

**Monterey County Fire Chiefs Association**  
**FIRE OPERATION MANUAL**  
**SECTION 15**

**HIGH-RISE FIREFIGHTING GUIDELINES**

**I. GENERAL OPERATING PRINCIPLES:**

- A. Any building that is 75' or higher, and designed for human occupancy will be considered a high-rise.
  - 1. However, when operating at any hazardous occupancy where the building is taller than the ladders available, or which requires extensive interior fire attack operations; the strategies and tactics used at a high-rise incident should be considered.
- B. When operating at these types of occupancies, it should be assumed that there will be considerable risk for loss of life due to the following factors: increased fuel loading; complex floor layouts; occupant density and demographics.
- C. Priority of assigning resources may vary depending upon the needs of the incident. However, rescue and fire attack operations should be placed as the initial priority.
  - 1. When implementing this guideline, it remains the responsibility of the agency having jurisdiction to adjust their operations accordingly based off of the building involved, and the needs of their organization.
  - 2. If there is any deviation from this guideline, clear communication to responding resources is paramount to ensure all personnel are operating consistently.
- D. In addition to the initial alarm response, appropriate for the agency having jurisdiction, when a working fire in a high-rise building is confirmed, the dispatch shall be upgraded to a **“Confirmed High-Rise Response.”** This response shall include an additional *two trucks, ten engines, breathing air support, and three chief officers*. In addition to the “Confirmed High-Rise Response,” additional resources may be ordered based on the conditions and needs of the incident.

**II. IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES**

- A. Upon arrival, the balance of the initial arriving units should be concerned with:
  - 1. Identifying the fire floor
  - 2. Determine life safety threats
  - 3. Establishing fire attack
  - 4. Establishing evacuation routes
  - 5. Establishing a water supply for initial attack companies

6. Establishing lobby control
  7. Determine ventilation needs on the fire floor and on the floor above.
- B. The remaining balance of the high-rise response will be tasked with the following:
1. Establishing a Staging Area
  2. Providing Relief and / or Back-up Crews
  3. Reinforcing Lobby Control
  4. Establishing Base

### III. LIFE SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The life safety aspects of a fire in a high-rise must include an evaluation of the conditions on each floor, as well as within each area of the structure. These areas should be assessed for occupant tenability, the need to evacuate, and potential evacuation challenges.
- B. When considering the safety of the building occupants, a shelter-in-place order may be given if evacuations could result in:
1. Exposure to an IDLH atmosphere
  2. Increased risk of injury
  3. Hampering / delaying fire attack operations
- C. The Incident Commander must determine the need to evacuate occupants, when necessary, and ensure the plan for evacuating or relocating occupants is communicated and coordinated with the fire control strategy.

### IV. FIRE ATTACK AND RESCUE

- A. The initial attack should consist of all personnel from the **first four (4) arriving engine companies**, excluding the Engineer from the 3<sup>rd</sup> arriving engine. Each company should equip themselves with the following items upon assignment:
1. All personnel in full PPE including radio
  2. Spare SCBA cylinders
  3. Forcible entry tools
  4. Long handled tool
  5. (2) Hose bundles and a standpipe kit (if equipped)
  6. Tools for propping doors open
  7. Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC)
  8. Cell phone
  9. Keys for the Knox Box
  10. Rope Bag (if equipped)

NOTE – The Engineer from the **3<sup>rd</sup> arriving engine company** will establish a water supply and support the standpipe system.

