(DWFRS) OA38

**Fire** & Rescue Service

Operational Guidance

Evacuation of Buildings on Fire

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|  | **Incident Commanders (ICs) need to:*** **determine whether people should be advised to evacuate**
* **when evacuation is necessary, identify the number of people affected and develop a plan.**

**Consider the following:*** **The evacuation procedure is an essential part of the overall incident plan.**
* **A ‘stay put’ policy, is, based on the levels of fire resistance for compartment walls and floors. The use of occupant strategies that are based on ‘stay put’ or ‘defend in place’ procedures need to be kept under review throughout the incident.**
* **The fire survival guidance offered to callers by Service Control Centre (SCC) operators when developing tactical plans.**
* **Informing all members of staff on the incident ground and in SCC if a ‘stay put’ policy is to be used, and when it is terminated.**
* **Establish a search sector to co-ordinate and prioritise evacuation.**
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General Points

* Identifying the evacuation strategy and establishing if it is being followed is important when determining operational plans.
* The ‘responsible person’ for the building may be able to provide information about the occupant evacuation strategy.
* Decision making regarding any evacuation needs to consider:
* the safety of the public and emergency responders
* making sure the occupants of a building can reach a place of ultimate safety outside the building
* maintaining control through communication and information sharing with all involved.
* The decision to evacuate and the size of the area to be evacuated, should be based on a joint understanding of risk with other agencies and our SCC. If this is not possible, inform all agencies involved as quickly as possible.
* To evacuate a building effectively, establish robust communication and information sharing and maintain this throughout the incident.
* Unless provided with specific instructions, people are likely to follow the most obvious or familiar egress route in the event of an incident. Public responses can also vary from inaction to panic which can result in evacuating towards the hazard. Consider using common fire alarm systems to assist with warning residents.
* To prevent access, egress and escape routes becoming compromised, compartmentation and suitable routes for firefighting teams should be identified and secured at the earliest opportunity. Do not rely on building signage for suitable access and egress routes.
* Protect access and egress routes by:
* utilising members of staff with appropriate firefighting media
* making use of the building’s fixed installations
* maintaining the structure and integrity of fire-protected areas.
* Once implemented, review the evacuation plan regularly, considering:
* the development of the incident
* changes in weather conditions
* information gathered from emergency responders and the public
* the effectiveness or impact of the evacuation.
* In the event the evacuation strategy is not being followed, use all available sources of information to identify whether evacuation has occurred and to what extent.
* Use Plain English to communicate information where a lack of common understanding exists.
* If a ‘Stay Put’ strategy is in use, the strategy must be continually assessed. Smoke travel should be analysed, and if possible, avoided by use of fixed installations or operational tactics. Ensuring that the residents continue to have a safe means of escape is an essential element of a ‘Stay Put’ strategy. The IC must consider not continuing with the ‘Stay Put’ strategy, if smoke is entering and increasing in a stairwell designated as the means of escape. An early decision to evacuate before a potential rescue situation develops, should continually be considered by the IC.
* If the IC is using (or abandoning) a ‘Stay Put’ strategy all members of staff at the incident and in SCC must be informed.
* If conditions in the stairwell are deteriorating the IC must use the Decision Control Process to decide if the incident is now an evacuation or rescue. The actions taken following this decision should reflect the greater resource and co-ordination requirements of rescue situations.

