

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 01		DEPARTMENT FIRE-RESCUE
SUBJECT STRIP MALL RESPONSE	SECTION 20	PAGE 1 of 9	EFFECTIVE DATE February 3, 2026

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for incidents that occur at [Strip Malls](#).

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all sworn San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) personnel, excluding Lifeguard personnel.

III. AUTHORITY

The Fire Chief authorizes this policy.

IV. POLICY

A. Risk Management and Safety Considerations

1. Building construction

- i. A feature found in Strip malls is the common attic, which allows for uninhibited horizontal fire spread over multiple units
- ii. Construction Features
 - a) [Legacy Construction](#) vs. [Lightweight Construction](#)
 - 1) Legacy Construction
 - (i) Legacy construction generally includes masonry walls with solid wood structural members instead of lightweight wood trusses and wooden I-joist.
 - 2) Lightweight Construction
 - (i) Lightweight construction uses a truss system joined together by gusset plates or other fasteners that are more likely to fail under fire conditions.
 - b) Unsupported vs. Supported [Mansard/Facades/Overhangs](#)
 - (i) Until verified, assume the mansard, façade, and/or overhang is unsupported.
 - (ii) An unsupported mansard, façade, or overhang presents a collapse hazard.
 - (iii) When the mansard, façade, or overhang is bolted onto the supporting wall, it is an indicator that it is supported.
 - (iv) These hazards are typically found over access/entry points.

iii. Hazard Classifications

- a) Higher-hazard occupations like nail salons, tire shops, laundromats, and auto mechanics can trigger more stringent life safety systems. Woodworking or metalworking businesses require sprinkler systems. These types of businesses may not have followed the proper procedures to meet safety requirements.

B. Strip Mall Response Strategic Objectives

1. The first alarm resources dispatched to a reported strip mall incident include:
 - i. 4 engines

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- ii. 2 trucks
 - iii. 2 battalion chiefs (BCs)
 - iv. 1 ALS ambulance
2. The primary objectives of the initial responding companies are:
- i. Search and Rescue.
 - ii. Confine and extinguish the fire.
 - iii. Conserve property after fire control is achieved.
 - iv. Ensure the safety and survival of emergency personnel.
3. Incident Command (IC) should determine the strategic function, which can be:
- i. [Offensive](#)
 - ii. [Defensive](#)
 - a) Combination efforts can occur in some structures depending on construction type and fire involvement.
 - 1) Not an initial strategic function
 - 2) These efforts may be taken following a risk analysis, which should include, but is not limited to:
 - (i) The location of the firewall is identified
 - (ii) The adjacent portion has little to no involvement
 - (iii) Portion of building is structurally sound.
 - (iv) The defensive area should be clearly identified and communicated
 - 3) Strip Malls often present with multiple businesses and no firewall; however, an occupancy(s) may have defensive operations occurring while offensive operations are occurring in adjacent units.
4. The IC must assess the need for ventilation operation(s) in support of the strategic objectives.
5. To help facilitate the strategic objectives, company officers may use the Pre-Fire Plans (PFP) to identify important information, including, but not limited to:
- i. Utilities
 - ii. Fire Department Connections (FDC)
 - iii. Roof access
 - iv. Building layout
 - v. Stairwell location
- C. Strip Mall Response Tactical Objectives
1. IC Guidelines
- i. The first-in company or chief officer should carry out the following tasks:
 - a) Evaluate the scene and conduct a risk assessment.

