

Fauquier County Department of Fire Rescue

OPERATING PROCEDURE

No. 404

Civil Disturbance Response

Effective Date: September 25, 2020


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Revision Date:

Forms:

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to establish an operational guideline for dealing with an actual civil disturbance and to specify actions to be taken in preparation for anticipated disturbances. These guidelines shall be implemented to minimize the impact on the citizens of the Fauquier County and their property, to ensure the maximum safety of Fauquier County Fire Rescue personnel and equipment, and manage the incident through effective incident command.

SCOPE

This procedure pertains to all Fauquier County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management personnel members of the Volunteer Fire Rescue Association agencies.

BACKGROUND

Adopted on December 15, 1791, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits interfering with the right to peaceably assemble. The First Amendment thereby guarantees the right for people to come together and collectively express, promote, pursue, or defend their ideas. On occasion, these assemblies go beyond a peaceable gathering and protest to civil disturbance where public safety becomes a concern.

Civil disturbances are dangerous and unpredictable occurrences requiring special preparation and operations. Incidents of civil unrest are considered a law enforcement event and fire rescue shall coordinate with the law enforcement incident commander via unified command. During a period of civil disturbance, the role of fire rescue does not change. There remains a responsibility for providing fire protection and emergency medical services. However, it is not the responsibility of fire rescue, or any of its personnel to maintain, or attempt to maintain order.

During a civil disturbance normal operations, strategies and tactics will be altered to provide maximum safety for responding personnel and members of the community caught in the disturbance. Fire and EMS activities will be conducted to limit exposure to dangerous situations while continuing to provide the best service allowed by the situation. Personnel must remain aware that in a civil disturbance, emotions are highly charged; personnel must remain especially calm and professional.

Desire to Serve

Ability to Perform

Courage to Act

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I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Demonstration/Protest:** a legal public assembly of persons exhibiting sympathy with, or opposition to, a political, legal, economic, or social condition or movement.
- B. **Civil Disturbance/Unrest:** acts of violence and disorder detrimental to public law and order. Any breach of the peace by a significant number of people assembled in one area or the gathering of an unruly mob. This may include any situation which, in the opinion of the onsite law enforcement commander, could develop into a riot.
- C. **Civil Disorder/Riot:** is defined by 18 USCS Section 232 as any public disturbance involving acts of violence by assemblages of three or more persons, which causes an immediate danger of or results in damage or injury to the property or person of any other individual. Frequently, such actions will not stop without the intervention of law enforcement personnel.
- D. **Hot Zone:** any area where there is known hazard or direct and immediate threat. Only law enforcement teams shall operate in the hot zone. This area of civil unrest/riot as designated by the law enforcement incident commander, in which civilian access is denied and fire department will not enter. When possible, the hot zone will be designated by perimeter streets.
- E. **Warm Zone:** any area with a potential threat to safety and health. This area, in the current state, is relatively safe for emergency responder operations, with observable indicators that suggest instability could possibly ensue. Fire/EMS providers operating within the warm zone shall be escorted by law enforcement.
- F. **Cold Zone:** area where there is little to no threat or unrest present due to geographic distance from the civil unrest/riot or the area has been secured by law enforcement.
- G. **Perimeter:** a term used by law enforcement to describe the boundary lines of an event. The inner perimeter is the barrier between hot and warm zone that serves to facilitate the self-evacuation of witness and victims and to prevent escape of potential threats. The outer perimeter is the barrier between the warm and cold zone, secured by law enforcement, to prevent access to all non-participants (such as homeowners, media, vehicular and pedestrian traffic).
- H. **Emergency Operations Center (EOC):** the location where representatives of all the public safety departments and other designated representatives meet to coordinate responses/actions related to jurisdiction-wide emergencies.

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- I. **Firefighter shot:** a firefighter has been hit by gunfire.
- J. **Firefighter injured as a result of “X”:** a firefighter has been injured due to something other than gunfire. A description of the injury and its cause shall be given.
- K. **Company under fire:** the reporting company is being shot at.
- L. **Company under attack:** the reporting company is being physically attacked by civilians.
- M. **Law enforcement protection needed:** law enforcement officers are needed to protect fire rescue personnel and equipment from civilian attack, or the threat of attack.
- N. **Abandoning the scene:** the incident is being abandoned due to safety concerns.
- O. **Task Force:** is a unified group of apparatus, personnel, and law enforcement resources assembled to respond. A task force responds as a single unit, operates as a unified team, and shall not be separated when deployed during a civil disturbance event.

