

This guideline provides North Zone procedures for providing tactical support at a fire emergency. Tactical support activities are functions that assist fire control and rescue operations. They generally include ventilation, forcible entry, and access operations. Most of the confusion on the fireground can be attributed to the lack of tactical support functions. The Incident Commander should ensure support functions are completed in a timely manner.

VENTILATION:

Ventilation is performed for two reasons. The first is to prevent dangerous interior atmospheric conditions and the second is to gain and maintain entry to the structure. In most working fire situations, vertical ventilation located directly over the fire is the most effective. The timing of ventilation becomes extremely important and should be coordinated with interior fire attack activities. Ventilation should be provided in advance of attack lines. Communication between the ventilation and attack companies is crucial.

Fire will naturally burn out of holes or openings in roofs, regardless of whether fire crews or the fire itself has made the hole. When a fire burns through a roof, it generally will do so directly over the fire. If a ventilation crew cuts the hole, they should make sure they understand exactly where the fire is. Ventilation holes cut in the wrong place will channel the fire to the hole and could increase fire size/damage. Ventilation is performed to alter interior building conditions. The best operating position to determine if ventilation is needed are the resources working inside the structure ("Interior Division").

HOSE LINES ARE NOT TO BE OPERATED DOWN VENTILATION HOLES. LINES TAKEN TO THE ROOF SHOULD BE USED FOR PROTECTING PERSONNEL AND EXTERNAL EXPOSURES UNLESS THE INCIDENT COMMANDER ORDERS A COORDINATED ROOF ATTACK.

Effective roof ventilation will tend to keep roofs intact longer. Roof integrity is the single most important factor that determines if vertical ventilation can be performed. If the ventilation crew cannot get on the roof due to advanced fire conditions, the Incident Commander should be ready to react and change to a defensive fire attack. **REMEMBER: IT IS BEST TO ABANDON A BUILDING TOO SOON, RATHER THAN TOO LATE.**

BASIC VENTILATION GUIDELINES:

A MINIMUM OF TWO PERSONNEL ARE REQUIRED TO WORK ON THE ROOF OF A SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE.

A MINIMUM OF 3 PERSONNEL (ONE SHOULD BE A COMPANY OFFICER) ARE REQUIRED TO WORK ON THE ROOF OF A COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE. THE COMPANY OFFICER SHOULD BE THE FIRST PERSON TO THE ROOF OF A COMMERCIAL BUILDING AND SHOULD DETERMINE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY AND PROVIDE FOR OVERALL SAFETY.

Anytime personnel go to the roof, they are to assure two "IDENTIFIED ESCAPE ROUTES" are in place. In some cases, the building may have a built-in ladder that can be used as a secondary escape route, or the crews may be able to exit to another building that has a separate roof. Crews operating on a roof are to have a minimum of 1 sounding device, 1 pike pole, 1 chainsaw, and a portable radio.

The minimum size ventilation hole to be cut on a commercial building is 4' X 4' feet.

ON A PANELIZED ROOF, VENTILATION CREWS ARE NOT TO CUT DIRECTLY OVER THE FIRE. PLACE THE VENTILATION HOLE AS CLOSE TO IT AS SAFELY POSSIBLE.

The minimum size ventilation hole cut on a single-family residence will be 2' X 4'.

When cutting a ventilation hole, crews should be aware of fire burning at the edge of the hole or smoke venting under pressure. If this occurs, the ventilation hole has not been cut large enough. Ventilation crews should try to keep the wind at their backs so when the hole has been cut the smoke will not blow directly at them. After the hole has been cut, ventilation crews are not to linger on the roof. They should report back to the Incident Commander and/or the Operation Section Chief when the assignment has been completed.

FORCIBLE ENTRY:

Forcible entry involves the trade-off in time versus damage. Companies performing forcible entry should remember, "the faster and harder the object is forced, the more damage that will likely occur." The more critical the fire, the less important entry damage becomes. If the fire is progressing and an interior attack is to be made, fire crews should not waste time trying to pick locks. Doors or windows should be forced and entry made. When the fire appears to be small, undetermined, or easy to bring under control, more time may be used to complete a less damaging entry into the building.

The ability to access the fire often determines how quickly the fire can be cut off and extinguished. Access oriented activities generally involve pulling ceilings, opening up concealed spaces, and other activities needed to assist fire attack efforts in hidden spaces. These types of operations should be done in a timely manner. If you size up a fire and determine it is in a concealed space, get ahead of it, open it up, and cut it off.

Crews should not open doors and holes or take access actions before lines are placed and crews are ready to go inside. Good timing requires effective communication between the hose line and ventilation crews.