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- b) Give an initial radio report to Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC) of visible conditions that includes the following:
 - 1) Number of stories
 - 2) Occupancy type
 - 3) Obvious conditions
 - 4) Safety concerns (construction features/collapse)
 - 5) Actions being taken
 - 6) Any additional pertinent information
 - 7) Assume IC
 - c) Conduct a 360 of the building to accurately identify fire conditions.
 - 1) If the size of the building does not permit an accurate 360 to be conducted by the first-in officer, communication with multiple units may be required.
2. Additional Alarm Request
- If there are indications that a working incident is in progress, the IC should request additional alarm(s) as soon as possible to minimize reflex time.
- i. 2nd or greater alarm triggers:
 - a) Greater than one unit involved
 - b) Attic Involvement
 - c) Reflex time of surrounding companies
 - ii. 2nd or greater alarm considerations:
 - a) Identify a staging location and relay the location to ECDC
 - b) Request an additional tactical (tac) channel.
 - c) All resources assigned in the subsequent alarms should be directed to staging.
 - d) The first-in engine of the second alarm should be prepared to assume the assignment of Staging.
3. Responsibilities
- i. IC Responsibilities
 - a) The first in company officer or chief officer arrival:
 - 1) Assume command per the [Command Procedures](#) policy
 - 2) Establish divisions prioritizing the unit involved and immediate exposures
 - 3) Develop and implement an Incident Action Plan
 - 4) Evaluate and continually assess resource assignments and needs, fire progress, structural stability, and fire loading
 - 5) Initial company officer ICs should be prepared to provide a turnover to the first-in BC
 - b) BC's additional responsibilities:
 - 1) Assume IC
 - 2) Notify ECDC of a command transfer and provide an incident update
 - 3) Communicate the operational strategy (ie. Offensive or Defensive)

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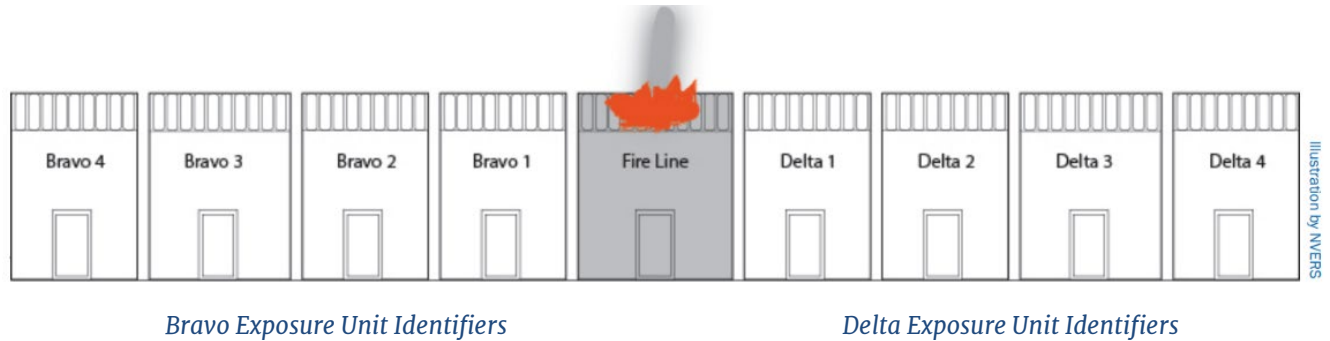
- 4) Establish an incident command post (ICP)
 - 5) Consider the following assignments for incoming BCs:
 - (i) Safety Officer
 - (ii) Division Supervisor
 - (iii) Operations Section Chief (OSC)
 - (iv) Rescue Group
 - (v) Logistics
 - (vi) Medical Group Supervisor
- ii. Tactical Assignments of 1st Alarm Resources
- (i) Engine company priority assignments
 - a. Establish a water supply
 - (1) Identify or establish a second water supply, if needed
 - b. Establish Fire Attack
 - c. Establish Divisions and/or Groups as incident dictates, including but not limited to:
 - (1) Multi-story buildings
 - (2) Adjacent Exposure units as Divisions (Bravo, Delta, Division 2)



- (3) Divisions with multiple units may be subdivided by the Division Supervisor (ex. Bravo 1, Bravo 2, Bravo 3)

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- (4) Identifiers for an exposure occupancy may be used for identification only and may not necessitate the assignment of a Division Supervisor.



