

San Francisco Fire Department

Division of Training

Training Bulletin 22-6



Split Truck Crew Considerations

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General Principles

Decisions made by first-in officers set the tone for the direction of firefighting operations.

It should not be the expectation to always split the first Truck crew. Several factors affect this decision including proximity of the Rescue Squad and second Truck, immediate and known rescues, location and advancement of the fire, building construction, time of day, occupancy, and wind conditions.

The decision of whether or not to split the Truck crew is a critical factor as it essentially determines how many tasks can be accomplished by the first Truck and what needs to be completed by the second arriving Truck. Rescue is top priority and all decisions on the fireground must be made with that understanding. If there are known rescues on the interior of the building, and a Rescue Squad is not on scene, the officer may elect to keep their crew intact and focus only on rescue operations.

The decision to split or not should be made based on the skills and experience of the crew and the situation encountered. It is imperative that a Truck officer make an informed decision developed at the beginning of the watch. Every crew member should have a clear understanding of their assignments. The allocation of crew members shall always be communicated to the IC.

Truck officers must remember that splitting the crew does not alleviate the officer from responsibility. Prior to entering the fire building, the officer must ensure that the proper ladders are being thrown to the proper locations, are secured, and safe for climbing.

Truck members should be trained to complete tasks fully before moving on to the next. Distractions are common on the fireground; however, a sound Truck Company will be able to overcome obstacles and set the incident up for success.

In the context of this training bulletin, splitting the crew is defined as a commitment of two separate teams to different areas for an extended duration. Sending two members to conduct forcible entry and continue to the interior to search, pull ceilings, and open walls is splitting the crew. Conversely, sending two members to conduct forcible entry and then rejoin the crew is not considered splitting.

A team sent to the roof without the officer must have the senior member take charge and make radio transmissions as necessary. Remember that until an ICS designation is made, a team uses their individual position as their designation. For example, two members sent to the roof under the command of the tiller shall have the tiller contact the IC as "Truck One Tiller".

The following considerations shall guide Truck company operations based on building type.
The following refers to **FIRST-IN TRUCK COMPANIES**:

Type 1

- **SPLIT**

- A High-Rise Building requires adequate personnel and coordination unique to this building type. As stated in the High-Rise Manual, the initial Truck crew shall be split with the officer and 2 FF's entering the building as part of the initial attack group. The driver and tiller remain with the Truck to use the aerial ladder, reposition the truck or be used by the IC.

Type 2

- **DO NOT SPLIT**

- If the building is occupied, such as a warehouse during business hours, a major search operation may be necessary. This would justify keeping the crew together as one unit.

- **SPLIT**

- After normal business hours or unknown occupancy. Rescue being the priority, a team from the truck must conduct an interior search if safe to do so. Due to the potential for dangerous roof types and potential for collapse, sending members to the roof is discouraged. However, use of the aerial and ceiling hook to ventilate skylights may warrant splitting the crew. After laddering, two members may be dispatched as a team to conduct forcible entry on metal rollup and other doors.
- Upon arrival at an advanced fire, splitting the crew entails sending members to the exterior to soften the building (open roll up doors, remove bars, horizontal ventilation, etc.), while the driver and tiller prepare for ladder pipe operations.

Type 3

- **DO NOT SPLIT**

- Top Floor Fire
 - With the many tasks that need completion on the roof of a type 3, the crew should not be split. Immediate ventilation for crews operating on the top floor must be a top priority. Other tasks, including a perimeter/lightwell search and forcing the penthouse door, can occur simultaneously with the ventilation hole being opened if the crew remains intact.
- Advanced Vertical Shaft Fire
 - Significant fire in vertical shafts such as a light well require a full Truck crew on the roof in anticipation of fire in the attic space.

- **SPLIT**

- Below Top Floor Fire
 - Similar Tasks on the roof need completion, however the opening of a ventilation hole is not warranted. This would justify splitting the crew and sending two members to the interior to assist fire attack. The members shall NEVER abandon the roof unless ordered to do so by the IC (or dangers present) as the fire may extend to the top floor or attic and a ventilation hole will need to be opened.

Type 4

- **SPLIT / DO NOT SPLIT**

- Similar to Type 3

Type 5 -Flat Roof

- **DO NOT SPLIT**

Top Floor Fire – Aerial Used

- Crew should remain intact and complete Flat Roof Operations including cutting a ventilation hole immediately. This type of building lends to possible horizontal extension to exposure buildings and/or extension to the attic space where additional ventilation holes will need to be cut or other strategies employed. This requires the additional personnel of an entire 4-member crew.

- **SPLIT**

Top Floor Fire – Ground ladder

- Since a firefighter is not committed to operating the aerial, a crew can be split into two teams of 2 and 3 members. This would allow for members to immediately conduct roof operations and interior operations simultaneously.

