

Code of Conduct

1) Overview

- a) The Strike Team/Task Force Leader must have the capability and experience for managing, coordinating, and directing the actions of fire companies at a wide variety of emergency situations. This includes maintaining all required records, attending appropriate briefings and meetings and ensuring the logistical needs of all personnel are met during the entire activation of the strike team/task force.
- b) Firefighter safety is the most important consideration on every assignment. Assuring that every firefighter returns home safely is the job of every member on the Strike Team/Task Force and especially the Strike Team/Task Force Leader.
- c) To this end the only time it is acceptable to stay in or assign resources to an unsafe, uncertain or marginal situation is to protect the lives of citizens. It can be simply put in these terms:
 - i) Risk a lot in a calculated manner to save savable lives.
 - ii) Risk a little in a calculated manner to save savable property.
 - iii) Risk nothing to save property or lives that are certain to be or already are lost.

2) Code of Conduct – General (Duration of the Incident)

- a) Personnel should at all times conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the expectations and philosophies of their agency and the Sonoma County Fire Chiefs.
- b) The image of each individual agency as well as the Sonoma County Fire Services are of the utmost importance and are second only to maintaining the readiness of the Strike Team/Task Force and safety of its personnel.
- c) Personnel are considered paid from portal to portal and therefore considered "on duty" from the time of dispatch and until they return to quarters.
- d) All individual Department/District policies apply from the time the personnel leave the station until they return to quarters.
- e) No alcohol or drugs will be transported or consumed at any time.
- f) Avoid discussing information relating to victims (patients) or specifics about the incident with the media. These requests should be referred to the incident Information Officer.
- g) Treat all members of the public, subordinates and supervisors with respect.

- h) All non-consumable equipment issued at the incident or provided on the line must be returned before demobilization.
- i) Keep the Strike Team/Task Force together at all times unless it is essential to manage the logistical needs of the individual engine companies.
- j) At no time during the assignment should personnel be in civilian clothing unless that clothing is part of the agencies regular duty uniform.
- k) The Strike Team/Task Force should maintain a "State of Readiness" at all times, from the time they leave their station until they return to quarters.
- l) Strike Team/Task Force Leaders will not take a field assignment that will leave the Trainee in charge of the Strike Team/Task Force.

3) Code of Conduct - Assigned Status (On Shift)

- a) Avoid the use of lawn chairs when in assigned status either on the line or while staged.
- b) During structure protection assignments, fire personnel may need to consider entering unoccupied and/or evacuated dwellings. The Strike Team/Task Force Leader must be considerate and respectful that they are entering private property and the need to do so should be seriously considered. The following guidelines must be enforced by Strike Team/Task Force Leaders with the crews working on these assignments:
 - i) The Strike Team/Task Force Leader must be given permission by the property owner to enter the structure. That permission and the owners contact information must be documented on the ICS 214 or;
 - ii) The dwelling is in imminent danger from the approaching fire and entry is warranted to conduct appropriate protective measures: i.e., closing windows, removing flammable curtains, closing doors, etc or;
 - iii) The crew must take refuge inside dwelling, as a survival zone, to retreat from the fire.
- c) Respect the property of the residents you are protecting, do not remove any personal belongs or remnants of personal property.
- d) All members are expected to work productively to complete the assignment regardless of the nature of the work.
- e) No member should accept any assignment that they are not qualified to perform.
 - i) Turning down and assignment, "turn down", due to the lack of necessary qualifications, safety or defective equipment issues should be in accordance with the latest version of the "How to Properly Refuse Risk" section of the in PMS #441, NFES #1077, Incident Response Pocket Guide .

- f) Strike Team/Task Force Leaders and Company Officers are expected to openly solicit input and listen to concerns and issues brought forth from their crews and to address those issues in an appropriate manner.

4) CONDUCT – Available Status (Off Shift)

- a) Personnel should not wear “Nomex PPE” (Yellows) when in “available” or “off shift” status.
- b) Personnel should wear their agencies duty uniform including shirt with badge, anytime while in public view while in “available” or “off shift” status.
- c) Personnel may wear their agencies duty uniform with logo T shirt while in base with permission of the Strike Team/Task Force Leader.
- d) Exceptions:
 - i) Personnel may be in their Department/District approved exercise uniform at a hotel for the purposes of relaxing at the facilities and in Base for the purposes of traveling to and from showers or during fitness activities as approved in this policy.
 - ii) Swimming suits are approved for use while at a hotel swimming pool.
 - iii) There are times in which the Strike Team/Task Force or individual engine company may be “available” or “off shift” in a remote area or “spike camp” and out of the public view. The Strike Team Leader/Engine Captain should use their best judgment in the appropriate uniform.
 - iv) The Sonoma County Fire Chiefs realize that not all agencies issue uniform shirts, pants and badges. For those agencies a uniform that meets the intent of this policy will be acceptable.
- e) Recreational activities are limited solely to the use of the swimming pool while in “available” or “off shift” status at a hotel.
- f) Fitness activities are limited to using the fitness equipment provided at the hotel or jogging in a one block radius of the hotel and only when communications with the Strike Team/Task Force Leader is maintained.
 - i) Other non-contact, non-competitive fitness activities will be allowed only if they are part of the agencies normal fitness program and the activity does not interfere with the Strike Team/Task Force readiness.
- g) With the permission of the Strike Team/Task Force Leader personnel, in duty uniform including shirt and badge may shop for supplies, dine at a restaurant or take care of logistical needs.
- h) All personnel will maintain a 1 hour readiness for reassignment purposes at all times.
- i) The Strike Team/Task Force Leader will assure that he/she is within contact of the Incident Base at all times.
- j) The Strike Team/Task Force leader will make every reasonable effort to keep the Strike Team/Task Force together at all times.

5) FEEDING

- a) Feeding out side of Base Camp is not reimbursable to the responding agency.
- b) Every effort will be made to feed personnel at the established Base Camp.
 - i) If personnel are fed at a location other than Base Camp reimbursement for the meal costs are up to their individual members unless their agency has approved otherwise.
 - ii) The Strike Team/Task Force Leader will take these issues into consideration when making a decision when feeding outside of Base Camp and make every effort to keep the Strike Team/Task Force together.

6) HOTELS

- a) Hotels may be provided by and paid for by the incident.
- b) When hotels are not provided by the incident the cost is not reimbursable to the responding agency.
- c) Every effort will be made to sleep personnel at Base Camp when motels are not provided by the incident.
 - i) If the Strike Team/Task Force agrees to obtain a motel during their "un-assigned" or "off shift" hours and the hotel is not provided by and paid for by the incident the cost of the hotel is up to the individual members unless their agency has approved otherwise.
 - ii) The Strike Team/Task Force Leader will take these issues into consideration when making a decision when obtaining motel rooms not provided by the incident and make every effort to keep the Strike Team/Task Force together.

7) EVALUATIONS/AFTER-ACTION REPORTS

- a) The performance of each company will be evaluated at the conclusion of the incident by their Strike Team/Task Force Leader and every engine company will evaluate the Strike Team/Task Force Leader.
- b) These evaluations must be returned to the Chair of the Strike Team Program Coordinators Group within 14 days or the responsible party or agency will be removed from the appropriate Strike Team/Task Force rotational list.
- c) These evaluations will be used as part of the annual re-certification process for Strike Team/Task Force Leader.