II. PHASES OF PREPARATION AND OPERATION

A. Phase One, the planning phase

1. A planning phase in anticipation of a civil disturbance based on information received from recognized public safety agencies. This will generally be done on a countywide basis and involves coordination with law enforcement agencies and other departments, such as public works and parks and recreation as well as town governments.
2. Phase one will be implemented based on information a civil disturbance is possible in the reasonably foreseeable future. At the declaration a Phase One, the fire chief will convene such staff as deemed necessary to evaluate the available intelligence reports and develop contingency plans for Phases Two and Three. In addition, the following preparation efforts will occur:
 - a. Attempt to provide riding positions of units likely to be impacted with body armor and ensure it is in a readily accessible location.
 - b. Ensure stations are prepared so they can be easily secured.

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- c. Company officers should discuss general safety guidelines included in this document with all crew member.
- d. Ensure fire rescue leadership has access to and are reviewing available intelligence reports.

B. Phase Two, the preparation phase

1. The preparation phase based on information a civil disturbance is likely to occur within a 24 to 48 hour period, or is occurring in a neighboring jurisdiction.
2. A Phase Two declaration shall be made by the fire chief or his designee. At this time, command staff deemed essential shall be convened to evaluate intelligence reports, identify personnel to fill roles on the Incident Management Team, and develop an Incident Action Plan. The identified members of unified command are encouraged to discuss the best location for the incident command post taking into consideration security and facility logistics.
3. In addition to Phase One actions, the following preparation efforts will occur:
 - a. Re-deployment or staging of apparatus and increasing staffing. Consider moving reserve apparatus and administrative vehicles to secure location.
 - b. Identification of staging areas for mutual aid and additional resources.
 - c. A chief officer will be designated to respond to the EOC when/if established.
 - d. Identify the anticipated impact area/boundaries and include a map in the incident action plan.
 - e. Contact will be made with all company officers to make them aware of the situation and to begin taking proactive measures within their work locations before receiving the incident action plan.
 - f. All stations will be kept secured and locked.
 - g. No apparatus will be parked or staged outside in anticipated impact areas unless operating on an emergency incident.

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- h. Exposed equipment, which can easily be removed and used as a weapon, should be removed (axes, pike poles) from outside of the of apparatus and stored in compartments. Reserve apparatus are to be included in this preparation. Ladders, due to the difficulty of removing them should be left as they are.
- i. Consider removing personal identifying items such as name plates from personal protective equipment.
- j. Staffing for suppression units should be four personnel, battalion chiefs should be assigned a driver/aide, and other resources, such as tankers, should be staffed with two personnel.
- k. An effective means of communications with local law enforcement agencies and the adjacent fire agencies will be established.
- l. Ensure operational personnel obtain the most current intelligence and closely monitor all incidents for potential disturbances.
- m. Notification to the Regional Hospital Coordination Center (RHCC) on the possibility of a pending incident.
- n. Apparatus shall remain in quarters and non-emergency activities suspended.
- o. All on-duty personnel, especially those in uniform or driving marked/unmarked vehicles, will be advised to report immediately to the nearest station or administrative facility, whichever is closer.
- p. All members off-duty shall be notified of the situations and to anticipate the possibility of recall. Members should plan routes to avoid known or expected problem areas commuting to and from work. Recalled members should not enter the Hot Zone area to retrieve protective gear or uniforms from stations. Those affected should report to an alternate location where a plan will be developed to safely retrieve gear or reissue equipment.
- q. All ride-a-longs will be cancelled.

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- r. Develop Medical Plan (ICS 206) for the treatment and transport of fire, EMS, and law enforcement personnel. This shall be done in coordination with EMS providers assigned to law enforcement response teams. The Medical Plan provides information on incident medical aid stations, transportation services, hospitals, and medical emergency procedures.

