Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Association
Model Operating Procedures

Fireground Strategy

Purpose

This procedure outlines the two fireground strategies employed at structure fire incidents. These strategies are ***Offensive Strategy*** and ***Defensive Strategy***, and are based on a structured approach to risk management that is employed at all fire incidents. The foundation of our approach to risk management:

- *We may risk our lives a lot to protect savable lives.*
- *We may risk our lives a little to protect savable property.*
- *We will not risk our lives at all to save what is already lost.*

Selection of a Fireground Strategy

The Incident Commander (IC) will select an appropriate strategy based on an assessment of level of risk and opportunity to save lives and property. Things that may be included in that assessment are:

- The Building: type of construction, condition, age, etc.
- Structural Integrity of the Building: contents vs. structural involvement.
- The Fire Load: what's burning and what's left to burn.
- Fire and Smoke Conditions: extent, location, etc.
- Rescue Potential: occupants in the building and the potential for their survival of the fire and smoke conditions

Once an appropriate strategy is selected, it is the IC's responsibility to assure that all personnel are informed, and operating within the selected strategy. It is also the IC's responsibility to assure that simultaneous ***Offensive*** and ***Defensive*** operations do not occur in the same fire area. The IC may elect to change the strategy being used based on reevaluation of risk/benefit parameters. Should a change in strategy occur, it is again the IC's responsibility to assure that all personnel are informed and that the change in strategy is implemented in an orderly fashion.

Offensive Strategy

Offensive operations involve a fast, aggressive interior attack by personnel using handlines. Offensive fire should be fought from the unburned side, driving the fire back into already burned areas. Important features of an ***Offensive*** attack are:

- Assign an IRIC prior to entry. Replace the IRIC with a full RIC when sufficient personnel have arrived on scene.
- Ventilation, advancement of hose line(s) and primary search must all be accomplished simultaneously. In most cases this will require that separate companies be assigned to *engine company function* and *truck company function*.
- If there are known victims, the initial attack line should go into operation between the victims and the fire, driving the fire away from the victims and personnel engaged in rescue operations.
- Direct application of water to the fire using straight or solid bore fire streams is the standard for ***Offensive*** attack. Water should be applied directly to the fuel that is burning at a sufficient gpm rate to knock down the fire. Application of water for more than 10 seconds without darkening the fire is clear evidence of one of the following:
    - The stream is not reaching the burning fuels
    - The hose line/nozzle combination is too small
- Every effort should be made to preserve the thermal layering that exists in the building. Do not operate fog streams during an interior attack. Avoid excessive steam generation which will rapidly make the interior untenable for firefighters and unsurvivable for victims.

- In general, do not operate fire streams into smoke. In impending flashover conditions, short one to two second bursts of straight streams against the ceiling will usually cool the super heated gasses at ceiling level below ignition temperature without excessive generation of steam.
- Operating streams into windows, doors or roof openings is not part of an ***Offensive*** interior attack. To do so will typically drive interior attack crews out of the building and drive fire into unburned parts of the building.
- When the fire involves concealed spaces (attics, utility chases, etc.) it becomes paramount that truck companies open up the spaces for operation of fire streams by engine companies into the involved spaces. Officers who hesitate to open up because they don't want to beat up the building may loose the entire structure.
- Aggressive ventilation is a major contributor to survival of victims, firefighter safety, and saving property. Ventilation must be well planned and coordinated. Ventilation openings should be made in the immediate are of the fire to avoid drawing fire into unburned areas. Positive pressure should be injected from the unburned side and exit out of the immediate fire area.
- The IC must anticipate the amount of time required to set up the ***Offensive*** attack, and how the fire will progress in that time frame. Given a long set-up time, conditions may deteriorate to the point that a ***Defensive Strategy*** is required.

Defensive Strategy

A ***Defensive*** attack is fought with master streams from the exterior, and concentrates on confining the fire to the involved structure and preventing extension to exposures. A decision to use a ***Defensive Strategy*** is typically made when there is little or no chance of saving lives or property in the fire building, and great risk to firefighters involved engaged in any effort to do so. The IC has made a conscious decision to write off the fire building.

Important features of a ***Defensive*** attack are:

- All exposures are identified and protected.
- *Primary Search* is conducted in the exposures, and threatened occupants are evacuated.
- Master streams flowing a minimum 750 gpm are typically the most effective tool for protecting exposures. Once exposures are protected, the next priority is usually to knock down the main body of fire, thus reducing the risk to exposures.
- When exposure is severe and water is limited, the most effective tactic is to put water or foam on the exposure.
- A fire brand patrol down wind is usually needed.

Change of Strategy

The decision to change from an ***Offensive Strategy*** to a ***Defensive Strategy*** should be made as an *Emergency Traffic* transmission. Once notified, all personnel should withdraw from the structure without delay, and maintain a safe distance from the building. A *Personnel Accountability Report (PAR)* should be obtained by the IC following the change in strategy. Interior hose lines should be withdrawn and repositioned. If retreat of interior crews is delayed by retrieval of the hose line and it is unsafe to stay in the building, the hose line should be abandoned.

The IC should always be pessimistic when implementing an ***Offensive Strategy***, and anticipate the need to withdraw and reposition personnel with enough lead time to accomplish the transition in an orderly manner.