

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT

DIVISION OF TRAINING

TRAINING BULLETIN



125 YEARS

TRAINING BULLETIN 93-1

RESPONSE TO CIVIL UNREST INCIDENTS

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I. Introduction:

- A. The San Francisco Fire Department has agreed to provide mutual aid to requesting agencies for fires, floods, earthquakes and civil unrest incidents.
- B. This document is intended to provide guidelines to Strike Team/Task Force Leaders and Company Officers when responding to civil unrest incidents.

II. On Scene Protection of Personnel:

- A. Department Units should be assigned, and respond with a law enforcement escort which would remain on scene and provide protection for personnel during the duration of the incident. If such escort is not available, consideration should be given to the delay entry into the designated area of civil unrest.
- B. Responding units may withdraw from emergency situations if the situation poses an extraordinary threat to the safety of personnel.
- C. The following items shall be worn by members riding on or in fire apparatus responding to, during, and returning from incidents:
 - 1. Goggles, face shield, or breathing apparatus face piece.
 - 2. Helmet
 - 3. Turnout Coats
 - 4. Body Armor (when available)
 - 5. Gloves
- D. Body armor shall be worn as follows:
 - 1. Body armor shall be put on prior to leaving base staging, or mobilization centers.
 - 2. Body armor shall be worn under turnout clothing.
- E. Personnel riding in vehicles shall have windows closed and doors locked. Personnel shall not ride on tailboards of fire apparatus.

- F. Units shall respond under emergency response conditions (Red Lights and Siren). Responding units are exempt from the requirements to stop at signal lights and stop signs; unnecessary stopping should be avoided.
- G. Discontinuing use of reds lights and siren may be a consideration by the Task Force Leader where such use would cause unwanted attention.
- H. Personnel shall not be placed above ground on aerial apparatus.
- I. Strike Team/Task Force Leaders, or any other personnel, shall not drive unaccompanied through the designated area of civil unrest.

III. Protection of Apparatus and Equipment:

- A. All tools and equipment normally exposed, shall be relocated in compartments or out of sight when possible.
- B. No apparatus shall be left unattended when in the designated area of civil unrest.

Exception: Strike Team/Task Force Leader vehicles shall be locked when unattended.

IV. Firearms:

The unauthorized carrying of weapons is a misdemeanor under California law and will not be tolerated or condoned by the Department or the State Mutual Aid System.

V. Strategic Considerations:

- A. Strike Team/Task Force Leaders and Company Officers should consider the overall environment of an incident and the potential of violence to fire fighting personnel or damage to apparatus and equipment prior to committing resources in a hostile area. Items for consideration shall be, but not limited to:
 - 1. Type of Incident
 - 2. Size of Crowd
 - 3. Attitude of Crowd
 - 4. Adverse reaction to the fire fighting force by the crowd.
 - 5. Lack of law enforcement personnel at the scene.

- B. Operations during "Riot Conditions" are influenced by the necessity to ensure the safety of personnel and the public and the security of apparatus and equipment. These considerations require conservative tactics commensurate with risk.
1. The "Buddy system" shall be utilized whereby no member or unit operates or works alone at an emergency. Pump operators shall not be left alone.
 2. Apparatus shall be parked at an emergency in such a manner as to facilitate rapid withdrawal from the area. Elevated stream apparatus shall be used only in the most extreme situation because of the time it takes to withdraw.
 3. Apparatus shall be positioned in such a manner as to afford maximum protection to personnel.
 4. Fire suppression actions should be defensive with the use of deck guns and limited hand lines.
 5. Operations involving the use of breathing apparatus should be kept to a minimum. Use of breathing apparatus should be typically be reserved for life safety operations.

- C. Strike Team and Task Force resources are to stay together when responding.

Exception:

1. Assignments to cover stations.
2. Assignments with Task Forces of requesting agency.

VI. If an attack occurs:

- A. If you are responding, keep moving until you are out of the hostile area.
- B. If you are committed, take cover or withdraw if possible.
- C. Notify incident communications and request law enforcement assistance immediately.

VII. Approaching A Structure:

- A. Check the streets surrounding the incident for loiterers, possible gang activity, or other potential hazard groups. This can be extremely important if the victim is an adversary of the crowd. Safety to the victim and Department personnel may be in jeopardy when the victim is removed from the structure. If at all possible law enforcement personnel

should accompany fire department members approaching and entering structures.

- B. Firefighters should not approach or enter the structure alone. Personnel safety is greatly enhanced by utilizing the "buddy system" in all incidents.
- C. When approaching a structure, observe windows, doors, roofs, etc., for any unusual conditions. It is particularly important to check upper windows in large apartment buildings. Members have been injured from large objects being dropped from upper story windows.
- D. Consider listening at the door....not knocking for ten seconds. Ten seconds of listening time may provide a good opportunity to evaluate the incident prior to committing yourself.
- E. Stand to one side of the door while listening and knocking.

