

Introduction to this writing sample

I prepared and composed this policy-and-procedure manual for emergency-dispatch operators who use a computer system to manage calls and dispatch firefighters for multiple jurisdictions. In this project, E-Comm's standard operating guidelines were formally established and documented for the first time. The primary goal was to develop new standards and integrate existing standards from historically separate partner agencies to produce universal standards addressing the needs of all fire departments and E-Comm. The secondary goal was to produce a manual written in plain language that could be easily revised in a modular way and was scannable for quick, practical access by operators.

I first sat in as observer in the Fire Pod to understand the pressures operators faced. The subject matter was then drawn from procedures developed by other companies and from brain-storming sessions with a small team of key players within the Fire Pod. After internal review, this draft was sent out to multiple fire departments for external review. Subsequent drafts were taken over by E-Comm's training department after about a year's time getting agreement from the fire departments. This is not the final approved draft.

I suggested many changes to terminology and structuring of the SOPs to maximize usability, consistency, and clarity. I drew up a small style sheet for standard usage, such as for capitalization of position titles for use by multiple fire departments at the same time.

The document-control information is a compromise. E-Comm executives were reluctant to depart from their familiar, archaic SOP format used for corporate directives. After several iterations of refining the control information they came to see the value of what I had recommended on start-up. An example of a recommendation that was *not* adopted is to have the chapter title in the header, which is linked across sections and doesn't need to be revised, with individual SOP titles in the footer, which is unlinked and frequently revised.

The Purpose and Policy statements were mainly left up to me to create from scratch, so in many places they appear as repetitive "boilerplate," submitted for modification by external reviewers. In my opinion, a single combined statement at the beginning of the document would be better for usability.

Each chapter was created in Microsoft Word as a separate document, using section breaks for each SOP to allow automatic numbering. I developed format styles to conform to published best practices.

This is all my writing. It has not been edited by anyone else. —**Stephen**

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7.1 Wait for Police

Policy

At scenes that are not secure, E-Comm Fire Dispatch will issue a well-defined and understood instruction to wait for the police.

Purpose

- To decrease unnecessary risk to firefighters.
- To perform dispatch operations consistently, in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Procedure

If a scene is not secure—for example, there could be weapons or threats of weapons being used, or an uncontained fire—take the following steps:

1. Enter the word WAIT as the *first word* in the comment field. It must appear on the rip-and-run.
 2. Over the radio, speak this exact phrasing: "*Wait. Wait for the police to secure the scene.*" Do the same if the information is received while en route.
- Note** – The pause and repeat of "wait" is intended to re-orient their train of thought.
3. Once you get information about staging, relay it to each group. This way, responders can coordinate with each other.
 4. If the police or the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) on the scene notify you that the area is secured and it's now safe to enter the scene, notify the fire officer.

BCAS combined events

Always dispatch combined events with a WAIT warning.

A *combined event* can be passed automatically to E-Comm by BCAS through the medical priority dispatch system (MPDS). It's a "pre-alert" that

notifies you to dispatch a first responder unit. Since these units are dispatched before receiving complete caller information, the unit can be placed into dangerous situations such as assaults, shootings, or domestic violence.

Definition of “Wait”

When E-Comm Fire Dispatch transmits a wait instruction, it means this:

- **Safe distance** – Stage the apparatus a safe distance away from the location of the event.
- **Out of sight** – Stage the apparatus out of the line of sight of the location of the event.
- **Respond routine** until the scene is cleared.
- **Wait to be cleared** – Don't move in to the scene until cleared by Dispatch, by the police on the scene, or by the incident commander.

Note – All field responders are responsible for understanding and complying with this definition. Fire officers will verify with police that the scene is now secure. Before attending to patients they will notify the dispatcher by radio that the area is safe.

Related topics

Chapter 5 Communications – Status Buttons – STG (Staging)

7.2 Death or Serious Injury to a Civilian at a Fire

Policy

When a death or serious injury to a civilian occurs at a fire, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Serious injury – Notify the following:

- the deputy fire chief on duty
- the chief fire prevention officer
- the fire investigator on duty
- BC Ambulance Service (BCAS)—at the request of the incident commander (often BCAS will be there already)

Death – Notify these *in addition*:

- Vancouver Police Department
- BC Coroner's Office

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

Fire death

Note – Only BCAS, in consultation with a doctor, has authority to pronounce a victim dead at the scene.