C. Phase Three, the operational phase:

1. The operational phase will be implemented in the event of civil disturbance occurring within Fauquier County and can be declared by the fire chief, designee, or the on-duty battalion chief when any units are actively involved in a civil disturbance believed to have a major potential. The actual deployment of units will be in accordance with the Incident Action Plan and all normal operations within the Hot Zone shall be suspended.
2. In conjunction with the responsible law enforcement agencies, unified command will take over Hot Zone operations. Responses in the affected areas will be controlled by the appropriate command.
3. In addition to Phase Two actions the following efforts will occur:
 - a. Confirm the declaration of a Phase Three and ensure the declaration is announced over active radio channels, sent as a priority message to all MDT's, and communicated to all department personnel.
 - b. A fire department command officer should respond to the law enforcement command post, meet with representatives from the involved law enforcement agencies, and participate in a unified command.
 - c. Identify the boundaries of the Hot, Warm, and Cold Zones and update as needed.
 - d. Order all units within the perimeter of the Hot Zone to move immediately to specified staging areas.
 - e. Determine if the recall of off-duty personnel is necessary and initiate callbacks.
 - f. Prepare for and provide a full briefing for Command Staff.

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- g. Staff and fire prevention personnel (both uniformed and non-uniformed) shall report immediately to the safest work location outside the Hot Zone and notify their supervisor of their location.
- h. Alert the RHCC of the current incident

III. FIREGROUND OPERATIONS

- A. A riot condition presents extreme hazards to firefighting personnel. The potential dangers may include the usual hazards of fire duty plus the threat of physical injury from a variety of weapons, such as rocks, bottles, and firearms. The first priority at an emergency scene is the life safety of firefighters. If at any time while performing firefighting activities a company witnesses any situation that appears threatening, rocks or bottle-throwing, large pushy crowds, clubs or weapons, they shall call for an immediate withdrawal of apparatus and personnel to a safe location utilizing standard fire ground evacuation procedures.
- B. Based on previous civil disturbance history, the number of fires could be very high. The most effective tactical considerations may include the following actions.
 - 1. Size-up the area to which you are responding into and be alert for traps or ambushes.
 - 2. Provide 360-degree firefighter safety and be aware of conditions surrounding the incident as well as the hazards of the incident. Remain aware of the "attitude" of the crowd. Be prepared to abandon the operation should the mood of the crowd turn confrontational.
 - 3. Company officers should identify and clearly discuss with personnel a primary and secondary means of egress (escape route) from the operating location and a designated rally point.
 - 4. During fire ground operations, the perimeter should be secured by law enforcement officers.
 - 5. Prior to fire/EMS companies proceeding an incident, ensure route of travel and clearance is clearly communicated.
 - 6. Companies will remain together with their security escort at all times. The driver/operator or other personnel will not be left alone and unprotected. Do not leave personnel by themselves to operate hydrants away from the apparatus.

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7. Based on a risk assessment of the situation/environment, the incident commander shall consider appropriate PPE, to include consideration of ballistic and respiratory protection.
8. Store a canvas tarp, wool/fire blanket, and dry chemical extinguisher in the cab of the apparatus to protect firefighters from thrown rocks, bottles, or firebombs.
9. Unless a life hazard is present, an exterior attack using master streams from deck guns should be the preferred strategy to control the fire in a defensive mode. Do not use manned aerial devices; remote aerial stream operations should be used.
10. Control and containment are the primary objectives. No interior firefighting should be undertaken unless necessary for rescue of known occupants in imminent threat of injury or death.
11. Utilize "hit and run" firefighting to knock down fire and move on; consider tankers or two-piece engine companies to provide necessary water without apparatus relying on fire hydrants and racking of supply lines.
12. Consider use of pre-connecting hose. Do not reload hose - throw them on the hose bed and leave the area as soon as possible.
13. Depending on the number of fires in an area, no overhauling should be attempted after the fire is knocked down. While this may present the possibility of a re-kindle, the strategy is to protect exposures, knock down the fire, and move on.
14. If helicopter or UAS service is available, consider providing a fire representative to utilize them for an aerial survey of fire conditions.
15. Laddering and/or roof operations should only be undertaken if necessary for rescue of known occupants in imminent threat of injury or death.
16. Apparatus shall be positioned for rapid redeployment and avoid entering blocked/dead end streets or alleys. Position all apparatus for a quick exit. Forward lays are preferred over leaving personnel or units alone some distance from the firefighting operation. Position units so pump panels are towards the involved buildings to serve as a shield for engineers and crew members.

