



CIVIL UNREST





Urban Fire Forum

Civil Unrest

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

In legal terms, civil unrest or civil disturbance means acts of violence and disorder detrimental to the public law and order. It includes acts such as riots, acts of violence, insurrections, unlawful obstructions or assemblages. It also includes all domestic conditions requiring or likely to require the use of federal armed forces. The term “civil disorder” is defined by 18 USCS § 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.¹

Civil unrest events typically evolve from a group of people protesting against major sociopolitical issues though they may also evolve from

major sporting events, concerts, block parties, abortion clinics, or political conventions. Protestors may lash out in a violent way against authority, property, or people. Riots may ensue involving vandalism and the destruction of property with targets varied between public and private properties.

Regardless of the terminology, the current era in the U.S. is marred by occurrences of civil unrest. Riots and demonstrations are a reality in today's world and like law enforcement, firefighters and paramedics are called upon to respond and function in the midst of these events. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1500 on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs Chapter 8 on Civil Unrest, Acts of Violence, or Terrorism require that the fire department shall develop and maintain written standard operating procedures that establish a standardized approach to the safety of members at incidents that involve violence, unrest, or civil disturbance. In response to this requirement, this white paper on Fire Service Response to Civil Unrest has been prepared in conjunction with the NFPA Responder Forum 2015 and released to the fire community by the Urban Fire Forum 2016.

¹ U.S. Code, Title 18, Part I, Chapter 12, Section 232. Legal Information Institute, Cornell University Law School.

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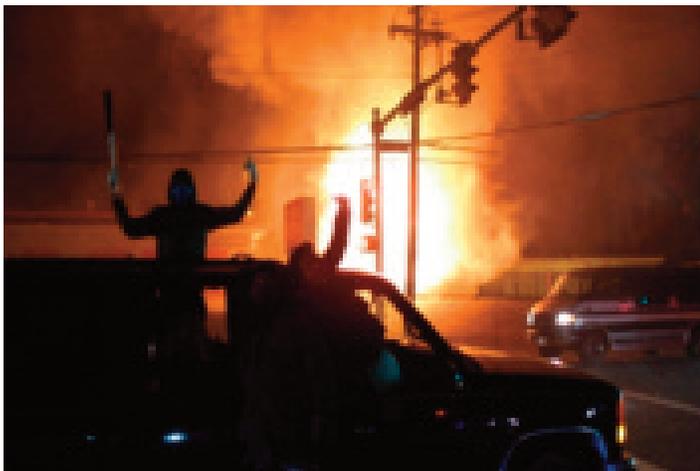
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Historical Perspective Civil Unrest Events Involving the Fire Service

For decades, the fire service has been called along with law enforcement to intervene in incidents involving civil unrest. Though the roles are very different, the fire service, like law enforcement must be prepared for the response and the range of incidents they will encounter. These incidents range from riots, to gang fights, violent crimes, drug-related crimes, family disturbances, or multiple victims of gun violence. History shows that any of these events may involve fire and most likely



will involve injured victims. Below are notable examples of recent civil unrest events requiring significant fire service response and intervention.

2003: Benton Harbor MI — Some 21 buildings including many vacant homes were torched. Rioters flipped cars and hurled rocks and bricks at police officers and firefighters as they attempted to quell the crowds.

2006: San Bernardino CA — After a punk rock festival a disturbance ensued reportedly caused by a group of youths advocating white power. Estimates put the crowd at 1,500 fans who began vandalizing local businesses and parked cars in the downtown area. Dumpsters were set on fire and several shops were broken into while dozens more were damaged.

2011: Oakland CA — Occupy protests riots. Protesters shattered windows, set fires, and plastered buildings with graffiti. Riot police fired heavy amounts of tear gas on the protesters.

2014: Ferguson MO — Police involved shooting of Michael Brown — At least a dozen buildings were torched and looted, many of them local businesses. Dozens of cars, including two police cruisers and a row of cars at a dealership were vandalized and left charred. The unrest was not limited to Ferguson as protest sprung up throughout the nation.



2015: Baltimore MD — Spontaneous protests started after the funeral service of Freddie Gray. Civil unrest continued with at least twenty police officers injured, at least 250 people arrested, 285 to 350 businesses damaged, 150 vehicle fires, 60 structure fires, 27 drugstores looted, thousands of police and National Guard troops deployed, and a state of emergency declared in the city limits of Baltimore.

Preplanning and Preparedness

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Leaders and members of the fire service often state that they serve everyone equally, which is commendable. However, this viewpoint can also obscure important cultural differences among subsets within the larger community. Social equity within public safety administration seeks to provide services as evenly as possible while accounting for differences among constituent groups.

Social capital is the concept involving networks, relationships and initiatives among individuals and organizations that are based on trust, reciprocity and cooperation. These relationships must be initiated and nurtured over time. Social capital typically increases as trust levels increase. Partners in community-based engagement initiatives should include law enforcement, teachers, healthcare professionals and political interests. Including community school teachers and resource officers may provide an early sense of brewing issues they may be privy to from school conversations.

Fire and EMS agencies should critically evaluate the amount of social capital that exists between themselves and all segments of their communities and then deliberately work to increase social capital within the communities they serve. There are several ways to increase social capital.

