

Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Survival

Size-Up Your Area of Operation

Objective: To cause the company officer and firefighters to pause for a moment, look over their area of operation, evaluate their risk exposure and determine a safe approach to completing assigned tactical objectives.

The firefighter shouldn't tunnel vision on the task at hand. It's necessary to take a few seconds to size up the situation within line of sight and listen to all radio communications or reports.

Determine Victim Survival Profile

Objective: To cause the incident commander, company officer and firefighter to consider fire conditions and determine if any victims can survive the event as part of the initial and ongoing action plan development.

Our first goal is to save lives, and any firefighter risk is based on that potential. No action plan can be accurately developed until we first determine if the victim can survive the existing fire conditions before rescuers reach them.

Do Not Risk Your Life for What Is Already Lost

Objective: Prevent firefighters from engaging in high-risk operations when all is lost.

If conditions indicate there is no victim survival or the building is lost to fire, firefighters should not extend risk.

Extend Limited Risk to Protect Savable Property

Objective: To cause firefighters to limit risk exposure when trying to save a building.

No building is worth the life of a firefighter. If it can be saved, limited risk and careful operations should be applied. If conditions deteriorate and become unsafe, crews must be rapidly withdrawn and the action plan adjusted.

Extend Only Calculated Risk to Protect Savable Lives

Objective: To cause firefighters to manage search and rescue and supporting firefighting operations in a calculated, controlled and safe manner during high-risk rescue operations.

Our goal is to save lives. Where the survival profile indicates lives may be saved, risk should be applied in a very calculated manner. Rescue operations must be fully supported with adequate resources and risk must be closely and continually assessed.

Be Continuously Aware of Your Surroundings and Fireground Communications

Objective: To cause all firefighters and company officers/supervisors to maintain constant situational awareness of all that is happening in their area of operations and elsewhere on the fireground that may affect their risk and safety.

The firefighter must maintain constant situational awareness of changing conditions in his/her area of work and elsewhere on the fireground, including closely monitoring all radio communications.

You're Authorized to Say No to Unsafe Practices or Conditions: Stop, Talk, Decide

Objective: To prevent firefighters and supervisors from engaging in unsafe practices or exposure to unsafe conditions by allowing any member to raise an alert about a safety issue without penalty and mandating the supervisor address the question to ensure safe operations.

This is not endorsing insubordination. Supervisors are responsible for accepting reports and properly acting to ensure the safety of firefighters. This means stop for a moment to assess the situation, quickly talk and report, and then decide the correct and safe response to the situation.

You're Authorized to Abandon Your Position and Retreat When Conditions Deteriorate

Objective: To cause firefighters and supervisors to be aware of fire conditions and cause an early exit to a safe area when they're exposed to unacceptable risk and life threatening conditions.

No firefighter needs approval from a supervisor or the incident commander to abandon a high-risk operation that deteriorates and becomes unsafe, but must notify the incident commander of the action.

Never Hesitate to Declare a Mayday if Needed

Objective: To make the firefighter who may get in trouble comfortable with declaring a mayday and to do so as soon as they think they're in trouble.

There is a very narrow window of survivability in a burning, highly toxic building. Any delay declaring a mayday limits rescue. ☒