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- 17. If possible, block traffic to prevent civilian vehicles from passing in close proximity to (or behind) firefighters.
- 18. Due to the high volume of radio traffic that can be expected, strict radio discipline must be observed by all radio users.
- 19. Secure utilities to damaged building if possible.
- 20. Consider not using SCBA except for unusual operations, such as interior rescue, severe smoke, or hazardous materials condition, due to limited visibility of surrounding and refilling of cylinders may be logistically problematic.
- 21. Fire apparatus, hose streams, tools, and equipment are not to be used for law enforcement crowd control activities. At no time will a hose stream be directed on people for the purpose of riot control or crowd dispersion.
- 22. Personnel or apparatus attacked by projectiles or gunfire are to withdraw from area until it is secured by law enforcement.

IV. COMMAND CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Ensure the establishment of unified command with law enforcement and utilize the Incident Command Structure (e.g. groups, divisions) to ensure proper command and control
- B. Identify perimeter around the Hot, Warm, and Cold Zones
- C. Establish access to camera feeds for situational awareness
- D. Establish staging areas outside of impacted areas and request law enforcement for security and to marry up/escort fire/EMS apparatus resources
- E. Resources shall not conduct a fire fighting mission or EMS assignment without a law enforcement escort or secure area being established.
- F. Protect government infrastructure.
- G. Protect exposures with primary emphasis on dwellings first.

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- H. Priority should be directed at protection of exposures, containment, and controlled burning; salvage and overhaul are secondary.
- I. Depending on the number of fires in an area, fires that present no exposure hazard should be left to burn.
- J. Depending on the number of fires in an area, respond only to structure fires. Unless a significant fire or exposure threat is imminent, smaller fires, such as auto or rubbish fires, shall be dismissed.
- K. Multiple alarms will not be initiated in a riot area.
- L. Ensure emergency/gross decontamination provisions for first responders are in place.
- M. Atmospheric monitoring and respiratory protection should be considered for all responders.
- N. Fire investigations will not be conducted until it is determined by the fire official and law enforcement the scene and surrounding areas are safe.

V. EMS OPERATIONS

- A. EMS calls may be a result of injuries from civil unrest activities, but can also be individuals with illnesses or needs separate and apart from the unrest.
- B. A Rescue Task Force (RTF) operational platform should be considered.
- C. An EMS Branch shall be established as soon as possible.
- D. Patients should be transported to a casualty collection area in the cold zone unless the medic in charge determines immediate hospital care is required. In this case, transport units should proceed directly to the most appropriate treatment facilities.
- E. The EMS Branch, in coordination with RHCC, will determine transportation destinations for all patients.

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VI. PERSONNEL SAFETY

- A. Based on a risk assessment of the situation/environment the appropriate PPE shall be worn. This shall include ballistic, eye, and respiratory protection. Structural or trench rescue jackets should also be considered to assist in visual identification of fire/rescue personnel.
- B. The policy prohibiting employees from carrying firearms on-duty will be strictly enforced.
- C. Be aware of surroundings at all times and be prepared for a quick exit. Keep the crew together utilizing the "buddy" system.
- D. Consider wearing long-sleeve uniforms to protect skin from materials throw such as chemicals, irritants, paints, body fluids, urine, and feces.
- E. Every effort should be made to keep personnel behind cover at all times.
- F. If attacked, keep moving if you are mobile. If committed, take cover and call for help. Abandon the position and withdraw if possible.
- G. Personnel shall conduct themselves in a manner that will not result in a hostile confrontation and shall not return obscene remarks, or direct comments towards civilians. Consideration shall be given to covering tattoos and removing stickers, which might incite civilians.
- H. The fatigue factor of personnel operating within the perimeter must be considered. Emotions will be highly charged. Monitor the physical and emotional state of personnel and provide relief companies as deemed appropriate.

VII. SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS IN QUARTERS

- A. Monitor radio and television news for additional information. Review information to determine if your station is in the Hot Zone. If so, prepare for immediate evacuation of the station.
- B. Keep all windows and doors closed and locked, close all window coverings.
- C. At night keep interior lights to a minimum, turning down interior lights, and posting a floor watch while units are in quarters. Perimeter lights should be left on.
- D. Keep away from windows or in areas exposed to potential gunfire.

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- E. Apparatus should not be parked outside the station unless servicing or maintenance is actively taking place.
- F. Personnel should be cognizant items left in their personal vehicles which may be at risk for theft or damage.
- G. Use the “buddy system” in answering the station doorbell, fueling apparatus, and all situations involving public contact.