Get to Know and Engage the Community

- Develop Cultural Competence projects for fire service members to foster a greater understanding of community issues/concerns, as well as a greater inclusiveness and diversity. These projects should be developed at the station/neighborhood level and can range from fire station tours to neighborhood cookouts. Fire departments should plan and carry out community social activities like block parties and summer water activities.
- Invite the community to watch drills and training exercises. Work with local school teachers to make attendance at these events extra credit for students.
- Community Risk Reduction Programs like providing and installing residential smoke detectors, checking on elderly in the neighborhood in extreme weather conditions, offering training on how to use a fire extinguisher for the boy scouts, or teach CPR at area churches.
- Certified Emergency Responder Training (CERT) Programs are particularly effective in building relationships with home owner associations and small business owners.
- Neighborhood Watch programs are not just for crime prevention. These programs and associated events are also a venue for fire prevention and safety demonstrations.

Identify Major Community Stakeholders through Community Outreach

- Meet, get to know and engage Faith-Based leaders of all denominations. Invite stakeholders to 'their' neighborhood fire station for meet-and-greet sessions.
- Sit with community leaders/members to discuss the local issues of concern like juvenile fire setters, community clinics, school incidents, or active shooter events
- Neighborhood Association Leaders are typically leaders in other venues as well and often have links to distribute information quickly to large numbers of people.
- Healthcare Leaders associated with local hospitals can be assets in multiagency preparedness training and should be included with fire and law enforcement officials.

Be visible and engaged in the community outside of emergency events. Establish programs that connect firefighters and paramedics with non-emergency needs in the neighborhood.

- Car seat Safety checks
- Elderly Home Safety Checks
- Smoke Detector Programs
- Junior Firefighter and Explorer Programs
- Festivals and Special Events

Effective community engagement strategies are crucial to the prevention, mitigation and management of civil unrest events. Fire service and EMS agencies should place a priority on the development of community engagement strategies. Community engagement is a two-way process that seeks to enlist community members in the development of relationships and solutions. It is a formal, comprehensive process and not the result of isolated programs or initiatives. Engagement is also an on-going process that must predate any specific event or period of unrest. Engagement strategies should be developed in consultation with professionals from the fields of sociology or public health who are familiar with their implementation. The best engagement strategies will include face-to-face and online components to appeal to multiple generations and groups.

For example, effective engagement opportunities for local community youth to become directly involved with the public safety agencies that serve their neighborhood, will contribute to the overarching goal of building mutual trust and respect. Establishment of these types of programs have also shown to be a factor in increasing minority recruitment into those same organizations, as well as providing police and fire service members with an additional opportunity to directly impact those that they serve in a positive way, unrelated to any emergency incident. Successful youth involvement programs, whether formal Explorer-based groups, internships, or other informal "junior firefighter" opportunities, have been successfully established in fire departments large and small from coast-to-coast.

Community Relations — Junior Firefighter / Explorer Programs

A number of programs exist on both the national and local levels that allow the youth of a community to become directly involved with public safety agencies at a young age. These types of formal interactions can provide a number of benefits to both the young community members that become involved and engaged with local safety forces, as well as the organizations themselves. Young men and women get the opportunity to experience first-hand what goes on behind the scenes at the local police or fire station, including participation in training, daily duties, and even riding emergency vehicles to actual incident responses. Those same public safety entities concurrently have the opportunity to plant the seeds of interest for recruitment of future employees from the local

neighborhood. Such programs have helped a variety of large cities increase minority recruitment into their police and fire department ranks, and serve to establish a positive bond between the public safety agencies and the youth participants, their parents, and other interested local community members.

One such national program that has proven successful in the public safety departments of a number of cities is the Explorer Program, a division of the national **Learning for Life Program** and subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America. Organizations can partner with the Learning for Life Program for resources, guidance on administrative procedures, and access to general liability insurance for participants in the program. The fire service has been a popular site for the establishment of Explorer “posts” nationally.

The establishment of meaningful, genuine relationships with members of the community is an inherently important part of the guiding principles of any emergency services organization. Making a concerted effort to be visible and approachable within the neighborhoods that a fire department serves is a critical element to not only building mutual trust and respect, but to foster a positive relationship prior to any emergency incidents or strife within the community. If the only times that community members see or interact with emergency responders are on their darkest and most stressful days, when an emergency has forced them to call for help, then their only association with the fire department has been a very stressful experience. Members of a community being able to make proactive personal connections with the firefighters and other emergency services providers that serve their area or neighborhood before an emergency event can be a productive and positive experience for all parties involved. When the stressful days with an emergency incident or a period of civil unrest occur, the connections made in times of calm and normalcy will serve to help bridge the gaps associated with stress and uncertainty.

One simple way to help establish positive relationships between emergency services organizations and citizens within a community is attendance at community events. Block parties, sporting events, cookouts, community meetings, and many other types of occasions can provide the opportunity for the fire department to interact with community members in a non-emergency, purely positive capacity. A crew of firefighters simply taking the time to stop the fire engine and play a quick game of basketball with kids at the local park can help build trust, as well as mutual empathy and admiration. The firefighters have the opportunity to meet kids in the neighborhood in a positive setting, while the young members of the community get to laugh and play with representatives

of the local government. The seeds of positivity are planted in the minds of young, impressionable citizens, and those seeds will grow over time into continued respect and admiration. Some of the youth on the basketball courts may be tomorrow’s firefighters, EMTs, and police officers! Simple, positive interactions on a regular basis can help to build emotional equity in the minds of both the firefighters and the citizens.

