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Rapid Intervention Team Command and Operational Procedures

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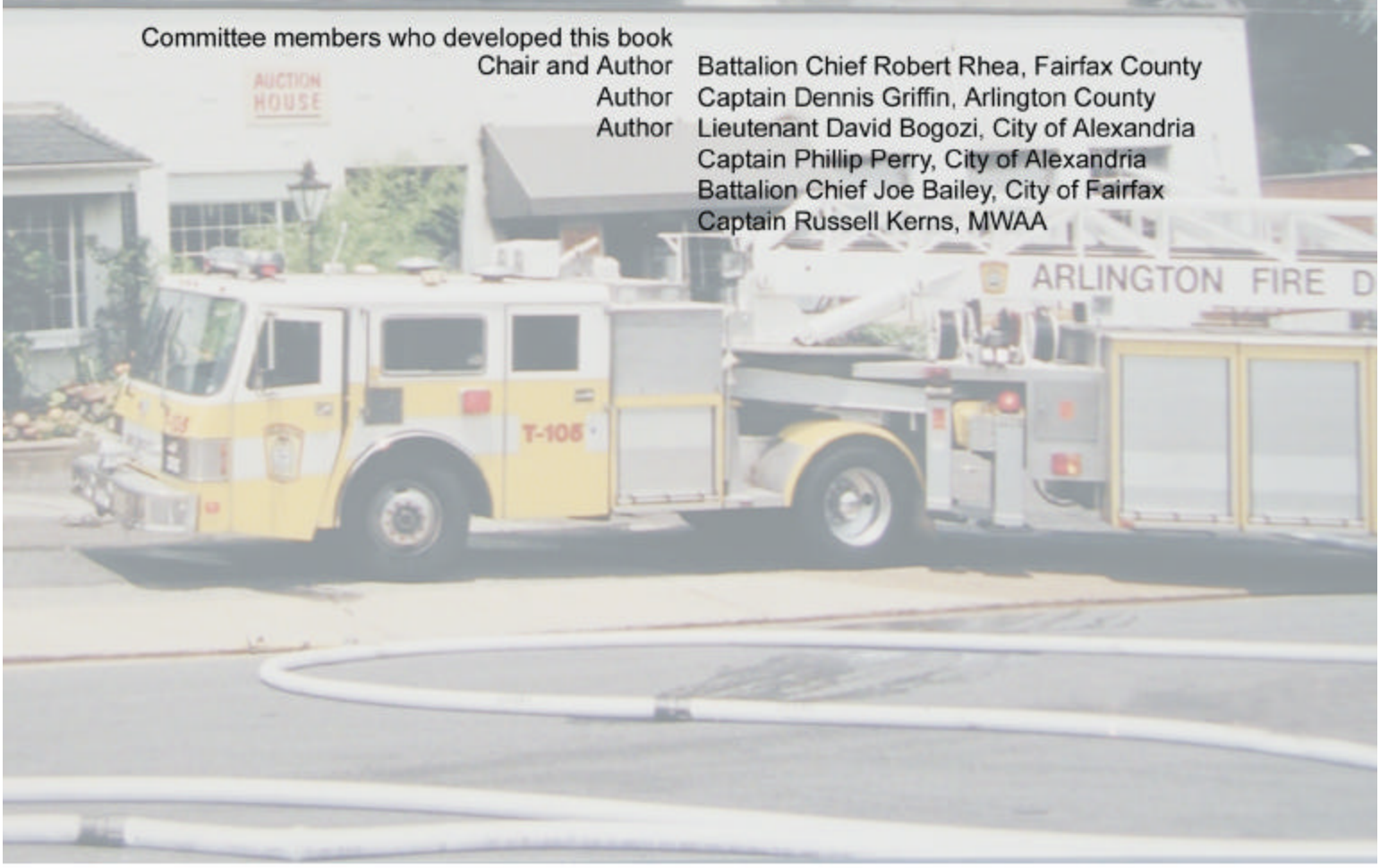

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RAPID INTERVENTION TEAM
COMMAND AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK IS:

1.1.1 The purpose of this book is to establish command procedures, identify optional levels of rapid intervention capability, and define survivability skills to assist fire and rescue personnel who may become trapped or missing while operating within hazardous environments.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 This procedure will apply to all fire and rescue department operations where personnel are required to enter hazardous environments that present an immediate danger to life and health (IDLH). Although the procedure has been developed primarily for structural fire events, it is also applicable to hazardous materials incidents, confined space entry situations and structural collapse events.