VIII. SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS WHILE DRIVING

- A. All personnel will be either in the cab or in the jump seat area at all times.
- B. While the vehicle is in motion, the helmet and goggles, or a face shield will be worn to lessen the chance of injury from broken glass should the unit be hit by thrown objects.
- C. The apparatus windows should remain closed.
- D. The use of interior dome light off should be limited to reduce the silhouetting of personnel.
- E. In areas where a large crowd has formed, consider delaying approach until adequate security is available.
- F. Enter and operate apparatus as closely together as physically possible. No apparatus shall operate independently.
- G. Minimize the use of emergency warning devices.

IX. ABANDONING FIRE STATIONS

During a civil disturbance, it may become necessary to temporarily abandon fire stations due to safety considerations. If the safety of firefighters and equipment cannot be assured within the confines of a fire station, then the ranking officer at that location has the authority to remove the company from the area. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES IS ANY MEMBER TO REMAIN BEHIND WHEN A STATION IS ABANDONED.

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- A. Companies abandoning a station will notify the incident commander of their actions.
- B. If an evacuation is ordered, all personnel shall meet at a pre-determined assembly point.
- C. As soon as all companies are in a safe area, an accountability check should be taken and communicated to the incident commander.
- D. Law enforcement notifications should be made regarding abandoned or unsecured facilities, property, vehicles, and/or equipment.
- E. Every effort should be made to secure property before abandoning any station.
- F. Personnel safety should be the highest priority during evacuation procedures, however, the following actions should be considered before personnel leave stations as time and safety allow:
 - 1. Secure all radio/communication equipment to include:
 - i. Disconnecting facility radios
 - ii. All portable radios, iPads, and cellular devices should be secured and, if possible, taken with personnel
 - iii. Station computers should be secured and powered off.
 - 2. Lock all doors, windows, and lockers; lower all blinds and drapes.
 - 3. Shut down utilities to station; if possible, attempt to secure the domestic water supply to the facility (not the sprinkler system).
 - 4. All efforts should be made to remove as many pieces of apparatus as possible. Personnel should evacuate the station in apparatus and close and secure apparatus bay doors upon exit.
 - 5. If evacuating in multiple apparatus, choose routes that avoid trouble spots, and travel in convoy style to the designated assembly area. Travel “non-emergency” to draw as little attention as possible unless necessary to traverse congested intersections or areas.
 - 6. Do not take personal vehicles as you evacuate. Personal vehicles may be moved inside to the apparatus floor before leaving.

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7. Do not try to pack and take personal belongings or gear other than what you would normally carry on the apparatus.

X. ABANDONING AREAS

A. Incident Commander, or company officer on incidents without an IC, shall decide whether personnel and equipment will be removed from an area. Factors involved in this decision include:

1. Is the law enforcement or force protection pulling out?
2. Is violence being directed toward the fire and rescue personnel?
3. Is current law enforcement presence sufficient for maintaining incident and personnel safety?
4. All personnel shall pick up equipment and leave the scene as quickly as possible at the same time.
5. If threats seem imminent or the situation otherwise becomes critical, hose lines may be cut, or apparatus can evacuate with deployed hose lines still attached.

B. There may be circumstances in which apparatus may need to be abandoned. In this case, crews should attempt to disable the apparatus ignition and radio/communication systems. Priority should be given to crew safety.

XI. COMMUNICATIONS

A. If communications become compromised at any time, an alternative communications plan may need to be considered, implemented, and disseminated quickly to include the following:

1. Sensitive information such as assignment areas, travel routes, staging and assembly locations, and operational directives should be relayed verbally or by phone when possible.
2. Radio volume should be kept as low as possible and physical distance from bystanders should be maintained.

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- 3. MTD's should be closely monitored for situational awareness and incident updates.
 - 4. On-duty personnel must carry portable radios at all times.
 - 5. Members should closely monitor both radio traffic and their surroundings at all times. Apparatus headset use should be limited, however, when in use, one ear should remain uncovered.
 - 6. Cellular phones, encrypted channels, and/or infrequently used channels should be considered for use for sensitive radio transmissions.
- B. Information or direction to switch to an alternative plan needs to be disseminated by the incident commander so all personnel know what changes to monitor.