When informed of a fire death, make the following notifications:

- New Westminster Police Service—Provide any available details. Police have access to special resources to help families deal with the death.
- Fire/Rescue Service chief officers:
 - fire chief
 - deputy fire chief
 - staff officer
 - manager of fire protection
- Fire Commissioner's Office

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.22.03.001 – Sudden Death Calls

VFRS SOG 4.10.01.000 – B.C. Coroner's Office – General

7.3 Injury to a Firefighter

Policy

When a firefighter is injured, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Note – Dispatch will be informed only if there's a *serious* injury or death of an on-duty firefighter. If firefighters are taken to hospital for minor injuries, the closest rescue unit or the battalion chief picks up and transports them back to the hall when they're discharged.

Serious injury

1. Notify BCAS to attend (if they aren't already there).
2. Dispatch a rescue unit if required.
3. Provide any available details to the battalion chief and the on-duty deputy chief.
4. Notify the chief fire prevention officer and the on-duty fire investigator.
5. Note the injury in the Event History.
6. At the direction of the incident commander, notify the coordinator of the Critical Incident Stress Management Team. The coordinator will decide whether or not to mobilize the team.
7. At the direction of the deputy chief, contact the department chaplain and the FBA[??] president or secretary.

Note – The deputy chief will notify the chief directly, if deemed appropriate.

Injury when an event has not been created – For example inside the hall:

- Create an event [?what type?] in the CAD.
- If requested by the incident commander, notify BCAS to respond.

Death

Contact the Vancouver Police Department or RCMP-UEL to attend.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.22.01.003 – Serious Injury Notification Protocol

VFRS SOG 2.26.04.000 – Serious Fire Injury/Death

7.4 Motor Vehicle Incidents

Policy

For motor vehicle incidents, E-Comm Fire Dispatch responds according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

First response

For first-response districts containing a rescue company, dispatch the full company, emergency response.

If a rescue company is unavailable:

1. Respond a single apparatus emergency.
2. Dispatch from the nearest district a rescue company responding *routine*—unless the situation dictates a rapid response, such as many vehicles involved, numerous casualties, a major event with people trapped, or the incident commander requests a rapid response from the apparatus out of the district.

Relieving firefighting apparatus – Have the on-scene rescue apparatus relieve the firefighting apparatus as soon as possible when the following conditions apply:

- Both rescue and firefighting apparatus are on the scene.
- All fire hazards have been dealt with.
- There's a need for the fire department to remain on the scene for an extended period of time.

Entrapment or extrication

Dispatch a heavy rescue unit. The incident commander should request a heavy rescue unit if one hasn't already been dispatched.

Currently[??], heavy rescue units are in Hall No. 8, Hall No. 9, and Hall No. 17.

Damage

Street lights – The Department of Highways maintains the street lights on the Stanley Park Causeway. Notify the Department of any damage to these poles resulting from a motor vehicle incident. Give them the following:

- location (ID number of the pole, if available)
- amount of damage
- type of damage, such as exposed wires
- license number of the vehicle that struck the pole
- fire event number

Fire hydrants – Notify the City Waterworks during working hours. Notify the Pumping Station during off hours via the direct line. Tell them:

- location
- fire hydrant number (example 41c26)
- license plate number of the vehicle that struck the hydrant
- amount and type of damage
- fire event number

Cassiar Tunnel incidents – Inform Cassiar Tunnel Control.

Related topics

Towing

VFRS SOG 2.25.11.000 – Freeway Operations

7.5 MVIs Involving Fire Apparatus

Policy

For motor vehicle incidents involving fire apparatus, E-Comm Fire Dispatch responds according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Procedure

If the apparatus was en route to an event, dispatch another apparatus to that event.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

1. Create an MVI event and dispatch normally.
2. Notify BCAS if required.
3. Notify the Vancouver Police Department or the RCMP.

Serious incidents

If the event involves injuries or needs towing of the apparatus, notify the following:

- the charge dispatcher
- the division's chief mechanic
- the on-call deputy chief
- the battalion chief

Note – If the incident isn't serious and damage is minor, the company officer notifies the division's chief mechanic as soon as possible the next day.

Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

1. Create an MVI event.
2. Regardless of whether it's an emergency or not, notify the battalion chief.
3. Dispatch the event and make notifications as directed by the battalion chief.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.04.08.000 – Accident to Apparatus

VFRS SOG 2.04.08.001 – Accident to Apparatus – Dispatch Procedures

7.6 Jaws of Life and Heavy Rescue

Policy

A *heavy rescue* unit is a rescue company that includes an *auto-extrication technician*. E-Comm Fire Dispatch is aware of the current location of all Jaws of Life equipment and all heavy rescue units. This equipment and these units must be available at all times.

