

Fauquier County Department of Fire Rescue

OPERATING PROCEDURE

No. 218

Inclement or Dangerous Weather

Effective Date: July 1, 2010

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Revision Date: February 2, 2018

Forms:

Approved By: Darren L. Stevens, Fire Rescue Chief

Approved By: Tom Marable, President VFRA



PURPOSE

To set guidelines for employees regarding inclement weather or dangerous weather situations.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all personnel within the Fauquier County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management and the Fauquier County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and its associated departments.

I. POLICY

From time to time Fauquier County may experience weather conditions which require personnel to be called back for overtime or situations which require deviation from normal operating procedures. Fauquier County is in a geographical location that makes it susceptible to varied and sometimes dangerous weather conditions. It is necessary for all personnel to understand their role in these situations, and to know the actions they will need to take to remain aware and safe as conditions evolve.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Weather Condition 1- Normal operations and normal weather conditions prevail.
- B. Weather Condition 2- Reports from the appropriate weather sources indicate that the possibility exists for evolving serious or dangerous weather conditions.(i.e. National Weather Service (NWS) issues a weather watch for the area).
- C. Weather Condition 3- NWS issues a weather warning for the county or any part thereof, or Command Staff indicates a situation exists that warrants upgrading to Condition 3.

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D. Weather Condition 4- Conditions exist that make travel on the roads within the county dangerous or impossible due to a weather event. The situation may also present a danger to personnel that are caught outside in unprotected areas.

III. PROCEDURES

A. The following are only guidelines and are not all inclusive. Field personnel must recognize the need to be flexible and alert as weather situations change.

1. **Weather Condition 1**--Normal operations.
2. **Weather Condition 2**--Station officers, battalion chiefs or command staff may choose at this time to take whatever steps are required to provide for the safety of all operations personnel. All other operations are considered to be at normal levels unless so noted.
 - a. Condition 2 will be initiated for high temperature at the request of a battalion chief and approved by the assistant chief when conditions warrant. During Condition 2 for heat, a number of normal activities will be suspended. These activities will include, but may not be limited to; the cessation of all outdoor training activities, normal physical training and certain uniform requirements. During heat related conditions personnel will add a water cooler to the equipment carried on apparatus. Personnel may add additional EMS units to any call that may require it during heat related Condition 2 situations.
3. **Weather Condition 3**--If the event involves sustained winds of 40 MPH +, personnel must use extreme caution when operating on the streets and roads of the County. Command Staff and/or Senior volunteer officers may make the decision to keep certain apparatus off the street.
 - a. If the event involves serious snow or icing conditions, it may become necessary to hold apparatus off the street unless properly equipped.
 - b. When the event involves numerous reports of power lines down, trees down (blocking a road, on a structure without injuries, etc.) or other debris in the road, companies will only be dispatched to those situations with a fire in a structure or where there is a threat to life.

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- c. In the case of tornado activity no apparatus will be dispatched while there are active tornadoes in a specific area.
 - d. All fire alarms when in Condition 3 will be a single company response.
 - e. If the situation involves high water/flooding, and calls are received for flooded basements, the communications center will advise the first due company of the situation and the address as they have the time. The station officer will make the decision as to whether or not they will respond. Company Chief Officers or Command Staff may alter this policy provided it does not jeopardize the safety of personnel.
4. **Weather Condition 4**--Apparatus will not normally be dispatched during this Condition except for events that involve threat to life, or working structure fires. Alterations may be made by Company Chief Officers or Command Staff if the safety of field personnel is not jeopardized. This Condition will include, but not be limited to, sustained winds of 60MPH+ or gusts of up to 60 MPH, blizzard-like conditions, road conditions that are not able to be repaired by VDOT personnel, weather conditions that make exposure hazardous, or any situation that Command Staff or Company Chief Officers feel warrants the needs for Condition 4.
- B. Personnel are not to be used to provide for public service type calls such as to clear trees from roads unless they are attempting to clear a path for responding personnel and vehicles. Employees are reminded of the requirement to mark on the air when leaving the station. Failure to do so could mean officers may not be aware of the location of members during high call volume events.
 - C. Personnel are subject to call-back for occurring or projected weather events as deemed necessary by the Chief of the Department. When personnel are called back and weather conditions make travel hazardous, they may be advised to report to the station nearest to their point of origin. From that point they will be transferred to the station/unit to which they are to be assigned.
 - D. Some employees may find it necessary to report to their assigned duty station, due to weather conditions, earlier than required in order to assure their timeliness for the next duty shift. In these circumstances, the employee will not be considered to be on duty

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and will not accrue pay until the start of their shift. However, if a member of the command staff authorizes it, the employee may respond to calls if needed by that particular station. From that point on, they will be considered to be on duty and will be paid accordingly.

- E. Since Department employees are emergency personnel, closure of Fauquier County Government offices or delay of opening same does not impact uniformed personnel. Personnel are expected to be at their assigned duty stations at their normal reporting times.

- F. Field personnel must be sensitive to the call volume the communications center receives during weather emergencies. As such, they are to attempt to keep all radio traffic to a bare minimum and transmit only the information that is absolutely necessary. The communications center personnel will attempt to keep field units advised of evolving conditions and other necessary information as it is received. If a significant amount of radio traffic is necessary between field units, an alternate channel must be used in order to keep 11-B open for normal operations.