

ROGUE VALLEY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Document:	High Rise Firefighting Considerations
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Purpose

To identify considerations for fighting fires in high rise buildings, a high rise is considered to be any building four or more stories.

High Rise Considerations

A working fire in a high rise building presents the logistical problem of moving the firefighting operation well above the street level. It complicates the task of rescue by reducing the options for occupant egress. Accomplishing objectives takes additional personnel and assistance from building fire safety systems.

Reported fires should include an initial response of a Chief Officer and Four Companies. Any indication of a working fire will require additional alarms; a stubborn working High Rise fire will require most of the fire resources available in both Jackson and Josephine County.

All personnel should **become familiar with buildings** that are four or more stories in height in their response area. Specifically that includes occupancy type, the sprinkler, standpipe, fire alarm, elevator, HVAC, access to upper floors, egress for occupants, other stairwell features, compartmentation of each floor, and any other fire safety features that may make our task easier.

During an extended incident, a **communications plan** should be established to reduce the volume of traffic on any one frequency. Operations and Logistics should each have a tactical frequency assigned by the IC. Other options for communications should also be considered if our normal radios do not meet the needs (Cell phones, fire control room phones, internal building phones, etc...).

Determine if you will **protect (shelter) in place or evacuate**. If you protect in place stay in touch with occupants and continually reassess your decision. Evacuation may only be required in specific portions of the building. Move occupants down below the fire using a separate stairwell from the attack stairwell.

Elevators are not to be used by fire crews until the extent of the fire problem is understood and COMMAND has approved its use. During an event elevators shall be

placed in Phase 1 mode. LOBBY will maintain control of elevators throughout the incident.

While freelancing and independent action can have a detrimental effect during any incident, a high-rise incident has a greater potential to create unsafe situations and waste resources. It is critical that officers directing tactical operations remain aware of the locations and activities of their subordinates.

Initial Assignments

The first arriving resources must provide a prompt investigation of the reported fire, insure the safety of building occupants, and begin an initial fire attack. The default assignments for first alarm resources are COMMAND, ATTACK, VENTILATION, and LOBBY. Command must be flexible with this plan, focusing on meeting the incident priorities and solving the highest priority problems first.

Incident Command – Chief Officer

- Connect with facility personnel and establish an Incident Action Plan.
- Determine if your Command Post will be with your command vehicle or inside the Building.
- Watch your span of control; consider assignments of Divisions, Groups, Operations, and Logistics early in the incident.
- Prepare to bump into Operations on arrival of another Chief Officer.

Fire Attack – 2 Companies

- The entire first crew goes to the fire floor, the Captain sizes up the fire floor and the floor above and below the fire floor. Consider a quick evaluation of all floors while ascending. Hook up to the standpipe one floor below the fire.
- Second company pumps the standpipe, remainder of the crew reports to the First Captain that was assigned to Attack inside the building.
- Both companies take a “High Rise” hose pack, irons, flashlight, and thermal imaging camera to fire floor to initiate the attack. Travel light; let future crews bring your additional equipment/bottles.

Ventilation – 1 Company

- Make the stairwells safe through pressurization; inspect the stairwells from top to bottom to be sure they provide a survivable environment. (Do the stairs go to the roof?) ***THIS MAY BE THE MOST CRITICAL LIFE SAFETY ACTIVITY AT THIS FIRE.***
- Post personnel to control the doors, label those you can't monitor. Doors will be compromised if you do not maintain some type of control.
- Remove smoke from the affected floors after the problems in the stairwells are solved.
- Determine how the HVAC system is working. Request LOBBY to shut it down if you have ***any*** indication of a problem.

Lobby Control – 1 Company

- Lobby is responsible for controlling vertical access of personnel to known safe routes; operating the elevators; controlling the air handling system; acquiring building keys and coordinating with the building engineers.
- Lobby will be most effective in buildings with fire control features; those buildings without systems may not need an entire crew to accomplish the tasks.

Lobby Control reports to Command until the Logistics Section Chief position is staffed; operates on the Logistic tactical frequency and monitors the Operational tactical frequency.

Additional Assignment Considerations Unique to High Rise

Staging

The staging area should have reserve personnel, supplies and equipment, rehab personnel and a medical treatment station for fire personnel. The Staging Area manager is responsible for managing all staging activities and reports to the Operations Section Chief. Staging can provide significant assistance to the Operations Chief by helping with the tracking and utilization of resources. Staging is located one or preferably two floors below the fire floor. Staging of equipment and supplies may initially be established in the lobby until sufficient personnel are available for stairwell support. Staging operates on the Operations tactical frequency and monitors the Logistical tactical frequency.

Rapid Intervention Team

Set up in the staging area. If more than one stairwell is being used by attack, then more than one RIT may be needed. The RIT should coordinate any pre-deployment activities with the Operations Section Chief.

Search

Search crews should first contact Lobby – Gather keys and occupant information prior to initiating search may save significant time. When searching keep Command / Operations well informed of your location during the search.

Stairwell Support

Stairwell is responsible for the transport of supplies and equipment to the staging area. Stairwell provides an excellent opportunity to use non-firefighters (such as PD) to move the supplies. The Stairwell Officer reports to Command until the Logistics Section Chief is staffed; works closely with Base, Lobby and Staging; operates on the Logistic tactical frequency and monitors the Operational tactical frequency.

Base

Base is a marshaling area for apparatus and equipment. The equipment is delivered to the lobby area for stairwell support to move up to staging. One person can be assigned the Base Manager and instruct companies arriving on scene what to bring into the building. The Base Manager reports to Command until the Logistics Section Chief position is staffed; works closely with Stairwell, Lobby and Staging; operates on the Logistic tactical frequency and monitors the Operational tactical frequency.

Operations Section Chief

Operations Section Chief should operate in the vicinity of the fire floor. Consider setting up an Operations Post in the Staging area to assist in the management of resources. Operating in the stairwell may provide the Operations Section Chief with the ability to easily coordinate the Divisions and Groups and to provide quality information for the Incident Commander.