

DALTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Guideline

S.O.G.: FO-13
Effective: 09-30-2013
Revised: 12-19-2017
Reviewed: 11-27-2018

Fire Chief Signature

DATE

Title: Rapid Intervention Teams/Crews (RIT/RIC)

Reference: NFPA 1407, Standard for Training Fire Service Rapid Intervention Crews, 2015 ed.

NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, & Wellness Program, 2018 ed.

NFPA 1710, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments, 2016 ed.

OSHA 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(4), Personal Protective Equipment; Respiratory Protection

Scope: All personnel

Purpose: Operations at hazardous incidents require a backup team to be in place at the incident site. This team's responsibility is to be available to rescue any responders in need of aid at the incident should that need arise.

Procedure:

The Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) shall be assigned as soon as possible on any incident where personnel are operating in a hazardous area. If the incident covers a large geographic area, more than one RIT may be required.

The initial stages of an incident shall encompass the tasks undertaken by the first arriving companies with only one entry team assigned or operating in the hazardous area.

During these initial stages, the rapid intervention crew(s) shall be either:

- (a) On-scene members designated and dedicated as rapid intervention crew(s).
- (b) On-scene personnel performing command or safety functions but ready to re-deploy to perform rapid intervention crew functions.

The initial RIT shall consist of a minimum of two fully equipped members with the necessary rescue tools. These tools may include forcible entry tools, search ropes, thermal imaging camera, cribbing, spare air packs, saws, etc. and should be tailored to occupancy and construction type. The RIT will report directly to the Incident Commander.

When a second entry team is assigned or operating in the hazardous area, the incident shall no longer be considered in the initial stages and at least one company of a minimum of three personnel shall be assigned as RIT.

The RIT Leader shall perform an additional 360-degree size-up of the structure to identify the structural layout, operating areas, potential hazards, and possible means of access and egress. Ongoing 360s shall be conducted throughout the incident to monitor for changing conditions.

The RIT shall monitor tactical radio channels to maintain contact with command and have an accurate understanding of operations and changing conditions. The RIT may perform exterior support functions (e.g., secure utilities, throw ladders for egress, etc.) but must remain prepared to deploy and perform RIT duties.

The IC shall evaluate the situation and the risks to operating crews and shall provide one or more RITs based on the needs of the situation (e.g., large commercial occupancy, health care facility, etc.). Nothing in this guideline is meant to preclude firefighters from performing rescue activities before an entire team has been assembled if there are fewer than three team members available and an individual inside the burning structure must be rescued immediately.

Whenever personnel are operating in positions or performing functions (including special operations) that would subject them to immediate danger, at least one rapid intervention crew shall be standing by with equipment to provide assistance or rescue.

Termination of RIT shall be at the discretion of the Incident Commander.

Dalton Fire Department Employee & Citizen Recognition

It is the policy of the City of Dalton Fire Department to appropriately recognize members of the department and members of the community who perform acts of distinct heroism, provide outstanding service to the department, or contribute to the overall safety and wellbeing of the community.

Awards Committee

This committee will be composed of a cross-section of fire department members as appointed by the Fire Chief. The committee will review all award recommendations and the actions of each individual nominated. Subsequently, the committee will select those persons who are to receive an award and determine which award will be conferred.

Nominations for Awards

Any employee of the department may recommend a person for an award. The recommendation must include a statement which outlines the actions for which an individual is being nominated along with any pertinent details surrounding the action. The award recommendation should be forwarded in writing to the Deputy Chief. There is no limit placed on the number of awards that may be conferred upon any one individual during any one year.

Presentation of Awards

Awards will be presented by the Fire Chief or his/her representative during an annual awards ceremony. In some cases, Unit Citations, Individual Commendations, or Citizen Lifesaving Awards may be presented during the course of the year.

Order of Precedence

Medal of Valor

The Medal of Valor may be awarded for a conspicuous act of valor and heroism by a fire department member under hazardous conditions in which the person is placed in a life-threatening position to save the life of another during incident operations.

Medal of Distinction

The Medal of Distinction may be awarded to a fire department member who has performed outstanding service to the department or contributed to the overall safety and wellbeing of the community during incident operations.

Individual Commendation

The Individual Commendation may be awarded to a fire department member who has performed in an outstanding manner worthy of recognition during incident operations.

Unit Citation

The Unit Citation may be awarded to any group of two or more fire department members who constitute a fire company, section, team, or employee work group which has performed in an outstanding manner worthy of recognition during incident operations.

Award of Merit

The Award of Merit may be awarded to a fire department member based on performance of assigned duties that have been carried out in an outstanding or superior manner. This award is not necessarily conferred for actions conducted during incident operations.

