

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

Standard Operating Guideline

Subject: Response to Mutual Aid Calls

Effective Date: December 31, 2003 – Revision September 16, 2004

Authorized By: Chief Paul Barker

I. History

Over the years, this Department has responded to the needs of our immediate neighbors (Ce-Bar, Oak Hill) just as they have responded to assist us with station coverage while our resources were tied up and with direct assistance by mutual aid at major fires. When we responded to calls for mutual aid in our sister department areas, we did so immediately and the amount of time our resources were out of District was relatively minimal.

With the institution of the County-wide Wildland Task Force a few years ago, our horizons began to change, our responses became longer and more protracted, and our concerns for District coverage during these events increased substantially. In 2003, we began to participate in the County-wide Hazardous Materials Taskforce/Team and the amount of time our resources could be out of District has again increased tremendously.

The Department has made a commitment to Minimum Staffing, but there are times when we cannot meet that ideal. While we attempt to maintain minimum staffing for standby purposes, while we are working a major fire/flood/EMS incident of our own and during mutual aid events, our response is delayed, we must rely on mutual aid ourselves, we are not sufficiently staffed, and that goal is not possible.

II Purpose

It is the purpose of this SOG to establish criteria for the response to all calls for mutual aid and to establish uniform criteria to assist in the management of our resources.

II. Policies

This Department will always attempt to respond to calls for mutual aid but will do so only when a reasonable level of protection remains to cover our own District.

III Procedure

A. Preparation for Mutual Aid Incidents

1. At the beginning of each shift, the Shift Commander should prepare a response plan for each category of possible mutual aid: Fire, Wildland, and Hazardous Materials

and know from the beginning of the day what units will be made available for mutual aid response. When our participation in the County Wildland Task Force necessitates a planned Tanker/Brush Truck response, the individuals, including volunteers, who will make that response, will be identified.

B. Mutual/Automatic Aid Responses to Regular Alarms in Ce-Bar and Oak Hill

1. The Shift Commander will immediately dispatch the closest available Engine Company to the call and direct the remaining Engine Company to Station 2 for District coverage.
2. If it appears that E-904 will be required at the scene, the time will be taken for the crew to change engines.

C. Mutual Aid responses for the Wildland Task Force (Ready Team):

1. When we have extra staff on shift to support the Wildland Task Force (Ready Team), only those qualified individuals who wish to respond to the Wildland Mutual Aid will be sent to the call.
2. In this case, the individuals who are staffing the Tanker/Brush Truck will be immediately dispatched to the call and all others will follow our normal mutual aid response protocol (report to Station 2 for coordinated response).
3. If the Ready Team is not specifically staffed, the Shift Commander will send the planned response for that day.
4. Additional request for personnel will be considered depending on the availability of personnel at the time.
5. With the exception of the initial response apparatus, no further response will be sent until the Chief Officers and the Shift Commander review the request.

IV. Wildland Taskforce

A. Ready Team Minimum Qualifications

1. Physically fit
2. Knowledge of ICS system
3. Taken a Department approved or provided wildland class
4. 18 years old or older
5. Has reviewed the 10 Standing Fire Orders and the 18 Watch Out Situations with their company officer or has taken a wildland class within the past twelve months.
6. Know how to work hose lays and assist with water supplies
7. Basic knowledge of brush truck pump operation
8. Been issued proper PPE for wildland firefighting (if responding on brush truck or as a hand crew)
9. Been issued proper PPE for wildland and structural firefighting (if responding on Engine or Tanker)
10. Has read and is familiar with the Travis County CRC guidelines set forth by the Travis County Fire Chiefs' Association (copies are available in the Shift Commanders' office at station #2 and at Headquarters)

B. Brush Truck Driver / Operators

1. Meets the driving qualifications as outlined in the Department Driving Policy
2. Attained the rank of firefighter or higher

3. Knowledge of 4x4 operation and driving techniques or accompanied by someone with previous experience operating a 4x4 on a wildfire scene
4. Previous wildland fire experience or with someone who has had two years of wildland fire experience
5. Know how to work the pump and foam proportioner

C. Engine / Tanker Driver

1. Attained the rank of firefighter or higher
2. Meets the driving qualifications as outlined in the Department Driving Policy.
3. Know how to deploy portable folding water tank and draft water from tank
4. Know how to operate dump valves, pump, and floating pump and refill the tank.