1.2.2 There is a narrow window of survivability for a firefighter who is out of SCBA air supply or trapped. Individual firefighters must not delay reporting to Command if they become lost, trapped, or otherwise in need of assistance. Company officers must not delay reporting to command that they cannot account for members of their crew. Command officers must always assume that the missing firefighter is lost in the building until they can be accounted for.

2 DESCRIPTION

2.1 DEFINITIONS

2.1.1 Trigger - an action or circumstance that initiates a given response.

2.1.2 Mayday - term used only to report firefighters who are lost, trapped, or in a life threatening situation.

2.1.3 Emergency Traffic - term used to communicate any urgent or important message other than a lost or trapped firefighter.

2.1.4 Officer of Appropriate Level - command officers identified by the individual jurisdictions that are qualified to fill specific command positions.

2.1.5 Heavy Rescue Capability - a fire and rescue response unit staffed and equipped to perform structural collapse rescue, (preferably at the NFPA 1670 Operations Level). This unit should be capable of cutting, breaching, and lifting light-frame or reinforced masonry building components and/or building contents such as furniture or appliances.

2.1.6 RIT - Rapid Intervention Team. A Team consisting of at least a three-member crew, to include two firefighters and one fire officer, that is immediately available to respond to requests for help from lost, trapped or incapacitated firefighters.

2.1.7 PAR - Personnel Accountability Roll call.

3 COMMAND PROCEDURES

3.1 Command procedures upon receipt of lost firefighter notification include:

3.1.1 Initiate a PAR check to confirm accountability of all personnel to determine total amount of missing firefighters.

3.1.2 Have the dispatch center initiate an emergency fire ground announcement that a mayday event has occurred. Dispatch center shall notify all jurisdictions communications centers involved in the incident.

3.1.3 Redirect the incident action plan and incident priorities to a high priority search & rescue operation. Development of a rescue action plan is critical.

3.1.4 Have dispatch center and/or command post monitor all radio channels.
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3.1.5 Assign the RIT Team or RIT Group to search and rescue operations in the known area or last known area where firefighters need assistance. Assign relief crews to the RIT Group.

3.1.6 Immediately request additional appropriate resources to meet the needs of the event as needed, including:

- Command Staff-Aide, Radio Operator, Senior Advisor, PIO, and Safety.
- General Staff/Operations, Logistics, Planning, etc.
- Specialized Resources-Technical Rescue Capability.
- EMS Assets.

3.1.7 Initiate and/or maintain fire attack positions and reinforce with extra alarm companies as needed.

3.1.8 Expand the command organization. Request and assign additional officers of an appropriate level to the rescue area, fire attack area, command staff, and other critical command positions.

3.1.9 Withdraw and control unassigned resources from the search and rescue area.

3.1.10 Maintain strong supervision in all work areas. Control and restrict all unauthorized entries into the structure or search-rescue area.

3.1.11 Maintain an ALS capability for ready treatment of the trapped firefighter.

3.2 ADDITIONAL COMMAND CONSIDERATIONS

3.2.1 Initiate/expand the EMS Group to prepare for triage, treatment, and transportation needs.

3.2.2 Assign resources to form a safety division/group to control risk taking.

3.2.3 Assess the ability to increase egress points from the building or area without spreading the fire.

3.2.4 Assign a Public Information Officer early to control release of information to the media.

3.2.5 Consider the need for a staff officer for notification to family members.

4 RAPID INTERVENTION TEAM OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

4.1 INITIAL ASSIGNMENT OF RIT CAPABILITY (RIT Level 1)

4.1.1 (RIT-Level 1)- An Engine Company assigned from the initial alarm on an emergency event to achieve the initial RIT capability. The trigger is an incident dispatch potentially requiring the use of SCBA, to include structure fires, confined space incidents, or haz-mat incidents.