Purpose

To save lives.

Procedure

Heavy rescue

The incident commander requests a heavy rescue, if a unit is not already on the scene.

Jaws of Life

When firefighters are at a scene where Jaws of Life are to be used, they may call Dispatch for information about the specific car or truck they'll be dealing with. This information is in the large white binder in the Fire Pod, entitled *Rescuer's Guide to Vehicle Safety Systems*.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

All halls have Jaws of Life.

Only Halls No. 8, No. 9, and No. 17 have heavy rescue units. If all three are tied up at working fires, dispatch an additional rescue unit to relieve a heavy rescue unit for service.

Start of shift – At the start of each shift, the battalion chief will advise Dispatch of any changes to heavy rescue designations on rescue units within their district.

Related topics

Rescuer's Guide to Vehicle Safety Systems

7.7 High Angle & Confined Space Rescue

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch responds to high-angle and confined-space rescue events according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Notify the manager of special teams.

Ask a battalion chief to fill the role of incident commander. The incident commander coordinates with other agencies as needed.

Charge dispatcher

Manage all issues related to staffing. Review the unit history and ensure a complete Technical Rescue Team of eight is dispatched with the apparatus needed for a high-angle or confined space rescue (Rescue-3 event type).

Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

Dispatch Engine 6, Engine 7, and Rescue 7.

Halls – The computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system should suggest Hall No. 6 and Hall No. 7, which have the high-angle and confined-space rescue response units. If the event happens within the areas of either Hall No. 6 or Hall No. 7, then *both* special response units are suggested by the CAD.

Other areas – If the incident happens outside these hall's areas, dispatch the closest engine, quint, or ladder to the event in addition to Engine 6, Engine 7, and Rescue 7.

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

The computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system will suggest Hall No. 3, which has the special apparatus and team trained for high angle and confined space rescues.

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

A special call-out for a technical rope-rescue team is required. See *Call-outs*.

Related topics

Chapter 4 Managing Events – Call-outs

7.8 Water Rescue

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch responds to water rescue events according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Procedure

Notifications – For all events in open water or at the shoreline, notify the Coast Guard. For all rescues in the North Arm or Middle Arm of the Fraser River, notify the North Harbour Commission as well. See *Chapter 6 Notifications*.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Mutual aid only – *Do not dispatch* VFRS personnel. Water rescues require specially trained, highly skilled responders. Create a *Mutual Aid In* event (FMUIN). Follow procedures for communication and authorization of mutual aid responses.

Note – Although the Urban Search and Rescue team is trained and equipped to perform swift-water rescues, it's usually quicker to obtain mutual-aid support than to assemble the Urban Search and Rescue team.

The incident commander initiates any requests for a water rescue team. Authority for the request must come from the on-duty deputy chief. When authority is granted, contact either of these departments for resources:

- North Vancouver District Fire Dispatch
- Coquitlam Fire Dispatch
- Richmond Fire-Rescue Services duty officer

Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

Notify the RCMP (if the call didn't come from them). If RCMP are on the scene already, they'll call out their dive team, if needed. If RCMP are not on the scene and the incident commander asks for a dive team, call the RCMP.

Steveston – If the rescue event is in Steveston, notify the Steveston Port Authority.

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

Marinas – Fire in a marina is quite different from fire at a ferry dock or at Roberts Bank. Dispatch the event as suggested by the CAD. Then the battalion chief will decide who else is needed.

Person in the water – Depending on what waters the person is in, notify:

- the U.S. Coast Guard
- BC Ferries
- Fraser Port Authority
- Steveston Port Authority

Related topics

Chapter 5 Communications – Mutual Aid

VFRS SOG 2.16.03.008 – Swift Water Rescue

7.9 Trench Rescue

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch responds to trench-rescue events according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

1. Create and dispatch a Rescue-3 event as suggested in the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system.
2. If the incident commander requests a special trench-rescue team, refer the request to the charge dispatcher.

Charge dispatcher

Either request a specialty rescue team from the City of Vancouver Engineering Department, or initiate a request for mutual aid.

Mutual aid – Create a *Mutual Aid In* event (FMUOUT). Follow procedures for communicating and authorizing mutual aid responses. Authority for the request must come from the on-duty deputy chief. When authority is granted, contact either of these fire departments for their trench rescue team:

- Coquitlam Fire Dispatch
- Surrey Fire Dispatch

Related topics

Chapter 5 Communications – Mutual Aid

VFRS SOG 2.16.03.007 – Trench Rescue

7.10 Urban Search and Rescue Team

Policy

The Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team is a resource for Vancouver, GVRD municipalities, and the province. When requested by either a Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services incident commander or the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP), E-Comm Fire Dispatch will help authorize and dispatch the USAR team.

