

CHAPTER 2

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**PERSONNEL INCIDENT SAFETY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY GUIDELINES**

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INTRODUCTIONS

In 1987 the National Fire Protection Association adopted NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program. This standard was revised in 1997 and is a broad-based national standard which addresses firefighting safety in fire ground operations, as well as a number of other important issues. NFPA Standard 1561 has been revised several times and establishes guidelines for Fire Department Incident Managements Systems.

This and many other national safety standards are important issues adopted for personnel accountability at the scene of emergencies. Personnel Incident Safety and Accountability Guidelines provide additional personnel safety measures, emergency announcements, and accountability into the Incident Command System (ICS) to ensure compliance with state and national safety standards

The National Standards contain specific requirements regarding accountability of members that include but are not limited to the following:

PERSONNEL EMERGENCIES

The Term "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" shall be used to clear radio traffic. Clear text shall be used to identify the type of emergency "PERSONNEL DOWN", "PERSONNEL MISSING," or "PERSONNEL TRAPPED," etc. NOTE: Specific terms such as Officer and/or Firefighter may be used.

Other guidelines for "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" include:

- A distinctive "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" tone transmitted by a Dispatch Center on designated channel(s) followed by clear text that identifies the type of emergency, i.e. "PERSONNEL DOWN", "PERSONNEL MISSING", or "PERSONNEL TRAPPED".

- The Dispatch Center OR On Scene incident Command should broadcast “EMERGENCY TRAFFIC” Radio Tone and verbal notification of “PERSONNEL DOWN”, “PERSONNEL MISSING”, or “PERSONNEL TRAPPED” etc., on designated channels.
- Initiate rescue action plan assigned by the Incident Commander.
- Monitor designated radio channel(s) during rescue operations.

In the initial stages of an incident where only one team is operating in the hazardous area at a working Incident, 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 of the initial entry can be accomplished in many ways. The jurisdictions should determine the manner in which they plan to assemble members in their response plan.

Initial entry operations shall be organized to ensure that, if upon arrival at the emergency scene, initial personnel that find an imminent life-threatening situation 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 National Safety Standards . 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 department.

Operational Retreat Policy

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.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

"Clear Text." - Use of common terminology understandable by all. The intent of the use of "Clear-Text" for radio communications is to paint a clear picture and reduce confusion at incidents, particularly where different agencies are working together. "FIREFIGHTER DOWN", "FIREFIGHTER MISSED", or "FIREFIGHTER TRAPPED" are examples of clear-text terms used for radio communications to notify personnel on-scene at an emergency that a firefighter accident or emergency has occurred. NOTE: The term **Mayday** should not be used for ground communications that could cause confusion with the term used for aeronautical and nautical emergencies.

"Emergency Traffic" - A term used to clear designated channels used at an incident to make way for important radio traffic for an emergency situation of an immediate change in tactical operations.

Personnel Accountability Reports (PAR): Personnel accountability reports of personnel and companies assigned to an incident.

Rapid Intervention Crew/Company (RIC). A crew or company designated to stand-by in a state of readiness to perform a rescue effort of personnel.

Standby Members. Two members/Personnel who remain outside the hazard area during the “initial stages” of an incident. 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.