4.1.2 The initial RIT capability is immediately achieved by the assignment of the 4th Engine Company on all box alarms, or the assignment of one of the first alarm Engine Companies based on the Incident Commanders strategic priorities to the RIT function. This engine's primary function is as the RIT assignment. The only deviation to this standard is high-rise fire incidents in which the 1st alarm Rescue Company will normally serve as the initial RIT, (refer to High Rise Operations book). The objectives of the initial RIT Team is to:

- Search, re-con, and locate lost/trapped firefighter.
- Remove the firefighter to a safe location if possible or provide an air supply to the trapped firefighter.
- Communicate with command on resource requirements needed to protect and rescue the trapped firefighter.

5 PLANNING REQUIREMENTS OF (LEVEL 1) INITIAL RIT TEAM

5.1 Report to and confer with IC

5.1.1 Perform a reconnaissance of the structure

5.1.2 Assess emergency conditions and forecast potential rescue problems

5.1.3 Confirm location of all units working in hazard zones

5.1.4 Retrieve and review building preplan (if available)

5.1.5 Assess building construction features

5.1.6 Determine all access points into the building including placement of ground and aerial ladders

5.1.7 Determine most rapid access to units operating in hazard zone (including forced entry and wall breaching requirements)

5.1.8 Perform the initial actions needed for rapid access/egress i.e. place ladders, force doors, remove window/door bars

5.1.9 Establish tool staging area for RIT tools (See the tool list in section 8)

5.1.10 Assess ability to quickly render ALS care to injured firefighters after removal from hazard zone

5.1.11 Locate at or near the command post, or at another strategic position as assigned by the incident commander or standard operating procedure, (floor below fire in a high rise building)

5.1.12 Monitor radio traffic

5.1.13 Perform periodic secondary reconnaissance

5.1.14 Plan where to acquire and deploy protective hose-line if needed for rescue

6 RIT LEVEL 2-RIT TASK FORCE

6.1 The RIT Level-2 RIT Task Force consists of (1) Engine Company, (1) Truck Company and (1) Rescue Company or a unit with heavy rescue capabilities, (1) Battalion Chief or Command Officer of Appropriate Level, and (1) ALS Unit. These units are in addition to the units assigned to the initial box alarm or greater alarms.

6.1.1 The need for a RIT Level 2 Task Force response is based on the incident commander's judgement of the incident conditions. The purpose of the RIT Level 2 Task Force is to have an enhanced rescue capability available to the incident commander during significant and/or difficult fire ground incidents, prior to a lost-trapped event occurring. Deteriorating conditions, large commercial building fires or other complex fire ground situations may warrant the request for this resource.

6.1.2 When the RIT Task Force Alarm is dispatched, these units will arrive on the scene and augment the capabilities of the initial RIT Level-1 Company. The resulting RIT resources are to be referred to as the RIT Group.

6.1.3 The RIT Group will operate as any other Group within the ICS system, with the primary and sole function of firefighter rescue. The RIT Group can request additional resources to augment their capabilities as needed through the IC.

6.2 PLANNING REQUIREMENTS OF (LEVEL 2) RIT GROUP

6.2.1 Confer with the IC and the Initial RIT Team.

6.2.2 Review, further develop, and implement the rescue action plan.

6.2.3 Assess the need for additional relief crews assigned to the RIT Group, and stage them outside the rescue area.

6.3 RIT TASK FORCE-RESCUE ACTION PLAN

6.3.1 Develop a rescue action plan to include the search parameters for lost firefighters:

- Last known location
- Listen for potential radio communications from trapped members
- Listen for PASS unit operation
- Information from other operating units
- Use of thermal imaging cameras
- Physical search

6.3.2 Initiate actions to place protective hose lines and establish ventilation in area where firefighter is trapped.

6.3.3 Identify a primary rescue plan and optional rescue plans (such as a direct approach through existing openings or by breaching walls, floors, etc.).

