

Police and Fire Joint Operations Directive	EFFECTIVE Jun. 15, 1996	NUMBER P/F-2
	REVISED Mar. 30, 2007	TOTAL PAGES 11
Joint Operational Scenes		



Cross Reference:..... 2.03, 3.38

I. Introduction

Members of the Columbus Divisions of Police and Fire often respond to the same operational scenes. There are many circumstances that require the expertise of personnel from both divisions. This directive identifies various types of joint operational scenes and describes in general terms the duties, responsibilities, and procedures of police and fire personnel at those scenes.

II. Fire Scene or Medical Emergency Scene

Operational control of a fire or medical emergency scene rests with the Division of Fire. The Division of Police provides support services as needed.

A. Police Personnel

Provide support services (traffic control, crowd control, etc.) to the Division of Fire as requested by **the** ranking on-scene Division of Fire personnel or as directed by a police supervisor.

B. Ranking Police Official at the Scene or Precinct Sergeant

Cause communication to be established with the ranking fire official at the scene in order to determine what, if any, support needs to be provided. This communication can either be in person or via the Police-Fire talkgroup on the 800MHz radio system. To speak with the Division of Fire over the Police-Fire talkgroup, it may be necessary to have the police communications center contact the fire alarm office and specifically request that the desired personnel from the Division of Fire switch to the talkgroup.

C. Fire Personnel

Take immediate necessary action to preserve life, minimize property damage, and/or contain the fire.

D. Ranking Fire Official at the Scene

Communicate or cause to be communicated to the ranking police official at the scene, or his/her designee, the needs of the Division of Fire. This communication can either be in person or via the Police-Fire talkgroup. If opting to speak with the Division of Police over the Police-Fire talkgroup it may be necessary to have the fire alarm office contact the police communications center and specifically request that the desired police personnel switch to the talkgroup.

III. Crime Scene Involving a Medical Emergency

The scene of a crime that involves a medical emergency can tax the professionalism of police and fire personnel like no other. The concerns of the two separate divisions at scenes of this nature are often at odds. Cooperation between police and fire personnel is essential at these types of joint operations. Without cooperation, lives may be needlessly lost and dangerous criminals may remain free.

Operational control of the crime scene rests with the Division of Police. Operational control of the medical emergency rests with the Division of Fire. The medical emergency will initially take precedence over crime scene considerations. Police personnel will not in any way hamper the efforts of fire personnel involved in a medical emergency. Likewise, while carrying out their procedures, fire personnel shall make a conscientious attempt not to disturb or contaminate the crime scene any more than absolutely necessary. Once the victim(s) of the medical emergency are stabilized and the medical emergency ceases to exist, as determined by the Fire Incident Commander, operational control of the scene will be relinquished by the Division of Fire to the Division of Police. It is essential that the highest ranking representatives of each division develop, demonstrate, and maintain the highest degree of professionalism and cooperation.

Normally, the highest ranking police official at a crime scene will be a sergeant. The highest ranking fire official at the scene will be a battalion chief. It will be the joint responsibility of these individuals to ensure that the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel are permitted to carry out their responsibilities and that they do so in such a manner as to minimize contamination of the crime scene.

A. Police Personnel

1. It is the duty of the first police officer on the scene to accomplish the following tasks in the following order:
 - a. Administer lifesaving care to injured persons, **if capable**.
 - b. Apprehend the perpetrator.
 - c. Identify, retain, and isolate witnesses.
 - d. Seal off the scene, establishing a single point of entry. Direct anyone who has a legitimate need to enter the scene to the established single point of entry.
 - e. Request the presence of a police supervisor.
 - f. Do not allow any unauthorized personnel to enter the scene regardless of their rank or position.
 - g. Do not reenter the scene, unless directed by the officer in charge of the investigation.
2. An officer may deviate from this response if the situation warrants. For example, if Division of Fire personnel are on the scene, the officer would not become involved in the care of injured persons.