- d. Establish a Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC)
 - (1) Multiple points of entry will require the establishment of multiple RICs and a RIC Group Supervisor
 - e. Establish Accountability
 - (ii) Truck company priority assignments
 - a. Based on building type and location of fire, the IC should prioritize truck company assignments as follows:
 - (1) Known rescues
 - (2) Forcible entry
 - (3) Ventilation needs
 - b. Consider establishing a Rescue Group, Roof Division, and/or Ventilation Group based on incident needs.
 - c. Truck companies can be assigned to interior Divisions if there are no immediate rescue, forcible entry, or ventilation needs.
 - d. Salvage and overhaul operations should be conducted throughout the incident.
 - e. Secure utilities
4. Arriving Staff Officers and Operations Support Personnel
- i. Operations Support personnel should report to the ICP for assignment.
 - ii. The arriving Shift Commander may assume command of the incident.
 - a) If a Shift Commander assumes IC, the initial BC may be assigned as Operations Section Chief or another position as needed.
 - iii. Subsequent arriving assistant chiefs, deputy chiefs, staff battalion chiefs, operations support personnel, and medical personnel may be assigned as:
 - a) PIO
 - b) Assistant Safety Officers
 - c) Medical Group Supervisor

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- d) Rehab
- e) Other responsibilities as required
- iv. The assumption of IC is optional for the Fire Chief, assistant chiefs, deputy chiefs, and shift commanders.

D. Task Level

1. Engine Company Operations

- i. Apparatus placement
 - a) The first-in engine company should spot the apparatus in the most advantageous position for deploying hose lines.
 - b) The second engine company should consider water supply and/or fire department connections (FDC), if not already established.
 - c) Additional engine companies not directly involved in water supply should be spotted in a location that does not impede the truck company's apparatus placement.
- ii. Access and fire attack considerations
 - a) Exercise door control to mitigate fire spread.
 - 1) Compromised doors or glass fronts may create an uncontrolled flow path.
 - 2) Construction features, floor plan, and fire load may contribute to rapid fire progression.
 - b) Monitor interior for changes in fire conditions.
 - 1) Utilize a thermal imaging camera
- iii. Tasks are based on the location of the fire
 - a) Fire confined to the room of origin
 - 1) Locate, confine, and extinguish the fire
 - 2) Conduct a primary and secondary search
 - 3) Check adjacent units and attic for extension
 - 4) Coordinate ventilation with the truck company
 - b) Room of origin with attic involvement
 - 1) All tasks identified in previous list
 - 2) Pull ceilings
 - 3) Attempt to locate a firewall
 - (i) Confirm the location of a firewall with the truck company
 - c) Exterior fire with possible or confirmed extension into the attic
 - 1) Confine and extinguish exterior fire
 - 2) Access the adjacent unit to determine attic involvement
 - 3) Multiple hose lines should be in place to control both the exterior and interior fire prior to ventilation occurring.
- iv. Attack Hose Line Management
 - a) Reflex time must be considered when making hose and nozzle selections.

