

**Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9**  
**Westlake Fire Department**  
**Standard Operating Guidelines**

**Subject: Fireground Operations**

**Effective Date: June 15, 1997**

**Authorized By: Chief Paul Barker**

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**I. Purpose**

To standardize certain procedures for fireground operations and other emergency scenes.

**II. Policy**

The following guidelines should normally be followed at all emergency scenes, except where deviation can be justified by command officers.

**III. Procedure**

**A. Placement of equipment**

1. General

Unless otherwise directed, apparatus shall not block a roadway in the vicinity of a fire, hydrants, intakes, or other apparatus. The principle attack point should be left open and free of equipment as much as possible.

2. Command Vehicle/Command Post (CP)

The command vehicle should be parked in a location that affords the most advantageous observation of the emergency scene, taking into account factors such as wind direction, topography, ease of being located, weather protection, sufficient room for activities, and access to the scene. The CP should normally be near the "front" of the incident where the main action is taking place. When established, the location of the CP should be reported to all personnel by radio.

3. Engine Companies

The first-in engine should position just past the fire building, unless to do so would require driving through a vapor cloud or would unreasonably expose equipment and personnel to hazardous conditions. Subsequent arriving engines should stage at a nearby hydrant, unless directed otherwise by the IC.

4. Other apparatus

Specialized apparatus should be located depending on the function to be performed. For example, a brush truck should be located so that its equipment can best be used to access wildland fires. Other apparatus and vehicles should be legally parked out of the way and in secure areas when left unattended.

## **B. Two In , Two Out Program**

In accordance with 29 CFR 1910.134 (g) (4) (1998) the department has adopted the following policy to be followed in all circumstances where it is possible that there is an **IDLH** (immediately dangerous to life and health) atmosphere. For those calls where it is reasonably expected that the atmosphere is IDLH, (any fire past the incipient stage, those which can be controlled by a fire extinguisher) at least two stand-by SCBA interior qualified fire fighters / rescuers will be standing by (with appropriate tools) prior to initiating operations in the IDLH atmosphere.

1. **Interior operations will be conducted by at least two properly equipped SCBA interior qualified individual.** One exception to this policy is in the professional judgment of the fire fighters present, immediate action must be taken to save life or prevent serious injury. This exception is in place to allow fire fighters that are present to effect a safe rescue if it can be accomplished prior to assembling at least four interior SCBA qualified fire fighters. This exception **MAY NOT** be used to conduct primary searches for property protection activities.
2. Any exception taken to this policy must be proceeded with a radio report of the situation, with a follow up written report detailing actions taken and why to the Chief.
3. Interior crew members must be in visual or voice contact. **Radio contact only between interior crew members is not acceptable.**

The function of the **Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC)** is to account for fire fighters operating in the IDLH environment and, if necessary, initiate a fire fighter rescue. One fire fighter would be assigned duties as the Primary **RIC** Member and one fire fighter will assume the position as Secondary **RIC** Member. Only the individual assigned as the Secondary **RIC** Member would be permitted to perform tasks in addition to accountability, but only if those tasks could be immediately abandoned without jeopardizing the safety and health of others at the emergency scene. No one shall serve as a Secondary **RIC** Member when the other activities in which he or she is engaged inhibit his or her ability to assist in monitoring the interior team(s) and if necessary, perform rescue or are of such importance that they cannot be abandoned without placing other fire fighters in danger. **At no time shall an interior attack be made with less than four fire fighters assembled at the emergency scene.** Additionally, an interior attack would not commence until the **RIC** is fully operational.

4. If interior fire fighting operations are to commence prior to the arrival of the second due engine, the Engineer shall be permitted to assume the Secondary **RIC** position. If the Engineer is assigned this position, entry by the initial attack team would not occur until the Engineer has charged the attack lines, secured a continuous water supply, set the pump (including throttle, relief valves and discharge gates) and donned protective clothing and equipment. The Engineer shall not assume the Secondary **RIC** position if the apparatus placement prevents voice and visual contact with the Primary **RIC** position at the place

where the Primary **RIC** position is monitoring and tracking the interior team (e.g. any reverse lay that positions apparatus a distance from fireground).