- B. Upon arrival, the first-in company should park their apparatus away from the building, then proceed to the fire control room with the objective of identifying the location and alarm information, as well as complete the following critical items:
  - 1. Determine what the alarm panel indicates, and provide an update to responding resources.
  - 1. Obtain appropriate keys
  - 2. Unlock the phone cabinet and obtain the fire phone
- C. If a fire is confirmed, the first-in company officer should pass command (if it has not already been assumed by the Duty Chief Officer) and commit to fire attack and rescue operations.
- D. The first company proceeding to the fire floor via a safe route shall provide a short report of conditions from each floor as they proceed to the fire floor (3rd floor clear, 4th floor, light smoke, etc.)
- E. As soon as the fire floor is reached and identified, the first arriving company officer will give the Incident Commander a report of conditions and immediate needs request.
- F. The first arriving company officer should determine the exact location of the fire, as well as evaluate the fire floor for potential flow path issues before placing hose lines into service.
  - 1. An attack stairwell, and evacuation stairwell should be identified and communicated as soon as possible to ensure effective hose line management, and safe removal of occupants.
- G. If advanced fire conditions are present or anticipated, the use of 2 ½” attack hose may be required to combat the increased thermal output of the fire.
- B. The Incident Commander should establish the fire floor as a division (Floor 6 = Division 6) and assign a Division Supervisor.
- H. The remainder of the initial response units may be tasked with the following operations:
  - 1. Assisting with getting the first attack line in-service.
  - 2. Deploy a back-up hose line.
  - 3. Assist with search and / or evacuation.
  - 4. Investigate the floor above the fire floor.
  - 5. Determining a suitable location for Staging.
- I. When a building has multiple standpipe systems, the fire floor Division Supervisor must advise the Incident Commander which standpipe is being used, and the Incident Commander will ensure the proper standpipe is supported. In the event the building has multiple standpipe systems, other incoming companies may be assigned to support additional standpipe systems.

- J. When engaged in investigating for a suspected fire within a building, elevators shall not be used as a means of ascent. However, the use of elevators at a confirmed high-rise fire should be evaluated, and a proper risk vs. gain analysis should be conducted.
1. If personnel are to use elevators, each manned elevator shall have the following items within it:
    - a) Each person shall be wearing a breathing apparatus (mask on, system charged, not on air.)
    - b) Water Can Extinguisher
    - c) Portable radio
    - d) Forcible entry tools
    - e) Elevator control key
  2. The elevator should be stopped at a minimum of two (2) floors below the fire floor.

## V. TRUCK ASSIGNMENTS

- A. All Truck Companies should equip themselves with the following items upon assignment:
1. All personnel in full PPE including radio
  2. Forcible entry tools
  3. Long handled tool
  4. Water Can Extinguisher
  5. Tools for propping doors open
  6. Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC)
  7. Cell phone
  8. Keys for the Knox Box
  9. Rope Bag (if equipped)
  10. Consider Large Area Search Bag (if equipped)
- B. The **first arriving Truck Company** may be tasked with the following operations:
1. Deploying ladder(s) for civilian rescue.
  1. Assist with determining the location of the fire.
  2. Searching the fire floor or the floor above the fire floor.

NOTE – The first arriving Truck Company should remain as light as possible and should be prepared to operate ahead of a charged hose line if both necessary and safe to do so.

- C. The **second arriving Truck Company** may be tasked with the following operations:
1. Deploying ladder(s) for firefighter rescue.
  2. Search and rescue functions as needed.

3. Gaining access to the roof.
    - a) Consider bringing a Life Safety rope to the roof to allow for the rescue of inaccessible victims if determined necessary.
  4. Stairwell ventilation.
  5. Salvage operations as needed.
- D. The **third arriving Truck Company** shall evaluate ventilation needs and or assist with salvage operations.
- E. Truck spotting needs to remain a top priority, and should be prioritized as follows:
1. If fire is visible, the first arriving Truck Company should spot to gain access to as many windows adjacent to and above the fire as possible.
  2. If no fire is visible, the first arriving Truck Company should spot on a corner of the building.
    - a) Later arriving Truck Companies should consider spotting on opposite corners of the building.
- F. Unless operationally necessary, the first arriving Truck Company should not be assigned as Lobby, Staging, Base, or RIC.

## VI. LOBBY CONTROL

- A. Lobby control will be established by the **fifth arriving engine company**. The responsibility of Lobby Control is to account for all fire personnel and their assignments, determine elevator use, identify stairwell access, ensure lobby security, and coordinate securing the air handling and smoke exhaust systems. The company assigned Lobby Control should bring the following items upon assignment:
1. All personnel in full PPE including radio.
  2. TIC
  3. Cell phone
  4. Key for Knox Box
  5. Lobby Control high-rise kit (provided by requesting agency)
  6. A personnel tracking board
  7. Any available pre-plans of the building
- B. Proceed to the lobby area, or main point of entry into the building if no lobby exists. Obtain fire alarm information from the annunciator panel or fire control room. Obtain the elevator/stairwell keys from the Knox Box and complete the below tasks:
1. Establish check-in/check-out station
  2. Log time-in, assignment/location, time-out of arriving units
  3. Assume control of the elevators
    - a) Recall all elevators to the lobby and lock them out.