VIII. Entering A Structure: (Enter A Structure Only For Life Safety Operations)

- A. Knock on the door. The initial knock should not be unusually loud or disturbing. At least two members should be at the door prior to knocking.
- B. Continue to stand to one side of the door.
- C. If someone says, "come in", DON'T. Ask the person to come to the door. If the person states they are unable to come to the door, carefully evaluate the situation prior to entering. Once inside the structure, you are much more vulnerable to attack.
- D. If there is no response to the knock, check the rear and sides of the house. In certain circumstances, checking with the neighbors may provide valuable information, i.e., elderly persons, small children, etc. Consider Communications check the call back number.
- E. If the door opens, look inside before entering. Look for unusual objects, or unusual situations.
- F. The firefighter nearest the door hinges should observe the portion of the room behind the door by glancing through the crack as the door opens.
- G. If there is a dog in the house, ask that it be taken to another room.

X. Apartment and Hotel Safety Procedures:

- A. The manager can be a valuable source of information. The manager may have knowledge of violent residents of the complex.

- B. If the complex is unfamiliar to you, ask the manager for a general layout such as the location of fire escapes, stairways, elevators, etc.
- C. Use the stairways as opposed to elevators whenever possible.
- D. When using elevators, if the call is violent in nature, do not go to the designated floor. Consider going to the floor below the incident, and using the stairs for the remaining distance. This will permit time to review and assess the situation. Using the elevator to arrive at the floor of the incident can result in Department personnel being confronted by a hostile person when the doors open with no escape available.

XI. Hostile Confrontations:

- A. Every hostile encounter is a unique situation making it impossible to identify specific actions to be taken by Department personnel when confronted by a violent individual or group. However, if the opportunity presents itself, disengage immediately and consider the following:
 - 1. Engage in conversation, i.e., "Why are you doing this?" Control of the situation is lost when taken by surprise by an armed individual.

A portion of this control can often be regained by getting the hostile person to converse with you.
 - 2. Attempt to get out of the "kill zone". Get behind a car, fire apparatus, wall, or out of the structure. Move laterally away from the assailant.
 - 3. Consider the mental state of the assailant. A depressed person can often be reasoned with. A paranoid, hyperactive, or persons with nystagmus (rapid twitching eyes) often cannot be reasoned with.
- B. The following considerations should be periodically reviewed when responding to violent incidents or operating in violence prone areas.
 - 1. Ensure all members are operating on the appropriate radio channel.
 - 2. Discuss egress routes prior to entering structures, alleys, subterranean garages, etc.
 - 3. Conceal body armor.
 - 4. Operate as a team. Every member is aware of their own responsibilities and that of the other members.
 - 5. Establish a regrouping area in the event that members are forced to separate.

6. Determine a commonly understood phrase or action that will discretely advise other emergency personnel of danger and to retreat.

C. Ensure law enforcement has been requested.

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CIVIL UNREST SITUATIONS

- Minimize exposure of all personnel to external hostilities.
- Limit spread of fires at exposures and buildings of origin.
- Prioritize incidents.
- Minimize interior attack, except when life safety is involved or small fires that can be quickly extinguished by one hand line.
- Roof ventilation for life safety situations **only**.
- Minimal overhaul.
- All tools/equipment placed in compartments.
- Use of heavy streams in "hit and run" mode.
- Use buddy system.
- Turn utilities off to damaged building if possible (you won't get utility companies responding into hostile area).
- **DO NOT** use water to control crowds.
- Logistics - think fuel, food, relief personnel, etc.
- Chief/Company Officers attend all briefings.
- Media relations through command personnel only.
- Accurate and timely information provided to all fire department personnel.
- Fire Department personnel shall not be placed above ground on ladder pipes; minimize use of ladder pipes.
- Utilize "multiversal" nozzles or other types of deck guns.
- Apparatus placement should be based on security and quick withdrawal.
- Minimize hose leads.
- Be aware of surroundings at all times.
- Avoid entering dead end or blocked streets.

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS CONTINUED

- Be aware at all intersections for other emergency vehicles responding.
- Do not request large numbers of resources to handle a single incident.

OVERRUN CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Prior to deploying into an area have a plan to execute if a hostile crowd overrun situation occurs:
 - 1. Brief all personnel, including law enforcement escort/security personnel if with you.
 - 2. Identify a specific signal that will be used if an evacuation of the area is necessary.
- B. Considerations in an overrun situation.
 - 1. Abandon all other vehicles and evacuate on a single apparatus propositioned for quick exit from the area.
 - 2. If abandoning vehicles and time permits, disable motor (i.e., cut battery cables, cut ignition wires, etc.).
 - 3. Remove microphones from mobile radio sets.
 - 4. Remove portable radios.
 - 5. Request law enforcement for extraction.