Consider taking the fire engine through the local soccer team fund-raiser car wash. The excitement of the boys and girls getting to wash the big red fire truck will be matched only by the smiles and contentment of the adults watching or driving nearby, seeing members of their community interact in a positive and productive way.

When the youth of the neighborhood stop by the fire station for a bike tire fill-up, or just to say hello and peek in the bay doors, they should be welcomed with an abundance of smiles and enthusiasm from the firefighters inside. Fire service professionals should consider themselves members of the community in every physical and emotional regard.

It is up to the emergency services organizations, through attendance at both formal and informal community events, to make a concerted effort to build relationships that will be called upon during times of stress, emergency, or civil unrest. This continued interaction will build cultural competence and community aptitude, where the fire service professionals serving an area understand and empathize with the specific strength, weaknesses, and challenges of that community.

LAW ENFORCEMENT JOINT RESPONSE

A unified command system must be adopted early with law enforcement as the lead agency. Security or force protection provided by law enforcement is critical to other services responding safely. All personnel on individual companies should be assigned to work in groups of two or more and consideration should be taken to avoid single resource response into the area involved.

Many law enforcement agencies have protocols for deployment and limitations on staffing. This situation may have an impact on the overall response resources that can be mustered in each community. Preplanning in this regard is an absolute. If the force protection personnel available beyond the frontline responders cannot meet the demand, plans must be in place for a seamless escalation of force to the state or federal level. This process must be delineated including the situation and justifications that require escalation of force.

Historical responses have shown that a sufficient initial force at the early stages of a disturbance are effective in preventing escalation of the event. However, there is a fine balance that must be struck to ensure that the force level does not provoke further violence. There must also be a clear separation between police and other services role in the response. The police have the responsibility for security, and other services must not be seen as crossing that line. Each agency has their own unique mandate, policies and procedures, and should not deviate from them. As noted previously, work done in the communities to build trust and relationships should be built on those unique roles prior to these types of events.



COMAND STRUCTURE – UNIFIED COMMAND

Most fire departments are accustomed to using the National Incident Management System (NIMS) in particular the Incident Command System (ICS). In accordance with NIMS guidance for joint operations, Fire and Police should establish a single Command Post (CP) and establish Unified Command (UC). Given that civil unrest, at least at the outset, is mostly a law enforcement response, fire service incident command should follow the lead of law enforcement until circumstances dictate that the civil unrest event has become primarily fire or emergency medical in nature. Even then, responders will likely require law enforcement accompaniment for force protection.



COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Prior to civil unrest events, communication and coordination with law enforcement is essential. Clear roles and responsibilities must be identified and documented and lines of communications must be established.

The difficulty surrounding common radio frequencies between agencies can make a joint response very challenging. Radio communication must be discussed and potential solutions tested.

Because law enforcement is typically the lead, force protection must be coordinated with them and must take into consideration the task objective which may include structure fire or mass casualty events. All communications for an event must be under the control of a unified command. This command structure will decrease the potential for error. Training on agency and individual responsibilities and tasks must also be conducted prior to an event. Initial and ongoing training will ensure that all parties understand each other's roles and limitations.

TRAINING

Fire and law enforcement leaders should work closely with local government officials to assure they have adequate funding for joint training. Joint training should be conducted regularly and should periodically include personnel from public works, utilities providers, the medical community and school teachers. Joint fire and law enforcement training exercises should at a minimum include the following:

- Life safety priorities
- Civil unrest standard operating procedures
- Unified command (See more above)
- Coordination of tactics
- Coordination of communications
- Span of control
- Task force deployment
- Media briefings
- Mutual aid



FORCE PROTECTION

The general consensus is that civil unrest type incidents are primarily a law enforcement matter. However, firefighters, paramedics, utility workers and others are often drawn into the conflict. Pre-planning and preparedness regarding security force protection, necessitates discussion with law enforcement at all levels to develop policy and procedures for such events.

NFPA Standard 1500 states that fire department members shall not become involved in any activities at the scene of domestic disturbance, civil unrest, or similar situations where there is ongoing violence, without the confirmed presence of law enforcement personnel who have deemed the scene secure. [1500- 8.10.1]

Interaction between firefighters/EMTs and Paramedics and law enforcement during a civil unrest event also extends to firefighting. Law enforcement officers are expected to provide direct and exclusive force protection for firefighters called upon to respond to fires set by protestors during the event area. In these circumstances, firefighters should operate with specific, targeted goals of achieving rapid extinguishment while minimizing exposure time. Firefighters should keep operational time on ladders, roofs, and other areas of clear line-of-sight visibility to a minimum. Fire apparatus should be positioned in such a way as to provide physical cover to personnel operating hose lines, regardless of standard fire service apparatus positioning principles. Despite these various safety precautions, there will be an expectation of direct security provided by law enforcement officers. The minimum number and locations of protection personnel will be incident-specific, but should be the subject of pre-incident planning, training, multi-agency emergency planning, and operational consideration at the Unified Command (UC) post.

