

SUBJECT: RAPID ASSISTANCE TEAM(S)**SECTION:** 306.06**REVISED:** AUGUST 14, 2009; MARCH 3, 2008**PAGE(S):** 6

PURPOSE

To establish procedures outlining the operations of a Rapid Assistance Team (RAT) at an emergency scene. The goal of this procedure is to establish a proactive Rapid Assistance Team at each emergency scene with the intent of removing barriers to facilitate firefighter self-rescues; if deemed necessary, to locate and provide breathing air to any firefighter needing assistances, and; if deemed necessary, to initiate immediate rescue assistance to any firefighter(s).

It is the intent of the Reading Fire Department to train all members engaged in structural firefighting, to identify dangerous fireground conditions/operations and the ability to proactively perform basic RAT operations and rescue operations.

REFERENCE

1. *Hamilton County Fire Chiefs' Association, Model SOG for Rapid Assistance Teams; revised February 1, 2008.*
2. *Ohio Administrative Code – Chapter 4123:1-21 Fire Fighting*

RESPONSIBILITY

- I. It shall be the responsibility of all department officers to implement this operating guideline.
- II. It shall be the responsibility of all department officers to train members in the application of this guideline.
- III. It shall be the responsibility of each member to know, understand and use this guideline as it applies to the situation at hand. Each member will use good judgement in the use of this guideline.
- IV. The RAT Company is responsible to operate within the incident command structure, reporting to the Incident Commander (or as otherwise directed).

POLICY

- I. On all working incidents, at least one RAPID ASSISTANCE TEAM (RAT) shall be maintained by the Incident Commander. This will include all incidents where an interior fire attack is made or whenever an operation places crews in the hazard zone.

- A. The Hamilton County Communications Center CAD shall include an assigned RAT company for all *23S Structure Fire* dispatches.
 - B. In the "initial stages" of an incident, at least two members shall remain outside the hazard zone and be responsible for maintaining a constant awareness of the number, location, function, time of entry, and identity of the members operating inside the hazard zone (two in – two out). There is an exception for this when an imminent life-threatening situation presents upon arrival, where immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury.
 - 1. The "initial stages" refers to the tasks undertaken by the first arriving fire company with only one team operating in the hazard zone.
 - 2. The standby members shall be permitted to perform other functions such as pump operator or incident commander.
 - 3. The standby members shall have a complete set of protective clothing, including SCBA.
 - 4. The standby members shall be permitted to perform rescue of the one operating crew if it becomes necessary.
 - a. If the standby members perform a rescue, the Dispatcher shall be notified and the incoming companies notified of the same.
 - C. Once the second crew is assigned or operating in the hazard zone, the incident is no longer considered to be in the "initial stages" and at least one RAT should be established.
- II. A RAPID ASSISTANCE TEAM shall consist of a minimum three (3) trained members (preferably an engine or truck company) and shall be available for rescue of a member or a crew if the need arises. If not assigned at dispatch, the Incident Commander should notify the arriving company to be assigned to RAT as soon as possible. The assigned crew shall be equipped with the appropriate protective clothing, SCBA, portable radio(s), handlights, hand tools, and specialized equipment that might be needed given the specifics of the operation underway. (Example of equipment in the appendix of this guideline.)
- A. The assigned RAT shall report to the Incident Commander and familiarize themselves with the incident action plan, current strategies/tactics, assure that accountability is established, and locations of operating companies.

1. The RAT should remain in close proximity to the Incident Command, assisting with monitoring operating channels (urgent or MAYDAY messages), monitoring status changes in strategies/tactics, operating modes, and company assignments. Incident Command may shift staging of the RAT to an Operation Officer's position.
2. Once on the scene, perform a 360° size-up of the building, occupancy, and location and extent of the fire. The RAT Company Officer should use the *RAT Company Checklist*. Any findings of the size-up shall be reported to the Incident Commander.
3. The RAT, particularly in small buildings, can be used to open up additional escape routes/ laddering upper floors, removing access obstructions, to prevent firefighters from becoming entrapped. *Glass in windows shall not always be considered a barrier preventing firefighter escape.* If employed in this manner, the RAT must still remain intact, ready to respond to an emergency.
4. When firefighters are operating above ground level, portable or aerial ladders should be placed to upper story windows or roofs. These ladders are to provide multiple escape routes interior or roof operations become untenable. The following priorities should be considered by the RAT company when placing ladders:
 - a. Roof
 - b. Fire area near the point of firefighter entry
 - c. Area above the fire
 - d. Fire area opposite the point of firefighter entry
5. Members of the RAT Company must maintain a “ready” state at all times to facilitate a rapid response if necessary. Avoid involvement in other fire ground duties, not included as a proactive measure, unless directly reassigned by the Incident Commander or Operations.
6. Companies assigned to the RAT can be rotated through in increments of 30-45 minutes to avoid fatigue of the company. Proper exchange of information to the newly assigned RAT is crucial. It is recommended that a Division/Group Officer be assigned for Rapid Intervention, assuring continuity of valuable information.

