



**ARCADIA FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE**

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SEARCH

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PURPOSE

To provide guidance in the provision of a primary and secondary search. Primary and secondary search is a critical component of offensive firefighting operations.

PROCECURE

A primary and secondary search shall be conducted in all offensive structural firefighting operations.

PROCEDURE

I. Primary Search Procedures

- A. A primary search shall be conducted to verify occupant status on every offensive firefighting operation.
- B. The search and rescue team will consist of a minimum of two (2) firefighters equipped with:
 - 1. Full turn-outs with SCBA
 - 2. Personal alarm device
 - 3. Portable radio
 - 4. Light box or flashlight – one per person
 - 5. Marking device – chalk or paint stick
 - 6. Forcible entry tool
 - 7. Tether (red webbing)
 - 8. Light at point of entry
 - 9. Rope bag – one per person
 - 10. Thermal Imaging Camera
- C. Hose line should be deployed immediately to protect the search and rescue team and their avenues of escape.

- D. The area should be ventilated as quickly as possible. Rapid and effective ventilation can drastically improve the interior environment of the structure. In addition to increasing the safety of personnel, ventilation will speed search and related fire control operations.
- E. During interior searches if the door is closed, feel the door for excessive heat prior to opening.
- F. Before entering the room or building to be searched, it will be the policy of this Department to always:
1. Verify your personal alarm device is activated.
 2. Prior to entering a building, the search team should develop a search plan. The search team should inform the IC that they are entering, the number of people in the search team, the location they are entering from, and the direction they are heading. Example: "RA106 entering A side of the structure with two, right hand turns."
 3. Upon entering a building, if the search team turns right they should stay in contact with the walls on their right, and continue to their right sweeping the floor area. If the search team enters the building and turns left, they should stay in contact with the walls on their left, and continue to their left sweeping the floor area.
 4. Search teams should keep in mind that they should use their drop bags, by tying one end off to an anchor point outside of the building. Using the drop bag will allow you to:
 - a. Speed up your exit from the building by following your rope to the outside without having to follow the walls.
 - b. Will give the search team another reference point in the event that they lose contact of the walls.
 - c. In the event that the search team themselves become trapped, rescuers will be able to quickly find the first search team by following the rope line.
 5. Check under beds and furniture.
 6. Thoroughly check closets and bathrooms for victims.

7. Open windows as you move around the room.

Opening windows in the room being searched will aid the rescuer by removing heat and smoke, thus increasing visibility and giving the victims added time to be rescued.

8. Keep in verbal contact with other members of the search team.

If fire is encountered, closing the door will often contain the fire temporarily. Immediately notify the IC of the location of the fire.

- G. When a room has been thoroughly searched, close the door and make a slash through your company assignment number on the lower third of the door.

This will indicate to others that the room has already been searched and who conducted the primary search. This procedure will be conducted on every room searched.

- H. If victims are encountered during the primary search, notify the IC of your location, status of the victim(s), number of victim(s) and if additional personnel or equipment will be needed to remove the victim(s).

- I. EMT's or paramedics will evaluate victims removed from an area with a hazardous atmosphere.

- J. After completion of the primary search, and having found no victims, report an "All Clear" to the IC.

- K. Upon reporting an "All Clear" to the IC, report to the Incident Commander for another assignment.

II. Secondary Search Procedures

- A. A secondary search shall be conducted in a planned and coordinated effort utilizing primary search tactics to verify occupant status on all offensive firefighting operations. Secondary searches shall be conducted after the fire has been knocked down and structure ventilation has been initiated.

- B. The secondary search shall not be conducted by the crew, or crews, who conducted the primary search.

The secondary search is a more thorough search of the involved structure, conducted at a slower pace making sure all rooms and voids have been checked for potential victims.

- C. The secondary search team will consist of a minimum of two (2) firefighters equipped with the same personal equipment listed for the primary search team.

- D. Due to the differences between a primary and secondary searches equipment needs may be different. Equipment to move and lift heavy materials may be needed by a secondary search team to verify victims are not hidden in void spaces.
- E. If victims are encountered during the secondary search, notify the IC of your location, status of the victim(s), number of victim(s) and if additional men or equipment will be needed to remove the victim(s).
- F. EMT's or paramedics will evaluate victims removed from an area with a hazardous atmosphere.
- G. After completion of the secondary search, and having found no victims, report an "All Clear" to the IC.
- H. Upon reporting an "All Clear" to the IC, report to the assigned company officer for another assignment.

III. Conclusion

The primary search system is not absolutely foolproof. Extending a primary search means only that search teams have quickly gone through the interior to verify that everyone the team can locate is out. The primary search is often done under hot, smoky, dark, rushed and sometimes desperate conditions. Although the primary search system is not perfect, it offers the best chance of locating, protecting and removing fire victims.

The secondary search system is designed to verify all occupants have exited, or been removed, from the involved structure. The secondary search is conducted thoroughly and at a much slower pace than the primary search and may require tools designed for the moving and lifting heavy materials to locate victims. The secondary search helps to ensure that no potential victim, or victims, remain within the involved structure.