Policy or procedures developed must include the level of security required for responders. The issue of personal protection must also be discussed, particularly pertaining to whether ballistic gear is necessary including the type, when to be worn, and the training necessary to accompany the issuance of personal body armor.

The fire department should provide ballistic vests and proper helmets to personnel responding and exposed to risks during civil unrest, active shooter incidents, or similar events where there are reasonably foreseen threats. Body armor provided should be at a minimum Level III-A ballistic vest as defined by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) 0101.05 Standard.

Firefighter EMT's and paramedic assignments may include participation in rescue task forces (RTF). Each firefighter EMT's and paramedic assigned to a RTF should be equipped at a minimum with a NIJ Level III-A ballistic vest, Kevlar helmet, flash light, medical exam gloves, radio with shoulder strap, and remote microphones with earpieces for communication.

The NIJ establishes minimum performance standards for body armor, and administers a program to test armor for compliance. Type III-A ballistic panels provide ballistic penetration protection for most all standard handgun and shotgun ammunition. Also known as "soft armor" due to its ability to shape and mold around the body; these ballistic panels are constructed of Kevlar Laminate, and can be easily removed for cleaning. The front and back ballistic panels are designed for a specific location which is marked on the panel; and the side ballistic panels are interchangeable.



PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABILITY

NFPA 1500 – Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health, 8.10.3 requires Fire Departments to develop procedures to provide for member safety when operating at Civil Unrest events. To provide for the accountability of all emergency responders, SOPs for civil unrest responses should include responder accountability as a critical incident objective. When possible, fire departments should incorporate law enforcement and non-fire-based EMS responders into an existing fire department model.

FACILITIES

Facilities located in an area involved in, or expected to be involved in, civil unrest should be closed and secured except to facilitate the movement of apparatus and equipment. Doors, window, and lockers should be locked and any parking area secured if possible.

If responding to an alarm when the unrest ensues, apparatus should stop by the station long enough for personnel to close and secure doors before resuming response. Ensure sufficient external lighting and dim interior lights.

Firefighters, paramedics, and officers should secure personal property under lock and key in the station and not take personal items, other than cell phones or mobile communications devices, with them into areas of unrest.

APPARATUS

Standard operating procedures should assure that apparatus responding in areas of unrest remove any equipment typically carried on the outside. Windows should be rolled up and doors locked.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Just as coordination with law enforcement is important, interagency coordination is also key. This coordination has particular importance for mutual aid agreements. Requesting help, coordinating the response, communications, and ensuring safe routes of transport must be addressed when dealing with multiple responding agencies. A unified command center with representatives from all involved agencies must be a priority.

NFPA 1500 states that the fire department shall be responsible for developing an interagency agreement with its law enforcement agency counterpart to provide protection for fire department members at situations that involve violence. [8.10.4] Such violent situations shall be considered essentially a law enforcement event, and the fire department shall coordinate with the law enforcement incident commander throughout the incident. [8.10.6]



FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

Fire and law enforcement leaders must maintain liaison relationships with local agencies and private entities necessary for mitigation of a civil unrest event. Local decision makers including mayors, city managers, district attorneys, and others should be included in the communications and planning stages. Agencies like electric, water and gas companies, as well as food preparers and distributors should be linked into the planning process and committed to participate as needed. Additionally, the building department, including engineers and architects, as well as the phone, cable, and/or internet companies should be included in response planning and a full list of contact information maintained.

INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has evolved over the years from being a means of communication with family and friends to being a source of information to improve operations and situational awareness in management of large scale emergency events. Experience has shown

that monitoring social media can provide insight into brewing issues in communities. Agencies should establish a system to monitor social media and respond to concerns prior to events occurring.

Posting messages proactively prior to events that detail the mission of the fire service may also be of benefit due to special interest groups monitoring social media as an intelligence gathering tool.

Google alerts is an effective, no cost way to follow traditional media by simply setting up alerts for various keywords or phrases. Fire service leaders can customize the type and frequency of the alerts they want to receive.

PIO

A PIO should establish and maintain relationships with local media prior to a civil unrest event. They should keep a list of local and national reporters who cover the public safety arena along with their contact information and filing deadlines. Preplanning and pre-set messages can be most helpful in high stress and fast changing events. PIOs should be equipped with drafts of relevant messages that provide the skeleton for details to be added and disseminated quickly. In fact, PIOs can create customized emergency message templates that can be uploaded in advance to cover many possible scenarios that can occur.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Fire and law enforcement leaders should work cooperatively with others in the community to address specific needs during periods of civil unrest. Plans should be in place to handle needs that will range from access and transport of dialysis or special needs patients, to curtailing the sale of liquor and garbage removal. Communication and pre-planning are key. Public safety leaders must include leaders from other venues in preplanning discussions to assure that plans are in place when needed.

Mobilization

MOBILIZATION PHASES

Phase One should be a planning phase in anticipation of a civil unrest event based on information received from public safety agency officers. Phase Two is the initial implementation of the tactical plan and is initiated when unrest is expected to occur within 24 – 48 hours. This phase will typically include apparatus redeployment, assembly of task forces, staging, and increased staffing.

Phase Three is the actual deployment of units according to the plan or SOP. All normal operations should be suspended in the impact areas. In conjunction with unified command, branches, divisions, and groups should be formed as necessary and all fire service responses into the affected areas should be controlled by appropriate command.

