



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

24-01

Policy and Procedure

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Incident Response Policy

07/01/2017

Issued by: Fire Chief Scott E. Goldstein

Policy Number: 24-01

Authority: Montgomery County Code Section 21-3 (b)

Supersedes: This is a new policy.

Effective Date: July 1, 2017

SECTION 1. Purpose:

- a. To provide a set of policies and procedures common to all incidents.
- b. To establish a MCFRS Operational Doctrine Statement (ODS).
- c. To establish a series of appendixes and attachments that provide more specific policy and procedural direction for specific incident types.

SECTION 2. Applicability:

All MCFRS personnel while participating in MCFRS operations and personnel from other organizations while operating in Montgomery County.

SECTION 3. Background:

- a. The variety of emergency types precludes the creation of individual policies, procedures, and other rules to cover all possible incidents.
- b. The ever changing nature of fire/rescue operations along with the increasing complexity of operations requires the establishment of the ODS to establish the MCFRS philosophical approach for the conduct of fire/rescue operations.
 1. The ODS provides guidance for the full spectrum of fire/rescue incidents regardless of nature or complexity.
 2. The ODS provides guidance that is relevant even in the absence of a specific standard operating procedure (SOP).

SECTION 4. Definitions:

See Appendix Q.

SECTION 5. Policy:

- a. The Fire Chief is responsible to develop and publish an ODS. The ODS will:
 1. Outline the Fire Chief's general philosophical approach to incident operations.



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2. Be authoritative but not prescriptive, carrying the weight of policy while having no procedural content.
 3. Be updated at the discretion of the Fire Chief.
 4. Be an appendix to the Incident Response Policy.
- b. All operational policies and procedures must be consistent with the ODS.
- c. MCFRS classifies incidents into two types, basic and complex:
1. A basic event is one where ALL the following conditions are true:
 - A. It is reasonable for a unit officer to manage all aspects of the incident from start to finish.
 - B. The span of control is five units or less.
 - C. The incident does not require the integration of more than one outside agency. (*Police agencies and utility companies are not counted in this number.*)
 - D. There is no threat of harm to large numbers of people.
 - E. There are no special operations components such as hazmat, METRO, heavy rail, water rescues, or technical rescues involved.
 - F. The incident can be resolved in a relatively short period of time, typically less than one hour.
 2. A complex incident is one where anyone of the above mentioned criteria are not true.
- d. All operations begin with the same incident priorities: life safety, incident stabilization, and property conservation. When sufficient resources are available, all of these priorities must be addressed simultaneously. When resource limitations force a choice, these priorities must be addressed sequentially and in the order listed below:
1. Life Safety;
 2. Incident Stabilization;
 3. Property Conservation.
- e. MCFRS operations rely on well trained, decisive and compassionate service providers doing what is right in support of people, the mission, and the values and principles of the organization.
- f. All operations must be directed toward a clearly defined and attainable objective.
- g. Some appendixes may establish embedded, or standard, objectives for certain incident types.
- h. The need for quick action does not absolve leaders from having and communicating clear objectives.



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- i. All operations must be conducted in a way that exposes personnel to the lowest achievable level of risk while not interfering with mission completion.
- j. MCFRS embraces Crew Resource Management (CRM) with the understanding that CRM does not override the chain of command.
- k. Deviations from SOPs
 - 1. Personnel are authorized to deviate from SOP when necessary. However, all deviations must be:
 - A. Deliberate;
 - B. Defendable; and
 - C. Communicated.
- l. Incident Management
 - 1. There are basic functions common to all incidents. The specific situation will dictate the relative importance of these functions but they must be carried out to the degree necessary and in the proper order at all incidents:
 - A. Situational Awareness. Situational awareness is the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about what is happening at the incident. Situational awareness is a process. It is knowing what is going on around you.
 - B. Accountability. This term has two meanings. First, it means that all personnel are responsible for ensuring they know where their subordinates are, and that their supervisors know where they are. Secondly, it means that all personnel are responsible for all of their actions.
 - C. Effective Communication. Effective communications are critical to emergency operations. Ideas, plans, objectives, and orders are useless until they are communicated. Effective communication speaks to more than the allocation of time for talking. It also requires that supervisors issue orders with clear objectives and intent. Personnel must know what is expected of them.
 - D. Effective communications also requires that personnel use the most efficient language possible while avoiding non-standard phrases.
 - E. Risk Assessment. Risk describes the relationship between hazards and harm. More specifically, risk is the product of the chance that a certain hazard will cause harm and the severity of the harm if it were to occur. A risk assessment is a dynamic process of gathering information about the operational environment as it relates to risk, then comparing the identified risks to the expected benefits of a given action. Stated differently, it is the process of making the decision of whether or not it is "worth it" to conduct a given operation.



