

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 01		DEPARTMENT FIRE-RESCUE
SUBJECT MID-RISE RESPONSE	SECTION 06	PAGE 1 of 9	EFFECTIVE DATE February 13, 2025

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines on a Mid-Rise response.

II. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) personnel.

III. AUTHORITY

The Fire Chief authorizes this policy.

IV. POLICY

A. Mid-Rise Buildings

1. Mid-Rise buildings are 4-7 stories tall
2. There are a large number of buildings that are constructed below 75' tall to avoid the higher cost features required of Life Safety High-Rise Buildings greater than 75' tall.
3. Hazards of Mid-Rise Buildings:
 - i. Modern
 - a) Potential for high occupancy levels
 - b) Potential for all of the hazards associated with a High-Rise and fewer Life-Safety Systems in place
 - c) Residential over Commercial
 - ii. Legacy
 - a) All hazards of the modern high-rise
 - b) No sprinkler systems
 - c) Antiquated or non-functioning Fire Protection Systems

B. Mid-Rise Response Strategic Objectives

1. The first alarm resources dispatched to a reported mid-rise incident include:
 - i. 5 engines
 - ii. 2 trucks
 - iii. 2 battalion chiefs (BCs)
 - iv. 1 ALS ambulance
 - v. 1 USAR

There are slight variations in adjoining agencies' response plans
2. The primary objectives of the initial responding companies are to:
 - i. Ensure the safety of occupants and emergency personnel
 - ii. Provide emergency medical treatment and transport
 - iii. Determine the incident operational strategy of offensive or defensive
 - iv. Determine resources needed to mitigate the incident

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- v. Gather information from civilians and Pre-Fire Plans
- vi. Develop an Incident Communications Plan
- vii. Confine and extinguish the fire
- viii. Conserve property after control of the fire has been achieved
- 3. Identify the Occupancy type to determine tactical objectives
 - i. Garden Style v. Center hallway
 - ii. Compartmentalized v Uncompartmentalized
 - iii. Mixed-use – Residential over commercial
- 4. Apparatus placement in support of strategic objective
 - i. Engine Placement
 - a) Should allow for inside truck placement
 - b) Should support suppression efforts
 - 1) Determine if utilizing standpipes, aerial ladder as a standpipe, hose aloft, 2.5” Gated Wye up the stairwell, or pre-connects
 - ii. Truck Placement
 - a) Truck companies should coordinate inside spotting on corners (A/B, A/D) to maximize scrub area, capturing 3 sides of the building and allowing access for window rescues and roof operations
- 5. Identify attack and evacuation stairwells. Factors such as building type, time of day, occupancy load, and size of the fire will help define the priority assigned to this function.
- 6. Develop a ventilation plan to facilitate the strategic objectives.
- 7. To help facilitate the primary incident objectives, Company Officers may use the Pre-Fire Plans (PFP) to assist in identifying elevators, stairwells, Fire Protection Systems (FPS), utilities, and other important information.

C. Mid-Rise Response Tactical Objectives

- 1. Incident Command (IC) Guidelines
 - i. The first in Company or Chief Officer should carry out the following tasks:
 - a) Initial radio report, evaluation, and risk assessment of the situation
 - b) Conduct a 360-degree inspection of the building to accurately identify occupancy type and 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
 - c) Give an initial radio report to the Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC) of visible conditions that include the following:
 - 1) Building height (if known)
 - 2) Building/Occupancy type
 - 3) Obvious conditions
 - 4) Safety concerns (construction features/collapse)