7. The RAT should remain intact at least until "Under Control/Loss Stopped" is reported. The Incident Commander should determine when a RAT is no longer needed: firefighters are no longer at risk.
 8. The Incident Commander may exercise reassignment of any responding companies based on arrival sequence and incident conditions, but must immediately make arrangements to replace any reassigned RAT companies. Additional companies must be dispatched to maintain adequate resources on the fireground.
- B. On multiple alarms and complex incidents, more than one RAPID ASSISTANCE TEAM may be needed. The Incident Commander must maintain as many RATs as is determined to be necessary. Multiple entry points separated by long distances may also indicate the need for multiple RATs.
1. When multiple RAT teams are assigned, an additional geographic identifier should be attached.
 2. The Incident Commander should create a "RAT Group", assigning an officer to manage the function of RAT.
 3. On any incident where a RAT is assigned, the Incident Commander should also assign an ALS unit to standby for medical assistance.
- C. Specific priorities to consider when a "MAYDAY" is declared.
1. Incident Commander
 - a. Shall request/maintain additional resources in a staging area and assure a Staging Officer has been assigned.
 - b. Shall notify the Communications Center of the MAYDAY and seek assistance in monitoring the talk group on which the MAYDAY originated.
 - c. Shall appoint a RAT Group Officer to manage the rescue operations and coordinate RAT Companies if not already assigned.
 - d. Shall direct all fire suppression companies operating on the scene to the alternate fire ground channel assigned (MAYDAY Talk Group); the distressed firefighter(s) shall remain on the original fire ground channel.
 - e. Shall have the Accountability Officer conduct a PAR on the MAYDAY Talk Group to determine who and how many firefighters are in need of assistance.

- f. Shall continue to direct the suppression operations, to the extent safely possible; thus making the structure more tenable for rescue operations. (*The IC must focus attention of controlling the fire and allow the RAT Group Officer to manage the rescue effort*).
2. RAT Group Officer
 - a. Shall report directly to the Incident Commander
 - b. Shall communicate directly with the downed firefighter(s) on the fire ground talk group on which the MAYDAY originated.
 - c. Shall direct the rescue effort of the RAT Companies assigned from the exterior of the structure or a forward command location in the event of a high-rise or large structure.
 - d. May assemble RAT Assist Teams to assist with the rescue efforts. This may entail laying additional hose lines to protect the RAT Companies and/or victim(s). If a victim is entrapped, a protective hoseline should be positioned.
 - e. Shall maintain accountability for all RAT Company members deployed into the structure.
 - f. Radio designations shall be "RAT Group Officer".
 3. Rapid Assistance Team (RAT)
 - a. Upon declaration of a MAYDAY, shall report/communicate immediately to the Incident Commander to determine last known location of distressed firefighter(s) and retrieve RAT pack.
 - b. Determine the best location for making entry to search for distressed firefighter(s).
 - c. Shall perform a rapid search of the structure with emphasis on the distressed firefighter's last known location.
 - d. The use of a tag line while conducting a search is highly recommended.
 - e. Upon locating the distressed firefighter(s), shall immediately report to the RAT Group Officer the location, identity, and condition of the firefighter(s), as well as, any necessary support/equipment needed to assist with rescue.
 - f. The RAT Company shall immediately assess the distressed personnel and assure adequate breathing air is made available.
 - g. If no extrication is involved, the RAT Company shall facilitate the removal of the firefighter from the hazard area.

- h. If extrication is required, the RAT Company shall determine the most efficient access to the distressed firefighter, communicate this information to the RAT Group Officer, and deploy the RAT rope to the exterior of the structure. *The RAT rope will signify the most direct route to the firefighter from the exterior of the structure.*
- i. The RAT Company Officer shall supervise the rescue effort from the interior, reporting to the RAT Group Officer.
- j. The RAT Company Officer shall maintain close supervision of the members working RAT and remain cognizant of their air supply and physical condition.

APPENDIX

The tools that should be considered (not limited to) by the Rapid Assistance Team as they step from the rig and report to the Incident Commander:

- Thermal Imaging Camera
- 200' search rope with direction travel markings
- Gasoline powered saw (metal cutting capability)
- Gasoline powered saw (wood cutting capability)
- Rescue SCBA (aka RAT Pack): face mask, strap/harness, minimum 12' quick fill hose with universal fittings, and a 60 minute rated air cylinder
- Rescue rope and hardware (min 100' of 9mm (or larger) rescue rope and 4 carabineers)
- Wire cutters
- RAT ID tags/ bands (helmet or bottle)
- Four loops of tubular webbing
- Portable radio (each member equipped preferred)
- Set of irons (flat head axe and halligan tool)
- Sledge hammer
- Egress rope (equipped with RAT packs)
- EMS trauma shears
- Stokes/Reeves stretcher
- Ladders suitable for the building
- Laminated RAT Company Officer Check List