

CHAPTER 18

**FIREFIGHTER INCIDENT SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY GUIDELINES
ICS 910**

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues facing the Incident Commander is personnel accountability at the scene of emergencies. These Firefighter Incident Safety and Accountability Guidelines incorporate additional firefighter safety measures and personnel accountability into the Incident Command System (ICS) to ensure compliance with NFPA standards.

The NFPA 1500 and 1561 Standards contain specific requirements regarding accountability of members that include but are not limited to the following:

Firefighter Emergencies

The term “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” shall be used to clear radio traffic. Clear text shall be used to identify the type of emergency “FIREFIGHTER DOWN,” “FIREFIGHTER MISSING,” or “FIREFIGHTER TRAPPED,” etc.

Other guidelines for “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” include:

- A distinctive “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” tone should be transmitted by a Dispatch Center on designated channel(s) followed by clear text that identifies the type of emergency, i.e. “FIREFIGHTER DOWN,” “FIREFIGHTER MISSING,” or “FIREFIGHTER TRAPPED”.
- The fire department Dispatch Center should broadcast “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” Radio Tone and verbal notification of “FIREFIGHTER DOWN,” “FIREFIGHTER MISSING,” or “FIREFIGHTER TRAPPED” etc., on designated channels.

Rapid Intervention Crew/Company (RIC) Members

Rapid Intervention personnel have two very important duties. These are:

- Monitor designated radio channel(s) while standing by and during rescue operations.
- Initiate rescue plan assigned by the Incident Commander.

In the initial stages of an incident where only one team is operating in the hazardous area at a working structural fire, a minimum of four individuals is required, consisting of two individuals working as a team in the hazard area and two individuals present outside this hazard area for assistance or rescue at emergency operations where entry into the danger area is required. The standby members shall be responsible for maintaining a constant awareness of the number and identity of members operating in the hazardous area, their location and function, and time of entry. The standby members shall remain in radio, visual, voice or signal-line communications with the team (NFPA 1500 6-4.4).

The assembling of four members for the initial fire attack can be accomplished in many ways. The fire department should determine the manner in which they plan to assemble members in their response plan.

Members that arrive on the scene of a working structural fire prior to the assembling of four persons can initiate exterior actions in preparation for an interior attack.

Initial attack operations shall be organized to ensure that, if upon arrival at the emergency scene, initial attack personnel find an imminent life-threatening situation in which immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury, such action shall be permitted with less than four personnel when conducted in accordance with NFPA 1500 Section 6-2. No exception shall be permitted when there is no possibility to save lives. Any such actions taken in accordance with this section shall be thoroughly investigated by the fire department with a written report submitted to the fire chief (NFPA 1500 6-4.4.5).

In the initial stages of an incident, the IC supervises the RIC. As the incident grows in complexity, this supervision can be assigned to the Operations Section Chief or even to individual Divisions to ensure the most rapid and effective deployment on a rescue.

When sufficient personnel are on-scene, the rapid intervention capability for the incident should be raised from the two-in, two-out minimum to include an entire crew or company. In some instances, such as multiple and/or remote entrance points, multiple RIC elements should be assigned and a Rapid Intervention Group Supervisor activated to supervise positioning and deployment of these Crews/Companies.

In high-rise fire incidents the RIC should typically be located at Staging. This will allow for RIC's to be deployed in a timely manner. Consider multiple RIC's if multiple floors are involved with positioning based on the assigned floor.

If a RIC is deployed to provide a rescue of a firefighter, the Incident Commander shall assign an additional RIC as a backup for the RIC that was deployed. Members working in the immediate area should be notified by the Incident Commander to assist in the rescue if at all possible. The IC must remember to continue to keep sufficient forces engaged in controlling the spread of the fire if threatening the trapped, lost, or injured firefighter.

Additional Rapid Intervention Considerations

When preparing for a firefighter rescue, consider the worst-case scenario. Rapid Intervention Crew/Company (RIC) standard operating guidelines are incident driven.

After considering existing conditions for rescue, RIC should collect the proper equipment required for any potential search and rescue operation encountered.

RIC should prepare by donning full protective clothing and breathing apparatus.

Officers or members assigned the task of RIC shall not get involved in routine firefighting activities, but remain in a state of readiness keeping company members together and ready for deployment.

Operational Retreat Guidelines

In addition to radio traffic requiring evacuation, the following standardized audible signal can be used to indicate evacuation.

The **EVACUATION SIGNAL** will consist of repeated short blasts of the air horn for approximately 10 seconds, followed by 10 seconds of silence. This sequence of air horn blasts for 10 seconds followed by a 10-second period of silence will be done three times; total air horn evacuation signal including periods of silence will last 50 seconds. The incident commander shall designate specific apparatus to sound the evacuation signal using air horns. This should be done in conjunction with the radio announcement of "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC", with direction for emergency scene personnel to evacuate the hazard area.

The Dispatch Center should continue to advise the Incident Commander of the elapsed time at each additional 15-minute interval, or until canceled by the IC, or until the incident is declared under control, i.e., knockdown.

<p style="text-align: center;">FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION READ: FIREFIGHTER INCIDENT SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY GUIDELINES - ICS 910</p>