Purpose

To respond to disasters or other events that overwhelm the normal resources of an area or agency.

Note – The prime function of USAR is collapse rescues, such as from an earthquake. USAR is composed of individuals from a variety of agencies, assembled on a call-out basis.

Procedure

1. Except for calls in Vancouver, requests to activate the USAR team must come from the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP).
2. Advise the charge dispatcher.
3. Contact the on-duty deputy chief.
4. The deputy chief speaks to the Vancouver city manager for permission. *Only the Vancouver city manager can authorize use of the team.*
5. Page the USAR task force leader to begin their call-out procedure.
6. The USAR team might have already received a call-out page from another source. Confirm call-out pages by calling the USAR number given in the resource manual.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

1. The incident commander asks for the USAR team by speaking directly with the on-duty deputy chief—either on the scene, or through E-Comm Fire Dispatch.
2. The deputy chief speaks to the Vancouver city manager for permission.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.16.02.001 – Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)

VFRS SOG 2.16.02.003 – USAR Team Deployment

7.11 Search and Rescue Dog Team

Policy

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services' *Canine Search and Rescue team*—a dog and a handler—can be requested by a VFRS officer, or by a Vancouver Police Department non-commissioned officer, for a defined search within Vancouver city limits.

This dog team is not used for locating criminals—the police K-9 Unit is more appropriate—or for detecting flammable liquids, hazardous materials at fires, or any situation deemed inappropriate by the handler.

The team can also be requested by a variety of agencies to work outside city limits. Examples are the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP), the RCMP, federal disaster authorities, and the operations manager of the USAR team.

Purpose

The Canine Search and Rescue team is trained for:

- locating victims of a collapsed building or excavation
- searching on land for a victim who could be injured or could have wandered away from an accident scene and can't be located
- locating victims lost in water areas
- locating deceased victims or human body parts
- locating victims of a fire after the fire is out

Procedure

Requests within the City of Vancouver – Contact the battalion chief to approve the deployment.

Requests outside Vancouver – The on-duty deputy chief must approve deployment.

If approval is obtained:

1. Confirm the location of the dog and handler with the battalion chief.
2. Respond the on-duty Canine Search and Rescue team dog and handler by alerting the hall or apparatus where the handler is assigned.
3. When the team is deployed, inform the battalion chief . The battalion chief will coordinate a replacement or back-fill an employee to cover the handler's apparatus assignment.

Note – If staffing is minimal and overtime is required, the deputy chief will need to approve the overtime.

4. The dog handler waits for the replacement to arrive before leaving the hall. Handlers usually respond to the event in their own vehicle.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.16.02.002 – Search and Rescue Canine – Deployment

7.12 Animal Rescue

Policy

For animal rescues, E-Comm Fire Dispatch responds according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

VFRS does *not* respond for animal rescues such as cats in trees or lost birds. Refer the caller to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

Note – For cats up trees or poles, suggest that the caller place food at the base of the tree, on a light-coloured cloth for visibility, and lean a two-by-four against the tree or pole to help the animal get down.

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

The Department does not respond to cats in trees or up power poles.

All other requests for animal rescues are dealt with on an individual basis. The department will make every effort to provide assistance when requested to do so.

Related topics

7.13 Accompanying BCAS to a Hospital

Policy

When a firefighter accompanies BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) to a hospital, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

The following four scenarios specify the standard operating procedures to be followed when firefighters accompany BCAS to a hospital.

Three-person rescue unit

When a member of a three-person rescue unit is assigned to a medical event and accompanies BCAS to a hospital within the City of Vancouver, dispatch the rescue unit to the hospital to pick up the member.

Status buttons – The status of the unit should be AOS (Available on Scene). When they pick up the firefighter, they should change their status to AOR (Available on Radio).

Two-person rescue unit

When a member from a two-person rescue unit is assigned to a medical event and accompanies BCAS to a hospital within the City of Vancouver, dispatch the rescue unit to the hospital to pick up the member.

Status buttons – The apparatus status remains for the trip as OS (On Scene), because it does not have enough staff to be assigned to an event.

Fire apparatus within their district minus one fire fighter

When a member from a fire apparatus is assigned to a medical event and accompanies BCAS to a hospital within the fire hall's response district, dispatch the apparatus to the hospital to pick up the member.

