



Rogers Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide policy to incident commanders in fireground search and rescue.

POLICY

It is standard operating procedure to complete a primary search in all involved and exposed occupancies which can be entered. According to standard fireground operations and basic firefighting tactics, the performance of a primary search is paramount. Primary search is defined as the quick and systematic search of a building through all affected areas and verifying the removal and/or safety of all occupants. Time is the critical factor in the primary search process. Successful primary search operations must necessarily be extended quickly during initial fire stages.

The rescue functions that follow lengthy fire control activities will be regarded tactically as a secondary search. Secondary search means a thorough search the interior of the fire area after initial fire control and ventilation activities have been completed. Secondary search should preferably be completed by different companies than those involved in primary search activities. Thoroughness, rather than time, is the critical factor in secondary search.

The completion of the primary search is reported utilizing the standard radio reporting term 'ALL CLEAR'. It is the responsibility of the IC to coordinate primary search assignments, secure completion reports from the Search and Rescue Group or appropriate Division and to transmit the 'ALL CLEAR' report to the Incident Commander. Dispatch will record the time of this report from Command.

The stage of the fire becomes a critical factor that affects the rescue approach developed by command. The following items outline the basic approach to fire stages:

- In nothing-showing situations or in very minor fire cases that clearly poses no life hazard, the Fire Attack Group or Investigation Group must conduct a primary search while attempting to locate the fire or hazard inside the building.
- In smoke-showing and flame-showing situations, fire control efforts must be extended simultaneously with rescue operations in order to gain entry and control interior access to complete primary search. Oftentimes, when limited resources are initially available, the most effective means to affect rescue will be fire containment and control. Exceptions to this operating assumption would be suspected viable victims in defined locations.

Command and operating companies cannot depend upon reports from spectators to determine status of victims. Crews should utilize reports as to the location, number, and condition of victims as supporting primary search efforts and must extend and complete a primary search wherever entry is possible.

Command must consider the following factors in developing a basic rescue size-up:

1. Number, location and condition of victims
2. Effect fire has on victims
3. Capability of companies to enter building, remove/protect victims and control fire

Command must make the basic rescue decision:

Do we remove victims from the fire?

OR

Do we remove the fire from the victims?

In some cases, occupants are safer in their rooms than moving through contaminated hallways and interior areas. Such movement may also impede interior firefighting. Command must realistically evaluate the manpower required to actually remove victims and then treat their fire-affected bodies. In cases involving such multiple victims, Command must call for the timely response of adequate resource and quickly develop an organization that will both stabilize the fire and provide for the removal and treatment of the occupants.

Rescue efforts should be extended in the following order:

1. most severely threatened
2. the largest number (groups)
3. the remainder of the fire area
4. the exposed areas

Command must make specific primary search assignments to companies to cover specific areas of large, complex occupancies and maintain on-going control of such companies until the entire area is searched. When primary search

companies encounter and remove victims, Command must assign other companies to continue to cover the interior positions vacated by those companies.

All initial attack efforts must be directed toward supporting rescue efforts and hose lines must be placed in a manner to control interior access, confine the fire, and protect avenues of escape. Hose line placement becomes a critical factor in these cases and Command must realize that the operation is in a rescue mode. It may be necessary to operate in a manner that writes off the structure in order to buy rescue time. Normal means of interior access (stairs, hall, interior public areas, etc.) should be utilized to remove victims whenever possible. Secondary means of rescue (platforms, ladders, fire escapes, etc.) must be utilized in their order of effectiveness.

Vent – Enter – Isolate – Search Technique

In instances where traditional means of egress are blocked, search and rescue crews may use the *Vent-Enter-Isolate-Search (VEIS)* Technique. This can provide an alternate means to remove victims from an IDLH atmosphere. Companies using this technique would need to have information regarding the location of a potential victim and evaluate the quickest route to gain access (assuming that conventional access is not viable). Because VEIS is significantly different from normal search and rescue techniques, using it requires notification to the incident commander. In addition, companies should transmit the side and floor that VEIS will be utilized.

Example:

Search and Rescue Group: “Search and Rescue Group to 9th Street Command”

9th Street Command: “Go Ahead”

Search and Rescue Group: “We are going to VEIS the Bravo Side, second floor”

9th Street Command: “Copy, Search and Rescue doing VEIS on the Bravo Side, second floor”

Search and Rescue Group: “That is affirmative”

Once the VEIS technique is complete, the incident commander should be notified.

In addition to the information above, the following tactical considerations should be remembered when using VEIS:

- VES uses exterior windows, so crews should be extremely careful to not enter pre-flashover environments
- Because access is more difficult through a window, multiple companies may have to provide assistance during the VEIS event

- VEIS is slower than traditional searches and conducted during high-risk situations on a limited portion of an occupancy
- Opening windows for VEIS will change fire behavior and crews should be cognizant of the rapidly changing fire environment
- VEIS should only be used in areas that are believed to have victims and are under immediate threat

The most important tactical consideration during the implementation of VEIS is controlled the door to the room and isolating the atmosphere being search from the flowpath of the fire. Failing to isolate the room can cause smoke, products of combustion, and heat to rapidly accumulate in the atmosphere thereby endangering occupants and firefighters.