

Volusia County Fire Services Safety Gram



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Risk Management Process

What is a Risk: Webster's dictionary describes risk as a possibility of suffering harm or loss: damage. In the fire services these risks are everywhere. Firefighters are taught basic skills when entering the fire service to later advance to specific training.

One of the areas where risks abound is structure fires. How to develop a risk management process must consist of four parts, identifying the potential risks, evaluating the risk, implementing control measures, and monitoring the control measures.

Risk identification pinpoints actual or potential hazards for the job function. ¹"A good rule of thumb is to anticipate the worst that can happen when identifying risk". The process is to make a list of things that might go wrong at a working structure fire. For example, a fire has consumed fifty percent of a structure resulting in a weakening of the structure. Is there someone trapped in the structure? Is there enough equipment or personnel on scene to complete tasks safely? The list goes on in identifying hazards on a fire scene.

The second risk management processes is risk evaluations. A definition of a risk evaluation given by the National Fire College is the potential of a given hazard and the severity of its consequences. The structure is fifty percent involved in fire. The probability of the roof falling in on the firefighters may be great if an interior attack is made. Is there probability of a person being alive in such a structure? What are the department policies dealing with these risks: Two-In-Two-Out 103.004 Standard Operating Guideline (S.O.G), Personal Accountability Reporting System (P.A.R.S.) S.O.G., Structural Fires 103.010 S.O.G., Fire Ground Operation and Command Post 103.021 S.O.G., etc. Deviations from S.O.G.'s may lead to injuries or damage to equipment in or around the fire ground.

The next step is to prioritize the risk by the degree of a hazard based upon the frequency and severity of occurrence. A risk or risks that have a high probability of occurrence combined with serious consequences will have immediate action and shall be considered a high priority. An example of a high priority risk is to place firefighters in a structure that is fifty percent involved with fire and the roof appears ready to collapse. The lower the risk and the lower the occurrence, the lower priority on the list for action is required. An example would be a firefighter pulling an attack line off the right side of an apparatus. All risk, no matter the priority, is a concern of the incident commander and the department.

The next step is to control measures to be implemented. Control measures are solutions for elimination or reduction of real or potential hazards by implementing effective control measures. When all of the risk factors have been identified and prioritized, control measures shall be implemented. These control measures will reduce or eliminate the risk to firefighters on the scene of a structure fire. Some of the best examples of control measures for structure fires are: Two-In-Two-Out 103.004 (S.O.G), Personal Accountability Reporting System (P.A.R.S.) S.O.G., Structural Fires 103.010 S.O.G., Fire Ground Operation & Command Post 103.021 S.O.G., National Fire protection Association (NFPA) standards, etc.

Once control measures are in place, firefighters must observe standard operating guidelines. Staff officers must observe, follow and make recommended changes where weaknesses or improvements are needed in S.O.G.'s. The risk management process is never ending, and following the risk management process will reduce liability and workmen's compensation issues.

¹ Advance Safety Operations and Management FEMA 1st edition, 2nd printing-June 2003

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Dispersion level Chart

Dispersion Range 0-40 is stable air, low fire intensity, less long range spotting.

Dispersion Range 41-70 is moderate unstable air, increased fire intensity and long range spotting.

Dispersion Range 70+ is unstable air, high amount of upper lifting, intense fire activity, potential for long range spotting and plume dominated wildfires.

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Fight fire aggressively, but provide for safety first.

Initiate all action based on current and expected fire behavior.

Recognize current weather conditions and obtain forecasts.

Ensure instructions are given and understood.

Obtain current information on status.

Remain in communication with crewmembers, your supervisor, and adjoining forces.

Determine safety zones and escape routes.

Establish lookouts in potentially hazardous situations.

Remain in control at all times.

Stay alert, keep calm, act decisively.

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