TASK FORCE ASSEMBLY

During civil unrest events, fire service officers may elect to require a task force format for all operations. Task forces should be multifunctional. Unit configuration may vary based on scale and location of the event. Larger task forces may include at a minimum

a battalion chief, three engines, one ladder or squad, one EMS unit, and two police units. More typical task force formations include a battalion chief, two engines and a truck and two police units. Once assigned, units should proceed to the assigned task force assembly location. Upon arrival, company officers report to task force leaders. A task force should remain intact and in tandem at all times.

All fuel tanks, including reserve apparatus, should be kept filled and all power to fuel pumps should be shut off when not in use. Companies not assigned to a task force should remain in station and respond as assigned.

TACTICAL

NFPA 1500 addresses mobilization of fire department resources in such violent situations stating that the fire department incident commander shall stage all fire department resources in a safe area until the law enforcement agency has secured the scene. The standard further states that when violence occurs after emergency operations have been initiated, the fire department incident commander shall either secure immediate law enforcement agency protection or shall withdraw all fire department members to a safe staging area. [8.10.9 and 8.10.10]

Apparatus should have windows taped before entering the civil unrest zone. Hose beds should be covered and fire extinguishers kept inside the cab along with tarps for protection from objects that may be thrown to break windows. All reserve SCBA cylinders from the station should be placed on the apparatus and secured.

Fire service leaders/responders may choose not to use emergency lights and sirens so as not to draw attention. Upon arrival, apparatus should be positioned in a manner to allow for unimpeded withdrawal. There should also be an action pre-plan for functioning in the area and an exit preplan established should retreat be necessary.

Should it become necessary to temporarily abandon fire stations for safety considerations, companies should take all portable radios and battery chargers, as well as any cell phones and chargers with them. Company officers should take journals, log books and other relevant documentation. All turnout gear should be placed on apparatus. All personnel should leave the station on fire department apparatus and assure the station is locked. In extreme circumstances, shut down utilities to the station. Personal vehicles should be stored in locked parking area if available. If the station does not have secure parking, personal vehicles can be moved to the apparatus floor before leaving.

OFF DUTY PERSONNEL

Members called back for duty should be directed to a specific secure location. Personnel should be organized and transported from this location to task force assembly locations as needed.

MUTUAL AID

Upon notification that a civil unrest event has ensued, mutual aid systems should be immediately notified. All neighboring jurisdictions' fire and law enforcement agencies should be alerted and briefed on the status of the unrest.

Operations (Response)

Any civil unrest event has the potential to cause an increase in emergency calls for law enforcement, as well as fire suppression and emergency medical services. Public safety agencies all share the same priorities and a coordinated effort is necessary to ensure a safe and effective response.

TASK FORCE ASSEMBLY AND ASSIGNMENT

Past response experience demonstrates that organizing response resources into Task Forces provides for the efficient allocation of resources and the safety of responding personnel. A review of Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines and After Action reporting provides for several Task Force make-up alternatives. As noted in the mobilization section, the most common model combines Fire, Law Enforcement and EMS resources (i.e. three Engines, one Ladder, one EMS unit, one Chief Officer, and two Law Enforcement vehicles).

HazMat Responders should also be available, though assigned to a task force only at the discretion of incident command. Protesters may use ammonia, gasoline or other chemicals on each other or on responders. Molotov cocktails have also been used and present a serious danger. Responders should be prepared for decontamination efforts as large numbers of people may be exposed to pepper spray or other irritants.

INCIDENT COMMAND

Civil Unrest events demand the implementation of an ICS Unified Command structure. Since these events typically require multi-agency involvement and often require a multi-jurisdictional response, Unified Command will facilitate a coordinated effort and an agreed upon set of incident objectives in which participating stakeholders share a common understanding as the event unfolds. Additionally, Unified Command benefits responder and community safety.

Civil unrest events can change quickly. They may take a turn for the better or worse depending on the environment, information reported in the news or over social media, and the mood of citizens. Strategies must be dynamic so they can be changed and implemented on short notice. Officers or aids should keep an accurate log of all events.

Representatives from Law Enforcement, Fire Service, and EMS are the key stakeholders in the Unified Command Organization. Emergency Managers, Public Works officials, and Public Health representatives should serve in liaison and/or Operations or Logistics Sections roles.

AREA COORDINATION

When a Civil Unrest incident evolves to involve disparate locations within a single jurisdiction or spans multiple locations, Incident Commanders should consider the implementation of Area Command development. Reporting to the Incident Commander (Unified IC), Area Command will retain the authority of setting priorities and strategies within the context of the incident objectives to address challenges specific to the Area of Operation.

ZONES OF OPERATION

Incident Commanders (Area Commanders) and Task Force Leaders need to share an understanding of pre-defined operational zones recognizing that Civil Unrest events are dynamic, potentially fast developing and constantly changing. The designation of an area of operation should be predicated on the relative level of instability at the time of designation.

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

Perimeters should be established based on gathered intelligence and field observation. Coordination with law enforcement for protection when entering warm zones is recommended, and for entering hot zones must be required.

