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Derby Fire Department
Standard Operating Procedure Number 04
Firefighter Accountability

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The primary purpose of this procedure is to improve the chance of survival should a firefighter become lost, trapped, or otherwise incapacitated while operating at the scene of a fire or other major emergency. This procedure also serves to address the requirements of NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs, and NFPA 1982, Standard on Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS).

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Derby Fire Department recognizes the need and importance for maintaining a system for on-site firefighter accountability. The system must be effective not only for identifying individual members on-scene, but must also be capable of defining specific areas within the incident lines where members are operating as crews.
- 2.2. An effective accountability system will provide for the individual safety of every firefighter while providing the Incident Commander (IC) with a method to accurately track and account for all crews working at a particular incident.
- 2.3. The Derby Fire Department accountability system has been built around the Grace Employee Monitoring (GEM) system consisting of independent monitoring receivers and individual Transmitting Personal Alert Safety System (TPASS) devices. This system effectively establishes automatic accountability superior in performance and dependability when compared to traditional (manual) tagging systems. In addition to accountability, the system will help insure the consistent use of PASS devices as required by NFPA 1982.
- 2.4. The success of the overall system will require the personal commitment of every member, officer and chief of the Derby Fire Department. Freelancing by any individual member or crew, or failure to adhere to this accountability procedure cannot, and will not, be tolerated at any incident to which the Derby Fire Department responds.

3. Equipment

- 3.1. At a minimum, TPASS devices will be made available to all Certified Interior/Structural Firefighters. Drivers and other Non-Interior Firefighters will be issued TPASS devices on a prioritized basis when additional units are available.
- 3.2. Monitoring (GEM) Receivers will be distributed throughout the city and carried on designated apparatus. Dispatch procedures will be established and maintained to insure that at least one receiver is present and active at any incident requiring implementation of this accountability procedure.
- 3.3. At least one member of each operating crew, preferably a company officer, must have access to a working, portable two-way radio at all times. The GEM system does not eliminate the need for 2-way radio communications.

4. Operation

- 4.1. Upon arrival at the scene of the incident, and prior to entering any Restricted Zone, firefighters will activate their TPASS by removing the activation key. The driver of the apparatus to which a GEM receiver has been assigned will turn on the receiver upon arrival.
- 4.2. Restricted Zone will be defined as any area at an incident which requires SCBA, full turnout gear, charged line, special protective gear, exposure to heights, confined spaces, exposure to hazardous materials, or where a firefighter is otherwise at risk of becoming lost, trapped or injured by the environment or structure, including collapse zones.
- 4.3. No firefighter will be permitted access to the Restricted Zone without a properly secured and operating TPASS device. If a Certified Interior Structural Firefighter does not have the TPASS with him/her, or the assigned TPASS is not operational, then that firefighter may use one of the spares positioned on designated apparatus. The device will be removed from the storage board and the firefighter will print their name in the space provided. The device will then be secured and activated prior to entry into the restricted area.
- 4.4. Members will organize in appropriate crew sizes of not less than two (2) for the purpose of completing a tactical objective as outlined in the Derby Fire Department SOPs for Engine, Rescue and Truck Company Operations.
- 4.5. Company Officers will act as leaders of crews operating as outlined above. Information must be relayed in an efficient, practical manner via the chain of command of the Incident Command System to the IC for every crew operating in the restricted area. The number of personnel, approximate area of operation, and tactical objectives must be known by the IC. Any changes of the parameters,

including completion or failure to complete the tactical objective must be relayed to the IC. Each crew in the restricted area must operate with at least one two-way radio known to be fully operational prior to entry. The intent is not to hinder the crew's operation or require a continuous report of progress, only to make certain everyone's accountability is preserved. In the absence of a company officer in a crew, the senior member of that crew will assume the role of company officer.

- 4.6. At major incidents, the IC will assign a Safety Officer or assistant who will assume responsibility, among other duties, for overseeing the accountability system. Fire fighters in the restricted area without a TPASS will be removed for the duration of the incident and reported to the IC for disciplinary action. Firefighters who are on scene with their TPASS device not turned on will be notified by radio and/or crew officer to activate the device.
- 4.7. The accountability system will remain in effect for the duration of the incident until all hazards associated with the restricted zone have been mitigated and/or secured. TPASS devices will be reset and GEM receivers powered down only upon direction of the IC.

5. Emergency Procedures

- 5.1. Upon TPASS activation, the Safety Officer (or other individual monitoring the receiver) will notify IC immediately using the following language: "Clear the air for emergency traffic – Unit # *FDID* to IC, TPASS alert from firefighter(s): *list name(s)*".
- 5.2. IC will then acknowledge the transmission and call for radio silence. All non-essential fire ground operations will cease and noise levels reduced as much as practical to locate the sounding TPASS device. IC will initiate all radio communications and all other personnel will respond only when called/directed by the IC. The IC will contact the appropriate officers to ascertain the location or status of the firefighter whose TPASS has activated. If the activation is confirmed to be accidental, then the Safety Officer (or individual monitoring the receiver) will reset the alarm for that specific individual, but only once a visual confirmation has been made.
- 5.3. If a member can not be immediately located the IC will send the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) to the last known working area of the member. Simultaneously with this action, the IC must make a determination if adjustment of strategic objectives for the incident is needed, and at a minimum set the tactical objective for the search and rescue.

6. System Administration and Maintenance

6.1. Responsibilities for administration and maintenance of the GEM system will fall to individual TPASS users, Company Coordinators, and the Department Coordinator as follows:

- 6.1.1. **Users** – are responsible for reading and understanding all instructions provided on the operation and maintenance of the TPASS device and for following the directions of the Company Coordinator. Users are responsible for insuring that the TPASS is properly fastened and operational before entering any restricted area. Any problems with the unit should be reported immediately to the Company Coordinator and the unit taken out of service. Users will not exchange TPASS units, or borrow TPASS units from another firefighter, as the units must be individually programmed to the specific user.
- 6.1.2. **Company Coordinators** – are responsible for insuring that regular inspection and testing is performed on all TPASS units assigned to members of their company as well as for the training of all new members on the care, use and limitations of these devices. This will include monthly testing of GEM receivers (if one has been assigned to that company). Any problems will be documented and reported to the Department Coordinator. Defective units will be given to the Department Coordinator who will coordinate service activities and provide a replacement (when available).
- 6.1.3. **The Department Coordinator** – is responsible for the coordination of the department wide system. This individual will insure the regular inspection, testing and maintenance of the GEM system and will coordinate all necessary repairs, maintenance and upgrades with the manufacturer. The Department Coordinator will have responsibility for maintaining the user database and insuring that data downloads are coordinated among all GEM receivers. No TPASS will be assigned or transferred without the knowledge and approval of the Department Coordinator. The Department Coordinator will also be responsible for preparing an annual budget necessary to maintain and/or upgrade the system.