3. If, after securing the scene, the officer determines that Division of Fire personnel are needed, the officer will so advise on both the main police talkgroup and the Police-Fire talkgroup.
 - a. If there is any possibility, no matter how slight, that the victim's life can be saved, the scene will be considered a medical emergency. The officer will summon Division of Fire personnel to the scene. Police personnel will advise fire personnel of the general nature and cause of the victim's injuries. The minimum number of EMS personnel necessary to address the medical emergency, as determined by a fire supervisor, shall be allowed access to the immediate crime scene to administer lifesaving treatment.
 - b. In the case of a decapitated or decomposing body, the scene will be considered a crime scene, and the officer will cancel the Division of Fire and notify the appropriate **Investigative Subdivision** personnel. Fire personnel may only be cancelled prior to their arrival on the scene. Police supervisory and/or investigative personnel will determine what specialized personnel will be needed as the processing of the scene progresses, including those needed to formally pronounce death, and at what point in time they will be allowed access to the scene.
4. It will be the role of the highest ranking police official to make contact with the highest ranking fire official at the scene and to act as a liaison between EMS personnel and the police. With the highest ranking fire official at the scene, the highest ranking police official will ensure that EMS personnel are permitted to carry out their responsibilities and that they do not unnecessarily contaminate or disturb the crime scene.
5. Notwithstanding the importance of crime scene preservation, the welfare of the victim and the safety of Division of Fire personnel will be of primary concern to Division of Police personnel at the scene of any crime that involves a medical emergency. Fire personnel may request that police personnel move an object that is located in the scene for reasons of safety or to enable them to carry out their duties. Moving any objects in the crime scene shall be considered a last resort. The preferred course of action will be to stand guard over the item until the scene is processed by **Investigative Subdivision** personnel. If it becomes necessary to move anything in the scene, the movement will be reported to the investigating detective as soon as possible.
6. Once Division of Fire personnel have left the crime scene, they shall not be allowed to reenter the scene without the approval of the police official in charge.
7. A crime scene log will be initiated and will include the names of all individuals, including fire personnel, who entered the scene, along with a brief explanation of their reason for entering the scene.

B. Fire Personnel

1. Division of Fire personnel may respond to, and rendezvous at, a nearby location when there is an indication that a crime has been or is being committed. This will allow police personnel to arrive first and secure the scene. Fire personnel may respond directly to the scene prior to the arrival of police when fire personnel have reason to believe that they can do so safely.
 - a. Once notified that the scene is secured and that a medical emergency exists, fire personnel will proceed to the scene and make contact with the ranking police official on the scene, or his/her designee.
 - b. If notified that no medical emergency exists, fire personnel may clear the area and return to service.
2. If advised that a victim in the scene requires medical treatment, the minimum number of EMS personnel necessary to address the medical emergency, as determined by a fire supervisor, will enter the scene and institute lifesaving procedures.
3. It will be the role of the highest ranking fire official to make contact with the highest ranking police official at the scene and to act as a liaison between EMS personnel and the police. With the highest ranking police official at the scene, the highest ranking fire official will ensure that EMS personnel are permitted to carry out their responsibilities and that they do so without unnecessarily contaminating or disturbing the crime scene. While performing their duties, Division of Fire personnel shall make a conscientious effort to not disturb or contaminate the crime scene any more than absolutely necessary.
4. Evidentiary Considerations
 - a. Each and every item located in a crime scene, whether or not it was used in the commission of a crime, is considered evidence. This includes items that are normally within the perimeter of the crime scene, as well as items that were brought in from elsewhere.
 - b. Upon leaving a crime scene, Division of Fire personnel are not to clean up after themselves, except that hazardous materials such as needles or other items that have contacted body fluids may be collected for disposal provided the hazardous material has not become intermingled with evidence. Fire personnel are to notify police of material placed at the scene by fire personnel.
 - c. All Division of Fire personnel who need to enter and exit the scene will enter and exit at a single point, when, in the judgment of the fire official in charge, this can be done without compromising or delaying patient care. Ideally, police personnel will be at the scene prior to fire personnel and will have already established the point of entry/exit. However, if fire personnel arrive first, they will select a single point of entry and advise police personnel of the location of that point. If possible, the point selected should not be the point obviously used by any criminal suspect.

