

Salt River Fire Department Operating Guidelines

Overhaul

April 2000

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This procedure describes guidelines for conducting overhaul operations. The main objective of overhaul operations is to seek out and extinguish all remaining fire and control loss, stabilize the incident scene by providing for firefighter safety and to secure the structure. Rekindles must always be eliminated. Additional objectives should include:

- Preserve evidence
- Secure the fire scene

When addressing overhaul operations, Command should:

- Insure overhaul is conducted safely
- Insure all fire is extinguished.
- During rehab of fire crews, insure at least two firefighters are in the fire area to detect any possible hidden fire and re-ignition.
- Use early and continuing positive pressure ventilation to maintain an acceptable working environment and reduce loss.
- Meet with the property owner or occupant concerning overhaul operations.
- Schedule post-incident drive-by / walk-through of fire building by fire companies to check for potential re-ignition sources.
- Closely coordinate overhaul with fire investigators.

Customer Relations

In the absence of an occupant services sector, Command or the company officer should meet with the property owner or occupant to explain the reasons for overhaul operations. In some cases, when safe to do so, allowing the property owner or occupant to be escorted through the fire area can help them understand the need for overhaul operations. Proper loss control operations should, of course, be completed prior to any walk-through.

Allowing the property owner or occupant the opportunity to remove personal possessions/valuables, or boxing and removing these items for them is excellent customer service and loss control opportunity.

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Every effort should also be made to assist the property owner or occupant in notifying insurance agents, etc., and answering any questions. In all cases the property owner/occupant should be provided the Fire Department publication "After the Fire" to assist them in the recovery.

Hidden Fires

Fire suppression operations often overlook small pockets of fire concealed in construction voids or hidden under debris. Overhaul activities must thoroughly search the fire scene to detect and extinguish these hidden fires or "hot spots" before they rekindle.

Floor, wall or ceiling areas showing evidence of extensive decomposition due to fire should be thoroughly examined during overhaul. Additional areas to check include wooden door jambs, air conditioning vents and registers, baseboards, door and window casings, and around light fixtures and electrical outlets. Axes, pike poles, and halligan tools are most commonly used for this purpose. Attic fires pose a special hazard for rekindle where insulation has been exposed to fire.

Large areas can receive fire damage and can be located in difficult to reach areas. In some cases, all insulation must be removed to extinguish all remnants of fire.

Plenum spaces, soffits and pipe chases should receive careful inspection as they provide possible routes for fire to spread throughout a structure. Failing to overhaul these areas invites fire extension to uninvolved building areas.

Command will be responsible for insuring that the fire area has been thoroughly overhauled and no hidden fire remains. The company officer last leaving the scene will be responsible for insuring total fire extinguishment. Command will be further responsible for scheduling post-incident drive-by/walk through inspections of the fire building to eliminate any rekindles. At least one post- incident inspection will be scheduled, and Command will determine the need for additional inspections.

Post-incident inspections include a walk through of the building or areas that are safe to enter.

Crews should search for any evidence of smoke or remaining hot spots. An examination of contents below salvage covers should be conducted. In some cases, additional openings in the structure may be required.

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The placement of a portable wireless fire detection system can provide continuous monitoring of post fire conditions and an early warning of any hidden hot spots.

Evidence Preservation

Companies performing overhaul should continuously weigh the importance of preserving evidence with the desire to immediately remove debris and completely extinguish all traces of fire. In some cases, it may be necessary to monitor spot fires until investigators arrive on the scene. Where possible, evidence should remain untouched, undisturbed and in its original location. Where circumstances prohibit this, evidence should be removed under the direction of a fire investigator.

Securing the Fire Scene

Securing the fire scene is also a function of overhaul. Securing refers to actions required to protect the structure and contents from any further loss after fire suppression companies have departed from the scene.

Roof ventilation holes and broken windows should be covered to reduce weather damage and deter vandalism. The rolled plastic is ideal for this use. For safety reasons, remaining glass shards should be removed from the frames of broken windows prior to installing covers and always prior to leaving the scene. If necessary doors and windows may need to be boarded up to prevent unauthorized entry or vandalism.

Securing the scene also includes the actions required to insure the safety of all persons likely to visit the incident scene. Once a hazard zone is established during firefighting operations, it must not be abandoned prior to removing or stabilizing the hazard. Overhaul companies must provide a means of identifying and guarding hazards that cannot be removed or stabilized. Barricades, hazard tape, and the posting of guards are all suitable methods depending upon the severity of hazard.