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- 5) Actions being taken
- 6) Any additional pertinent information
- 7) Additional resource request
- d) Assume IC
- e) Request additional alarms
 - 1) The IC should anticipate that an incident of any magnitude may require additional alarms. These requests should be made as soon as possible to minimize reflex time. This is necessary to support a continuous fire attack, perform search and rescue, and accomplish support functions.
 - 2) If there are indications that a working incident is in progress, the IC should request additional alarms.
 - 3) The IC has discretion based on fire conditions and building height to either establish Staging per the [Staging Policy](#) or assign Staging two floors below and establish a Base per the [High-Rise Emergency Response Policy](#).
 - 4) Identify a Staging or Base location and relay the location to ECDC
 - 5) All resources assigned in the subsequent alarms should be directed to the Staging or Base location.
 - 6) The first-in Engine of the second alarm should be prepared to assume the assignment of Staging or Base.
 - 7) Request an additional tactical channel.
- f) Gather additional information
 - 1) Obtain information from building representatives/civilians, to include but are not limited to:
 - (i) Location of the fire or hazard
 - (ii) Access points
 - (iii) Evacuation status
 - (iv) FPS status
 - (v) Unique building hazards

2. IC Responsibilities

- a) The first-in Company Officer or Chief Officer Arrival
 - 1) Assume command per the Command Procedure Policy
 - 2) Establish Divisions prioritizing the fire floor and floors above the fire
 - 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
- ii. Mid-Rise Response Assignments
 - a) Establish Fire Attack/Division(s)

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- 1) On incidents with nothing showing or when the fire floor is not identifiable, establish Fire Attack
 - (i) The Fire Alarm Panel or Fire Control Center can provide a location to investigate
- 2) Establish a Division once Fire Attack has located the fire floor
- 3) Assign the initial 2 companies to Fire Attack/Division
- b) Establish a Division(s) above the fire floor
- c) Establish a Division(s) below the fire floor
- d) Establish a Water Supply Group
 - 1) Composed of at least two engineers
- e) Establish a Rescue Group based on incident needs
 - 1) Consider utilizing:
 - (i) 1 Truck Company
 - (ii) 1 US&R Company
- iii. Establish an Evacuation (Evac) Group when needed
 - a) Building and Occupancy Type may necessitate the assignment of units dedicated to assisting in evacuations
- iv. Establish Staging 2 floors below fire floor or outside the building
 - a) At the IC's discretion
 - b) Should be based on the building height and location of the fire
 - 1) Reference Staging Section of the [High-Rise Emergency Response Policy](#) if Staging is created inside the building
 - 2) Reference the [Staging Policy](#)
- v. Establish a Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC)
 - a) Based on the building and location of the fire, determine if RIC should be established two floors below the fire
 - b) Consider RIC Group Supervisor when there are multiple points of entry and there is a need for multiple RICs
- vi. Establish a Ventilation Group
3. Battalion Chief's additional responsibilities
 - a) Assume IC, establish an incident command post (ICP) and consider the following assignments for incoming BCs:
 - 1) Operations Section Chief (OSC)
 - 2) Assign a BC to the incident floor as the Division Supervisor
 - 3) Rescue Group
 - 4) Safety Officer
 - 5) Logistics
 - 6) Liaison Officer
 - 7) [Medical Branch Director](#) (Medical)

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- b) Subsequent arriving Chief Officers will be assigned as required
- c) Subsequent arriving BCs should report to the command post in full PPE with an SCBA, radio, cell phone, and high-rise packet if relevant to fire conditions, height, occupancy type, and/or building construction.
- d) Consider implementing expanded communications
 - 1) Division/Group Supervisors communicate with IC/Operations on the assigned command channel
 - 2) Consider requesting additional tactical channels from ECDC
- ii. Arriving Staff Officers and Operations Support Personnel
 - a) Staff Officers and Operations Support Personnel should report to the ICP for assignment.
- iii. Subsequent arriving Assistant Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, and Staff Battalion Chiefs may be assigned as:
 - a) Public Information Officer (PIO)
 - b) Safety Officers
 - c) Medical Unit Leader
 - d) Other management responsibilities as required
- iv. The assumption of IC is optional for the Fire Chief, Assistant Chiefs, and Deputy Chiefs