D. Crew Boss – One Ready Team member must be designated as the Crew Boss

1. The most qualified or ranking Ready Team member will be designated the Crew Boss. See station officer or Shift Commander for assignment.
2. Attained the rank of Firefighter or higher
3. 21 Years old or older
4. The Crew Boss will be in charge of all Department personnel at the scene. All Ready Team members will follow the orders of the Crew Boss unless doing so will jeopardize the safety of Westlake personnel or members of the public.
5. The Crew Boss will follow the orders of the IC or Sector/Division Officer unless doing so will jeopardize the safety of Westlake personnel or members of the public.
6. If at any time the Crew Boss determines the Incident Command System is not established, is not followed, or the scene is unsafe, he will remove all Westlake personnel from the scene.
7. If leaving the scene, advise the appropriate personnel (generally the assigned sector officer) of your actions. When it is safe to do so, contact the WFD Shift Commander via phone for instructions.

E. Wildland Taskforce Back Fill Procedures

1. A minimum of two personnel shall staff a brush truck and three personnel shall staff an engine or tanker.
2. Each available Ready Team slot will be filled first by qualified volunteer personnel on a sign-up basis (hours to be determined).
3. If a qualified volunteer who lives or works in the District is capable of arriving at the station **within five minutes of CRC activation** that member will fill a slot on the Ready Team if the member has notified the Shift Commander of his ability to respond in advance of CRC activation. This five-minute window follows the guidelines set forth for CRC operations by the Travis County Fire Chiefs' Association.
4. In the absence of qualified volunteer personnel, shift personnel will fill the empty positions and respond as part of the Ready Team if requested by the CRC.
5. If on-duty personnel are utilized, the Shift Commander or designee will send out an all call alpha page requesting volunteer personnel to report to Station 2 to fill vacant positions. If a member is able to report to Station 2 within thirty minutes of the page, they will call Station 2 to notify remaining personnel or Shift Commander they are reporting to Station 2 for assignment. Members must have a rank of firefighter or higher.

6. If an insufficient number of volunteers are unavailable or do not respond to the call **within fifteen minutes**, the Shift Commander or designee will send an Emergency Callback alpha page for paid personnel to report to Station 2 for assignment.
7. At the discretion of a Chief Officer sign-up for Callback coverage may be activated if the need for CRC response coverage increases.

V. **Mutual Aid for Hazardous Materials Incidents**

1. The Shift Commander must approve any response to Hazardous Material Incidents after reviewing staffing levels and discussing the response with the CRC.
2. **All response to Mutual Aid Hazardous Material Incidents will be Code 1, regardless of any request by CRC to upgrade.**
3. First choice of personnel will be three members of the Travis County Hazardous Material Team (TCHMT), if staffing levels permit. The Shift Commander will make the decision on who responds from WFD.
4. Minimally, two Operations Level trained personnel may respond with the TC Hazardous Material Trailer providing the driver has taken the TC Hazardous Material Trailer Driving Class.
5. If an engine company is requested, the first choice will be to send three members of the TCHMT.
6. Minimally, an engine company with three personnel may be sent as long as all personnel are Operations Level trained.
7. Before permitting any personnel to respond to Mutual Aid Hazardous Material Incidents, the Shift Commander will attempt to back fill any apparatus that was taken out of service due to the request for 15 minutes.
8. If TCHMT personnel are not present, but can respond to St. 2 **within 15 minutes**, WFD will wait before sending the required response.
9. The first priority is the coverage of our District and, if necessary, the Shift Commander will send the minimum amount of personnel or may be forced to wait until additional personnel arrive to ensure that our District has reasonable coverage.

VI. **Response Procedures**

1. Before ANY responders leave the station, they must meet with the Shift Commander to discuss the response and review District coverage. **The exception to this is automatic mutual aid with Ce-Bar FD.**
2. **All responses to mutual aid requests shall be Code 1 unless the requesting agency specifically requests a Code 3 response. The exception to this is automatic mutual aid with Ce-Bar FD.**
3. Upgrading to Code 3 response will be at the discretion of the Officer-In-Charge and / or the Shift Commander depending on the road conditions, traffic volume and nature of the incident. **The exception to this is when responding the Haz Mat Trailer, which all responses are Code 1.**
4. Personal Operated Vehicle's (POV's) shall not respond directly to the scene of a mutual aid request unless approved by a Chief Officer or Shift Commander.
5. Upon arrival the crew will notify our dispatch by radio, if possible, of their status. If unable to reach communications by radio, crews will notify the Shift Commander via landline or cellular phone.

6. Crews should make every effort to stay in periodic contact (at least once every two hours) with the on-duty Shift Commander in order to provide fireground updates, which could affect District staffing plans. Report to staging and switch to the assigned fire ground frequency.
7. CRC accountability tags must be used on all CRC responses.