- Task Force response into Hot Zones requires Law Enforcement protection.
- Law enforcement protection should also be considered for entry into warm zones.
- Staging and Area Command are to be established in Cold Zones

MITIGATION

Fire Suppression

Structure Fires

Selective dispatch plans should be in place to assure that units are first dispatched to the most affected areas. Before entering an area of civil unrest, as much information as possible should be gathered from the dispatcher or 911 operators, and with first-on-scene responders, if possible. Responding personnel should wear body armor under turnout gear. This proposition is a difficult one given the bulky gear firefighters must routinely wear.

For fire suppression, a quick knockdown method or hit-and-run method should be adopted.² The goal is to knock down the fire and quickly exit the impact area. Large diameter hoses and heavy stream appliances should be used whenever possible. There should be no interior firefighting in the most highly affected areas, unless necessary for rescue of known occupants in imminent threat of injury or death.

Apparatus should never be left unattended. Personnel remaining with the apparatus should be at a minimum paired. Drivers [engineers] should not be left alone with the apparatus. All responding apparatus should be positioned for quick exit/retreat.

² FEMA recommends, "In order to reach their objectives and lessen danger to personnel, firefighters should use hit-and-run tactics. The goal is to knock down the fire and quickly exit the impact area." FEMA, "Report of the Joint Fire/Police Task Force on Civil Unrest: Recommendations for Organizations and Operations during Civil Disturbances," February 1994, 46.

Typical SOPs should be altered or civil unrest SOPs specific to the event should be prepared. SOPs for response during civil unrest events should include the following:

- No firefighters working on roofs
- No laddering of building unless necessary for rescue of known occupants in imminent threat of injury or death
- No overhauling fires
- No interior attacks unless necessary for rescue of known occupants in imminent threat of injury or death
- No truck companies in the impact zones – if trucks must enter the zone, remove axes, hooks, and poles from the outside of the apparatus.

Officers should be prepared to leave vehicle and trash fires unattended if the situation warrants abandoning the scene quickly. To reduce the vulnerability of firefighters and apparatus, personnel and equipment should be withdrawn immediately after completing their mission.

Restoration of sprinkler systems

When buildings equipped with automatic sprinklers are involved in a fire, reasonable efforts should be taken to restore the system to service prior to withdrawal.

Rescue Operations

Whenever possible, rescue operations should be coordinated with law enforcement and EMS personnel. Members should only engage in rescue operations if safe to enter the zone of civil unrest. Searches should be conducted as thoroughly but as rapidly as possible, in case of changing conditions outside of the building.

Aerial and Roof Operations

Aerial and roof operations should only be conducted in zones where no threat exists from a violent crowd. If conditions permit use of aerial ladder, it should be positioned for maximum coverage of building and rapid exit. If conditions permit roof operations, roof operator may have dual responsibility to report on condition of fire, as well as any escalation of civil unrest.

Salvage & Overhaul

If conditions and staffing permit, a special team could be assigned for salvage and overhaul. If unrest situations are still active, salvage and overhaul should be kept to a minimum. Only actions considered essential to preventing rekindle and/or fire spread should be performed. When suppression is complete, hose and other equipment should be loaded onto apparatus in an expeditious manner.

Vehicle Fires

Members should adapt a quick knockdown method. In some cases, depending on exposure issues or wind direction, it may be best not to engage in suppression activity.

Other Fires

Types of fires that may require special consideration or may be more likely to be targeted during civil unrest include:

- Church/religious establishment fires
- Boat/ship fires
- Hi-rise fires
- Chemical fires
- Hospital fires
- Electrical/Transformer fires
- Gas station fires
- Forest/brush fires
- Storage facility fires
- Energy plant fires
- Public transportation, railroad and underground fires



NFPA 1500 notes that under no circumstances shall fire department equipment or personnel be used for crowd control or disbursement purposes. [8.10.2]

EMS

EMS responses assigned in the affected area must exercise exceptional situational awareness and consider risks versus benefits in providing care and extracting patients from the area. All EMS units dispatched must be accompanied by appropriate law enforcement support.

Upon arrival at the scene, personnel should not slam doors of the vehicle and keep handheld radio volume low. EMS personnel should assess all patients quickly and avoid excessive on scene times. This directive is especially applicable where large groups or crowds are present or beginning to form. Regardless of the patient's condition, in situations where on scene safety is a concern, EMS personnel should practice the load-and-go philosophy. In the event of a mass casualty incident, EMS should use the appropriate ICS procedures for triage, treatment and transport.

Rescue Task Force – Response with Law Enforcement

The concept of Rescue Task Force (RTF) deployment during active shooter events has gained significant standing in recent years. Under this operational deployment model, a small team of EMS providers and law enforcement officers are paired together to advance into “warm zone” areas where EMS care can be initiated on wounded victims prior to the formal securing and

clearing of the entire facility or area where the event is taking place.

Although an active shooter event is different from a Civil Unrest event in a number of physical and philosophical aspects, the concept of RTF deployment into active, still relatively unsecured areas of a large-scale, widespread Civil Unrest event should be a topic of discussion and training for local governments and emergency service providers. Under the RTF deployment model, EMS providers should be outfitted with protective ballistic vests and helmets to provide some protection from gunfire, as well as attacks from airborne rocks, bottles, and other objects that are often present during Civil Unrest events.

