

	UNION CENTER FIRE COMPANY INC. Best Operating Guidelines	
	Subject: Rules of Engagement	BOG Series Operations
		Initiated 1/2009
Approved: Fire Chief Chris Hoyt	Revised 03/02/13	

PURPOSE

To develop a comprehensive set of department wide standards for safe fire suppression operations at structure fires.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Best operating guide is to provide parameters for risk assessment, decision making and action to minimize the potential for the injury, duty related illness or death of fire department personnel.

ACCEPTABILITY OF RISK

All firefighting and rescue operations involve inherent risks to firefighters. A basic level of risk is recognized and accepted, in a measured and controlled manner, in efforts that are routinely employed to save lives and property. A higher level of risk is acceptable only in situations where there is a realistic potential to save endangered lives. This elevated risk must be limited to operations that are specifically directed toward rescue and where there is a realistic potential to save the person(s) in danger. These expanded risks are not acceptable in situations where there is no potential to save lives or property.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR STRUCTURAL FIRE FIGHTING

In recognition of the risks involved in structural firefighting operations, all feasible measures shall be taken to limit or avoid these risks through risk assessment, constant vigilance, and the conscientious application of safety policies and procedures.

The exposure of firefighters to an elevated level of risk is acceptable only in situations where there is a realistic potential to save endangered lives. **No risk to the safety of firefighters is acceptable in situations where there is no possibility to save lives or property.** Firefighters shall not be committed to interior offensive firefighting operations in abandoned or derelict buildings that are known or reasonably believed to be unoccupied. **No building or property is worth the life of a firefighter.**

It is the responsibility of the incident commander to evaluate the level of risk in every situation. This risk evaluation shall include an assessment of the presence, survivability and potential to rescue occupants. When there is no potential to save lives, firefighters shall not be committed to interior suppression operations that present an elevated level of risk.

An incident command system shall be established, beginning with the arrival of the first fire department member at the scene of every incident. The incident commander must conduct an **initial risk analysis** to consider the risk to firefighters in order to determine the strategy and tactics that will be employed.

RESPONSIBILITY

All personnel are responsible for:

- Their own safety as well as the safety of those working with them.
- Continuously identifying unsafe actions.
- Reporting unsafe actions and conditions to their immediate supervisor or nearest most accessible NIMS management element.
- Maintaining a knowledge of safety related BOG's and standard practices, so as to minimize the potential for the injury, duty related illness or death of themselves or those they work with.

Supervisory personnel are responsible for:

- Conducting a risk assessment at every incident, with an associated plan to minimize those risks.
- Maintaining a knowledge of safety related BOG's and standard practices, so as to minimize the potential for the injury, duty related illness or death of those that they supervise.

Incident commanders are responsible for:

Evaluating the level of risk at every incident to include the following at a minimum:

- The presence, survivability and potential to rescue human life.
- The presence of savable property that requires minimal risk to responders.
- The presence of conditions that could create a risk to responders, including the presence of hazardous environments, unstable structures, chemicals, biological or explosive agents or devices.

The responsibility for risk assessment is a continuous process for the duration of each incident. The incident commander shall continually reevaluate conditions to determine if the level of risk has changed and a change in strategy or tactics is necessary. The incident commander shall assign one or more safety officers to monitor and evaluate conditions to support this risk analysis.

PROCEDURES

At a minimum the risk analysis for a structure fire shall consider:

Building Characteristics

- Construction type and size
- Structural condition
- Occupancy and contents

Fire Factors

- Location and extent of the fire
- Estimated time of involvement
- Smoke Volume, Velocity, Color & Density

Risk to Building Occupants

- Known or probable occupants
- Occupant survival assessment

Fire Fighting Capabilities

- Available resources
- Operational capabilities and limitations

10 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTING

Acceptability of Risk

1. **No building or property is worth the life of a firefighter.**
2. **All interior firefighting involves an inherent risk.**
3. **Some risk is acceptable, in a measured and controlled manner.**
4. **No level of risk is acceptable where there is no potential to save lives or savable property.**
5. **Firefighters shall not be committed to interior offensive firefighting operations in abandoned or derelict buildings.**

Risk Assessment

1. **All feasible measures shall be taken to limit or avoid risks through risk assessments by a qualified officer.**
2. **It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to evaluate the level of risk in every situation.**
3. **Risk assessment is a continuous process for the entire duration of the each incident.**
4. **If conditions change, and risk increases, change strategy and tactics.**
5. **No building or property is worth the life of a firefighter.**

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Firefighter Injury / Life Safety Risk	High Probability of Success	Marginal Probability of Success	Low Probability of Success
Low Risk	Initiate offensive operations. Continue to monitor risk factors.	Initiate offensive operations. Continue to monitor risk factors.	Initiate offensive operations. Continue to monitor risk factors.
Medium Risk	Initiate offensive operations. Continue to monitor risk factors. Employ all available risk control options.	Initiate offensive operations. Continue to monitor risk factors. Be prepared to go defensive if risk increases.	DO NOT INITIATE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS. Reduce risk to firefighters and actively pursue risk control options.
High Risk	Initiate offensive operations only with confirmation of realistic potential to save endangered lives.	Do not initiate operations that will put firefighters at risk for injury or fatality.	INITIATE DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS ONLY.

