

# Training bulletin #35

APRIL 1980

## OVERHAUL PROCEDURES

Gradual changes in the Department's overhaul policy have evolved in recent years. These changes have been communicated to members verbally, but have not been stated in writing. Recent experience indicates the need to update and clarify the official Department overhaul policy.

The main objectives of overhaul are:

- I. To insure that the fire is out and not subject to rekindle and that the building or other areas being overhauled are safe for occupancy if released to the owner without restriction.
2. To determine the most probable fire cause.
3. To minimize further damage to the building and/or materials that were involved.
4. To leave insurance adjusters a means to determine the fire loss. This results in a more equitably settlement for fire victims.
5. To provide for security of the premises before leaving the scene. The fire scene should be secured against rekindle, unlawful entry and other unauthorized acts.

There are a variety of ways to accomplish the above objectives. The method chosen will depend on the extent of the fire, the materials involved, the structural stability of the building and other factors that the officer in charge considers pertinent.

Following knock-down of the fire, the Incident Commander shall survey the premises prior to the start of the overhaul phase of the incident. The reasons for the survey are; to determine fire cause, to determine the nature and extent of the overhaul, to obtain pertinent information for developing the "overhaul" strategy with the affected officers, to develop and train subordinate officers in the planning of the "overhaul" strategy, to assure that all levels of command are aware of unsafe conditions and to review safety procedures to be followed.

The "overhaul" strategy meeting is the time to be used by the Incident Commander to delegate to the subordinate officer(s) the responsibility for completion of specific "overhaul" tasks. During this meeting, the firefighters may be permitted to take a rest period. An officer and/or other member(s) shall be designated to watch over the fire area. Charged hose lines shall be maintained in position until it can be definitely determined that the potential for flashover or rekindle no longer exists. Officers at each level of command are to ensure that personnel are closely supervised and that department safety procedures are enforced. Company unity shall be maintained during all phases of the incident. While attempting to determine the origin of the fire from the fire indicators present it must not be forgotten that the observations of the Company Officers and the firefighters during the initial phase of firefighting should be solicited as this often provides valuable information. Physical evidence at or around the suspected point of origin should not be disturbed except for what is absolutely necessary to confine and extinguish the fire. The Incident Commander shall determine if there is a need to request an Arson Unit. The Incident Commander shall determine at what point the emergency is to be officially declared abated and issue the order to "shut-down" and "pick-up."

In developing overhaul plans, the Incident Commander will consider the need for special equipment, structural stability, safety of personnel, the number of Firefighters or companies necessary to accomplish overhaul, and any other item, determined to be pertinent to the specific type of overhaul problems encountered during the inspection tour of the premises.

Debris from overhaul should normally be located on the fire property. At this time, the area for deposit of fire debris should be determined. If conditions are favorable, i.e., distances are not excessive, no disruption of vehicular traffic, etc., overhaul piles may be located on a public way. Street Maintenance should be contacted for cleanup of overhaul piles left on public ways.

The Incident Commander should develop the organizational needs at this time. The Incident Commander will then put the organization into effect and instruct the personnel to whom the responsibility has been delegated for achieving the objectives.

When feasible, the Incident Commander will confer with O.C.D. as to the types of companies needed. The Incident Commander will advise them as to the actual needs, i.e., two-truck companies, two engine companies, etc. This will allow them greater flexibility in determining specific companies to send while maintaining an optimum level of fire protection in the City. The Incident Commander should also make overhaul companies available when possible.

The extent of overhaul can range from a simple sorting of materials in the fire area and separating burned from unburned, to extensive use of heavy stream appliances and continuous wetting down of total-loss fires until the area is secured. Normal procedure followed in the typical small fire is to confine the overhaul to the room or area in which the fire occurred. Overhaul will consist of separating burned from unburned material and leaving intact as much of the fire area as possible. This will give the occupant the opportunity to continue the separation process after we leave and may result in salvaging sentimental items or other valuables that would not be recognized by firefighters.

Larger fires require special planning. The number one priority when planning any overhaul is safety of personnel. If structural integrity is in doubt, a fire watch should be established and firefighters should not be allowed to enter the area.

Ordinarily, Department tractors and skidloaders will not be used for overhauls. In fires with extensive stock and/or building damage, it will suffice to effect a knock-down and continue to wet down the area. A fire watch should then be established until the building can be released to the responsible person.