During a civil unrest event, there could be long delays in EMS deployment to injured civilians, law enforcement officers, or other responders. These delays could persist for significant periods if the expectation is that an area must be entirely secured prior to any EMS entry. Consideration of RTF deployment for Civil Unrest events can provide for a balance of risk vs. benefit, where limited additional PPE and direct, dedicated law enforcement protection of a small team of EMS providers can lead to immediate care of victims injured during the event.

Rescue task forces are deployed with law enforcement personnel to provide point of wound care to victims where there is an on-going but indirect ballistic or explosive threat. Indirect threat care is rendered once the casualty is no longer under fire (i.e. warm zone).

FORCE PROTECTION

Law enforcement protection should include protection of fire personnel both en-route and on scene.

All personnel, including driver/engineers, should wear full protective clothing and be seated and belted when on apparatus. Ballistic vest and helmets should be issued to all personnel responding into the warm or hot zones.

Fire service leaders should research and follow the recommendations set forth by the National Institute of Justice standards on Ballistic gear for Emergency Responders. (See also Preplanning and Preparedness: Force Protection)

Firefighters and paramedics should be strictly prohibited from carrying firearms or other weapons on the apparatus. Should firefighters or paramedics be attacked, any means necessary should be used for self-defense. Self-defense measures should be limited to those necessary to disengage and retreat.



FORCE PROTECTION/NATIONAL GUARD FEDERAL OR STATE

While the control and mitigation of the unlawful and destructive aspects of a civil unrest event will initially be the responsibility of local law enforcement officials, it is likely that additional agencies will become involved if the event progresses in size and scope. On the law enforcement side of the operational equation, the National Guard may be called upon to provide additional force protection and site security. Although the National Guard is trained and equipped by the United State Army, the units are routinely under the control of individual State Governors. Use of the National Guard will be at the discretion of the Governor, and if activated will coordinate with local law enforcement officials to provide protection and back-up to existing deployed resources, safeguard high-value or notable targets or areas (i.e. police stations, courts buildings, hospitals, scene of notable incident), or move in a forward, offensive fashion to clear geographical areas as assigned.

State-level law enforcement agencies, such as the State Police or State Highway Patrol, may also be involved in the event as needed based upon standing policies and active mutual aid requests of local law enforcement during incident progression.

For fire service agencies, effective interaction with deployed Federal and State law enforcement and/or military resources will depend largely on the existence of pre-incident relationships, joint training events, and briefings on the actions and needs of each agency while the incident is ongoing. While local fire department personnel may be quite familiar with the operating style and procedures of the local police department, Federal and State resources will likely operate under significantly different parameters. Intra-agency communication at all levels during the event will serve to streamline the interaction and ensure the safety of the unarmed fire and EMS responders moving throughout the incident area. The involvement of senior fire department personnel in the Unified Command (UC) should be mandatory.



ACCOUNTABILITY

In general, fire service organizations have accountability systems in place for application during firefighting and emergency operations. This same system should be used in these events so that it is familiar and practiced. It isn't guaranteed however, that participating Law Enforcement and single role EMS agencies will have pre-developed personnel accountability systems.

If it becomes necessary to quickly evacuate an area because of civil unrest, firefighters, paramedics, and officers should only take small equipment in their possession, that will not impede their withdrawal. All other equipment should be left on scene. Officers should account for all personnel before withdrawing.

COMMUNICATIONS

A civil unrest response plan must include which members of senior command will act as the communications team. During the situation, both fire and law enforcement departments must speak as one unified voice. The main purpose of this plan is to assure messages are consistent. NFPA 1500 requires that the fire department develop a standard communication method that indicates that an incident crew is faced with a life-and-death situation requiring immediate law enforcement intervention. [8.10.5]

Communications during civil unrest operations, even with a single agency, have been the subject of great debate. This problem is magnified during multiagency responses. For civil unrest situations, the structure of communications must be identified and included in a multiagency pre-plan. Pre-planned communications are essential for facilitating safe and effective operations. A communications plan (ICS 205) must consider the multi-agency/multijurisdictional nature of a Civil Unrest response. This will include designation of overall lead responsibility of the scene, unified command structure, lines of communication, and some form of training that can be shared with participating agencies prior to an event. The method of communication must also be identified, with the simplest method being the existing communication systems used by the respective agencies.

NFPA 1500 section 8.10.7 requires that the fire department incident commander identify and react to situations that do involve or are likely to involve violence. The standard further notes in section 8.10.8 that in such violent situations, the fire department incident commander shall communicate directly with the law enforcement incident commander to ensure the safety of fire department members. Additionally, all responders should be provided accurate up-to-date intelligence briefings as the situation changes.

Programmable mobile and portable radios should be made available for unit and personal use. Cell phones can serve as a back-up to radio communications. Phone numbers should be included in the Communications plan and (ICS 205A) when reporting to the Command Post. Compiling lists of numbers prior to an event is likely unusable given contacts and numbers change often.

Plans should reflect Fire, Law Enforcement and EMS resource involvement, as well as the inclusion of mutual aid resources. ICS forms may be downloaded [here](#).

Ideally, if a representative from each agencies dispatch center could operate in the command post on a separate channel within their own system, they can keep command up-to-date on each agencies' involvement and better coordinate response and accountability of resources.