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- F. In the context of incident operations, the benefits are usually framed in terms of lives saved, significant injury reduced or avoided, and reduction in property loss. The risks may include injury or death.
- G. Established Objectives. At each incident, the Incident Commander must establish and communicate the operational objectives to be met.
- H. Initiating and Monitoring Action. Successful operations hinge on action. All actions must be coordinated to ensure that all units are operating in ways that support their supervisor's intent.

SECTION 6. Responsibility:

- a. All personnel are responsible for:
 - 1. Knowing the nature and location of incidents that they respond to.
 - 2. Reducing the risks associated with incident response to the lowest achievable level.
 - 3. Ensuring reasonable vehicular response within the scope of their authority.
 - 4. Ensuring effective crew communications.
 - 5. Conducting an on-going risk assessment.
 - 6. Being accountable to their unit officer at all times and ensuring that their unit officer is aware of both their location and their actions.
 - 7. Monitoring the health and well-being of their crew.
 - 8. Using the appropriate personal protective equipment as dictated by the situation.
 - 9. Ensuring teamwork and coordination.
 - 10. Reporting changes in conditions to their supervisor.
- b. All unit officers are responsible for all of the above and:
 - 1. Knowing the location and action of all crew members at all times.
 - 2. Developing and communicating an action plan for their unit.
 - 3. Acting in support of the incident objectives and the team effort.
- c. All Incident Commanders are responsible for the above, as applicable, and for ensuring the basic functions common to all incidents are accomplished.

SECTION 7. Procedure:

- a. Once a response has been initiated, personnel must ensure an appropriate response to the incident.



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- b. All crew members, but especially the unit officer(s), must immediately begin to develop and maintain situational awareness and conduct risk assessments.
- c. Any crew member having pertinent information that might reasonably affect the outcome of the response or the incident must ensure that their supervisor is aware of that information.
- d. Operations in hazardous areas
 - 1. No personnel may enter into a hazardous area regardless of exigency before:
 - A. The appropriate intervention teams are in place as per appendixes to this policy.
 - B. A size up has been conducted.
 - C. A risk assessment is conducted.
 - D. Objectives are developed and communicated.
- e. Units should position with due consideration for incident progression.
- f. The first arriving primary unit officer must establish objectives, establish command, and conduct other initial incident activities as outlined in the appendixes to this policy.
- g. All personnel must continually reevaluate progress and continually update their risk assessment.

SECTION 8. Cancellation:

This is a new policy.

SECTION 9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Operational Doctrine Statement

Appendix B: Incident Command

Appendix C: Accountability

Appendix D: Structure Fires

Appendix E: High Rise Fires

Appendix F: Water Supply Operations

Appendix G: Future use

Appendix H: Future Use

Appendix I: Rapid Intervention and Maydays



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Appendix J: Initial Actions for Technical Rescue

Appendix K: Initial Actions for Hazardous Materials

Appendix L: Heavy Rail

Appendix M: Initial Actions for Water Rescue

Appendix N: Metro Incidents

Appendix O: Traffic Safety

Appendix P: Vehicle Collisions

Appendix Q: Definitions

Appendix R: Personnel Rehabilitation

Appendix S: Communications

Appendix T: After Action Reporting

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott E. Goldstein".

Scott E. Goldstein
Fire Chief

April 14, 2017