Status buttons – The status of the apparatus is AOS (Available on Scene) until the firefighter has been returned to the apparatus. Then the status will be AOR (Available on Radio).

Fire apparatus where the hospital is outside their district

When a member from a fire apparatus is assigned to a medical event and accompanies BCAS to a hospital *not* within the fire hall's response district, have the apparatus return to quarters "in service." A rescue unit or battalion chief will be required to pick up the member from the hospital.

Status buttons – The status of the apparatus is AOS (Available on Scene). The apparatus can be assigned to medical and fire events, provided that another unit is assigned to the fire to bring staffing up to full complement.

Related topics

7.14 Suicide or Attempted Suicide

Policy

For cases of suicide or attempted suicide, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Ask the Police or RCMP to attend.

Note – Vancouver Police have two useful resources. Car 86 is staffed by a social worker and is available at all times. Car 87 is staffed by a psychologist in the evenings.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team – Request the CISM team if the event falls into their mandate or affects crew members.

Related topics

Chapter 9 Fire Department Activities – Critical Incident Stress Management

VFRS SOG 2.22.02.000 – Suicide/Attempted Suicide

7.15 Hazardous Materials

Policy

For hazardous materials events, E-Comm Fire Dispatch dispatches a hazardous-materials response team according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To protect public health and safety.

Procedure

1. Initially, give preliminary, basic CHOS hazmat-reference information to the crew responding. *Safety is critical.*
2. Enter basic hazmat information into the Event History.

Once the Haz-Mat team is involved, the incident commander gets information directly from the Haz-Mat team members.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Biological hazards

1. *Before* dispatching units, contact the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) or the University Endowment Lands RCMP if a biological hazard is reported (unless they reported it).
2. Downstream the call to the VPD dispatcher.
3. The VPD will conduct a preliminary investigation and determine whether or not a fire-department response is needed. If it is, deal with it as a hazmat event.

Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

At the direction of the battalion chief, ask the Vancouver Haz-Mat team to attend (see *Mutual Aid In*).

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services will provide any further directions and information to Richmond's crews. Provide support as requested.

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

1. Notify the incident commander about the possible problem with hazardous materials. State the exact problem and the nature of the materials, if known.
2. The battalion chief or incident commander and crew will check out the situation, then declare what level of response is needed, and what support is needed.
3. Call out the Surrey Haz-Mat team. If they're not available, call the Vancouver Haz-Mat team.

Event priority – If there's imminent risk to life, or if rescue is required, dispatch a hazmat team *immediately*.

Shipper or railway company – If there's no placard on a container on a ship, call the shipper. The Container Port has the contact numbers. Similarly for road or rail, the incident commander can direct Dispatch to contact the shipper or railway company for information.

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

Automatic notifications – When dispatching an event involving hazardous materials or dangerous goods, always notify the following agencies:

- New Westminster Police Service
- BC Ambulance Service
- New Westminster Fire Department Chief Officers
- The Provincial Emergency Program

Requested notifications – If requested by the incident commander, notify these agencies in addition:

- News agencies (via the police)
- Engineering Operations
- Haz-Mat Team—Surrey or Vancouver fire departments
- Railways
- Canutech
- T.E.A.P [?]
- Ministry of Environment
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- New Westminister Environmental Health Division of the Fraser Health Authority – Simon Fraser Area

Notifying the Environmental Health Division

Fire department officers who become aware of public health hazards can ask Dispatch to notify New Westminister Environmental Health Services of the Fraser Health Authority North Area.

Call them when the following health hazards have been identified, and the hazards involve the types of occupancy listed below.

Health hazards –

- sewage spills and leaks
- unreasonable amounts of dirt or grease, or bad housekeeping that fosters unsanitary conditions
- the presence of infectious diseases
- the presence of rodents
- abnormal amounts of insects
- hazardous materials spills and leaks
- food that's been exposed to products of combustion

Type of occupancy –

- any public assembly
- businesses where the general public could be involved

- situations where employees are subjected to unhealthy conditions
- public areas
- multiple-occupancy residences such as hotels, motels, and apartments, where the hazard affects people other than those living in a single residence

Related topics

Chapter 5 Communications – Mutual Aid

VFRS SOG 2.23.12.000 – Response to a Confirmed Biological Hazard.

7.16 Bomb Threats

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch and partner fire departments respond to bomb threat events according to a standard operating procedure.

Purpose

To ensure firefighter safety.

Procedure

1. For all calls reporting a bomb threat, create an event, FBOMB.
2. Advise responding units to stage two blocks from the scene and *"Wait for Police."*
3. Remind crews to avoid the use of radios within a two-block radius of the scene. Crews should already be aware of this standing restriction.
4. Notify the Police, BC Ambulance Service (BCAS), and the on-duty deputy chief.