- d. Fire personnel will not move firearms or other weapons unless it is absolutely necessary to do so for reasons of safety or so that lifesaving procedures can be carried out. For example, a gun must be taken from a living victim before the victim is transported to the hospital. If time permits, police should move the gun. A gun is safer lying on the floor than it is while being picked up and moved. Keep in mind that the scene is secure, and the only people in the scene are police and fire personnel, along with the injured victim.
- (1) If there is a gun or other weapon in the scene, fire personnel will advise a police officer. The officer will decide whether the weapon will be moved or guarded. Officers have been instructed to move items, including weapons, only as a last resort.
 - (2) If no police officer is available, and fire personnel feel that the weapon must be moved, then follow these guidelines:
 - (a) If possible, mark the weapon's location prior to moving it, and notify the ranking police official at the scene as soon as possible.
 - (b) Handle the weapon in such a way as to preserve evidence. Wear gloves if possible. Handle only rough surfaces, such as serrated grips on a firearm. Touch as little of the surface as possible, and handle the object by touching areas not normally touched when the object is normally handled.
 - (c) Do not wipe blood from weapons.
 - (d) Do not pick a gun up by sticking any object through the trigger guard or down the barrel.
 - (e) Do not activate or deactivate a safety lever on a semiautomatic firearm. There have been documented cases of semiautomatic firearms being converted to fully automatic weapons. When the position of the safety lever on some of these weapons is changed, the gun automatically begins firing and will not stop until it is out of ammunition.
 - (f) Do not unload any firearms.
 - (g) If you moved the weapon, or any other object, provide your name and assignment to police, and specifically explain that you handled the object. It may be necessary to subpoena you to testify in subsequent court proceedings.

IV. Traffic Accident with Injuries

As with crime scenes that involve medical emergencies, operational control of a medical emergency arising out of a traffic accident rests with the Division of Fire until relinquished to the Division of Police. The medical emergency will take precedence over evidentiary concerns. It will be the joint responsibility of the highest ranking representatives of both divisions to seek out and communicate with each other so that EMS personnel are permitted to carry out their responsibilities and that they do so in such a manner as to minimize contamination of the accident scene.

A. Police Personnel

1. The role of police at the scene of any traffic accident is to determine the severity of the accident, request any necessary emergency medical services, preserve the scene of an accident resulting in severe injury or death, conduct an investigation into the accident, and reestablish traffic flow.
2. When Division of Fire personnel respond to the scene of a traffic accident involving injuries, the safety of fire personnel and the injured victim(s) will be the primary objectives. To address these objectives, the Fire Incident Commander may choose to have fire vehicles block one or more lanes of traffic. The Fire Incident Commander will then delegate traffic control duties to police personnel, and reestablishing traffic flow will become a secondary objective. The Fire Incident Commander will determine when fire vehicles will be moved and when partial or total traffic flow can be safely established.
3. The police officer who is assigned to complete the accident report, or guard the scene of an accident that resulted in severe injury or death, will be responsible for obtaining from fire personnel as much information about the Division of Fire's activities at the accident scene as possible. Fire personnel will advise police personnel of any major alterations to the accident scene, e.g., damage to vehicles as the result of extracting victims, repositioning of vehicles, etc.

B. Fire Personnel

1. Fire personnel may be requested to neutralize a hazard, e.g., oil or diesel fuel in the roadway. Fire personnel will provide this type of service if requested, as permitted by law.
2. Fire apparatus will not be used to provide lighting at accident scenes unless a hazardous situation exists.
3. Fire personnel will respond, on emergency, to any report of a traffic accident involving injuries. With patient care and the safety of Division of Fire personnel as their primary objectives, fire personnel will handle the incident with consideration for the contamination of a possible crime scene. Relevant facts and any significant statements made by citizens at the scene will be properly recorded on the EMS report.