Community Service Award

The Community Service Award may be conferred upon a member of the fire department who has donated considerable time and/or effort toward the betterment of the community, not necessarily in a job related manner.

Firefighter of the Year

The Firefighter of the Year award may be made to a fire department member for having performed an act of valor and heroism, for outstanding service to the department, or for contributions to the overall safety and wellbeing of the community.

Citizen Awards

Citizen Heroism Award

The Citizen Heroism Award may be made for a conspicuous act of valor or heroism by a citizen under hazardous conditions in which the person is placed in a life-threatening position to save the life of another.

Citizen Lifesaving Award

The Citizen Lifesaving Award may be conferred upon a member of the public who has been involved in a lifesaving effort at an emergency scene before the arrival of the fire department or who has provided extraordinary assistance to fire department members in a lifesaving effort. This nomination is normally made by fire department personnel assigned to the incident.

Certificates of Recognition or Appreciation

Certificates of Recognition or Appreciation may be issued throughout the year by the Fire Chief to departmental members and/or citizens for recognition of commendable actions or performance.

Recognition by Outside Organizations

Selection of members to receive annual recognition by a non-departmental organization will be made by the Fire Chief, his/her representative, or by the Battalion Chief/Division Coordinator when appropriate. The Firefighter of the Year will be the recipient of these awards for the year following his/her award.

Decorations

Persons selected to receive awards as outlined in this procedure will receive the appropriate decorations as follows:

Medal of Valor

Medal of Valor certificate and red/white/blue ribbon for Class A uniform

Medal of Distinction

Medal of Distinction certificate and blue/white/blue ribbon for Class A uniform

Individual Commendation

Certificate of Commendation and solid red ribbon for Class A uniform

Unit Citation

Unit Citation certificate and solid blue ribbon for Class A uniform

Award of Merit

Award of Merit certificate and blue/gold/blue ribbon for Class A uniform

Community Service Award

Community Service Award certificate and blue/gray ribbon for Class A uniform

Firefighter of the Year

Firefighter of the Year certificate and red/white/black ribbon for Class A uniform

Subsequent awards within each category will be signified with a bronze star (for each additional occurrence) applied to the existing ribbon on the Class A uniform.

Dalton Fire Department Employee Corrective Action Manual

Purpose

Dalton Fire Department members are required to conduct themselves in a highly self-disciplined manner, obeying the City of Dalton Personnel Rules and Policies, and Departmental Standard Operating Procedures. In situations where members do not adhere to these expectations, supervisors will take the necessary action to correct the problem.

This manual will guide Dalton Fire Department supervisors in dealing with disciplinary problems they may encounter. If supervisors have any questions concerning employee discipline, they should consult with their next level supervisor.

This manual serves as a guide to assist with questions concerning the disciplinary process inside Dalton Fire Department and acts to compliment the City of Dalton Employee Handbook, not replace it. City policy will supersede any conflicting information found inside this manual.

General Information

It is the policy of the fire department that supervisors administer discipline in a corrective, progressive, and lawful manner.

Corrective in the sense that the supervisor and member come to an understanding about the causes and/or reasons for a member's deficiencies, correct those deficiencies, and restore the member to a productive and positive employment status.

Progressive in that discipline will normally begin with a coaching form or verbal reprimand and, when circumstances of separate or related incidents warrant, proceed to written reprimand(s), suspension with or without pay, demotion, and finally to dismissal. An incident of misconduct may require any of these forms of disciplinary action whether or not a lesser form has preceded the action. This would depend upon the severity of the offense.

Lawful in that discipline and the procedure by which it is administered does not violate city, state or federal rules, administrative regulations, departmental rules of conduct, or the member's constitutional rights.

The principal objective of disciplinary action is to improve or correct performance, efficiency, and morale of the member receiving discipline as well as that of the department. Disciplinary proceedings and the results thereof are confidential. The supervisor is responsible for maintaining this confidentiality. All media inquiries and open records requests pertaining to disciplinary actions shall be directed to the Fire Chief.

Supervisors should keep in mind that all disciplinary actions imposed are subject to review by their superiors. It is advised that supervisors seek support from their superiors prior to taking disciplinary action, and feel comfortable that they can support their actions in a formal review or appeal process. Support from supervisors is extremely important when disciplinary action beyond a verbal reprimand is being considered.

The department's performance tracking records are not only to be used for disciplinary action but shall be used to recognize good performance above and beyond expectations. The forms for recognition of good performance as well as recommendation for commendation are available to supervisors.