6.3.4 Assignment of the additional Battalion Chief or a Command Officer of an appropriate level as the Rescue Division/Group Officer.

6.3.5 Assignment of a separate radio channel for rescue.

6.3.6 Coordinate rescue operations with fire fighting operations and other incident scene operations.

6.3.7 Identify support needs and request additional resources from the IC.

6.3.8 Identify or create access openings to the trapped firefighters.

6.3.9 Develop capability to supply air to trapped firefighters from all jurisdictions involved, and accounting for differences in SCBA equipment.

6.3.10 Anticipate patient extrication requirements and assign task.

6.3.11 Anticipate patient packaging and removal requirements and assign task.

6.3.12 Assign ALS units, outside of the hazard zone, where most ALS intervention can take place.

7 (RIT LEVEL 3)-COLLAPSE RESCUE TASK FORCE

7.1 The RIT Level 3-Collapse Rescue Task Force consists of at least two Rescue Companies or units with structural collapse rescue capabilities, a response unit with shoring capabilities, and support resources to include additional rescue tools, technical search equipment, and additional collapse rescue trained staffing.

7.1.1 Each jurisdiction should identify which units are capable of these tasks.

7.1.2 Incident commanders should consider requesting a greater alarm if a building collapse occurs, in order to maintain the fire attack and initiate immediate and prolonged rescue operations.

7.2 PLANNING REQUIREMENTS OF (RIT LEVEL 3) GROUP

7.2.1 Confer with IC and existing RIT Group

7.2.2 Assess and further develop planning issues established during Level 1 & Level 2

7.2.3 Review rescue action plans, further develop, and implement building collapse action plan

7.3 BUILDING COLLAPSE ACTION PLAN

7.3.1 Maintain suppression control operations (if applicable).

7.3.2 Perform hazard assessment:

- Fire acceleration
- Utility involvement
- Secondary collapse potential
- Hazardous materials involvement

7.3.3 Implement hazard control requirements (utility control, shoring, monitor atmosphere, etc.).

7.3.4 Assign units to assure adequate lighting in rescue area.

7.3.5 Initiate operations to rescue surface victims and lightly trapped victims.

7.3.6 Expand search parameters established during Level 1 and Level 2 RIT:

- Hailing System technique, (call out into collapse area, triangulation of sounds).
- Technical search devices, (acoustic listening devices, visual search cameras).

7.3.7 Initiate operations to search accessible void spaces.

7.3.8 Identify support requirements and request resources from IC.

7.3.9 Initiate operations to perform heavy rescue requirements.

- Breaching
- Lifting
- Specific debris removal
- General rubble clearance
- Utilization of heavy equipment

7.3.10 Maintain a RIT capability while rescue operations are performed.

8 RAPID INTERVENTION TEAM RECONNAISSANCE PROCEDURES

8.1 There may be occasions when the RIT may locate a trapped or downed firefighter, and conditions may not allow rapid extrication from the hazard area. This scenario will call for a ***RIT RECON TEAM.*** The purpose of this Recon Team is to protect the trapped firefighter in place until the fire can be controlled or more resources are gathered to complete the rescue.

8.1.1 A search line should be deployed directly to the location of the trapped/downed firefighter. This will allow other crews a rapid way in and out of the hazard area.

8.1.2 A separate air supply system (spare SCBA, RIT Air Supply Bag) should be brought to supplement/replace the breathing apparatus of the downed firefighter. In situations where a lengthy entrapment is anticipated, consideration should be given to bringing in supplied air breathing apparatus for a backup air supply.

8.1.3 Once the firefighter has been located, a hose line should be brought to the location and positioned to protect the area. Use caution when utilizing large volumes of water. Flooding may occur, thus hampering rescue efforts.