4. Fire personnel will provide information about the condition of the scene upon their arrival, including the position of the vehicles; the identity of any possible witnesses to the accident who are known to them; any statements made by any of the parties involved in, or witnesses to, the accident; any alterations made to the scene, e.g., damage to vehicles as the result of extracting victims; the call numbers of the responding EMS units; the name of the individuals treated or transported; and the facility to which victims were transported.
5. When there is a strong possibility that the accident will result in a fatality, Division of Fire personnel are not to clean up after themselves, except that hazardous materials such as needles or other items that have contacted body fluids may be collected for disposal provided the hazardous material has not become intermingled with evidence. Fire personnel will notify police of material that was placed in the scene by fire personnel.
6. As soon as practical, fire personnel will advise police personnel of the victim's condition. Of primary concern to police is the risk of death to a victim. A traffic fatality requires that the scene be held and that the accident be investigated by Accident Investigation Unit detectives. Fire personnel will also provide the names of all persons treated or transported by them, as well as the call number of the EMS unit that provided treatment or transportation, and the name of the facility to which the victims were transported.

V. Bomb Scene

Police and fire personnel at a bomb scene will confer at the field command post, staging area, or evacuation area to coordinate their response.

A. Police Communications Center Personnel

1. Upon receiving information that an explosive device may be located in a motor vehicle:
 - a. Dispatch a patrol sergeant and an officer to the scene.
 - b. Notify the fire alarm office and ask the Division of Fire to alert its bomb squad.
2. Upon receiving information that a suspected explosive device has actually been found at any location:
 - a. Dispatch a patrol sergeant and an officer to the scene.
 - b. Notify the fire alarm office and request that the Division of Fire's bomb squad respond.
3. Upon receiving information about a bomb threat, dispatch a patrol sergeant and an officer to the scene.

B. Police Personnel Responding to the Scene

1. Do not operate, or allow to be operated, electronic devices within 300 feet of the scene. Such devices include, but are not limited to, radios, walkie-talkies, **MDCs**, pagers, and cellular telephones. Any device that sends or receives a signal could trigger an electronic detonation device.
2. Secure the target area.
3. Advise communications center personnel to notify the Division of Fire of hazardous materials or military equipment known to be present at the scene.
4. Leave the decision to evacuate a school or other building to the manager, supervisor, or owner of the facility. However, in an evacuation, assist in moving occupants to an area of safety.
5. Leave the search of a motor vehicle to the bomb squad. Otherwise, conduct a search for suspicious packages or devices only in areas accessible to the public.
 - a. Ask employees or residents who are familiar with the premises to help conduct the search, particularly in areas not accessible to the public.
 - b. If it is necessary to search a school that has not been evacuated, request that school employees help conduct the search. Should they refuse, the responding sergeant is to notify the **School Investigative Unit** and request assistance with the search.
 - c. If the location of the bomb is not given, begin by searching a building's exterior and work inward, from the bottom to the top.
 - d. Advise persons responsible for the premises to leave windows and doors open to minimize potential structural damage.
6. If a bomb threat was made, but no explosive device is found, complete an **incident** report.
7. If a suspected explosive device is found:
 - a. Do not touch or move the device.
 - b. Evacuate the area.
 - c. Notify the Division of Fire and turn over operational control of the scene to fire personnel until the device is defused.
 - d. Notify the **Strategic Response Bureau, Criminal Information Unit. If there appears to be a terrorist connection, also advise the Terrorism Early Warning (TEW) Unit.**
 - e. Establish a safety perimeter of at least 300 feet in all directions, with cover of sturdy stone, concrete, or earthen materials.
 - f. Keep all persons out of the line of sight of the explosive device, away from glass and other flying debris that could be propelled by an explosion.

- g. Provide support services, e.g., traffic control, crowd control, or evacuation, as needed and requested by the Division of Fire.
 - h. Complete **an** incident **report**.
 - i. Leave explosive materials in the custody of the arson investigators or bomb squad. Do not take explosives to the Property Control Unit.
8. If there is an explosion that results in a fire or medical emergency:
- a. Obtain medical assistance for injured persons, and render first aid when possible until appropriate assistance arrives.
 - b. Notify the Division of Fire and turn operational control of the scene over to fire personnel until the fire is extinguished or the medical emergency is stabilized.
 - c. Notify the **Strategic Response Bureau, Criminal Information Unit**.
 - d. Establish a safety perimeter of at least one-half mile in all directions, or as requested by the Division of Fire.
 - e. Secure the crime scene and guard it until relieved by a supervisor or the investigator in charge.
 - f. Provide support services, e.g., assisting in the search for a secondary explosive device, as needed and requested by the Division of Fire.
 - g. Complete an **incident** report.
9. With the exception of arson (when no other crime is involved), the subsequent criminal investigation of the incident will be under the control of the Division of Police in cooperation with the Division of Fire and any other agency that has jurisdiction. Arson investigation (when no other crime is involved) will be the responsibility of the Division of Fire with the cooperation of the Division of Police.

