

Fulton County Fire Department	
Standard Operating Procedure	
Subject:	Response to Scenes of Violence
Effective Date:	July 1, 2003
Number:	4909
Revised:	

1.0 Statement of Policy

- 1.1. The mission of the Fire Department:
 - 1.1.1. Requires its members to maintain neutrality during situations where violence may be occurring.
 - 1.1.2. Does NOT include the control of persons in excess of actions necessary to treat injured persons where the safety of responders is not obviously compromised.
- 1.2. Fire Department members shall NOT:
 - 1.2.1. Engage in inflammatory activities in public, while on duty or while visibly identifiable as a member of the Fire Department.
 - 1.2.2. Approach an uncrossed scene where the following or similar activities are on-going:
 - 1.2.2.1. Firearms actively being discharged;
 - 1.2.2.2. Persons held against their will, with or without confirmation of the presence of weapons;
 - 1.2.2.3. Large crowds engaged in property destruction or activities that could result in bodily injury to responders.
 - 1.2.3. Utilize Fire Department equipment or other resources, or take any offensive action to control crowds during civil disturbances.
 - 1.2.4. Engage in on-going negotiations without coordination with law enforcement personnel with:
 - 1.2.4.1. Persons holding hostages
 - 1.2.4.2. Persons contemplating suicide

- 1.2.5. Utilize protective equipment that they have not been trained to use, specifically body armor, bullet proof vests or other equipment intended primarily for law enforcement personnel.
- 1.3. In addition to standard strategic goals at an emergency incident, the following shall be priorities for members at incidents involving violence regardless of the target.
 - 1.3.1. Protection of Fire Department and other public safety personnel and;
 - 1.3.2. Cooperation with law enforcement personnel to secure the incident, prior to taking action to mitigate the incident.
- 1.4. Scenes of violence are generally divided into three categories:
 - 1.4.1. Single point of violence:
 - 1.4.1.1. An individual threatening or engaged in violence against oneself, or others.
 - 1.4.1.2. An animal threatening or engaged in violence against a human.
 - 1.4.2. Multiple points of violence:
 - 1.4.2.1. More than one individual or animal threatening or engaged in violence against oneself, or others.
 - 1.4.3. Civil Disturbance:
 - 1.4.3.1. The number of individuals involved in the violence exceeds the number of responders.
- 1.5. A Fire Department Chief Officer shall respond or be requested to respond to any accident involving:
 - 1.5.1. Firearms, knives or other weapons reported at the scene;
 - 1.5.2. Persons being held against their will, with or without confirmation of the presence of weapons;
 - 1.5.3. Large crowds engaged in property destruction or activities that could result in bodily injury to responders.
- 1.6. This SOP or portions thereof may be suspended by order of the Fire Chief during times of declared war on domestic soil, enemy attack or other unforeseen situations that require Fire Department members to take specific actions to protect themselves or other public safety personnel.

2.0 Objectives

- 2.1. The objective of this SOP shall be to establish protocols to be utilized when Fire Department members are faced with situations where there is a significant threat of violence affecting or being directed at responders.

3.0 Responsibility

- 3.1. It shall be the responsibility of all Fire Department members to conduct themselves in a manner that will not escalate violent or potentially violent situations.
- 3.2. Officers on response capable vehicles shall be responsible for:
 - 3.2.1. Staging in a position that will minimize the unit's exposure to potential violence.
 - 3.2.2. Coordinating with law enforcement personnel to determine when an incident is secure.
 - 3.2.3. Monitoring incident conditions with priority placed on maintaining the safety of Fire Department and other public safety personnel.

4.0 Procedures

- 4.1. General Considerations:
 - 4.1.1. When Fire Department members believe that violence is a realistic possibility at an incident they shall:
 - 4.1.1.1. Confirm know information about the incident with the Dispatcher.
 - 4.1.1.2. Ensure that both law enforcement and a Fire Department Chief Officer have been requested to respond to the scene.
 - 4.1.2. When response to an accident that involves violence is confirmed; in addition to the above:
 - 4.1.2.1. Stage in a location that will not subject the unit to violence at an uncontrolled incident scene.
 - 4.1.2.2. Only approach the incident scene when law enforcement personnel have confirmed that the scene is secure.
- 4.2. Response Considerations:

- 4.2.1. Members responding to known civil disturbances shall do so in full personal protective equipment.
- 4.2.2. Units responding to scenes of violence shall limit the use of sirens and red lights in the vicinity of the actual location.
- 4.2.3. No unit shall respond to a known civil disturbance alone.
- 4.3. Command Considerations:
 - 4.3.1. In general, scenes of violence are law enforcement matters until they are secured.
 - 4.3.2. Command will generally be established by law enforcement personnel.
 - 4.3.3. Upon arrival at the scene, Fire Department members shall either:
 - 4.3.3.1. Report to the law enforcement Incident Commander; or
 - 4.3.3.2. Enter into unified command; or
 - 4.3.3.3. Establish a single command.
- 4.4. Scene Control Considerations
 - 4.4.1. Fire Department members shall confirm with law enforcement personnel that a violent scene is secured prior to taking action to mitigate the incident by:
 - 4.4.1.1. Face to face communications with the law enforcement Incident Commander.
 - 4.4.1.2. By radio either from the Dispatcher or law enforcement personnel.
 - 4.4.2. The officer of the unit or a Chief Officer shall remain in a position to observe the scene including other potential sources of violent acts.
 - 4.4.3. If necessary, patients should be extricated to a more secure location to complete treatment.
 - 4.4.4. During civil disturbances, Fire Department vehicles shall not be left unattended or out of control of either fire or law enforcement personnel.
- 4.5. Fire Control

- 4.5.1. Small fires that are not in danger of spreading to structures or threaten lives shall only be extinguished without increasing the threat of violence to responders.
- 4.5.2. Working fires in structures will not be attacked offensively if a large number of violent individuals are present and unwilling to allow access by Fire Department members.
- 4.5.3. In areas with active large scale disturbances, fire suppression activities shall be of a primarily defensive nature.
- 4.6. If violence is directed at Fire Department members:
 - 4.6.1. If possible, immediately withdraw from the area where violence is occurring.
 - 4.6.2. If withdrawal is not possible, activate the emergency button on one or more portable radios.
 - 4.6.3. If radio traffic would potentially draw attention or escalate the violence, members should use any method necessary to request assistance.

5.0 Reference – N/A

6.0 Appendix – N/A