- b) Do not allow elevator use until it is declared safe by the IC or Operations.  
Exception – elevators may be utilized to transport equipment without personnel.
- 4. Locate ground floor stairwell openings
- 5. Manage stairwell access
- 6. Verify from Fire Attack / Division Supervisor the safest stairwell for ascent to the staging area.
- 7. Control entry and exit of fire personnel and civilians
- 8. Utilize the buildings PA system to verbalize directions and help coordinate evacuations.
- 9. Provide the following information to personnel entering the building:
  - a) Reported location of the fire
  - b) Status of elevators
  - c) Specific route to staging, including stairwell
  - d) Additional important information
- 10. Make contact with the Building Manager/Engineer and control HVAC and smoke exhaust systems.
  - a) Shut down HVAC system (if not already done.)
  - b) Make sure smoke exhaust system is in the “on position”

## VII. STAGING

- A. Staging will be established by the **sixth arriving engine company**. The staging area should be located two (2) floors below the fire floor (or in another safe location) with convenient access to stairwells and fire operations.
- B. Staging will act as a rehab area, as well as resource area for supplying firefighting operations with essential equipment and personnel, to include:
  - 1. Spare SCBA bottles
  - 2. Extra hose and nozzles
  - 3. Medical Equipment
  - 4. Rehab Equipment
  - 5. Drinking Water
  - 6. Food Supplies
  - 7. Other equipment
- C. Staging personnel should consider gaining access into rooms on the Staging floor to allow for additional room for equipment and personnel.
- D. Staging personnel should consider dividing and labeling the following areas:
  - a) Reserve personnel
  - b) Rehab
  - c) Reserve equipment
  - d) Full air cylinders
  - e) Empty air cylinders
- E. The IC should consider placing an ambulance company in or near Staging for

rehab or triaging fire victims.

- F. The company assigned Staging should bring the following items upon assignment:
  - 1. All personnel in full PPE including radio
  - 2. Forcible entry tools
  - 3. Water for rehab
  - 4. Cell phone
  - 5. Breathing apparatus
  - 6. EMS Bag with O<sub>2</sub> (priority shall be placed on ALS equipment)
  - 7. Staging high-rise kit (provided by requesting agency)
- G. Establish communication with Operations or the IC and identify the Staging location, as well as determine resource levels to be maintained in the Staging area.
- H. Use elevators only when they are determined safe by Operations or the IC.
- I. Maintain a record of companies and equipment in Staging and track when they are assigned to, or released from Staging.
- J. Check-in / Check-out procedures for companies arriving or being released from Staging:
  - 1. Check-in / Check-out time
  - 2. Company number and agency
  - 3. Officer in charge
  - 4. Number of company members
  - 5. Division or Group assigned / or released
  - 6. Equipment brought to Staging / removed from Staging when released

## VIII. BASE

- A. Base will be established by the **seventh arriving engine company**.
- C. Base should be located at least 200 feet from the fire building, preferably in an open area, suitable for the storage and movement of apparatus and equipment. Base location will be identified by using a geographical identifier (usually the same identifier as the incident).
- B. When establishing Base, contact the IC to verify the appropriate location
  - 1. Make sure base location does not interfere with command post operations
  - 2. Use a geographic identifier (usually the same as the incident identifier)
  - 3. Locate at least 200 feet from the building
- C. Advise Incident Command of the location of Base so incoming equipment can report directly to this location.

- D. Establish a security perimeter around the Base area
  - 1. Coordinate with the police department to assist with
    - a) Ensuring Security
    - b) Blocking of streets
    - c) Movement of resources from Base to Lobby.
- E. Establish a check-in/check-out procedure for arriving resources:
  - 1. Base arrival time
  - 2. Company number and agency
  - 3. Officer in charge
  - 4. Number of company members
  - 5. Type of equipment
  - 6. Assignment given when leaving Base
- F. Park apparatus in an orderly fashion and keep crews together to facilitate response
- G. Advise the Incident Commander when apparatus are in Base and ready for assignment (only the IC can call for more resources)
- H. Coordinate the smooth flow of personnel and equipment from Base to lobby
- I. Establish an equipment cache and locate it in a secure area
  - 1. Consider a traffic flow that will facilitate unloading of equipment and transportation to lobby
- J. Base high-rise kit will be provided by the requesting agency

