety/Rescue: Identify the need of immediate rescue or shelter in place
- FDC connection: Utilize high-rise pack

##### **2<sup>nd</sup> Engine**

- Complete water supply 1<sup>st</sup> Engine
- Officer assigned to division officer shall continually evaluate the conditions of the Division and keep the Incident Commander informed
- CAN report
- Establish back up line once initial attack line is properly stretched and in service. Back up line should be equal or greater than the initial attack line. Consider a 2 ½" attack line a backup
- Protection of stairway

##### **3<sup>rd</sup> Engine**

- Secondary water supply
- Reports to side "Charlie"
- Identify, report and prevent auto exposure
- Establish attack line above the fire floor
- Consider 2 ½" attack line
- Check conditions of attic or cockloft. Identify any firewalls
- Officer shall report to command conditions on the upper floors above the fire this includes attic area

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Engine**

- RIT: Rapid Intervention Team(s) will not be reassigned to any other non-critical function until relieved by adequate replacements. The IC will have a RIT team established within the first alarm, which will relieve the initial “2 out” requirements, of the “2in/2out” policy. The RIT crew requires a minimum of 4 entry personnel.
- Active RIT includes additional laddering, lighting and fully clearing vented openings (refer to TAC 18)
- RIT Officer will develop a RIT Action Plan
- RIT Officer will monitor interior crew location
- RIT team will monitor all radio communications
- RIT Officer will ensure proper tools needed in staging
- Will deploy at the direction of the Incident Commander

#### **5th Engine**

- **Command Engine (refer to Tac 7)**
- Assists the Commander with Command functions such as:
  - A2 SCBA Monitoring
  - Command Charts and radio monitoring
  - Safety Officer
  - Accountability
  - Other Command duties as needed

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Truck**

- Ventilation in coordination with fire attack and command
- Force entry and controlling interior doors
- Search
- Ladder placement: Both aerial and ground ladders
- Provide support to Engine company
- OV Side Charlie report conditions to command

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Truck**

- Search above fire floor
- Check for hidden fires
- Control utilities
- Ladder exterior
- Exposures
- Assist in roof operations

**Squad:** A squad’s primary responsibility is to perform truck company operations. The role they play will depend on the order of arrival of both the squad and the truck.

- If the Squad arrives prior to 1st truck, they will function as the 1st arriving truck
- If the Squad arrives after 1st truck, they will function as the 2nd arriving truck
- If the Squad arrives after 1st and 2nd truck, they will report to command for an assignment
- The 1st truck to arrive will normally assume 1st arriving truck duties from the squad, which the IC may then reassign or continue to work with the truck
- The squad will function as a truck in accordance with the prescribed procedures in this tactical manual to the extent they are limited by their apparatus and equipment

**Appendix A:**