8.1.4 Sump pumps may be needed to keep the area around the firefighter from flooding. This is likely to occur in low elevation areas such as basements. Request command to order the reduction or elimination of firefighting streams if they are causing life threatening flooding situations in the rescue area.

8.1.5 Fire blankets if available (these are carried on some Fairfax County units), may be used to protect the trapped firefighter from direct flame impingement and/or elevated temperatures. When used in conjunction with a light hose stream, there can be a significant reduction in temperature for the firefighter who may be shielded under the blanket.

9 EQUIPMENT

9.1 A tool staging area is to be established for Level 1 and Level 2 RIT Operations.

9.2 The tool staging area should be positioned in an area that allows the quickest access to where potential problems have been forecast during the reconnaissance. The tool staging area will be built up as the RIT capability is built up:

- PPE/SCBA Hand-lights/Radios
- Forcible entry hand tools
- Lifeline pack
- Chain saw
- Battery operated reciprocating saw
- Thermal imaging camera
- RIT Air Supply Bag
- Reeves and/or other patient packaging devices
- SCBA Units, with extension hose and buddy breather capability
- Assess supplied air availability

10 SURVIVAL CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 Self-survival techniques are examples of the things you can do to save yourself. As a firefighter, you should be familiar with the different buildings that are located in their response territory. You should know and understand the types of construction, along with the inherent dangers posed with different types of construction. As firefighters, you should also know what hazards are located in the different buildings in the area. These hazards might include different security systems (barred windows), and other entry or egress problems. In addition, you should always be prepared with the proper tools such as PPE, lights, hand tools, and small personal tools such as a pocketknife. Members shall follow their department regulations and training guidelines.

10.1.1 As firefighters, you should know your equipment and the limitations of each part of the protective ensemble. Knowing the operation and limitation of your breathing apparatus could be the difference between life and death. Listed below are some of the techniques that may assist you as a firefighter to self-rescue yourself.

10.2 Radio and PASS Device Operations:

10.2.1 Purpose: To signal when a firefighter is at risk or exposed to a potential imminent life threat.

10.2.2 Technique: As soon as you realize that you are at risk or lost, communicate with your crew and command with a **"MAYDAY"** and your best possible location in the building (floor, side, and quadrant).

10.2.3 The Mayday transmission shall follow this sequence in order to assure good information and flow of command:

- Mayday, Mayday, Mayday
- Unit number repeated three times, (Engine 407, Engine 407, Engine 407)
- Location (we are on floor 12, quadrant B-Baker)
- Nature of emergency (we have been cut off by collapse, one member is missing, we are down to 1500 lbs. of air)
- Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, command acknowledge

10.2.4 After calling a "MAYDAY", activate the microphone on your portable and briefly transmit the PASS device alarm to get the attention of other firefighters or command.

10.2.5 After making the radio transmission, turn your PASS device to the “on” position to sound the alarm.

10.2.6 If you are in a large open area and believe that you are lost, attempt to move to the closest wall and DO NOT MOVE. Moving will only confuse the rescuers and make it more difficult for them to locate you. Moving also consumes more AIR. If you are conducting a search off of a wall, look for the nearest window.

10.3 Wall Sounding

10.3.1 Purpose: To create noise to assist other firefighters in locating you when escape or self-rescue is impossible

10.3.2 Technique: Use your tool to bang on an adjacent wall or other building components and continue banging until located. To sound with a tool on drywall wall, hit against the areas where the framing backs the drywall. Sounding against the floor can be just as effective

10.4 Drywall Kick Through

10.4.1 Purpose: To exit a high hazard area into an area of lower hazard by breaching gypsum board wall. This technique can also be used to create an exit through the exterior wall of a typical wood frame house.

10.4.2 Technique: Use your tool to break a hole in the gypsum wallboard. Enlarge the hole by kicking with your feet, striking with your elbows and pushing and pulling with your arms. Use your tool to displace any framing materials encountered. Swing downward with your tool prior to exiting to clear wires or other entanglement hazards. (Use caution, electrical wires may exist). Pass through the wall feet first to assure that there is solid footing on the other side of the wall. Select a location away from corners, doorways or windows to avoid reinforced framing. By twisting your body to a 45-degree angle, you can minimize your body width to fit between the studs. Avoid removing your SCBA. If you are unable to pass through wearing your SCBA, drop the harness off one shoulder and drag the SCBA through the hole behind you.