Employee Assistance Program

Occasionally, supervisors will be approached by a member who discloses personal problems and requests assistance. Many times just listening and helping the members reason through the problem will be all that is needed. Other times, particularly with serious alcohol, drug, stress, marital, or financial problems, the member may require professional assistance. This help is available through the Employee Assistance Program. Supervisors must be aware that when a member's personal problems involve violations of city or departmental rules or policies, disciplinary action may be necessary in addition to entering the Employee Assistance Program.

Programs for Improving Job Performance

In most cases minor job performance problems can be resolved by the supervisor bringing the problem to the attention of the employee, and the employee making the proper modification in his/her performance. When a serious job performance problem is identified, the supervisor must decide whether to solve it through:

- Training
- Employee Assistance Program
- Non-disciplinary counseling or
- Disciplinary action

Each situation will be considered separately, and it will be the supervisor's responsibility to make a determination as to the best course of action to take to resolve the situation. It is the supervisor's responsibility to promptly notify the employee of all job performance problems and act on them accordingly.

If the situation is determined to be a training problem, a program for improvement will be developed for the member. This may best be accomplished through the use of coaching form or a Performance Improvement Plan.

When utilizing the Performance Improvement Plan to prepare a program for improvement, it must clearly identify the member's problem area(s). It must include measurable objectives for improvement. It must also indicate a reasonable time frame within which the objectives are to be met. At the completion of the evaluation period, if the member's performance has not been corrected, additional disciplinary action should be taken.

Investigative Process

Any accusation of misconduct or complaint involving fire department members shall be thoroughly investigated before formal action is taken. All accusations of misconduct or complaints involving fire department members shall include notification of the next level supervisor. This ensures the situation is assessed and assigned to the appropriate level of supervision necessary for the investigation. The investigation is a fact-finding process and supervisors must be cautioned not to make judgments until a thorough investigation is concluded. For accusations and complaints of serious on-duty misconduct, an investigative report must be completed. The Fire Chief, with approval of the City Administrator, has the discretion to suspend the employee (with pay), or reassign an employee pending the outcome of the investigation.

Preparation of an investigative report must include the following information before it will be considered complete:

- Summary of the incident - should answer the questions: who, what, where, why, when, and how.
- Interviews conducted - this must include the interviewee, rank and assignment, date, time, location, those present, and the information discussed. A signed statement by the interviewee should also be obtained.
- Conclusions - from the information available, the supervisor must make a determination of responsibility.
- Extenuating circumstances may be discussed in this section.
- Attachments - relevant documents that the supervisor feels should be a part of the investigative report.
- Recommendations - state the recommended disciplinary action or alternate course of action, if any.

Failure to cooperate serves as a separate basis for disciplinary action, including dismissal.

The completed report shall be immediately forwarded to the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief.

Questions concerning legal issues pertaining to administrative investigations should be directed to the Human Resource Department.

The following are legal issues that all supervisors should keep in mind when conducting administrative investigations:

- A member may be compelled by supervisors to answer questions that are related to his/her duties or fitness for duty. Failure to answer such questions completely and

truthfully may form the basis for disciplinary action, including dismissal. A member under investigation should be so advised prior to an administrative interview.

- There is no expectation of privacy with regard to lockers, desks, etc. furnished by the department for the use of members. These spaces are subject to inspection and, if reasonable grounds for suspicion exist, may be searched by supervisors without a subpoena. Items found may be used in a disciplinary proceeding.

Accusations or complaints of criminal behavior or misconduct shall be immediately reported to the Fire Chief. Criminal investigations will be referred to law enforcement for investigation.

Suspected On-Duty Substance Abuse

The City of Dalton has a Drug Free Workplace Policy which shall be referenced and will supersede any discrepancy between this document and city policy. Reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or any substance, which impairs any employee's mental or physical capacity, will not be tolerated. The city maintains a zero tolerance policy toward unauthorized use or possession of alcohol or controlled substances which could affect the workplace. Failure to comply shall be grounds for discipline up to and including dismissal. When there exists reasonable grounds to believe that the employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the supervisor may direct the employee to submit to a drug screening and/or blood alcohol test. Refusal to submit to such test will subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any employee using medication or prescribed drugs that may impair job performance shall report this fact to his/her supervisor.

Supervisory Responsibilities - If a supervisor has reasonable grounds to believe that an employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs when reporting for work or during the work shift, the supervisor has the obligation to verify the employee's condition and relieve the employee of his/her duties. The second level supervisor must be notified of the situation immediately. The possibility of liability to the city and to the supervisor exists if an employee who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs is allowed to remain working, to operate or drive vehicles or equipment on the job, or to drive a private vehicle from the work site. An employee who is believed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs must not be allowed to operate or drive a vehicle, including a private vehicle, until the condition of the employee has been determined.

