

Halifax Fire Department

February 2, 2004

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Area Evacuation

13.01 PURPOSE

To provide a means of closing an area or moving people from an area in which life safety conditions have become unsafe or may become unsafe due to an emergency situation.

13.02 POLICY

In a variety of possible situations, it may be necessary to evacuate an area of Town. An evacuation of anything more than a single structure requires a coordinated effort between Fire and Police personnel at the scene to ensure that the evacuation is rapid, complete, and without unnecessary duplication of effort. It requires a definite plan and a method of reporting progress.

- A. When evacuation of an area is indicated due to an imminent hazard, the limits of the evacuation area will normally be determined by the Incident Commander at the scene and the Police Department Liaison at the scene. The resources available and the degree of risk involved will be factors in the determination of evacuation limits.
- B. The Incident Commander shall, upon determination of the necessity for evacuation, coordinate with the Police Liaison on the scene to plan and execute the evacuation.
- C. Fire Companies will not normally be utilized for evacuation operations. However, they may be utilized if available and not needed for control operations.

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13.03 RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Police Department will be responsible for securing the perimeter of the evacuation area, and for coordination and security of the evacuation center.
- C. The Fire Department Incident Commander will be responsible for the assessment of the degree of danger and the need for evacuation, and for the physical safety of personnel operating within the evacuation zone.

13.04 SCOPE

The scope of this policy concerns those situations in which life hazard conditions warrant the evacuation of an area. An “area” is defined as anything more than a single structure.

13.05 PUBLIC INFORMATION

Any major evacuation will require and benefit from complete Public Information notification. A Public Information Officer (PIO) should be assigned to communicate with the media as quickly as possible to explain exactly what the situation is and what people involved should do.

13.06 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

In situations where the Emergency Operations Center (E.O.C.) has been activated, the Fire Department Incident Commander at the scene may be required to report information to and receive direction from the E.O.C.

13.07 EVACUATION CENTERS

- A. In most situations it is desirable to have a location where evacuees can be directed. This Center should be located, secured and identified as quickly as possible.
- B. The Halifax Elementary School is a designated evacuation Center. Other facilities may be used if necessary.

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13.08 ORGANIZATION OF EVACUATION

Once the desired area of evacuation and the operational perimeter have been established, a plan is necessary to actually effect the desired evacuation. This will be dependent on the resources available (Fire, Police, other agencies) and the type of situation. Personnel from one or several agencies may be involved in actually alerting citizens and/or assisting them to evacuate.

- A. Establish a Unified Command Post for Fire, Police, and EMS. Utilize maps of the area to make assignments and to best utilize resources. To avoid duplication or omissions, units should report progress back to the Incident Commander. If it is not feasible to have a Unified Command Post (Police, Fire, EMS) Liaisons for each department will have to be established.
- B. Assign units, companies, or individuals to evacuate specific objectives (a building, a block, a street etc.) and report completion.
- C. Start with areas in most immediate danger first. Assign priorities according to degree of risk.
- D. Advise personnel if evacuees are to be directed to a particular Evacuation Center.
- E. Use Public Address (P.A.) function on electronic sirens to alert citizens or go door-to-door for individual notification.

13.09 ADDITIONAL SITUATIONS

In addition to conventional evacuations, some situations may indicate different approaches.

- A. **Atmospheric Hazard:** Some hazardous materials situations may pose a problem to persons exposed to outside air only. This may be caused by a wind carried irritant vapor or gas. In this case the best alternative may be to advise citizens to stay indoors with windows closed and HVAC units shut down.
- B. **Advisory Notification:** In some situations it may be necessary to notify citizens of potential risk and suggest that they relocate for their own convenience. Example; flooding with no immediate threat to physical safety.