D. Mid-Rise Response Task-Level Objectives

1. Engine Company Assignments

- i. Fire Attack/Division
 - a) Access Knox box for keys
 - b) Locate the alarm panel to identify the area/unit involved
 - c) Identify the best access to the building
 - d) Determine standpipe usage and/or hose lay for attack lines
 - e) Identify the attack and evacuation stairwells
 - 1) When identifying the attack stairwell, the following considerations should be made:
 - (i) Proximity to the fire
 - (ii) Roof access
 - (iii) Standpipe access
 - a. Not all stairwells have fire protection system access
 - (iv) Door control or utilizing the leeward side in open stairwells to minimize wind-driven fire behavior and flow path disruption
 - 2) Communicate the stairwell uses to the IC or Operations, if established
 - 3) Once the attack stairwell has been identified, confirm that the stairwell above the fire floor is clear of occupants before exposing it to the IDLH atmosphere.
 - (i) Factors such as the size of the fire, time of day, and occupant load should be considered.

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- (ii) Crews should attempt to minimize smoke migration by utilizing door control tactics to control the flow path.
 - (iii) Notch the door on the lower corner opposite of the hinges to facilitate the passage of hose lines through a closed door.
- 4) Once the evacuation stairwell has been identified, the following considerations should be made:
 - (i) Informing ambulatory civilians of the dedicated evacuation stairwell location
 - (ii) Dedicating a crew to non-ambulatory evacuations if needed
 - (iii) Informing civilians to shelter in place for non-impacted floors.
- f) Complete a primary and secondary search
 - 1) Notify IC/Operations when complete
- g) Attack Hose Line Management
 - 1) For a compartmentalized fire, consider utilizing any of the following, but not limited to:
 - (i) 2 1/2" attack line with smooth bore 1 1/8" tip for any fire extending or anticipated to extend beyond the room of origin
 - a. Consider utilizing pre-made 2 1/2" hose packs
 - b. Deploying a 2 1/2" line requires sufficient personnel to be effective. Supervisors should plan on at least 6 firefighters to utilize a single line
 - (ii) (2) 1 3/4" high-rise hose packs to the standpipe to serve as primary and back-up line
 - (i) (2) 1 3/4" pre-connect hose lines up the stairwell to serve as primary and back-up line
 - (ii) 2 1/2" condo lay up the stairwell or with a drop bag for extended distances
 - (iii) The aerial ladder as an exterior standpipe
 - 2) For a large, uncompartmentalized fire, consider a 2 1/2" attack line equipped with a smooth bore 1 1/8" tip.
 - (i) Consider utilizing pre-made 2 1/2" hose packs
 - (ii) Deploying a 2 1/2" line requires sufficient personnel to be effective. Supervisors should plan on at least 6 firefighters to utilize a single line.
 - (iii) Utilizing the aerial ladder as an exterior standpipe
 - 3) Hose line placement should utilize the following:
 - (i) A primary and backup line to any floor with active fire conditions
 - (ii) An exposure line to the floor above any floor with active fire conditions
- h) Salvage and overhaul considerations:
 - 1) Salvage should be conducted throughout all phases of fire operations
 - (i) Consider the delay of horizontal and vertical water spread as it travels to the floors below

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- (ii) Mitigate and prevent water from entering the hoist ways or from damaging elevator equipment
 - 2) Create an overhaul plan that includes how and where to remove debris
 - (i) On upper floors, consider the amount of water usage during overhaul to prevent further water damage below
 - ii. Divisions above the fire floor should prioritize the following:
 - a) Search and Rescue
 - b) Exposure line(s)
 - c) Extension of both fire and smoke
 - 1) Smoke may accumulate on the upper floors
 - d) Evacuations or sheltering in place
 - iii. Divisions below the fire floor should prioritize the following:
 - a) Evacuations or sheltering in place
 - b) Salvage operations
 - iv. Water Supply Group
 - a) Develop a water supply plan
 - 1) Communicate with Fire Attack/Division on plan of attack, which may include but is not limited to:
 - (i) Standpipe usage
 - (ii) 2 1/2" up the stairwell or aloft
 - (iii) The Aerial Ladder being used as a standpipe
 - (iv) Supporting the sprinkler system
 - b) Standpipe usage
 - 1) Dry standpipe systems may be independent and require communication with attack crews on which standpipe to supply
 - 2) Standpipes may be located on various sides of the building and may be looped or independent of each other
 - 3) Supply the standpipe/fire department connection (FDC) with an initial pump pressure of 150 psi
 - v. RIC
 - a) Established two floors below when applicable
 - b) Reference the [RIC Policy](#) for further details
2. Truck Company Assignments
- i. Rescue Group
 - a) Based on the time of day, building type, occupant load, and fire conditions, the need for a Rescue Group may be required very early in the incident. The primary goal of this group is to perform rescues or assist with self-evacuation of the occupants.
 - b) Consider assigning a Rescue Group when multiple exterior rescues are being performed.

