**Civil Unrest Template**

**Adopted** 10/11/21 **Updated:**

The Polk County Fire Chief’s Association has adopted a standardized procedure for Civil Unrest events. The intent is to have each fire department respond in a like manner for the safety purposes of all personnel in the event of a mutual aid call.

PURPOSE

To provide a guide for fire department activities during civil unrest including riots, civil disturbances or related hostile and violent encounters that will result in a prompt and coordinated action with law enforcement (LE).

DEFINITIONS

* Demonstration or Protest
  + A demonstration or protest is a legal public assembly of persons exhibiting sympathy with, or opposition to, a political, legal, economic, or social condition or movement.
  + A demonstration/protest may become illegal and dangerous when it includes active resistance and civil disobedience as a deliberate violation of a law.
* Civil Disturbance
  + A civil disturbance is 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.
* Civil Unrest / Riot
  + A riot is civil unrest/disorder wherein crowds display a propensity for violence by setting fires, vandalizing, looting, attacking civilians, firefighters or law enforcement, or engaging in other violent acts. Frequently, such actions will not stop without the intervention of law enforcement personnel.
* Hot Zone, Warm Zone, Cold Zone
  + A Hot Zone (or exclusion zone) is the area of civil unrest or riot as designated by the on-scene law enforcement commander, in which civilian vehicle access is denied and fire department vehicles will not enter unless accompanied by law enforcement escorts. When possible, the hot zone will be designated by perimeter streets.
    - Hot Zone – Unstable, potentially unsafe given observed protest/riot conditions & actions.
    - Warm Zone – An area, in the current state, that is relatively safe for emergency responder operations, with observable indicators that suggest that instability could possibly ensue.
    - Cold Zone – Safe Area with little likelihood of unrest
* Task Force
  + A task force is a unified group of apparatus and personnel assembled in response to a civil unrest/riot condition.
* Rescue Task Force
  + A Rescue Task Force will consist of 2 medics and 2 or more Law Enforcement personnel.
* Engine Task Force
  + An Engine Task Force will consist of 1 Engine and 2 or more Law Enforcement personnel.
* Fire Task Force
  + A Fire Task Force will consist of 3 Engines, 1 Ladder, 1 Chief Officer and 1 Ambulance, and 2 or more Law Enforcement personnel

RESPONSIBILTY

It will be the responsibility of each member to know and understand this procedure. In addition, members shall also prepare to implement this procedure in cooperation with LE through a unified incident command.

PROCEDURE

Notifications

Notification from LE or dispatch of such civil unrest or other disturbance shall be completed with as much advanced notice as possible. If intelligence of pending unrest is known, a chief officer or shift commander shall be notified. In addition, if dispatch is aware of a civil unrest taking place in a location or near a location of an incident, crews shall be made aware prior to arriving at the scene.

Demonstration or Protest

Companies shall avoid unnecessary travel in the city, especially in areas of concern. This includes running errands, grocery stores, or looking first hand at the demonstration or protest. Companies that are dispatched to incidents near a demonstration are to avoid the area as much as possible and implement the following procedures:

1. Request law enforcement to be notified and respond to your location.
2. Shut off lights and sirens at least 3 blocks from the scene.
3. Wear ballistic personal protective equipment.
4. Meet with the LE Supervisor on the scene.
5. Assess the need for additional assistance.
6. Leave promptly after service is rendered.   
     
   Civil Disturbance

If a demonstration or protest escalates to a civil disturbance, additional precautions and procedures shall be implemented, which include:

1. Notify dispatch of the escalated situation and give updated information as to exact location, crowd size, and general conditions observed.
2. The Shift Commander shall be added to the incident and report to the Unified Command Post.
3. Zones shall be established to include hot, warm, and cold.
4. If the area of disturbance is near a fire station, all doors shall be shut, secured, and members shall remain inside.
5. While responding to the area of disturbance, members shall wear ballistic personal protective equipment.
6. Lights, sirens, and air horns shall not be used in the affected area.
7. Avoid hostile verbal exchanges, gestures, or physical contact, and at no time shall water lines or tools be used as crowd control.
8. If at any time conditions present unreasonable risk of safety to the members of the fire department, all personnel shall leave the immediate area by the most expedited route.

Civil Unrest / Riot

If the demonstration, protest, or disturbance escalates into a civil unrest or riot, the following additional procedures shall be implemented:

1. All companies and stations shall be notified by the Shift Commander, or dispatch of the location of unrest. If possible, hot/warm/cold zones shall be established if they haven’t and relayed to all companies.
2. All companies not on an incident, but out of the station shall return to their assigned station immediately.
3. A safety officer, if available, shall be dispatched to the unified command post.
4. A call back of all available personnel shall be considered.
5. If the hot zone includes an area of a fire station, ensure that all reserve apparatus are re- located and the building is secured.

Abandoning a Fire Station

During a large-scale disorder or riot, it may become necessary to temporarily abandon fire stations due to safety considerations, especially in the hot zone. 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. This decision may also be made at the unified command post by the Shift Commander after consultation with LE. Companies abandoning a station will notify dispatch and the Shift Commander of their actions and proceed to the closest fire station in a safe area.

Company officers, when ordered to abandon their station, will carry out the following actions.

1. Take all portable radios and battery chargers with them.
2. Take any cellular phones and battery chargers.
3. Take all SCBA cylinders (bottles) on board the apparatus.
4. Take bunker gear of all members, if possible
5. Lock all doors and windows.
6. Personal vehicles shall be moved inside to the apparatus bay before leaving. Provision should be made for the removal of personal vehicles to a safe location at the earliest convenience depending on conditions.

Safety Considerations

Additional safety considerations may be considered during any of the aforementioned procedures and include:

1. Ballistic vests shall be worn under bunker gear by all members.
2. Store a tarp and CO2 or Dry Chemical extinguisher in the cab of the apparatus to protect firefighters from thrown rocks, bottles, or fire bombs.
3. Tools that may be weaponized (axes, halligan bars, sledge hammers, etc.) are to be kept in locked compartments or inside the cab when not in use.
4. In many situations it may be safer to ask Law Enforcement to bring a patient out of the Hot Zone to EMS personnel in a warm or cold zone.
5. Based on previous civil unrest/riot history, the number of fires could be very high. The most effective tactical considerations may include the following actions -

Fireground Operations

The first priority at an emergency scene is life safety including the safety of firefighters. Unless a life hazard is present, an exterior attack using master streams from deck guns may be most effective. 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. Laddering and/or roof operations should only be undertaken if necessary for rescue of known occupants in imminent threat of injury or death.

Depending on the number of fires in an area, fires that present no exposure hazard should be left to burn, including vehicle fires and rubbish fires.

During fireground operations, the perimeter should be secured by Law Enforcement officers prior to initiating firefighting operations. Only connect to hydrants in the secured area.

Apparatus should be positioned in a manner to allow for rapid evacuation. If ordered to evacuate, personnel should make an effort to get nozzles and equipment back on the apparatus and shut down the hydrant if possible to do so safely. If it is not possible, then companies should leave hose and other equipment on the scene. The task force must remain intact.

If it becomes necessary to abandon an apparatus, the apparatus radio microphone should be removed and the apparatus immobilized, if possible.

EMS Operations

EMS calls in the hot zone 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. Task force units remain together throughout an EMS response. Depending on assessment of the situation, patients may be extracted as follows:

* Removal from a Hot Zone by Law Enforcement
* Removal from a Hot Zone by a Rescue Task Force

If multiple patients are involved, MCI protocols may be followed.