

Lake County Fire Service Standard Operating Guidelines

Withdraw and Emergency Evacuation Orders	SOG: 011 Effective Date: April 1, 2011 Supersedes: Approved: <hr/> President, Lake County Association of Chiefs of Fire Page 1 of 3
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1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this guideline is to describe the conditions under which a “Withdraw” or “Emergency Evacuation” order is given and the corresponding actions to be taken when that order is issued.
- 1.2 Interior firefighting operations should be abandoned when the extent of the fire prohibits, or the structure becomes unsafe to operate within. When conditions become untenable, evacuate, regroup, re-communicate and redeploy. Our primary concern, when a hazard that may affect the safety of the fire personnel becomes apparent, is the welfare of those personnel. In an effort to protect personnel which may suffer the adverse effects of such hazards as structural collapse, explosion, back draft, etc., a structured method of area evacuation must be utilized, one which will provide for the rapid and effective notification of those personnel involved, and one which will be able to accurately account for those personnel.

2.0 DIVISIONS AFFECTED

- 2.1 All Fire Department personnel.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITY

- 3.1 All Officers are responsible to comply with and ensure that personnel under their command are adequately trained, fully understand, and comply with this guideline.
- 3.2 All members have the responsibility to learn and follow this guideline.

4.0 PROCEDURE

Withdraw Order

- 4.1 The order for withdrawal from the structure is an action that is needed when the mode of the operation is changed and the structure must be evacuated.
- 4.2 An example of this would be to go from an offensive to a defensive operation.

- 4.3 When this action is ordered, the firefighters in the structure will exit with their tools and equipment.
- 4.4 Command will then call for a PAR on the fire ground.

Emergency Evacuation

- 4.5 An emergency evacuation is ordered when an extremely serious emergency has or is about to happen, such as a missing firefighter(s), an explosion, or collapse. In an emergency evacuation, unlike a withdrawal order, fire department tools and hose may be left behind. A PAR will be conducted as soon as personnel exit the structure. The emergency traffic announcement is designed to provide immediate notification for all fire ground personnel of a notable hazard that is either about to occur or has occurred. The use of “Emergency Traffic” should occur only when the hazardous condition has taken place or appears to be imminent.
- 4.6 An emergency evacuation is a rare occurrence in the fire service, and because of its infrequent occurrence, a prearranged signal is given. This signal will be three long blasts of air horns and emergency broadcasts over the radio using the term “Emergency Traffic”.
 - A. Any member has the authority to utilize the “Emergency Traffic” announcement when it is felt that a notable danger to personnel exists. However, considerable discretion should be applied to its use. Emergency traffic announcements become ineffective if overused.
 - B. When an imminent hazard has been recognized, the emergency traffic process should be initiated. Usually, either a company or group leader will be the initiator. The initiator should describe the apparent hazard and order a positive response, usually to evacuate a particular area or section, according to the scope of the hazard.
 - C. If possible, the group leaders of those areas to be evacuated should request an acknowledgment of the emergency traffic dispatch from those crews to be evacuated.
- 4.7 Upon hearing this signal, firefighters will rapidly exit the structure, tools and equipment may be left behind. Upon receipt of the emergency traffic evacuation order, group/crew leaders will assemble their crews and promptly exit to a safe location, where the leader will again account for all crewmembers. Shortly after the evacuation order, crew leaders will begin the process of accounting for all evacuated crews. When all affected crews and crew members are accounted for (Command initiates the PAR) the evacuation process is complete.
 - A. Building evacuation generally involves a shift from offensive to defensive as the operational strategy. In such cases, Command must develop a corresponding operational plan and must communicate that plan to all operating elements. This can be a difficult shift to complete as units are committed to positions in an offensive manner. It is extremely important that everyone gets the word that a strategic shift has been made.

- 4.8 At this time a more specific determination as to the reality/extent of the hazard can be made and efforts initiated to redeploy/redirect attack forces.

Command Responsibility

- 4.9 It is Command's responsibility to continually evaluate and determine if the building is tenable for interior operations. This ongoing evaluation of structural/fire conditions requires the input of firefighters advising their respective group/division leaders and those leaders advising Command of the conditions in their area of operation.
- A. Structures of other than fire resistive/heavy timber construction are not designed to withstand the effects of fire, and can be expected to fail after approximately twenty (20) minutes of heavy fire involvement. If, after ten to fifteen (10-15) minutes of interior operations, heavy fire conditions still exist, Command should initiate a careful risk/benefit evaluation of structural conditions and should be fully prepared to withdraw interior crews and resort to a defensive position.
 - B. Contemporary structures of lightweight construction may fail after 5 to 10 minutes of fire or high heat in the structural areas. Command must carefully evaluate exterior smoke conditions and obtain frequent and accurate reports from the interior. Interior crews must maintain communications with command and comply immediately with any withdrawal or emergency evacuation order.
 - C. Crews retreating from interior operations often require hose line protection. Back-up lines may provide this or the crew may bring their hose line with them. The urgency of the withdrawal/evacuation will drive this decision, but Command should always be thinking ahead and should have back-up lines in place.