## **IX. COMMAND PRIORITIES**

- A. Once the initial arriving companies have begun operations, the Incident Commander must be concerned with properly resourcing the incident:
  - 1. Call for additional resources as soon as the need is identified. Any type of working fire will quickly utilize initial arriving fire companies.
  - 2. Begin to establish additional support systems. A fire which is not controlled by the initial attack companies and which will require more resources will need additional support in the form of staging, rehab, increased lobby control, stairwell support, base, and an expansion of the Incident Command System.
- B. Ensure a continuous water supply is established for fire attack companies by assigning an appropriate number of engine companies to provide water to the standpipe system. When there are multiple standpipe systems, pump to all standpipe inlets to ensure an adequate water supply is established.

- C. Request additional tactical channel(s) for command and control operations early into the incident.
- D. Establish a rapid intervention crew (IRIC then RIC) one floor below the fire floor; only after confirming there are no existing civilian rescues.
- E. Assign a company to check the floor above the fire floor; this is usually the first due Truck Company. The Incident Commander must get a report on conditions from above the fire as quickly as possible, indicating possible fire extension, smoke conditions, and the need for evacuation.
- F. Ensure every floor above the fire floor has been searched. Work with building officials to ensure all occupants are accounted for.
- G. Ensure personnel accountability is established and effectively maintained throughout the incident.
- H. If a defensive fire is anticipated, ensure a secure water supply is established to each Truck Company operating their aerial master stream devices.
- I. Establish ventilation groups.
  - 1. Ensure that flow path concerns are identified prior to establishing any ventilation openings.
  - 2. Getting a unit to the roof to open the penthouse door, bulkhead door, or other ventilation opening is critical to the overall ventilation effectiveness.
  - 3. Provide positive pressure ventilation to the attack stairwell as soon as possible.
  - 4. Additional stairwells may also require positive pressure ventilation.
- J. Assign additional resources to provide stairwell support to help with transporting equipment and other logistical needs to Staging or the Fire Floor. This will help to minimize the workload placed onto the crews already engaged in firefighting operations.
- K. Assign resources to begin salvage operations as soon as practical.
- L. The declaration of a MCI should be considered due to the injury potential to both civilians and firefighters.
- M. Consider Unified Command with operating agencies.

**X. COMMAND POSITIONS:**

- A. Incident Commander - First Arriving Chief Officer
  - 1. Responsible for management of all incident operations. Plans and directs the overall strategy for control of the incident and establishes

the organizational elements necessary to handle the incident.

- B. Operations Chief – Assigned as personnel are available
  - 1. Manages all suppression and rescue operations.
  - 2. Reports to, and consults with the IC regarding the overall strategy and tactics to be employed.
  - 3. Assigns and supervises Fire Attack, Staging, and Division and Group Supervisors.
  - 4. May operate from a location above ground in proximity to the fire suppression activities. This position may be assigned additional Chief Officers to manage various divisions or groups.
  
- C. Division Supervisor – Assigned as personnel are available
  - 1. Manages all suppression and rescue operations of the fire floor or designated floor.
  - 2. Reports to, and consults with the IC regarding the overall strategy and tactics to be employed.
  
- D. Safety Officer – Assigned as personnel are available
  - 1. The Safety Officer identifies hazardous situations, advises the Incident Commander in matters affecting personnel safety and investigates accidents that occur during the incident.
  
- E. Logistics Chief – Assigned as personnel are available
  - 1. Supervises and coordinates the activities of Lobby Control, Base, Stairwell Support, Water Supply, Communications, and the Medical Unit.
  - 2. The location of the Logistics Chief will vary depending on which element of this command requires attention.
  
- F. Plans Chief - Assigned as personnel are available
  - 1. Assists the IC in planning overall strategy for containment of the incident.
  - 2. Supervises and coordinates the Situation Status (SITSTAT) and Resource Status (RESTAT) inquiries.
  
- G. Information Officer – Designated Agency Representative
  - 1. The information officer provides liaison between the media and the Incident Commander, consults with the command staff regarding any constraints on the release of information and prepares press briefings.