

Yamhill Fire Protection District

District Policies, Procedures, & SOG's

MISSION

*Yamhill Fire Protection District is dedicated to
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District Procedure

OPERATIONS

OPS-FIRE – 602.1

Rapid Intervention Team Procedures

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Issued: October 28, 2014

Purpose:

To ensure uniform procedures for Rapid Intervention Teams, and operations involving immediately dangerous to life and health in (IDLH) atmospheres.

References:

NFPA 1500 8.4.4 & 8.5

NFPA 1561 5.7.2

Oregon OSHA standards for Firefighters

Definitions:

A.W.A.R.E.:

An acronym that stands for: **A**ir, **W**ater, **A** Radio, **E**xtrication. This provides a basic plan for firefighter rescue.

Back-up Team:

A team of two (2) interior-certified firefighters standing-by outside the IDLH atmosphere. This team is the outside part of the "2-in, 2-out" requirement.

Buddy System:

Two (2) Firefighters operating together in an IDLH atmosphere. The firefighters **MUST** remain in voice, visual, or touch contact. Radios shall not be considered an acceptable form of contact for this purpose.

Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health atmosphere (IDLH):

Any atmosphere that would cause immediate harm to a person not wearing the appropriate respiratory protection. Any interior structure fire that has progressed past the incipient phase is automatically assumed to be an IDLH atmosphere.

Imminent Rescue:

Any situation where a confirmed or highly probable citizen rescue is necessary and delaying rescue action would endanger the life of the citizen.

Rapid Intervention Team (RIT):

A team of at least 4 interior-certified firefighters assigned to a dedicated firefighter and/or civilian rescue team.

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NOTE:

Refer to the “Emergency Communications” and “Passport System” Procedures for definitions regarding those operations.

Procedure:

GENERAL

Emergency services personnel respond to many incidents that present a high risk to their safety. This procedure is intended to increase the overall level of safety for district personnel by identifying the requirements and operation of Rapid Intervention Teams (**RIT**) at emergency scenes. Due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of emergency operations, the Incident Commander (IC) should use this document as an adjunct to sound operational practices and procedures.

During an emergency, there is a tendency for **ALL** of the personnel on scene to want to assist. This becomes even worse when emergency personnel are the ones who need assistance. The result can be un-coordinated, and often chaotic, rescue efforts. Rapid Intervention Teams are designed to be immediately available to the IC for use in a structured and organized rescue operation.

Personnel should review and become familiar with the “Emergency Communications” and “Passport System” procedures, as they are an integral part of this RIT program.

Personnel should remember that **RIT** operations are not just for structural firefighting. The IC should consider the implementation of a **RIT** for any operation that subjects personnel to hazardous environments.

NOTE:

Any **RIT** assigned at a specialty rescue incident, **MUST** be staffed by personnel trained in that specific field.

INITIAL OPERATIONS:

Upon arrival at an incident, the IC should perform a through size-up and evaluation of the hazards present. The IC will then determine which of the following three situations exist.

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Nothing Showing:

Personnel may enter a structure to conduct an investigation, or extinguish an incipient stage fire, without having to establish a **Back-up Team**. Immediate withdrawal of personnel must be conducted if the situation deteriorates to an IDLH level and no **Back-up Team** is in place.

Working Fire With Imminent Rescue:

If a working fire is found on arrival, the IC will determine if there is an imminent rescue situation. If so, personnel may enter the structure without a **Back-up Team** in place. In this situation, the IC must notify YCOM and the other incoming units that they are operating without a **Back-up Team**. The IC **MUST** establish a **Back-up Team** as soon as enough qualified personnel arrive on scene.

Working Fire without Imminent Rescue:

The IC **Must** establish a **Back-up Team** prior to any personnel entering the structure. If there are not enough personnel on scene to establish a team, personnel may conduct **exterior operations only**.

The initial **Back-up Team** shall consist of at least two (2) interior-certified firefighters wearing full structural PPE and SCBA. One of the firefighters may be assigned another task (i.e. pump operator) as long as he/she is immediately available for rescue operations. The other firefighter will begin the **RIT** process, and monitor the scene for emergencies.

The initial **Back-up Team** should carry out the following actions:

- Secure one portable radio for each team member.
- Perform a 360 size-up of the building.
- Pull an additional hose line that is at least the same diameter and length as the initial attack line. This line should be stretched to the same entry point as the first line, and left uncharged.
- Monitor the radio for any “MAYDAY” messages, and track the location of the interior crew.