Note – Fire personnel are not permitted to assist in any search procedure aimed at locating an explosive device.

Related topics

Wait for Police

VFRS SOG 2.25.08.000 – Bomb or Bomb Threat Incidents

7.17 Burning Permits

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch deals with burning permits according to the fire department's standard operating procedures. The fire department's fire-prevention office will fax to E-Comm Fire Dispatch the burning permits that they issue, plus the current permit list.

When permit holders start burning, they must call E-Comm Fire Dispatch.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Procedure

Day of burning – The permit holder on the day of the burning must call the GVRD to get clearance to burn. This is an air-quality issue. When they start burning, they must call E-Comm Fire Dispatch. The number at E-Comm is printed on the permit. Deal with callers as follows:

1. The caller gives their permit number and says when and where burning is to happen.
2. Check off the permit number given by the caller from the department's current permit list.
3. Check the information from the caller against the corresponding permit copy.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Except for cooking, no open burning is allowed in the City of Vancouver unless a valid permit has been issued by the Fire Prevention Office.

Cooking is allowed only if done in a container such as a barbecue or hibachi that is approved by the Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada (ULC) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA).

Examples of permits are First Nations people's ceremonial burning and major fireworks events such as the Symphony of Fire.

Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

Permits are issued by the Fire Prevention Office. Not many are issued. There are three kinds:

- beach
- agricultural
- land clearing (not in peat areas)

With a permit, beach fires are allowed until 2300 hours.

Note – Richmond Fire gets numerous calls to Gary Point in Steveston to respond to fires after 2300 hours.

Responding to burning-permit calls

- Check the number off the permit list.
- Notify the battalion chief and nearby halls that the specified type of burning will be taking place at the specified time and place.
- If the caller requests a beach-fire permit, send them to the local fire hall to get one.
- If any other type of burning permit is required, send them to the Fire Prevention Office during regular business hours. Burning permits for agriculture and land clearing are only issued by the Fire Prevention Office during regular hours.

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

Burning permits are issued in Delta for agricultural waste, but not for garbage. No burning is permitted at night or on weekends. Open commercial and industrial burning is not permitted, and is regulated by the GVRD.

Parks – Fires are permitted in the designated fire pits in Centennial Park. Campfire permits are issued for designated fire pits in Water Shed Park, or on an individual basis from Hall No. 5.

Dispatching illegal-burning events or complaints

If unauthorized burning appears to be happening, dispatch apparatus to investigate.

Complaints – If there's a complaint about burning—even if the person doing the burning has a permit—and if the complainant gives E-Comm their name, address and phone number, then Delta Fire will go to check it out.

Halls – Don't dispatch Hall No. 4 for burning complaints. The response to Hall No. 4's area should be from Hall No. 1 or Hall No. 5, depending on the location.

Callers without permits

If a caller doesn't have a permit, inform them that they must have a permit to burn. Tell the caller that permits are available from all Delta fire halls, and that burning is permitted only on agricultural land.

If the caller has started burning already, tell the caller they need to put their fire out or the fire department will do it.

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

Under Fire Prevention By-Law No. 6640, 2004, no open burning of any kind is allowed in the City of New Westminster.

Related topics

7.18 Blasting

Policy

For blasting permits, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows standard operating procedures of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Fire Prevention Office – All companies doing construction blasting or movie-shoot pyrotechnics need permits issued by the Fire Prevention Office. The Office will fax to Dispatch the burning permits that they issue, plus the current permit list.

Day of blasting – Before they start, permit holders must call E-Comm Fire Dispatch. The number at E-Comm is printed on the permit. Deal with callers as follows:

1. The caller gives their permit number and says when and where the blasting or movie-shoot explosion is to happen.
2. Check off the permit number given by the caller from the department's current permit list.
3. Check the information from the caller against the corresponding permit copy.
4. If the caller doesn't have a permit, inform them that a permit is a requirement and is available from the fire department's fire-prevention office on weekdays.
5. If the caller says they have a permit, but E-Comm has not received a copy:

- During regular business hours, call the Fire Prevention Office, then phone the caller back after checking the matter.
- After hours, refer the matter to the Fire Investigators' Office. Take the alleged permit-holder's name and phone number and tell them they'll be called back shortly. Then call the Fire Investigators' Office. The fire investigator can phone the caller directly, or can give direction so that you can phone the caller back yourself.