5. The Incident Commander on any mutual aid response from Westlake to a neighboring department must insure that appropriate 2 In 2 Out procedures are utilized, with appropriately qualified and equipped personnel, if any Westlake fire fighter will participate in operations in an IDLH atmosphere.

### **C. Offensive and Defensive Tactics**

1. An offensive attack will be assumed at most Regular Alarms, unless the IC believes that one cannot be carried out in safety, and announces a defensive attack mode. The IC will make a general announcement via radio broadcast on the fireground channel when making the change from offensive to defensive mode.
2. Offensive firefighting is an inside attack. Defensive firefighting is an outside operation. The two are incompatible. When the decision is made to go to a defensive mode, all personnel must be pulled back to a safe area or out of the building.
3. Streams through windows are defensive and prohibit interior attack. Hose lines should not be directed through windows from the outside unless the decision to switch to defensive mode is announced by the IC and all personnel have evacuated the building.
4. Attack on the fire will be made from the unburned side of the structure when practical. Fire attack must be coordinated, and at no time will opposing attacks be initiated such that heat and other products of combustion are pushed toward personnel operating in another part of the structure.
5. There will be no "free-lance" firefighting. The IC, Operations, and/or Sector Officers will place and direct all personnel on the scene.
6. Personnel assigned to guard against extension via a partition wall or fire wall will not abandon the position unless relieved or if untenable. If abandoning the position because of untenable circumstances, the IC must be notified without fail.

### **D. Staging Area Location and Management**

1. The staging area for mutual-aid alarms should be established within one quarter mile of the fire. Parking lots make an excellent staging area. If one of these is not available, a street may be used.
2. The IC should announce a staging area when requesting a mutual-aid alarm.
3. The following duties will be the responsibility of the Staging Manager:
  - Report to the announced staging area, or request a location from the IC if one has not been announced.
  - Establish a check-in location.
  - Maintain a Staging Log, including a list of units available in staging and the number of personnel on each apparatus.
  - Respond to radio requests from the CP.
  - Inform the CP when resources in staging fall below the established minimum level.
  - Assign staged units to parking areas where they are accessible.
4. During mutual-aid alarms, when the Department's resources are committed and another alarm comes in, one of the mutual-aid engines should be dispatched to

the call. At least one mutual-aid responding engine should be held in reserve at a major incident until the IC is confident that the incident is winding down, and operations can be handled by on-scene companies.

5. All personnel responding on a mutual-aid alarm must check in at the CP, unless already given an assignment by the IC. Everyone must also check out at the CP upon leaving the scene. This accountability is required for the safety of everyone on the fireground.

### **E. Sector/Division/Group Designation**

1. Under the National ICS model, at least three different designations may be used to denote fireground work groups.
  - The term "Division," when used, normally designates a geographical area.
  - A "Group" is a team of personnel performing like or related tasks, and is functionally oriented.
  - A "Sector" can be used interchangeably for either of the other two, though with less precision. WFD has traditionally used the term "Sector" exclusively, but acknowledges the other terms and encourages their use by Incident Commanders when appropriate. WFD personnel may encounter different systems for fireground designation when responding or training with other agencies, so all members are encouraged to become familiar with common terminology and its correct use.
2. The incident ground is divided into sectors for quick reference and clarity. Sectors are designated according to their relationship to the CP. The side of the building on which the CP is located is Sector A. The sides are then designated in a clockwise direction from the CP, using the letters B, C, D, and others, as needed. For clarity of communication, phonetic designations, such as "Alpha", "Beta", "Charlie", and "Delta" etc., should be used.
3. It is also acceptable to use numerical values (1,2,3,4, etc.) with 1 denoting the CP side and continuing with the clockwise designations. For structures in which the geographical direction is apparent, North, South, East, and West may be designated.
4. Internal areas are designated as the number of the floor (Example: Sixth Floor). Further designation may be made by using the letters A, B, C, D, and E (others may be added for irregularly shaped buildings) to indicate different portions of the interior. Basements should be designated as such.
5. Internal and external exposures are designated by the sector in which they are located; for example, "Second Floor, Sector A".
6. When assigning sector command responsibilities, the IC should brief the sector officer on the goals of the operation and the specific objectives to accomplish in his/her sector as well as assigning a radio designation.
7. All major incidents shall have an Incident Safety Officer assigned with appropriate safety knowledge for the type of incident.