

Annex E - Fire and Rescue

PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to provide an overview of how fire protection services, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and search and rescue (SAR) operations in Houston County are coordinated. This annex is applicable to all agencies, organizations and personnel assigned these functional responsibilities.

The overall responsible parties for implementing and amending this annex are the fire departments and the Sheriff's Posse.

^[14]STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

Search and rescue operations in Houston County are a jointed effort of multiple response parties, including local fire departments, local law enforcement, local EMS, and the Sheriff's Posse (a volunteer organization under the Sheriff's Office). During an on-land search and rescue event, any and all of these organizations may be utilized to find missing persons and rescue persons who are trapped or injured. During a water search and rescue event, the Sheriff's Posse and mutual aid may resort to dragging the waterbed, searching by boat, or searching from the shoreline. The amount of response and the type of responders is dependent upon the type of event and the location of the missing persons.

Situation and Assumptions

Situation

Fire protection is provided in each municipality listed below:

- Brownsville Fire Department
- Caledonia Fire Department
- Hokah Fire Department
- Houston Fire Department
- La Crescent Fire Department
- Spring Grove Fire Department
- Eitzen Fire Department

All of the fire departments are staffed entirely by volunteers. The municipal fire departments are dispatched through the Sheriff's Dispatch Center.

^[11]Each municipal fire department is primarily responsible for fire suppression. The fire departments also provide for search and rescue activities, weather/storm watch, limited hazardous materials response (basic awareness level only), as well as assist the ambulance services as first responders.

Area fire departments are available to support fire and rescue operations in Houston County through the Region 1 Emergency Management Mutual Aid agreement.

Assumptions

- Existing fire and rescue personnel and equipment are adequate to deal with most incidents through existing mutual aid agreements.
- Fire protection, emergency medical services, and rescue operations are challenges faced daily by local fire departments and EMS. These activities become even more intense during emergency/ multi-hazard situations such as major hazardous materials incidents/ contaminated victims, flooding/ disease outbreak, widespread power outages/ loss of supporting critical infrastructure, etc.). Such occurrences may cause need for specialized emergency fire fighting, hazardous materials response, EMS, and rescue activities including provisions for extended mass care/ triage operations, and extensive decontamination operations.
- Situations could arise that would hinder fire fighting capabilities or overwhelm local resources. Outside assistance (federal, state, or other local governments) is available should the need arise.
- The fire and EMS departments will maintain the equipment and level of training necessary to perform the fire protection functions. A detailed listing of this equipment will be inserted in the Houston County Resource Manual.

Concept of Operations

The fire departments are comprised of organized, trained units of volunteer personnel serving in specific geographical areas known as fire districts. The primary focus of these departments is structural fires within their jurisdictions. Some fire departments also include personnel trained in other specialties such as storm spotting, search and rescue and dealing with hazardous material.

The primary task of the fire service is the protection of persons and property from the threat of fire. The primary task of the local EMS is to preserve life and to provide health support services while transporting injured residents to local hospitals for care.

Coordination of fire and rescue operations rests with the Incident Commander at the scene of the disaster within the affected area. If more than one locality or jurisdiction is affected, coordination is handled by the respective department or agencies' representative in the EOC or in a joint command as appropriate. The Sheriff's Posse will be available to be deployed for search and rescue activities on the water and on land.

The Emergency Management Director, as well as the local municipal fire/EMS department, will identify the facilities that store or use hazardous materials, including the materials and problems each could cause. They will also maintain a map locating all these facilities and a listing of the materials that may be held at the facility for their areas of responsibility. The Emergency Management Director will coordinate with local municipalities to compare information.

Mutual aid agreements will be utilized to insure the best possible protection for all residents.

Fire department personnel and equipment will be deployed to the location of greatest need in the event of an emergency. Priorities will be assigned by the Incident Commander, or the first person/highest ranking person on the scene.

The MN State Division of Natural Resources has the overall responsibility for the control and prevention of wild forest/ land fires in the County; however local fire departments provide mutual support in this endeavor.

[\[11\]](#)In addition to fire protection, the fire departments may be asked to:

- Assist with the dissemination of warnings
- Coordinate or assist with evacuations
- Coordinate or assist with search and rescue efforts
- Inform local officials of the risks associated with a hazardous material incident or accident
- Report status information through the incident command system/EOC
- Respond to hazardous materials incidents within the limits of their training
- Provide light and heavy rescue services
- Provide first responder/EMS services
- Provide SkyWarn spotters in the event of severe weather

Each fire department maintains a set of Standard Operating Guidelines specific to their department.