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

The only blasting incidents in Delta are explosions on movie shoots. The movie permit stipulates that they hire Delta Fire to attend if there's to be a fire or explosion. The relevant hall knows about the shoot and notifies Dispatch when they log out to attend the scene. The crew that attends uses spare equipment staffed with call-out personnel.

Related topics

7.19 Children playing with Fire

Policy

Whenever a caller reports children playing with fire, regardless of whether there is an actual fire, E-Comm Fire Dispatch will alert the district fire department and police department, and record the details of the event.

Purpose

- To deal with juveniles in a timely manner.
- To ensure the relevant authorities can decide what's appropriate.
- To account for all events.

Procedure

If there's fire

1. Create an event and dispatch apparatus.
2. Alert the police.

If there's no fire

1. Create an event.
2. Alert the battalion chief, who will choose the course of action.
3. Alert the police.
4. If not dispatched, close the event as Advised.

Note – A child is anyone under 16 years of age.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.26.03.000 - *Juvenile Fire Setters*

7.20 Special Events

Policy

For special events, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

When a special event has been approved by the Fire Prevention Office, the special events captain faxes the permit to Dispatch.

7.21 Building Inspection

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch will request building inspectors according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Building inspection officials – When requested by the incident commander, contact one or more of the building inspectors as needed. The fire department can tell you which type of inspectors are needed. For major electrical concerns, call the head electrical inspector.

Note – Demolition equipment, including backhoes, can sometimes be provided by city building inspectors. Inspectors might first attend the fire scene to access it.

Structural integrity of buildings

If a building is considered unsafe:

1. The incident commander or officer in charge requests attendance of a building inspector. Information should include:
 - the address
 - a brief description of the building
 - the present operational situation and the reason for the request
 - nature of the building damage
 - name and rank of the requesting officer
2. Inform the on-duty deputy chief.

3. Call the Permits and Licenses Department for a building inspector.
4. To arrange demolition if it needs to be done after assessment, see the *Building Inspection Officials* policy for contact names and numbers.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.25.07.000 – Structural Integrity of Buildings

7.22 Fumigations

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch records information about commercial fumigations and alerts responding units.

Purpose

To protect the health and safety of firefighters.

Procedure

Fumigation companies will contact Dispatch when they plan to fumigate.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

In General Notes, record the following:

- location
- fumigant
- call-back phone number
- duration

Alert responding units to any location where fumigation is in progress.

Note – If the incident commander decides that the chemical being used could be absorbed through the skin or otherwise pose an unreasonable hazard to the responding fire company, the incident commander will request the Haz-Mat Team. Personnel on the scene will wait at a safe distance.

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

- Record a location-information note (Loc Info) including the location, duration, phone number, and the product being used.
- Broadcast the information to all halls.

- Alert any units that are responding to a location where fumigation is in progress.

Related topics

7.23 Clothing Wagon

Policy

A clothing wagon contains clean clothing for firefighters. E-Comm Fire Dispatch dispatches a clothing wagon according to the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To ensure the health and safety of firefighters.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Dispatch the clothing wagon automatically to Fourth Alarms or greater.

It can also be requested for any event where a firefighter's clothing becomes contaminated or wet and needs to be replaced.

Send the closest rescue unit to the clothing wagon's location at Hall No. 1 to transport it to the staging location.

Assign the rescue unit and the clothing wagon to the event. The rescue unit can then clear when they've delivered the unit to the scene.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.05.01.009 – Clothing Wagon Response

7.24 Emergency Entry to Sealed Premises

Policy

The incident commander must notify E-Comm Fire Dispatch when a Crown seal is broken during a response. Dispatch must inform an *excise officer* about the broken seal and the location.

Purpose

This policy allows emergency responders to gain legal entry to a premise that has been sealed under the Crown Excise Act, provided that these procedures are followed.

Warning – Normally, opening or breaking a Crown lock or seal without the knowledge and consent of the Collector is an indictable offence.

Procedure

1. Enter the information into the Event History.
2. Contact and inform the excise officer. See the resource binder for contact information.
3. If a reference is unavailable to attend, contact the police to secure the premises.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.05.05.000 – Excise Act – Emergency Entry into Sealed Premises

7.25 Board-ups

Policy

Only the battalion chief or a fire investigator can approve a board-up.