The initial Back-up Team may only enter the building and/or IDLH atmosphere to perform rescue operations.

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NOTE:

The initial **Back-up Team** may be assembled with personnel from different companies. The IC may utilize non-interior personnel to assist with stretching hose or other tasks, but those personnel may not be counted as part of the two (2) required firefighters.

SUSTAINED OPERATIONS:

If operations progress to those involving more than one company, then a full **RIT** must be established. A full **RIT** consists of a minimum of four interior-certified firefighters that are dedicated to immediate rescue operations. At incidents involving large structures or areas, the IC should strongly consider multiple teams deployed to different entry points. These teams should be referred to by their assigned division or group (i.e. West division **RIT**). Major incidents may require a full alarm assignment dedicated solely to **RIT** operations.

NOTE:

The IC may upgrade the initial **Back-up Team** by adding additional personnel as they arrive. For example: Assigning a 2-person Medic or Engine crew to the **Back-up Team** to create a full 4-person **RIT** team.

The Full **RIT** should carry out the following actions:

- Contact the initial **Back-up Team**, and the IC, for a situation report.
- Perform another 360 size-up, and re-evaluate the situation.
- Set-up a tool staging area (See “**RIT** Equipment” in the following section).
- Stretch an un-charged 2.5” hand line with enough hose to reach all areas of the building or, in very large structures, the team’s assigned area. This line should come from a different engine than the attack lines.
- Monitor the radio for “MAYDAY” messages, and track the location of the interior crews.

The **RIT** should do as much as possible to **Prevent** a firefighter from getting into trouble. The **RIT** officer should report hazards to firefighter safety, and monitor fire conditions closely. The team may carry out tasks that enhance the safety of personnel, such as forcing open outside doors, so long as two (2) members remain ready to immediately deploy.

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RIT EQUIPMENT:

Each member of the **RIT** team should be dressed in full PPE, and have a donned SCBA with at least 2000 psi of air. Face pieces should be hung around the neck in the stand-by position. The **RIT** officer should have a portable radio that is tuned to the fire ground frequency. If possible, another team member should carry a second radio.

A “**RIT** tool staging area” should be established near the primary point of entry. A blue tarp with orange traffic cones on each corner designates equipment that is only for the use of the **RIT**. Other firefighters should not use this equipment, as it may be needed for an immediate rescue situation.

The following equipment should be assembled in the staging area:

- Rescue Air Supply bag
- Large flashlight
- 150' search rope
- Flathead axe and Halligan tool (or similar)
- The 2.5” hose line specified above

The **RIT** officer should also consider the following special equipment:

- Additional portable radio (if possible)
- Thermal imaging camera
- Chain saw
- 1.5” House bundles
- Piercing or distributor nozzles
- Ground ladders
- Mini-Holmatro tool (if available)
- Air bags, jacks, cribbing
- Cordless Sawzall (will run in smoke)
- Stokes basket and/or rope rescue equipment
- Spare air bottles

The list of possibilities is only limited by your imagination. The **RIT** officer should be proactive in assembling equipment **BEFORE** it is needed in an emergency.

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RIT DEPLOYMENT:

The Incident Commander, or a designee, shall maintain awareness of the location of all personnel on the fire ground. This is accomplished through the use of the incident command system, radio transmissions, and Passport tags. The **RIT** officer should also monitor fire ground activity, with an emphasis on the location of personnel inside the structure. The goal is to rapidly identify firefighters who are in distress, and respond as quickly as possible.

In the event of a catastrophic occurrence such as a collapse, or other event that may result in personnel being unaccounted for or injured, the IC must initiate a **Roll Call**. Command should consider loss of radio contact as a sign of distress. The **RIT** should be deployed to the last known location of the missing personnel, while Command adjusts on-scene operations to support the rescue effort.

Personnel, who are in distress and require assistance, should use a “**MAUDAY**”, transmission to summon help. Personnel should not hesitate to call a “**MAYDAY**”, even if they think they may be able to resolve the problem themselves. A good rule of thumb is: **If you have a problem you cannot fix in 30 seconds or less, call a “MAYDAY”**

If a “**MAYDAY**” is received by Command, it should be immediately acknowledged. Command should use the “Emergency Traffic” phrase and request all companies clear the air. Command should then have YCOM assign another channel for fire ground operations. **The firefighter/crew in distress, the RIT, and Command should remain on the original channel.** Command should then dispatch the **RIT** to the firefighter's location.

