

**PHOENIX REGIONAL
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

Fireground Strategy

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Procedure

Structural fireground operations will fall in one of two strategies, Offensive or Defensive. Fireground strategy is determined and declared by the Incident Commander on all structure fire incidents. The Incident Command constantly reevaluates the fireground strategy, driven by size up and risk management.

The Offensive or Defensive strategies are based on the application of the Risk Management Plan.

1. We Will risk our lives a lot, in a calculated manner, to save SAVABLE lives.
2. We Will risk our lives a Little, in a calculated manner, to save SAVABLE property.
3. We Will Not risk our lives at all for lives or property that are already Lost.

Considering the level of risk, the Incident Commander will choose the proper strategy to be used at the fire scene.

The strategy can change with conditions or because certain benchmarks (i.e., ALL CLEAR) are obtained.

The fireground strategy is also based on a reevaluation of the incident size-up, all Fireground Factors and reconsideration of risk.

Fireground Factors:

- Building
- Fire & Smoke
- Life Hazard
- Occupancy
- Arrangement
- Resources
- Other

Operational Information

The Incident Commander is responsible for determining the appropriate fireground strategy. Once the appropriate strategy is initiated, it becomes the Incident Commander's job to ensure

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that all personnel are operating within the correct strategy. By controlling the fireground strategy, the Incident Commander is providing overall incident scene safety. The proper strategy will be maintained by the following actions:

- Avoiding simultaneous OFFENSIVE and DEFENSIVE strategies in the same fire area. This typically happens by first committing personnel to interior positions, then operating master streams from exterior positions, which places interior crews in danger of injury or death.
- Matching the appropriate strategy to the fire conditions of the structure and minimizing risk to fire fighters.

Managing fireground strategy must start with the arrival of the first unit and be constantly monitored and evaluated throughout the entire incident. The initial Incident Commander will include the fireground strategy in the on-scene report. As Command is transferred to later arriving officers, these officers assuming Command must reevaluate the fireground strategy based on the Risk Management Plan.

Fireground strategy provides a starting point for fireground operations. Once the strategy is announced, all firefighters know whether to operate on the interior or exterior of the building. The fireground strategy cannot be a mystery, everyone operating on the fireground must be operating in the same strategy mode (Offensive *or* Defensive).

Offensive Strategy



Commercial and residential fires require a thorough size up, assessment of life safety, and consideration of the Risk Management Plan. Once it is determined that an offensive attack is safe and appropriate, a smart and deliberate execution of the tactical objectives will be

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conducted. The following are guidelines for offensive fire attacks once size up has been completed and offensive strategy has been determined:

1. Assume Command
2. Address 2 in / 2 out decision prior to entry.



3. Initial attack efforts must be directed toward supporting a primary search. This may require rescuers to go to obvious victims or to manage the hazard and extinguish the fire. The first attack line must go where it can best affect this mission and its placement is dependent upon the variables present on the fireground, determine fire conditions and extent before starting fire operations (as far as possible). Gather 360° of information; identify the flow path and the most likely location of the fire and survivable environments for victims. Search, rescue and fire attack are simultaneous operations.
4. Offensive fires should be fought aggressively, with rapid and effective size up. Quickly identify conditions in the occupancy and apply the quickest, most appropriate, water to the fire.
5. Keep the building openings closed if possible to reduce ventilation of the fire until you have a charged hose line in place and are prepared to make entry.
6. *Before making entry* When possible reset or darken down the fire using a straight stream applied to the ceiling of the fire compartment. 15-30 seconds of water applied in this manner will dramatically reduce temperatures and improve tenability throughout the occupancy. This tactic must be followed by an aggressive interior attack to complete fire extinguishment and evacuate any victims.
7. Make every effort to enter the structure at the air intake side of the flow path. You want the air at your back as you make entry. This will reduce the likelihood of being caught in the flow path.
8. Co-ordinate all ventilation of the structure to ensure effectiveness and improvement of interior conditions.

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Companies must maintain situational awareness and resist the urge to focus only on the fire (this is known as the "candle moth" syndrome or "tunnel vision"). 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 and requirements.

Command must consider the most critical direction and avenues of fire extension, plus its speed, particularly as they affect:

- Rescue activities
- Level of risk to firefighters
- Confinement efforts
- Exposure protection

Command must allocate personnel and resources based upon this fire extension/spread evaluation.

Command must not lose sight of the very simple and basic fireground reality that at some point firefighters must engage and fight the fire. Command must structure whatever operations are required to put water on the fire. The rescue/fire control-extension/exposure problem is solved in most cases by a fast, strong, well-placed attack. Command must establish an attack plan that overpowers the fire with actual water application, either from offensive or defensive positions.