- **SPLIT**

Below Top Floor Fire

- Without the need for a ventilation hole immediately, crew should be split to accomplish interior and roof operations simultaneously. Again, members shall not abandon the roof unless ordered to do so or safety requires.
 - Exception: Fire with potential to extend to the top floor should be treated as a top floor fire and the crew is not split and will go to the roof.

Type 5 -Peaked Roof

Peaked Roof – This is the most dangerous roof on which to ventilate, and risk/reward assessment must be made by the Truck officer prior to determining tactical objectives. However, remember that if an SFFD Engine crew has opted to make a hose lead to the interior of the top floor, a Truck company should make every effort to conduct vertical ventilation. If it is unsafe to do so, a radio communication must immediately be made to the IC. Whenever possible, the ventilation hole should be made on the ATTACHED side. A firefighter slipping there would fall into a valley or adjacent roof and not to the ground.

- **DO NOT SPLIT**

Top Floor Fire –Aerial Used

- Two firefighters are not enough to safely cut a hole on steeply pitched roof buildings. These situations usually necessitate using ridge/roofing ladders and tying members off with rope while they cut. Additionally, many hands are required to get tools and ladders safely to the roof. All four members should be sent to the roof to conduct ventilation.

- **SPLIT**

Top Floor Fire –Ground ladder

- Three members can cut the ventilation hole while two members enter the building to assist with Fire Attack.
- The officer may also elect to keep their crew intact and utilize all members for roof operations. This does not necessarily mean all members will be on the roof. Personnel are needed to foot the ladder and haul tools up and down to those working on the roof. This decision is based on factors such as roof pitch, whether or not the roof is attached, experience of crew, or other observed factors.

A Truck company arriving as the *FIRST FIRE DEPARTMENT UNIT* at a Working Fire should not take their entire company to the roof. The possibility of rescue at the front entrance cannot be compromised. Do not assume that someone else will conduct a search or perform a rescue.

Who Goes to the Roof?

The Truck officer shall decide who goes to the roof. The officer should go where the most impactful decisions need to be made. For example, if the fire is on the first floor of a 7 story Type 3, it is a mistake for the officer to go to the roof. The most critical tactic in this fire is eliminating horizontal and vertical extension on the interior. However, in a 4-story type 5 balloon frame construction building with fire on the first floor, the officer should consider going to the roof. This type of construction may warrant vertical ventilation on the roof.

The Tiller always goes to the roof. Allocation of other Truck members will be determined at the beginning of the watch based on experience and skillset.

While not all situations can be predicted, Truck officers must make use of predesignated roles prior to an incident. At roll call, Truck officers shall designate the following positions:

These are recommendations, the SFFD does not have designated RIDING POSITIONS

Apparatus Seat positions – Driver, Tiller, EMT, PX or Junior Firefighter behind officer

50' Ladder positions- Driver/Tiller on the Poles. Other positions determined by Height/Size

35' Ladder positions – Tiller, Driver, FF behind Driver

Fire Escape Ladder – Tiller and FF behind Driver or Driver

Roof Team –2 members

Tiller and FF sitting behind the Driver

Roof Team – 3 members

Driver, Tiller, and Senior FF

Interior team –2 members

Officer, PX/Junior FF

Company Officers shall have the authority to deviate from these designations based on the skills, experience, and abilities of their crew.

Should the officer elect to go to the roof, they must alter these positions. Again, this should be planned at the beginning of the watch. Should two firefighters be sent to the interior without the officer, it is imperative that they know to whom they report. If an Engine officer is advancing a line prior to a Chief's arrival, they will report to them. If a Fire Attack Chief has been assigned, the two firefighters will report to them.

Second Arriving Truck

The first responsibility of the second Truck is to complete the Tasks left incomplete by the first Truck. It is imperative that the first and second Truck do not duplicate tasks independently of each other. If a chief officer is on the scene, the second Truck must report in prior to initiating action. Should the first Truck go all in on rescue or otherwise fail to complete other tasks, the second Truck may elect to split their crew and assume first Truck operations based on the previously stated criteria.

At the majority of fires, the first Truck is able to complete their initial tasks. In these cases, the second Truck should initially remain intact and report to the Fire Attack Chief. Their main priorities will be Rescue, Forcible Entry and Searching for Fire Extension. The IC or Fire Attack Chief may order them to split up later based on developing incident priorities.

Truck officer decision making is a learned skill. A combination of experience and training create a solid framework for sound fireground decisions. While actual experience is paramount, the sharing of knowledge increases the knowledge base for all members. When conducting a Truck Drill, the officer must have a plan in place. Included in that plan should be officer development that includes fire tactic discussion and explanations as to why those decisions would be made. Understanding the "Why" helps all members understand the impacts of Officer decisions.

