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Standard Operating Guidelines

SOG NO.: KP-2-0025
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Purpose: To identify critical components to help prepare for and manage incidents in large area (non high-rise structures).

We are fortunate to be in a business hub which assists the community's ability to thrive. This situation also provides major challenges to emergency services. The construction of large area structures is an integral part of this demand. We have four "mega structures"; THE PLAZA, THE COURT, LOCKHEED MARTIN BUILDING 100, and the VALLEY FORGE CONVENTION PLAZA, to deal with as mega structures. Home Depot, Levitz, Costco, Philadelphia Gear, SKF Ball Bearing and Confab are "large area structures", with similar issues, to also be concerned with. These structures, because of their sheer size warrant special considerations when incidents occur. In the past, we have experienced bomb threats, hazardous materials incidents, mass casualty situations, and fires at these facilities. The probability of a situation is low, but the severity potential is high in these structures.

The reality is, that we respond to these facilities for alarms and similar non-events. We cannot be lulled into a false incident response pattern and must be prepared through emergency planning and training.

There are four major concerns regarding mega- or large area structures:

1. Size and Construction:

These facilities are bigger, have multiple levels, multiple access points, multiple/mixed construction techniques, varied/questionable security team response capabilities, unique architectural features, and most significantly, multiple occupancies. It is easy to encounter multiple false ceilings, partitions, facades, gaps in sprinkler protection, trash storage and

temporary features (e.g. seasonal displays in stores). These all present challenges to the fire service and require knowledge, planning, and training.

2. Occupancy:

Mega structures bring varied occupancies. It is highly probable that in any of our mega or large area structures, that we encounter all of the following hazards contributing to fire loading and resultant smoke development, fire extension, evacuation, and containment potentials.

This collection of commodities includes:

- food stuffs
- clothing
- walk-in coolers and similar man traps
- beauty aids, florists, drugs
- paper, plastics, aerosols, and paints
- cleaners, degreasers, solvents
- seasonals (charcoal, lighter fluids, fireworks)

In addition, time of day or special events will bring people and evacuation/equipment movement problems.

3. Protection:

Most of these properties have monitored fire detection and suppression equipment, and full-time security. In either case, special attention needs to be given to the area of activation, as it will aid in your decisions of apparatus and manpower staging locations and officer's response points. In the case of the King of Prussia Plaza, one officer responding **MUST** respond to the fire control room. Internal fixed suppression systems should be considered the **PRIMARY FIRE ATTACK METHOD** in these structures and supported first, before manual fire-fighting takes place.

4. Exposures:

When an incident occurs, there are primarily internal exposures to be concerned with. However, if the incident is significant, the following may need to be contacted to respond:

- Health Department/Food and Drug Administration
 - * food stuffs, sanitary products, etc.
- Department of Environmental Resources/Fish Commission
 - * air or water contamination
- Utilities
 - * shut-off assistance

- Alarm Company
 - * monitoring issues, service cut-off or resumption, system analysis
- Business Owner/Operator
 - * access, information, securing of structure/space
- News Media
 - * pre-prepare information for release.

The command post needs to be identified as the control point for all information dissemination and contact location when support units/mutual aid companies arrive.

Goal: The goal in structures such as this is to use knowledge, fixed systems and manual efforts to keep the incident small.

The King of Prussia Fire Company Strategic Guidelines for Officers and the Incident Command System are the basic processes we should apply to incidents in these type facilities.

In addition, the following items warrant second/priority consideration:

- Determine needs, per alarm response
- Water Supply
- Collapse potential
- Master stream points within and outside the structure
- Interior large and small diameter hose lay requirements
- Aerial observation Points
- Sectoring/Incident Command System
- Communication/Radio system limitations
- Line layout/access
- Smoke removal/movement systems
- Control of stairways and elevators
- Ventilation
- Automatic Sprinkler system backup
- Extension of exposures

References:

" On the Job ... Pennsylvania", Firehouse, March 1995, pgs. 46-48, 50, 52, 54

"IRI Sentinel", 1st Quarter, 1995.