10.5 Drywall Kick and Climb

10.5.1 Purpose: Used to exit a hazardous area by climbing the gypsum board. May be used to climb over a drywall partition or to climb out of a hole in the floor.

10.5.2 Technique: Using the toe of your boot, gently kick holes in the drywall to create footholds. Use your hand tool to poke though the drywall to create handholds. Climb up the wall in a “mountain climber” fashion by keeping your body close to the wall to avoid outward stress on the drywall.

10.6 Disentanglement

10.6.1 Purpose: To escape when entangled in suspended wires such as electrical conduit, computer wiring, or cable television wiring.

10.6.2 Technique: Slowly back out of the entanglement while swinging your arms in a swimming motion (use caution, this method could cause further entanglement). When the entanglement is severe, it may become necessary to utilize lineman’s pliers or a knife to remove the wires. The utilities must be controlled to prevent an entanglement from becoming an electrocution. When wires droop, this provides a natural void against the wall to prevent entanglements. Keep your cylinder close to the corners (between the floor and the wall).

10.7 Crouch and Cover

10.7.1 Purpose: To improve chances of survival and reduce the risk of injury if unable to escape a high heat environment. This is only to be used as a last resort when all possible means of escape have been exhausted. **Continue to try to escape until you are forced to crouch and cover. Do not give up** and crouch in the corner.

10.7.2 Technique: Move to a corner of the room with your head pointing into the corner. Crouch in the corner and cover the sides of your face (at the face piece/hood interface) with your gloved hands. Attempt to cover yourself with furnishings or other objects. This technique takes advantage of fire behavior. The corners of a room are “dead airspace” and suffer less damage when a room is heavily involved in fire. When this technique is employed, ventilation should be accomplished whenever possible to reduce heat and remove the super heated gases.

10.8 Skip Breathing

10.8.1 Purpose: There are times when exiting the hazard area may not be possible due to entrapment or fire conditions. When these types of events occur, the remaining air in your SCBA must be conserved. Skip breathing techniques, when done properly, can extend the operating time of a given SCBA beyond the manufacturers estimations.

10.8.2 Technique: The firefighter must try and remain calm. Panic and exertion will consume more air. Take in a normal breath and hold that breath for approximately two seconds. Before exhaling, the firefighter should inhale again, before exhaling slowly. The firefighter should take normal breaths and exhale slowly to keep the carbon dioxide in the lungs balanced.

10.9 Breathing Apparatus Emergency Procedures

10.9.1 Purpose**:** There are times when breathing apparatus may fail. When this occurs, firefighters must be familiar with emergency procedures that apply to the type of breathing apparatus that is being used. Specific procedures will not be listed due to different manufacturers, but some general topics will be listed. Refer to training received through your department for emergency breathing procedures. The firefighter must try to remain calm. Remember your basics. If the firefighter experiences a regulator failure, use the regulator bypass and advise your crew immediately. Sound a MAYDAY as soon as possible if you require assistance to get out of the hazard area.

10.9.2 If the firefighter experiences a damaged breathing tube, consider the face piece to regulator connection. If it is a hole in the breathing tube, attempt to cover the hole with your hand.

10.9.3 If the face mounted regulator fails, remove the regulator and cup hands over the regulator opening and stay as close to the floor as possible.

10.9.4 Be familiar with the different styles and locations of “buddy breathing” connections and the functions of the apparatus.

10.10 Two Arm Hang and Drop

10.10.1 Purpose: Exiting from a second story window without a ladder. It will reduce the height of the fall approximately 7 to 8 feet.