Purpose

- To meet legal requirements and comply with government regulations.
- To protect public health and safety.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

1. The battalion chief or fire investigator will request a board-up and give you an estimate of the amount of board-up material needed.
2. Contact the City of Vancouver as below and request an estimated time of arrival:
 - Days—0700 to 2300 Monday to Friday—contact Manitoba Yards.
 - Nights—2300 to 0700 Monday to Friday, and any time on weekends and statutory holidays—contact the Pumping Station.
3. If the building owner is more than fifteen minutes away, the incident commander could ask you to inform the Vancouver Police.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.25.001 – Board Ups

VFRS SOG 2.25.000 – Building Security

7.26 Flood Restoration

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch will respond to flooding only if there is a fire hazard or a threat to life or public property. Flood restoration is the responsibility of the property owner.

Purpose

- To meet legal requirements and comply with government regulations.
- To protect public health and safety, where applicable.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

Dispatch an emergency response only if the water:

- creates a potential fire hazard
- is a hazard to occupants
- is a hazard to locations on City property
- involves a city water main

If flood restoration is needed, contact the property owner (if not already on the scene).

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.05.01.06 – Domestic Water Problems

7.27 Towing

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch will arrange towing if there's a hazard to health or property, or if the vehicle driver or owner requests it. A tow truck will be requested for drivers or owners only if they stand by with the vehicle to accept the charges.

Purpose

- To meet legal requirements and comply with government regulations.
- To protect public health and safety.

Procedure

When requested by the officer on the scene, contact tow trucks to attend. The officer will give details such as the owner's preference, license number, year, make, and colour of the vehicle.

For motor vehicle incidents (MVIs) with injuries, refer the request to the Vancouver Police or the RCMP at UBC.

Note – BCAA will not tow member vehicles involved in MVIs.

Related topics

Motor Vehicle Incidents

VFRS SOG 2.03.04.000 – Requesting Tow Trucks

7.28 Arson

Policy

In cases of suspected arson associated with a fire event, when requested by the fire department E-Comm Fire Dispatch will call a fire investigator, following the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To meet legal requirements and comply with government regulations.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

If requested by the incident commander, ask the fire investigator on call to respond.

Note – If you get a report of possible arson when a VFRS incident commander is not on the scene, create an event and dispatch at least one unit to ensure scene safety.

Richmond Fire-Rescue Services

1. The incident commander or battalion chief will ask you to call out a fire prevention officer. See the call-out list provided.
2. Once a fire prevention officer has been reached, give the incident commander or battalion chief an estimated time of arrival.

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

1. When requested by the battalion chief, call out an investigator from the Fire Protection Office.
2. If requested by the battalion chief, call in the Delta Police or the RCMP.
3. Notify the deputy chief of operations or the on-call deputy chief, depending on the time of day.

Policy # 7.28

Related topics

7.29 Evacuating Homes

Policy

When a response to an event requires evacuating homes, E-Comm Fire Dispatch follows the standard operating procedure of the fire department.

Purpose

To comply with local regulations, allocate resources optimally, and perform dispatch operations in a manner understood and agreed on by all parties.

Fire departments' special procedures

Delta Fire and Emergency Services

Only the fire chief or designate and the Provincial Office of the Fire Commissioner have the authority to order evacuation.

Help Delta Police block off the area and move people.

Related topics

7.30 Major Emergency Plan

Policy

E-Comm Fire Dispatch will immediately notify fire departments about any major emergency.

Purpose

To protect public safety.

Fire departments' special procedures

New Westminster Fire/Rescue Service

Also telephone the New Westminster Police Department and tell them about the major emergency.

Related topics

7.31 Provincial Emergency Program

Policy

The Provincial Emergency Program (PEP)—through the Attorney General’s office—can request resources from E-Comm Fire Dispatch in response to large, human-caused or natural disasters.

Purpose

To protect public health and safety.

Procedure

If PEP calls requesting specific resources

1. Call the deputy chief on duty to get approval.
2. When given approval, contact PEP and assign resources.

If approval is denied, or if more information is needed, the deputy will contact PEP directly.

If the incident commander asks for specific resources through PEP

Proceed the same way.

If approval is denied, the deputy will speak directly to the incident commander.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 4.05.01.000 *Provincial Emergency Program - PEP*

7.32 Helping Other Agencies

Policy

The E-Comm Fire Dispatch charge dispatcher will coordinate the response to any requests for help from non-fire agencies such as police, Coast Guard, BC Ambulance Service (BCAS), and city engineering departments, unless the matter is part of a regular response to an event.

Purpose

To protect public health and safety and comply with government regulations.

Fire departments' special procedures

Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services

For responses outside the City of Vancouver and the University Endowment Lands, refer the request to the on-duty deputy chief.

Related topics

VFRS SOG 2.03.01.000

Policy #