REFUELING AND MAINTENANCE

If apparatus becomes disabled on the fireground or during EMS response, logistics should arrange for evacuation of the apparatus with a wrecker. Apparatus maintenance should not be attempted in operation zones. Refueling apparatus should only be done in the staging area by mobile tanker or at an area designated by the incident commander.

MUTUAL AID

Mutual Aid resources and decision points must be pre-identified. Plans should indicate the trigger for Mutual Aid resource response to and involvement in Civil Unrest incidents. Response metrics should establish that the first mutual aid priority is to backfill active unit firehouses/stations located in Cold Zones. The next level priority involves supplementing existing jurisdiction Task Forces and/or the creation of additional Task Forces consisting of mutual aid resources.

INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

A social media manager assists in monitoring the unrest event on social media like Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. The social media manager can also get the appropriate messages out through social media and respond to comments, correct misinformation and share links to resources with accurate information.

PIO

Leaders should expect a large media response. A key officer in the operations center or multiagency coordination center is the public information officer (PIO). The PIO should serve as the point of contact for all mutual aid representatives allowing the incident commander(s) and command staff to focus on the situation at hand. Effective communications involve providing and sharing intelligence. Therefore, the PIO is also the point of contact for the media. They should be well versed in political sensitivities of the event and be able to provide the media with information appropriate for public consumption. Multiple means of communications should be established to include online, mobile devices, and landline phone, and cable. The PIO must also act as a safety mechanism to ensure the correct message is sent to the correct people. Information that should be transmitted securely is most likely not information you want posted on social media. The correct and accurate information online can build trust, help reduce panic and help stop rumors from spreading.

REHABILITATION DURING EXTENDED OPERATIONS

When the tactical phase of the event extends beyond 12 hours, personnel relief or more frequent rehabilitation sessions should be considered. Rehabilitation remains an essential element on the incident scene to prevent more serious conditions from occurring. The physical and mental demands associated with firefighting and other emergency operations, coupled with the environmental dangers of extreme heat and humidity or extreme cold, create conditions that can have an adverse impact on the safety and health of emergency responders. Firefighters who are not provided adequate rest and rehydration during emergency operations or training exercises are at increased risk for illness or injury, and may jeopardize the safety of others on the incident scene. When emergency responders become fatigued, their ability to make critical decisions diminishes.

A key resource for rehabilitation is the U.S. Fire Administration Emergency Incident Rehabilitation Manual. The manual may be downloaded [here](#).

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COUNSELING DURING CRITICAL STRESS

There is growing concern about behavioral health issues and the significant impact on wellness. The stresses faced by fire fighters, paramedics and EMTs throughout the course of their careers — incidents involving children, violence, inherent dangers of firefighting, and other potentially traumatic events — can have a cumulative effect on their mental health and well-being. Fire service leaders should establish a personnel support program that will identify and address responder needs post event. These programs, regardless of title, should include peer-to-peer counseling and a family support aspect.

Peer Counseling should be led by firefighters or officers who have experienced similar events. The program should recognize supervisors in the field of affected personnel and determine the need for additional referrals beyond initial counseling.

Important links to behavioral health resources:

- [IAFF Behavioral Health Resources](#)
- Phoenix Fire Department's [FireStrong](#) website has behavioral health information for the fire service
- U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs' [National Center for PTSD](#) is dedicated to research and education on trauma and PTSD
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) — 1-800- 273-TALK (8255) connects callers to local crisis centers and has information on suicide prevention.

RESPONDER FAMILY COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Firefighters and officers should emphasize to their family that it is not a typical day at the station. A program should be in place to disseminate information periodically to families about status and well-being of responding personnel. Media briefings should be honest updates with appropriate discretion for details.

When operations are extended, officers should be assigned to actively gather information from families to help establish their needs. Non-emergency needs should be placed on a prioritized list. The fire department could establish a 24-hour "Hotline" in the event of a family emergency requiring immediate response.

POST INCIDENT CRITIQUE

After the event, there should be a thorough analysis of which procedures were effective and which did not achieve the desired outcome. This review will allow local fire service agencies to prepare and respond better in future events.

Resources

- Report of the Joint Fire/Police Task Force on Civil Unrest, USFA/FEMA, FA-142, February 1994.
- National Incident Management System Incident Command System ICS Forms Booklet FEMA 502-2, September 2010
- Civil Disturbances: St. Petersburg Florida. USFA/Technical Report Series. USFA-TR-098/October/November 1996
- White Paper: 10 Step Guide to Effective Crisis Communication, Regroup Mass Notification, Regroup.com 2016
- Active Shooter/ Hostile Event (ASHE) Guide, InterAgency Board, July 2016
- Vernon, A., Safe Response to Civil Unrest Incidents. Fire Engineering, March 2008.
- NFPA Responder Forum Civil Unrest Panel Presentation: Ferguson, MO. Matt LaVanchy.
- NFPA Responder Forum Civil Unrest Panel Presentation: Baltimore, MD. Jeffrey Segal
- Civil Unrest Standard Operating Procedures from urban fire departments throughout the U.S. and Canada including; New York City, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Virginia Beach, Phoenix, Dallas, Seminole County, FL, Orange County, FL, Arlington County, VA, and St. Louis, Houston, Tualatin Valley, Ottawa, and Vancouver.





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