[National Incident Management System](#)

All firefighting, EMS, and rescue organizations supporting emergency operations in the county will coordinate their operational efforts through implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Fire Chiefs are responsible for the following:

- Maintain/develop Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) that address fire and rescue needs incorporating the National Incident Management System
- Determine if any specialized equipment or training is required to meet potential threats (such as hazardous materials situations) and either obtain or locate the source (i.e., protective respiratory devices, clothing, and equipment for personnel)
- When the EOC is activated, coordinate firefighting and fire department rescue operations with the EOC, and provide the EOC with timely operational updates and normal incident reports, as appropriate
- Develop and maintain written mutual aid agreements, as necessary. Maintain aid agreements with area fire departments, private resources, etc., that can support fire suppression and other fire duties
- Provide mutual aid assistance as requested

- Support public warning and evacuation of the public within threatened or contaminated areas
- Subsequent to a local disaster, provide damage assessment operations support personnel to assist in developing an overview of property damage within the County
- Prepare or assist in the preparation of plans and SOPs in support of county operations in conjunction with other Fire Departments and provide for coordination with other emergency services (e.g., EMS, law enforcement, hospital, etc.) including private support groups
- Provide continuous training for fire and rescue personnel
- Maintain personnel call-up lists and the means to implement them
- Assist in the dissemination of warning to the public (provide weather spotting, mobile public address systems, etc.)
- Provide fire protection for critical/special facilities (i.e. EOC, public shelters, etc.)
- Integrate personnel into the incident command system and report the to incident commander if services are requested
- Conduct search and rescue operations for victims as directed by the Incident Commander
- Assist in the development and maintenance of a viable inter-operable county fire communications system
- Assist ambulance service as first responders
- Participate in the after action review of operations to an incident
- Maintain a listing of Tier II hazardous facilities including a map and listing of potential hazardous materials

EMS departments will:

- Provide on scene triage, medical stabilization and transportation of victims
- Develop and implement protocols for EMS requirements for emergency operations to include mass casualty/ triage operations, patient evacuation support, and medical transport
- Prepare or assist in the preparation of plans and SOPs in support of county operations in conjunction with other EMS and provide for coordination with other emergency services (e.g., fire, law enforcement, hospital, etc.) including private support groups
- Develop and maintain mutual aid agreements, as required
- Coordinate EMS activities for public warning, notification and evacuation operations (e.g., route/ door-to-door alerting), as directed by the Incident Commander
- Be prepared to conduct decontamination of contaminated patients, if required
- Assist the County Public Health Director with distribution the Strategic National Stockpile Federal medicine, if necessary
- Assist the County Public Health Director with operating the County's mass medication sites, if required

- Assist in informing all first responder and support personnel to known dangers associated with technological hazards (e.g., HAZMAT, radiological incidents, etc.) during emergency operations
- Advise the IC on the medical dangers associated with hazardous materials
- Assist in the recommendation of protective clothing/ equipment to support assigned tasks of EMS activities
- Assist in providing training of EMS personnel relative to the proper recording and maintenance of exposure/ decontamination records
- Review, approve, and participate in the education of EMS personnel to include mass casualty, and MCI management
- Participate in the after-action review of EMS operations to an incident

Sheriff's Posse will:

- Assist in Search and Rescue activities in the county
- Assist surrounding jurisdictions in Search and Rescue activities including water jurisdiction

On-scene operations will be controlled by the Incident Commander. The incident command system will be used as appropriate. Outside fire and rescue resources from other jurisdictions will be controlled by the procedures outlined in mutual aid agreements. They will remain under the control of the Incident Commander.

The IC will:

- Establish an ICP and control and direct emergency response resources
- Assess the incident, request any additional resources needed from, and provide periodic updates to the EOC, if activated
- Determine and implement initial protective actions for emergency responders and the public near the incident site
- Establish a specific division of responsibilities between the incident command operation and the EOC, if activated

Law Enforcement will:

- Upon request of the IC, provide traffic control and perimeter control at incident scenes, including hazmat spills, major fires and explosions, and other types of incidents

County Emergency Management Director will:

- Assist all organizations supporting this annex in the County, and the surrounding municipalities, in obtaining required outside assistance and resources, as necessary
- Maintain a listing of Tier II Hazardous facilities including a map and listing of potential hazardous materials

ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

Procedures for dealing with expenses incurred and liability for actions and injuries are contained in mutual aid agreements, state laws, and local ordinances.

After-action reports will be prepared which will include: actions taken, materials expended, personnel costs, assistance received from and given to other agencies, and problem areas to include corrective measures.

A periodic review will be conducted of this annex in accordance with the basic plan. The revision process will include incorporation of changes based upon periodic tests, drills and exercises, as appropriate.

All organizations that support this annex will develop and maintain their own organization's updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and mutual aid agreements, as appropriate, that are supportive of this annex. This information will be coordinated with and provided to the Emergency Management Director, as necessary.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Training to and exercise of individual organization's SOPs that support this annex are the responsibility of each respective organization.

AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

None

Appendix A: Fire & EMS District Maps

