



## Division 06

## Fire and Rescue Operations

### Chapter 07 – Searching for Victims

March 2009

#### POLICY

The Department shall establish a system for conducting searches and documenting searched areas at a structure fire.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Primary Search** – is a rapid, thorough, systematic search that is performed to locate and remove occupants before the fire has been declared under control.

**Secondary Search** – is a systematic search that is conducted after the fire has been declared under control. Ventilation and sufficient lighting shall be introduced into the structure. A different company or companies than those involved in the primary search activities will complete the secondary searches. The secondary search will include the entire fire structure and all exposure buildings.

**Search/Guide Ropes** – are ropes deployed for the primary purpose of ensuring firefighters assigned to search operations will be able to return to their entrance/anchor point.

**Systematic Search** – is a search technique deployed to ensure that a designated area has been completely and methodically searched.

**Thermal Image Camera** – is a device that translates a thermal picture into an electrical picture, and then a visual image for the human eye. This is accomplished because it relies on the thermal energy emitted by all objects and not on reflected visible light.

Thermal Imagers provide vision capability with zero light present.

**Search Communications** – is the key to ensuring and documenting that a meticulous search of a structure has been completed. Communications must take place verbally (face-to-face) or via radio, or written utilizing a marking system.

#### PROCEDURES

##### 1. General

Personnel directed to perform search operations shall be properly trained in search and rescue techniques, and shall have reviewed and practiced the procedures found herein

Primary and secondary searches will be completed within all structures where an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) atmosphere exists.

Members entering an IDLH atmosphere will don all personal protective equipment, including self-contained breathing apparatus.

The officer in-charge of the search team is responsible for performing a rescue related size-up, identifying the fire's location, all means of entrance and egress, and communicating the search and rescue plan to the search team.

Companies engaging in search operations will deploy in teams of at least two (2) personnel. Each search team will be equipped with a minimum of a Department radio, hand lights, hydraulic forcible entry tool, set of irons, and



a rope (personal or rope bag). Units that are equipped with a thermal imaging camera will utilize the camera while performing searches.

When a victim is encountered, the search team officer will notify the Division Supervisor, announce the route of egress, and ensure that appropriate emergency medical care is initiated.

When companies assigned to either the primary or secondary search group encounter and remove victims, the Incident Commander must assign another company to continue/complete the search.

## 2. Basic Search Process

Primary search of the structure shall be prioritized in the following order, unless conditions dictate otherwise:

- The fire area
- The area adjacent to the fire area
- Floor above the fire
- Other areas (stairwells, elevators, balconies, etc.)

Personnel conducting a search should be cognizant of the following:

- Occupants will normally exit through their normal means of egress when presented with an emergency situation.
- Check behind doors and underneath windows.
- Children have a tendency to hide when faced with an emergency situation.

Units performing the searches in stairwells and elevators are searched will place the appropriate markings at the lobby level entrance of the stairwell and elevators.

## 3. Large or Open Area Searches

When searching large open spaces, multi-family dwellings, or when a search/guide rope is being utilized, the Incident Commander will assign a search group supervisor. The search group supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that a systematic primary and secondary search has been completed in all areas of the structure. Before declaring the incident mitigated, the search group supervisor will be responsible for entering the structure and verifying that all areas have been marked as searched, and shall report findings to the Incident Commander.

Search/guide ropes will be deployed on all searches of large, open, or congested spaces, or when deemed necessary by the unit officer, division/group supervisor, or the Incident Commander.

Incident Commanders will ensure that when units are deployed to search large open spaces, or when a search/guide rope is being utilized, a thermal imaging camera is placed in operation by the search teams.

The search line should be secured to a fixed object at the search team's entry point. In addition to the search line, light(s)/strobe(s) may be placed at the entry point to provide the search crew a point of reference.

## 4. Progress Reports and Documentation

Communicating the progress of a search is vital to documenting and ensuring that all areas within a structure have been searched. Progress reports should include the name of the unit completing the search, the type of search, the division that has been searched, and search results.



Example: *Division 3 to command* – “Truck 1 has completed a primary search of Division 3, search is negative.” When a victim is located, the search team will include the location of the victim and the route of egress.

To reduce radio traffic, unit officers should make every effort to provide the required search information to their division/group supervisor face-to-face. The supervisor will then inform command.

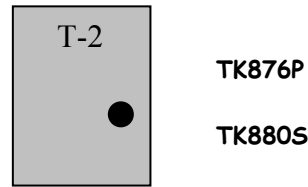
A marking system will be utilized to document all searches in high occupancy dwellings and large commercial buildings, or when deemed appropriate by the division/group supervisor and/or Incident Commander. The search teams will utilize a lumber crayon to write the status of the search on the wall adjacent to the doorknob.

Units initiating a primary search will write their station number as they enter the unit on the wall adjacent to the doorknob to indicate that personnel are currently conducting a primary search of the area. *After completing the primary search, the officer-in-charge of the primary search team will write a “P” next to their station number to indicate that the primary search has been completed.*

Units initiating a secondary search will write their station number upon entering the unit to be searched on the wall adjacent to the doorknob to indicate that personnel are currently conducting a secondary search of the area. *After completing the secondary search, the officer-in-charge of the secondary search team will write an “S” next to their station number to indicate that the secondary search has been completed.*

**Example:** When Truck 876 completes the primary search and TK880 completes the secondary search on apartment T-2, the

following markings will be written adjacent to the doorknob:



Structures not qualifying for implementation of the Department’s marking system should be searched following criteria established in this General Order, and shall be documented verbally and by the traditional methods (example: mattresses, furniture overturned and repositioned).

### 5. Responsibilities

**The Incident Commander, Division Supervisor, and Unit Officer will each be responsible for:**

- Supervision and control of personnel under his/her command
- The safety and welfare of personnel under his/her command

The Incident Commander will be responsible for:

- Verifying that a systematic primary and secondary search has been completed within all addresses involved in the incident.
- Ensuring that Stairwells, elevators, and balconies are searched.

The Division Supervisor will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that a systematic primary and secondary search has been completed within the division being supervised.
- Ensuring proper documenting of the progress of their search



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- Providing the Incident Commander with timely search status reports

The Unit Officer will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that primary or secondary searches are conducted in a systematic manner as outlined herein
- Providing the appropriate supervisor with search progress reports

### REFERENCES

N/A

### FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

N/A