Guidance for Incident Commanders

* Review the use and effectiveness of pre-arranged evacuation strategies and procedures or Fire Survival Guidance throughout incidents; making sure they remain valid and whether Simultaneous Evacuation is required.
* Determine if people need to be evacuated. This includes whether to maintain or rescind the ‘Stay put’ advice. Consideration should include:
* fire’s development
* building structural integrity
* breaches of the compartment
* likely further development to other flats
* threatens to the means of escape for residents.
* If evacuation is necessary, identify the number of people affected and develop a plan using JESIP principles; making sure the SCC Operators are part of this process (consider disabilities, medical needs and refuge areas).
* Identify the most appropriate evacuation plan, prioritising those considered at greatest risk first.
* Communicate the plan to all members of staff on the incident ground, including any representatives from the building and other relevant agencies present.
* Consider implementing the Major Incident procedure.
* Immediately inform the SCC that an evacuation of the building is considered necessary and include the rationale for the decision. This records the decision via the incident log.
* It is highly likely that greater resources will be required on-scene. Consider making an early request to SCC Operators for these.
* Establish a search sector officer (functional role) to co-ordinate and prioritise response.
* Stairwell protection is a critical part of successful operations. Consider (if safe to do so) deploying fire crews to assist with the evacuation of residents and ‘Stairway Protection Teams’.
* When teams need to work above the bridgehead in areas not affected by fire or smoke, the IC must confirm that the building’s construction and fire engineered solutions have not been compromised.
* Establish a safe evacuation point and consider safe egress routes and refuge points.
* Establish communication arrangements to allow information about an evacuation to be shared across the incident ground and with SCC. Consider the use of a separate ‘Talk-group’ and San B handheld radios at all command points.
* Brief Lobby and Bridgehead personnel that residents may be self-evacuating through their scene of operations.
* Consider the impact of the incident on the local community and on other emergency responders.
* Consider creating a dedicated team to take roll call of persons evacuating, and log which flats have been vacated.
* If multiple staircases are available, it may be appropriate to designate operational and evacuation staircases. This will reduce congestion and assist in the control of those evacuating the building. If this tactic is used all members of staff at the incident and SCC should be informed.

Stairway Protection Teams

* The IC should consider deploying Stairwell Protection Teams. These primarily engage in activity to make sure the means of escape are secure. If floor searches are required, the team should only carry out this task if suitably equipped and on a risk assessed basis.
* The first team provides protection to the firefighting teams (the three-line attack model). Following teams are tasked to:
* make sure egress routes are safe and free of obstructions
* monitor gas levels
* search stairwells, hallways, and lifts for building occupants who may be trapped or are entering an untenable environment
* report information about conditions at each floor
* ensure the stairs are clear of smoke
* deploy to Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) calls where required
* manage occupant evacuation where required.

Fire Survival Guidance (FSG)

* Service Control Centre (SCC) provides FSG to callers unable to escape from a building on fire. If an FSG call is taking place, they will provide the IC with all relevant information.
* The FSG offered to callers must be kept under review, in conjunction with the evacuation plan, when developing or reviewing tactical plans.
* If an FSG call is taking place, the IC needs to consider appointing a search sector officer to manage FSC and prioritise response.
* To prevent duplication of effort and potential delays in covering unsearched areas, there needs to be effective search co-ordination as the incident progresses. Information about ongoing search activity should be shared with SCC, so that FSG can be amended if necessary.

Service Control Centre (SCC)

* If the SCC is alerted from the incident ground that an evacuation of a building is necessary, they must:
* (if it is safe to do so) advise any subsequent callers that they should attempt to exit the building using the nearest safe route
* note the flat number of callers exiting the building and advise the incident ground of each instance, giving as many location and occupant details as is practicable
* consider requesting a Control Room Advisor (CRA) to attend Control to assist with the logistics and recording involved
* provide FSG to those unable to leave their flat, and ensure the IC is informed of these locations.
* If the SCC receive information from callers, or other agencies, that a fire appears to be breaching the compartment of origin, they must:
* inform the IC of the information and the location of the caller
* (if the caller is still within the building) advise that if safe to do so, they leave the building or if unable to, provide FSG and inform the IC
* (if the caller believes themselves to be in a hazardous position) advise them to leave the building using the nearest safe route. This also applies to any subsequent callers that believe themselves to be at risk.

Further Information

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|  | National Operational Guidance – Evacuation and Shelter |