VICTIM SURVIVABILITY PROFILE

When considering the survival profile of any victims, members must consider the conditions present in the “compartment” or area of fire conditions or other conditions affecting survival. These elements include toxic smoke and gases, rising heat in a structure due to the stack effect, as well as time or duration of exposure. Compartmentalization greatly increases a victim’s chance of survival due to sheltering the victim from the harmful effects of fire and smoke.

A fire in the rear bedroom of a house with smoke throughout the home may allow a survivable environment if a search and rescue operation is initiated quickly. We may extend risk, in a calculated manner, with these conditions.

A significant fire in a residential occupancy with dense smoke under pressure to floor level throughout the building likely means victims could not survive. A very cautious, calculated rescue and fire suppression operation would be warranted. A well involved building would likely represent a zero survivability profile for any victims. Similar conditions in an abandoned building would indicate little survivability and little property to be saved and personnel should avoid the offensive fire fight.

The threat assessment of determining whether victims may or may not be present is one element where a Company Officer or Incident Commander must give great thought and exercise extreme caution when deploying manpower for a primary search. Survivability profiles and gathering intelligence from family members, neighbors and/or co-workers are required components of determining whether to proceed with an offensive fire attack and searches or to deploy forces in a defensive posture.

The Incident Commanders Rules of Engagement for Structural Firefighting

Immediately Conduct, or Obtain, a 360-Degree Size-up of the Fireground

Objective: To cause the incident commander to obtain an early 360-degree survey and risk assessment of the fireground in order to determine the safest approach to tactical operations as part of action-plan development and before firefighters are placed at substantial risk.

Safe firefighting operations can't be developed until conditions and risks on all sides of the incident are evaluated.

Determine Victim Survival Profile

Objective: To cause the incident commander to consider fire conditions and determine if any victims can survive before committing firefighters to high-risk rescue operations as part of action-plan development.

No action plan can be accurately developed until we first determine if the victim can survive the fire conditions before rescuers reach them.

Conduct a Risk Assessment and Develop a Safe Action Plan

Objective: To cause the incident commander to develop a safe action plan by conducting a thorough size-up, assess the victim survival profile and complete a risk assessment before firefighters are placed in high-risk positions on the fireground.

The victim survival assessment and 360-degree size-up and risk assessment will provide the basic information to develop a safe initial-action plan.

If You Don't Have the Resources to Protect Firefighters, Consider Defensive Operations

Objective: To limit firefighter commitment to only tactical objectives that can be achieved safely when faced with inadequate resources on scene.

If faced with inadequate resources, restrict risk and consider a defensive strategy.

Don't Risk Firefighter Lives for What Is Already Lost—Consider Defensive Operations

Objective: To prevent the commitment of firefighters to risky operations when it is determined all is lost.

If conditions indicate there is no victim survival, or the building is already lost to fire, don't place firefighters at substantial risk.

Extend Limited Risk to Protect Savable Property

Objective: To cause firefighters to limit risk exposure when trying to save a building.

If the building can be saved, limit risk to careful operations.

Extended Only Calculated Risk to Protect Savable Lives

Objective: To cause the incident commander to manage high-risk search and rescue and supporting firefighting operations in a calculated, controlled and cautious manner to ensure safe operations during high-risk rescue operations.

Search and rescue must be fully supported with adequate back-up firefighting resources and a RIT and must be closely monitored for changing risk.

Firefighters Are Authorized to Say No to Unsafe Practices and Conditions: Stop, Talk, Decide

Objective: To prevent firefighters and supervisors from engaging in unsafe practices or exposure to unsafe conditions by allowing any member to raise an alert about a safety issue without penalty and mandating the incident commander and all officers/supervisors to promptly address the question to ensure safe operations.

This is not endorsing insubordination. Supervisors are responsible for accepting reports and properly acting to ensure the safety of firefighters. This means stop for a moment to assess the situation, quickly talk and report, and then decide the correct and safe response to the situation.

Conduct a Continuous Risk Assessment—Revise the Action Plan

Objective: To cause the incident commander and all command organization officers/supervisors to continually assess fire conditions and any risk to firefighters and to regularly revise the action plan.

The incident commander must continually obtain frequent progress reports and evaluate tactical operations in order to keep firefighters safe.

Keep Interior Crews Informed of Changing Conditions

Objective: To ensure all interior crews are kept informed of all fire conditions observed from the exterior by the incident commander and other command organization officers that may affect crew safety.

What is observed from the exterior or what is occurring elsewhere on the fireground may quickly increase the risk and reduce the safety of interior crews. Communicate!

After Search and Rescue is Completed, If There Is No Progress Towards Fire Control, Seriously Consider Withdrawal of Firefighters

Objective: To cause a benchmark decision point, following the completion of the primary search and the determination that no victims are in the building, requiring the incident commander to determine if it's safe to continue the risk of offensive interior operations.

If there are no lives to be saved and the first wave of fire operations hasn't made progress on controlling the fire, operations have now entered a marginal and very risky period. Consider withdrawal.

Always Have a Rapid Intervention Team in Place

Objective: To cause the incident commander to have a rapid intervention team in place ready to rescue firefighters at all working fires.

A fireground operation is a risky business. Always have a rapid intervention teams in place. This includes compliance with OSHA's Two-In, Two-Out rule for initial operations. The incident commander must understand that it will take several RIT members to rescue a downed firefighter. Research by the Phoenix and Seattle fire departments determined that an average of 11–12 members to rescue a downed firefighter. Additionally, it took an average of 19-21 minutes to complete a rescue. An expanded RIT may be required.