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- c) Responsibilities of Rescue Group:
 - 1) Confirm with Fire Attack/Division which stairwells have been identified as evacuation and attack stairwells.
 - (i) Consider utilizing rapid ascent tactics
 - a. The highest priority area to search is the attack stairwell above the fire floor. Ideally, this search should be complete or well underway before fire attack takes place.
 - 2) Evacuation stairwells should be kept clear of smoke and heat to the greatest extent possible.
 - 3) Strict stairwell door opening discipline will help enhance pressurization operations and maintain stairwell integrity.
- d) Rescue crews should:
 - 1) Ensure automatic unlocking stairwell doors are activated (unlocked).
 - 2) Obtain keys.
 - 3) Ensure doors remain unlocked after removing the key.
 - (i) If doors cannot be kept unlocked, duct tape can be utilized to keep the locking mechanism disengaged.
 - 4) Not prop open stairwell doors unnecessarily.
 - 5) Conduct a continuous search of the attack and evacuation stairwells throughout the incident.
- ii. Ventilation Group
 - a) Determine ventilation needs with Fire Attack/Divisions
 - 1) Horizontal
 - 2) Vertical
 - 3) Combination
 - b) Ventilation must be well-coordinated and communicated with interior companies to prevent adversely affecting flow path and fire conditions
 - c) Ventilate common areas and stairwells in legacy center hallways utilizing “[Vent for Life](#)” methods
 - 1) Must be well coordinated with interior units and with adequate hose lines in place before occurring
 - d) May need to pressurize evacuation stairwells or coordinate positive pressure ventilation utilizing stairwells
- iii. Truck companies can be assigned to divisions if there are no immediate exterior/window rescues or ventilation needs.
- 3. Other Company Assignments (non-specific to unit type)
 - i. Secure utilities
 - ii. Accountability
 - iii. Medical Group when there are multiple patients
 - iv. Evacuation Group (Evac)

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- 1) Develop an occupant movement plan
 - (i) Partial evacuation
 - a. Evacuate involved floors/areas
 - b. Shelter in place on floors/areas that are not threatened
 - (ii) Movement to safe refuge areas
 - a. If an area is deemed a safe refuge, crews should utilize a gas detector to ensure Carbon Monoxide (CO) levels do not endanger evacuees.
 - (iii) Total evacuation
 - a. Considerations:
 - (1) Time consuming
 - (2) Difficult to move large numbers of people
 - (3) Determine an offsite temporary shelter and transportation for all evacuees

4. Elevator Usage

- i. Elevators are typically not used during initial mid-rise operations.
- ii. Refer to the [High-Rise Emergency Response](#) Policy for elevator usage guidelines.

V. DEFINITIONS

- A. Medical Branch Director (Medical): That portion of the Incident Command structure is designed to provide the Incident Commander with a basic expandable system for handling any number of civilian patients in a Mass Casualty Incident or Multiple Patient Incident plan. [RETURN](#)
- B. Scrub Area: The scrub area is the vertical surface area of a building wall that can be touched with the tip of an aerial ladder. It includes the area between the aerial ladder and the building, making apparatus spotting a key consideration. [RETURN](#)
- C. Vent for Life: Removing smoke, heat, and gases from a legacy center hallway building by opening up roof access, penthouse, or skylights to ventilate the common stairwell. This must be well-coordinated with interior operations to prevent the extension of fire. [RETURN](#)