C. Fire Personnel

1. Fire personnel will only be dispatched to a bomb call:
 - a. If a suspected explosive device is found;
 - b. If a suspected explosive device is found in, or reported to be in, a motor vehicle; or
 - c. If there is an explosion, fire, or medical emergency.
2. The Division of Fire bomb squad will make every effort to render explosive devices safe.
3. If a suspected explosive device is found, or if there is an explosion, the Division of Fire will assume operational control of the scene until the device is defused, the fire is extinguished, or the medical emergency is stabilized.
4. The Division of Fire will be responsible for the investigation of arson when no other crime is apparent.

5. If the incident involves a crime other than arson, e.g., homicide, the Division of Fire will cooperate with the Division of Police and any other agency with jurisdiction during any subsequent criminal investigation of the incident.

VI. Drowning Scenes

A. There are three types of drowning scenes:

1. Rescue scenes at which there is a possibility, no matter how slight, that the victim's life can be saved. Rescue scenes are under the operational control of the Division of Fire.
2. Recovery scenes that exist when there is obviously no possibility that the victim's life can be saved. Recovery scenes are under the operational control of the Division of Police.
3. Undetermined scenes, at which the type of scene is not readily apparent, which will be considered rescue scenes under the operational control of the Division of Fire.

B. Police Personnel

1. Upon notification of a possible drowning, the police radio room will notify the fire alarm office so that appropriate rescue equipment can be dispatched.
2. Assume operational control of recovery scenes.
3. Obtain the approval of a deputy chief for a recovery attempt under ice.
4. Provide support services to the Division of Fire at rescue scenes.

C. Fire Personnel

1. Upon notification of a possible drowning through a source other than the Division of Police, notify the police communications center.
2. Assume operational control of rescue scenes.
3. Provide support services to the Division of Police at recovery scenes.

VII. Potential Suicide by Jumping

Upon receiving a report of a potential suicide by jumping, the police radio room will notify the fire alarm office for informational purposes.

A. Police Personnel

Assume operational control of the scene, following established police procedure.

B. Fire Personnel

1. EMS personnel should respond to a location close to, but not in sight of the scene and stand by at that location until advised that the victim is in need of emergency medical treatment or that the risk of harm to the victim no longer exists.
2. Fire personnel will provide support services as requested by police.

VIII. Forced Entry

It often becomes necessary for members of the Division of Police or the Division of Fire to force entry into a structure so that they can carry out their duties. Occasionally, members of one division depend on members of the other to assist in these situations. When such assistance is requested it will be given.

- A. Police personnel can assist fire personnel at forced entry situations by:
 - 1. Responding prior to the actual entry to provide security for fire fighters.
 - 2. Taking custody of valuable items left unsecured by the forced entry and placing them in the Property **Control Unit**.
 - 3. Completing an **incident** report if the circumstances dictate.
- B. Fire personnel can assist police personnel at forced entry situations by:
 - 1. Providing equipment, e.g., ladders, at scenes where use of the equipment will minimize or prevent damage to the structure into which entry must be forced. However, fire personnel will not force entry, place ladders, etc. if a criminal suspect is believed to be in the structure.
 - 2. Securing the structure with plastic, or any other material that is available, so that the structure into which entry was forced will be left as secure as possible.

IX. SWAT Response

The Division of Police SWAT Section and the Division of Fire have worked out procedures for a "SWAT response." The SWAT response will be initiated by the SWAT Section when a SWAT mission carries a high potential for violence and lifesaving medical attention might be immediately needed, e.g., dynamic entries or hostage/barricade situations.

The involvement of fire personnel in a SWAT response, or for that matter any situation involving the Division of Police, will be confined to the established mission of the Division of Fire.