Command must consider the seven sides (or sectors) of the fire: front, rear, both sides, top, bottom, and interior. Fires cannot be considered under control until all seven sides are addressed. Failure to address all seven sides will frequently result in fire extension.

Where the fire involves concealed spaces (attics, ceiling areas, construction voids, etc.), it becomes paramount that companies identify and operate fire streams into such areas. Early identification and response to concealed space fires will save the building. Officers who hesitate to gain access to concealed spaces because they don't want to beat up the building may lose the entire structure.

Early coordinated ventilation is a major support item that must be addressed during concealed space attacks. Ventilation must be initiated early and be well coordinated with interior crews. Ventilation openings should be made in the fire area.

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Command must “get ahead” of the fire. Command must make critical decisions that relate to cutoff points and develop a pessimistic fire control strategy. It takes a certain amount of time to get water to a location, and the fire continues to burn while the attack is being set up. Command must consider where the fire will be when attack efforts are ready to go into operation; if misjudged, the fire may burn past the attack/cutoff position before resources and personnel are in position. Do not play "catch up" with a fire that is burning through a building. Project your set-up time, write off property and get ahead of the fire. Set up adequately ahead of the fire, then overpower it.

Write-off property that is already lost and go on to protect exposed property based on the most dangerous direction of fire spread. Do not continue to operate in positions that are essentially lost.

The basic variables relating to attack operations involve:

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

Command develops an effective attack through the management of these factors. Command must balance and integrate attack size and position with fire conditions, risk and resources.

Many times, offensive/defensive conditions are clear cut and Command can quickly determine the appropriate strategy. In other cases, the conditions are Marginal, and Command must clearly communicate these conditions.

A Marginal situation is defined as defensive conditions with a known rescue

A Marginal situation has a very short window to affect a rescue or to discontinue the attempt and begin a defensive fire attack.

Strategy changes can develop almost instantly or can take considerable time. Command must match the strategy with the conditions. The Incident Commander controls overall incident scene safety by determining the proper strategy and subsequently the proper tactics to be used.

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If the Incident Commander doesn't change strategies from offensive to defensive until the building is disassembling itself due to structural damage, Command is late in strategy determination and on the receiving end of the building's decision governing the new strategy to be employed. Often times when the building gets to make those decisions, fire fighters become traumatized (physically and/or emotionally). The Incident Commander determines the strategy, the building should not.

Command needs to constantly evaluate conditions while operating in marginal situations. This requires frequent and detailed reports from Sector Officers.

It is imperative that Command assign a Roof Sector as early as possible during marginal situations for rapid evaluation of roof conditions. In certain situations, Command should strongly consider not committing crews to the interior of a structure unless he/she receives a report from Roof Sector that the roof of the structure is safe to operate on and under. It is better to go from an offensive to a defensive strategy too soon rather than too late.

Defensive Strategy

The decision to operate in a defensive strategy indicates that the offensive attack strategy, or the potential for one, has been abandoned. The elements of an effective defensive strategy always include:

- Identify what is lost
- Write it off
- Protect exposures

The announcement of a change to a defensive strategy will be made as Emergency Traffic and all personnel will withdraw from the structure and maintain a safe distance from the building. Captains will account for their crews and advise their Sector Officer on the status of their crew. Sector Officers will notify Command of the status of the crews assigned to their sector. A PAR (Personnel Accountability Report) shall be obtained after any switch from offensive to defensive strategy.

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Interior lines will be withdrawn and repositioned when changing to a defensive strategy. Crews should retreat with their hose lines if safe to do so. If retreat is being delayed because of hose lines, and it is unsafe to stay in the building, hose lines should be abandoned.

All exposures, both immediate and anticipated, must be identified and protected. The ability to protect these exposures from any appropriate position must be assessed and coordinated. This must match the overall strategic level incident size-up and position in the risk management plan.

An attempt to control the main body of fire is critical. This may be the best thing to assist in protection of exposures.

Master streams are generally the most effective tactic to be employed in defensive operations. For tactical purposes, a standard master stream flow of at least 750 GPM should be the guideline. Adjustments may be made upward or downward from this figure, but it is very significant in the initial deployment of master streams.

When the exposure is severe, and water is limited, the most effective tactic is to put water on the exposure. Once exposure protection is established, attention may be directed to knocking down the main body of fire and thermal column cooling. The same principles of large volume water application should be employed.

“FIRE UNDER CONTROL” means the forward progress of the fire has been stopped and the remaining fire can be extinguished with the on-scene resources; it does not mean the fire is completely out. When the fire is brought under control, Command will notify Alarm utilizing the standard radio report of "FIRE UNDER CONTROL" and alarm will record the time of this report. Command must initiate a PAR report from all sectors and crews.

If defensive operations are conducted from the onset of the incident, Command will notify Alarm that there will not be a primary search completed for the affected structure(s).