10.10.2 Technique: Exit the window feet first. Position yourself so your stomach slides over the sill and you end up facing the wall. Lower yourself gently and hold onto the windowsill with your hands. Hang from the windowsill with your arms fully extended before dropping to the ground. Roll when you hit the ground to reduce the shock to your body and lessen the risk of injury. When possible, the firefighter should remove the SCBA before attempting this maneuver.

10.11 Ladder Slide

10.11.1 Purpose: Used for a rapid descent of the ladder. Used when you cannot descend slowly due to hazard or impinging fire.

10.11.2 Technique: Exit the window headfirst. With your left arm, hook the ladder from the underside of the third rung and at the elbow. Reach for the fourth rung with your right hand and use this as a pivot point. Tuck your legs and swing them out of the window on your right side. When your legs clear the windowsill, straddle the ladder with your legs, so that your feet and lower legs are on the outside of the rails. Slide down the ladder with your hands and forearms along the rails, and squeeze the rails of the ladder with your legs to control your descent. Do not carry any tools down the ladder with you. Either leave them in the structure, or throw them out the window after assuring the falling tools will not injure any one below. When sliding down an extension ladder, anticipate that the bed section will create difficulties in completing the slide and caution should be taken to avoid falling.

10.12 Hose Slide

10.12.1 Purpose: To lower yourself from a window or roof using an attack line.

10.12.2 Technique: Push all available hose-line out the window. Utilizing a technique similar to a firehouse pole slide, wrap your arms and legs around the hose. Slide down the hose to the lower area.

10.13 Rope Slide

10.13.1 Purpose: To quickly lower yourself from a hazardous area using an approved personal rope and no hardware

10.13.2 Technique: Tie your personal rope securely to a substantial anchor point (i.e. a sturdy railing, door hinge).. Place the rope across your shoulders behind your neck with your strong hand closest to the anchor point. Wrap each arm twice with the rope, then grasp the rope tightly with each hand. Step off carefully hanging by the rope with one hand over your head and the other hand at your side. Control your descent by letting the rope slide through your hands. It doesn't matter which direction you wrap the rope around your arms, either way is equally effective. You are using your body as a friction device. Remove as much slack as possible before beginning to lower yourself. Slack will reduce friction and could cause you to loose control of your descent. This technique should only be used to lower yourself to an area of lesser danger.

ADDENDUM

LOST/TRAPPED FIREFIGHTER COMMAND CHECKLIST

[1] INITIATE PAR CHECK-CONFIRM TOTAL NUMBER OF MISSING OR TRAPPED PERSONNEL

[2] INITIATE EMERGENCY FIREGROUND ANNOUNCEMENT THAT MAY-DAY EVENT HAS OCCURRED

[3] MAKE SEARCH AND RESCUE A HIGH INCIDENT PRIORITY

[4] DEVELOP A RESCUE ACTION PLAN

[5] MONITOR ALL INCIDENT RADIO CHANNELS

[6] ASSIGN RIT TEAM TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

[7] REQUEST ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1) Command Staff
2) RIT Level 2-Task Force, if not already on scene
3) RIT Level 3-Collapse Rescue task Force, if Technical Rescue Capability is needed
4) EMS Capabilities
5) Fire Control
6) Relief

[8] MAINTAIN FIRE ATTACK

[9] EXPAND THE COMMAND ORGANIZATION

[10] WITHDRAW AND CONTROL UNASSIGNED RESOURCES FROM THE SEARCH AND RESCUE AREA

[11] MAINTAIN STRONG SUPERVISION IN ALL WORK AREAS

[12] CONTROL AND RESTRICT UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY INTO THE STRUCTURE OR SEARCH AND RESCUE AREA

[13] MAINTAIN AN ALS CAPABILITY FOR TREATMENT OF THE TRAPPED FIREFIGHTERS

[14] ASSIGN A SAFETY GROUP TO CONTROL RISK TAKING

[15] ASSESS THE ABILITY TO INCREASE POINTS OF EGRESS FROM THE BUILDING OR AREA WITHOUT SPREADING THE FIRE

[16] ASSIGN A PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER TO CONTROL INFORMATION RELEASE