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- b) Consider the 1 3/4" attack line for a small, compartmentalized fire.
- c) Consider a 2 1/2" attack line equipped with a smooth bore 1 1/8" tip for attic involvement, or heavy fire in a single occupancy.
 - 1) Deploying a 2 1/2" line requires sufficient personnel to be effective. Supervisors should plan on multiple firefighters to deploy a single line.
- d) Each involved unit should have a hose line in place.
- e) Personnel should exercise caution when accessing the structure directly under the mansard, façade, or overhang.
 - 1) Mansard, façade, or overhang may be unsupported.
 - 2) Structural stability may be compromised due to fire conditions or the application of water.
- v. Supply lines
 - a) Consider a 2nd and 3rd water supply as incident expands.
- 2. Truck Company Operations
 - i. Apparatus placement
 - a) Truck companies should coordinate spotting on corners:
 - (i) Maximize scrub area
 - (ii) Consider opposing corners
 - (iii) Allow access for window rescues and roof operations
 - (iv) Allow multiple points of egress
 - (v) Consider collapse zones
 - (vi) Anticipate defensive operations
 - b) Consider avoiding ladder placement on the alpha side of the structure when facades are present.
 - 1) Exercise caution when laddering a façade due to increased difficulty in roof access and lack of structural stability.
 - 2) Communicate with the interior crews whether a mansard, façade, or overhang is supported or unsupported for hazard awareness.
 - ii. Forcible Entry
 - a) The IC should prioritize assigning appropriate resources such as truck companies and USAR for forcible entry needs.
 - 1) Strip malls may present forcible entry challenges that delay hose line placement.
 - 2) Truck companies may need to address forcible entry prior to accessing the roof to ensure well-coordinated vertical ventilation.
 - 3) Potential obstacles may include but are not limited to:
 - (i) Reinforced security doors
 - (ii) Roll up doors
 - (iii) Window bars
 - (iv) Solid metal doors

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(v) Scissor gates

iii. Vertical Ventilation

- a) Ladder from the uninvolved section of the roof.
- b) Place additional ladders for egress.
- c) Coordinate with Fire Attack to ensure hose lines are in place and vertical ventilation is necessary.
- d) Ensure ventilation occurs on the appropriate/involved side of the firewall.
 - 1) Use inspection holes to confirm construction type and fire progress.
- e) Consider removing skylights in place of cutting ventilation holes.
- f) After the initial ventilation hole, communicate with interior crews to assess effectiveness.
 - 1) Large volumes of pressurized smoke and/or fire from a ventilation hole are an indication of ineffective fire attack and should be communicated.
 - 2) Avoid expanding vertical ventilation holes if fire attack is ineffective.
- g) Strip/Trench Operations
 - 1) Utilized as a defensive tactic with the following considerations:
 - (i) Increased fire progression from the unit involved to the strip/trench.
 - (ii) Strip/Trench Operations is time-consuming.
 - (iii) Distance from the involved portion must be considered.
 - (iv) Requires multiple truck companies to complete.
- h) Hazards of Roof Operations
 - 1) Solar panels
 - 2) Void spaces
 - 3) Deadloads, such as AC units and storage
 - 4) Unsupported mansards/facades/overhangs
 - 5) [Parapets](#)
 - 6) Power lines
 - 7) Lightweight construction

V. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Defensive Operations**: refers to a strategy used when a fire is too large or dangerous to be fought with an offensive attack. Typically adopted when the risks of interior engagement outweigh the benefits or are currently unachievable. [\(RETURN\)](#)
- B. **Façade**: one exterior side of a building; usually, but not always, the front. The wall can serve decorative purposes and offer little to no structural support. [\(RETURN\)](#)
- C. **Lightweight construction**:
 1. **Lightweight Truss**: A collection of lightweight structural components joined in triangular unit that can be used to support either floors or roofs.
 2. **Lightweight Wood Truss**: A collection of lightweight wood structural components joined in a triangular configuration that can be used to support either floors or roofs. [\(RETURN\)](#)

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- D. Legacy Construction: In terms of wood-frame construction, the use of solid wood members as opposed to lightweight wood trusses and wooden I-joist. [\(RETURN\)](#)
- E. Mansard: A type of roof characterized by two slopes on each of its four sides, with the lower slope significantly steeper than the upper slope. [\(RETURN\)](#)
- F. Offensive Operations: Going interior to perform fire attack and primary search. Offensive operations may transition to defensive operations when risk outweighs the gain. [\(RETURN\)](#)
- G. Parapet: a portion of the wall extending above the roof. The parapet is required to be as fire-resistant as the lower wall and extend a distance prescribed by the building code. [\(RETURN\)](#)
- H. Strip Mall: Generally considered a single-story commercial building that contains multiple retail or business units arranged in a row. These units often share common walls and attics and have separate entrances from the outside. [\(RETURN\)](#)