Observation - If a supervisor observes an employee who seems to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, he/she should, if practical, seek the opinion of at least one additional supervisor. Reasonable grounds should exist before requesting the employee to take a drug screening and/or blood alcohol test. Reasonable grounds would include a combination of various factors such as slurred speech, red eyes, dilated pupils, incoherence, unsteadiness on feet, smell of alcohol or marijuana emanating from the employee's body, inability to carry on a rational conversation, increasing carelessness, erratic behavior, inability to perform the job, other unexplained behavioral changes, etc. The supervisors shall document these observations in writing. A copy of this document will be provided to the employee upon request.

Referral for Testing - If the supervisor determines that reasonable suspicion of impairment exists, the supervisor must contact their Battalion Chief or Division Coordinator. The Battalion Chief/Division Coordinator must then notify the Deputy Chief. The employee must be accompanied by a chief officer to the designated facility for a drug screening or blood alcohol test to determine fitness for duty. All required releases and/or forms will be filled out and signed by the employee before a sample is obtained. The employee should be informed that tests will be conducted on city time, paid for by the city, and are part of his/her job responsibilities. The employee should be informed that refusal to take a drug screening and/or blood alcohol test may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. A drug screening or blood alcohol test found to be positive shall be verified by an additional test. Upon request, a separate sample will be provided to the employee for independent testing at his/her expense.

Test Results - Employees who test positive or refuse the test shall be considered unfit for work and will be relieved from duty for the assigned work day/period. The employee should not be allowed to drive to the hospital or home. If the employee submits to the test and signs the release of information, he/she will be placed on paid leave until the status of the tests and the circumstances surrounding the impairment are determined.

Determining the Proper Disciplinary Action

After an incident or complaint has been thoroughly investigated and the need for disciplinary action determined, a decision concerning the action that would be most effective must be made.

Factors to be considered in making this decision are:

- Seriousness of the offense
- Member's past history with the department
- Past practice of the Dalton Fire Department in dealing with similar offenses

Consistency is critical to any disciplinary system. Although disciplinary action for the same offenses should be similar, the final decision to determine the exact action will be made after considering the factors previously listed, and applying them to the particular situation.

Coaching for Success

This is the most often used and least severe of the formal group of corrective actions. When properly administered, it serves to notify employees that certain behavior or performance deficiency need changing/improving or that discipline will take place. The employee must be given a copy (stamped or written copy). The supervisor shall maintain notes of the counseling session for future reference and guidance. This form of discipline may be performed by any supervisor.

Verbal Reprimand

Supervisors may elect to use formal verbal reprimands to document a repeat offense of a minor infraction, or a more serious single infraction for which a written reprimand is not appropriate. When the supervisor decides to issue a formal verbal reprimand he/she will prepare a Verbal Reprimand Form. The employee must be given a copy (stamped or written copy). The original shall be maintained by the Battalion Chief or Division Coordinator. This form of discipline may be performed by the rank of Lieutenant and above.

Written Reprimand

Supervisors may elect to use formal written reprimands to document a repeat offense of a minor infraction, or a more serious single infraction for which suspension; demotion or dismissal is not appropriate. The employee must be given a copy (stamped or written copy) and the original shall be placed in member's personnel file located in the office of the Fire Chief. This form of discipline may be performed by the rank of Battalion Chief, Division Coordinator, or above.

Performance Improvement Plan

When utilizing the Performance Improvement Plan to prepare a program for improvement, it must clearly identify the member's problem area(s). It must include measurable objectives for improvement. It must also indicate a reasonable time frame within which the objectives are to be met. At the completion of the evaluation period, if the member's performance has not been corrected, additional disciplinary action should be taken. Each Performance Improvement Plan must be approved by the Battalion Chief or Division Coordinator.

Suspension, Demotion, or Dismissal

Suspensions without pay, demotions, and dismissals are utilized as punitive, yet corrective measures taken for numerous repeated incidents of rule infractions or a single major infraction by a member. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to stabilize a situation in which immediate action is necessary. This may require relieving the member from duty (with pay) until a decision is made concerning the official action to be taken. Supervisors should not commit themselves to a particular form of disciplinary action prematurely. The Deputy Chief shall be notified when a Battalion Chief or Division Coordinator considers this action.

The Fire Chief will make a final recommendation to the Public Safety Commission concerning suspensions, demotions, or dismissal. This will ensure consistency in the administration of discipline throughout the department. The Deputy Chief shall be notified when an employee receives two written reprimands within a twelve month period or one that involves insubordination or dereliction of duty that affects the safety of the public or public safety personnel.

Formal Grievance Procedure

See the City of Dalton Employee Handbook for grievance procedures, eligibility, and instructions.