

This guideline identifies North Zone procedures for offensive fire control operations. Many times offensive or defensive fire conditions are clear cut, and the Incident Commander can develop a plan for dealing with the incident. In some cases, the incident is complex and the Incident Commander should initiate an offensive interior attack while setting up defensive positions on the exterior. The success of an interior attack should be evaluated and abandoned depending on the fireground factors and conditions. Changes in the fire conditions can occur instantly and the Incident Commander should be ready to respond to these changes.

The Incident Commander should consider the most dangerous direction and avenues of fire extension, particularly as it affects rescue activities, confinement efforts, and exposure protection. The Incident Commander should allocate resources based on this fire spread evaluation.

In some cases, the most effective tactical analysis involves an evaluation of what is not burning rather than what is actually on fire. The unburned portion represents where the fire is going and should establish the framework for fire control activities.

Offensive fires should be fought from the INTERIOR, UNBURNED SIDE OF THE STRUCTURE. Interior operations are the principle factors of an offensive strategy.

Initial attack efforts should be directed toward supporting the primary search. The first attack line should go between the victims and the fire and to protect the avenues of escape. First arriving Officers should determine fire location and extent as soon as possible before starting fire operations. Streams should not be directed haphazardly into smoke.

The Incident Commander cannot lose sight that at some point the fire resources should engage and fight the fire. The Incident Commander should structure whatever operations are required to PUT WATER ON THE FIRE. The rescue, fire control, extension and exposure problem will be solved in the majority of cases by a rapid, aggressive, well placed attack. Effective fire control requires that water be applied directly onto the fire or directly into the fire area. The Incident Commander should establish an attack plan that provides the appropriate amount of fire flow that will suppress the fire.

Areas involving concealed spaces, attics, ceiling areas, or construction voids, should be "opened up" by ventilation crews. Early identification and response to concealed space fires can reduce further fire loss. Officers who hesitate to "open-up" because they do not want to cause further damage to a building often times will find themselves faced with extensive fire damage.

The Incident Commander should consider 7 sides of the fire: front, back, two sides, roof, bottom, and interior. When faced with a sizable fire, the Incident Commander must establish a safe position to begin operations, and then aggressively attack the fire.

The basic variables relating to attack operations involve:

- Location/position of attack
- Size of attack
- Support functions

The Incident Commander develops an effective attack through the management of these factors.

Time is an extremely important factor in attack operations. The larger the attack operation, the longer it takes to get it going. The Incident Commander should balance and integrate overall attack size and position with fire conditions and resources. In some instances, the tactical realities of the incident require that attack placement principles be violated. Such violations generally relate to the factor of time versus ideal placement. When such principles are violated, the Incident Commander should implement back-up action to cover the uncovered areas.

Companies that are lacking direction when fire is showing often lay hose and put water on the fire utilizing the fastest, shortest, most direct route. This process is called the “**candle-moth syndrome**” (everyone wants to go to the flame).

**Attack from the burned side will usually drive the fire, smoke, and heat back into the unburned portion of the building, and force the interior fire control crews out of the building.**

The fastest place to put water on the fire is generally from the outside at the point where the fire is venting out of the building. **THIS IS THE WORST APPLICATION POINT MOST OF THE TIME.** When fire is showing out of a building and not affecting exposures, it should be left, and an aggressive interior attack should be taken from the unburned side. In these cases the fire is usually venting in the proper direction. It will require discipline on the part of control forces to not submit to the “candle-moth” temptation.

The Incident Commander should develop a fire control plan of attack that first stops the forward progress of the fire and then brings the fire under control. In large complex fires, the Incident Commander will not immediately have adequate resources to accomplish all attack objectives. Therefore, the Incident Commander must prioritize attack efforts, act as a resource manager, and determine the resources for the eventual need. Accurate forecasting of conditions by the Incident Commander becomes critical during this evaluation process. The Incident Commander should develop critical decisions that relate to cut-off points and should approach fire spread determinations pessimistically. It takes a certain amount of time to “get water”; meanwhile the fire continues to burn while the attack is set up.

**STRUCTURAL FIRE ATTACK**  
**Offensive Fire Control**

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The Incident Commander should consider where the fire will be when attack efforts are ready to actually go into operation. If misjudged, the fire may burn past the attack/cut off point. Don't play catch up with a fire that is burning through a building. Project your set up time, and don't get behind the fire. Set up adequately and overpower the fire. Do not continue to operate in positions that are essentially lost.