

This guideline provides North Zone procedures for performing the rescue function at fire emergencies. It is standard operating procedure to conduct a primary search in all involved and exposed occupancies that can be entered. The Incident Commander should include a primary search as part of the initial plan, with time being the critical factor in the primary search process. A PRIMARY SEARCH is defined as:

“A COMPANY FROM THE FIRST ALARM ASSIGNMENT THAT HAS QUICKLY GONE THROUGH ALL AFFECTED AREAS AND VERIFIED THE REMOVAL AND/OR SAFETY OF ALL OCCUPANTS.”

The rescue functions that follow fire control activities will be identified as a secondary search. A SECONDARY SEARCH is defined as:

“A THOROUGH SEARCH OF THE INTERIOR OF A BUILDING THAT HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN FIRE AFTER THE INITIAL FIRE CONTROL AND VENTILATION ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED.”

If possible, a different company than the one that completed the primary search should complete the secondary search. Thoroughness rather than time is the critical factor when performing the secondary search.

The completion of the primary search is reported by utilizing the standard radio reporting term “PRIMARY ALL CLEAR”. It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to coordinate primary search assignments, secure completed reports from the interior companies and to transmit the “PRIMARY ALL CLEAR” report to the Dispatch Center. The Dispatch Center will record the “PRIMARY ALL CLEAR” message.

The stage of the fire is a critical factor affecting rescue. The following items outline the basic command approach to handling rescue in conjunction with the stage of the fire.

In a **“NOTHING SHOWING”** situation or in very minor fire cases that clearly pose no life hazard. The Incident Commander should insure a rapid interior search and report an “all clear”. The interior search for victims will also help verify no fire.

In a **“SMOKE SHOWING”** situation and working fire situations, fire control efforts should be initiated simultaneously with rescue operations in order to complete a primary search. The Incident Commander and all operating companies should understand they are still operating under the rescue mode until a primary search has been completed, regardless of the fire control required. In working fire situations, the primary search should be followed by a secondary search.

In cases of fully involved buildings or sections of buildings, immediate entry and primary search activities often become impossible and survival of occupants is improbable. The Incident Commander should give a report of the conditions and advise that a primary search is

not possible at this time. As soon as fire containment has been achieved, the Incident Commander should start a secondary search for victims.

The Incident Commander and operating personnel cannot depend upon reports from spectators to determine the status of victims. Control forces should use reports as to the location, number, and condition of victims to support primary search efforts.

The Incident Commander should consider the following factors in developing a basic rescue size-up:

- Number, location, and condition of victims.
- Affect the fire has on the victims.
- Capability of the control forces to enter the building and to remove or protect the victims and control the fire.

The Incident Commander should make the following basic rescue decision:

- Should the victims be removed from the fire or should the fire be removed from the victims?

In some cases, occupants are safer being sheltered in place than moving through contaminated hallways and interior areas. Such movement may also impede interior fire fighting efforts. The Incident Commander should evaluate the resources required to actually remove victims and then treat their injuries. In cases involving multiple victims, the Incident Commander should call for the timely response of adequate resources and quickly develop an organization that will both stabilize the fire and provide for the removal and treatment of the occupants.

Rescue efforts should be conducted in the following order:

- Most severely threatened
- The largest number of occupants
- Victims in the remaining fire area
- People in other exposed areas

On large complex occupancies, the Incident Commander should make specific primary search assignments and maintain on-going control of such companies until the entire area is searched. When primary search companies encounter and remove victims, the Incident Commander should assign other companies to continue to cover the interior positions.

All initial attack efforts should be directed toward supporting rescue efforts. Hose lines should be placed in a manner to protect interior access, confine the fire, and protect avenues of escape. It may become necessary to give up saving the building in order to buy rescue time.

Normal means of interior access such as stairs, halls, and interior public areas should be utilized to remove victims whenever possible. Secondary means of rescue like elevated platforms, aerial ladders, fire escapes, and helicopters should be utilized in their order of effectiveness.

It is the Incident Commander's responsibility to arrange for treatment after removal. Multiple victims should be removed to one location for more effective treatment. The Incident Commander should coordinate and utilize paramedic units whenever available and assign treatment companies as required to an exterior medical treatment area.

Once the primary search has been completed and an "PRIMARY ALL CLEAR" has been transmitted, the Incident Commander should still maintain control of access to the fire area.

The Incident Commander should always remember that in large buildings or complexes additional resources may have to be called to assist in the primary search. The most urgent reason for calling additional resources will be for the purpose of covering life safety.