NOTE:

Personnel should not freelance, or change their operations, without a direct order from Command. It is very important that operations such as fire suppression and ventilation continue to help protect the firefighters in distress. Officers should maintain discipline with their crews.

When the **RIT** is deployed, it should then be designated by its company name (i.e. Engine 42). This is done to avoid confusion between different **RIT** units on the fire ground. If the **RIT** is composed of personnel from several different companies, it should be referred to as “**RIT 4**”. If additional composite teams are used, they should be “**RIT 4 Alpha. RIT 4 Bravo, and ect...**”

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Command should follow the steps below whenever a **RIT** is deployed.

- Request two (2) additional alarms be struck, and two (2) additional ALS Ambulances.
- Establish a “Firefighter Rescue Branch” to manage the rescue operations.
- Adjust on-scene operations to support the rescue effort.
- Designate a new **RIT**.

Studies conducted by the Portland Fire Bureau have shown that up to two (2) additional alarms worth of personnel may be required for a firefighter rescue. Command should not hesitate to call for additional help.

Command should remember that the **RIT** may also be deployed for civilian rescues as well. The specialized equipment, and manpower, of the **RIT** may be needed to effect a difficult victim removal. Examples would be obese, invalid, or ventilator dependent patients.

A.W.A.R.E. AND FIREFIGHTER RESCUE:

A trapped firefighter, or civilian's, survival depends on four critical needs; **A**ir, **W**ater, **A** Radio, and **E**xtrication. Together, these items form the acronym **AWARE**. The initial **RIT** should devote themselves to meeting the first two needs, as they are the most important.

The first goal is to provide the victim with a sustained **AIR** supply. For a firefighter in distress, the **RIT** should assess their SCBA system. If it is in good working order, then the Rescue Air Supply (RAS) should be connected to their emergency fill port. If the SCBA is damaged or missing, then they should use the RAS directly via its mask. Civilians should also be provided air from the RAS mask as well. If it appears that the rescue will take a significant amount of time (Person is trapped, etc...), then the **RIT** should develop a plan to rotate spare bottles in to maintain a sustained air supply.

NOTE:

In an emergency, **ANY** spare SCBA unit may be used as a RAS.

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The next step is to create a survivable environment with **WATER**. The **RIT** should stretch their line to the firefighter's position, and provide a defensible space. Keep in mind that heavy fire conditions may require several large caliber lines. The **RIT** should consider the use of piercing nozzles or distributors to reach firefighter who are inaccessible locations. The "Firefighter Rescue Branch" should ensure that there is a sustained water supply available for rescue operations.

**SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETEING THESE STEPS WILL SIGNIFICANTLY
INCREASE THE VICTIM'S CHANCE OF SURVIVAL!**

If the firefighter does not have **A RADIO**, then the team should try to provide him/her with one. This radio should be on a separate channel from the other fire ground operations. The "Firefighter Rescue Branch" should assign a person to monitor this channel at all times. A radio allows monitoring of the firefighters condition and level of consciousness.

EXTRICATION is the final step of the process. Unlike civilian rescues, firefighters who are in distress often require lengthy removal operations. These operations tend to be complex, and require a great deal of personnel and planning. In most cases, the initial **RIT** will not be able to extricate the firefighter before becoming low on air. This is why it is important that additional teams are established, and multiple alarms are called.

If the initial **RIT** must leave the firefighter before the next team arrives, several steps should be followed:

- Notify the "Firefighter Rescue Branch" immediately.
- If the victim is conscious, explain why you are leaving. Tell them that there are more rescuers coming, and they need to stay calm. Have them provide regular updates by radio.
- If the victim is unconscious, activate their PASS alarm.
- Give them the nozzle of the hose line, or set up an unmanned stream to protect them from the fire.
- Cover the victim with the fire shelter from the RSA bag.

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- Place several glow-sticks around the victim, and activate the strobe light on the RAS bag.
- Tie off a rope to an object next to the victim, and lay it out as you exit.

As teams exit the structure, they should provide a face-to-face briefing to the "Firefighter Rescue Branch" officer. This will assist in the organization and planning of the rescue.

CONCLUSION:

Firefighter rescue operations can be extremely complex and stressful. Officers should closely monitor their personnel for illness or injury. Firefighters will often ignore their own medical condition in their attempts to save one another. Rehabilitation and medical sectors should be established early on to care for the rescuers.

No one document can cover all of the potential situations that might be encountered on the fire ground. A strong command system, thorough planning, and motivated personnel are key for a successful firefighter rescue.