

5-1 Firefighter accountability and entry control

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This **resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and its regulations and should not be used as or considered legal advice.** Health and safety inspectors apply and enforce these laws based on the facts they find in the workplace.

We have included links to other websites, but this does not mean that we endorse their information as compliant with the OHSA or the regulations.

Background

Firefighters, in the course of their work, should be accounted for at all times. Accountability and entry control systems effectively account for firefighters at an incident and track their location, crew integrity and time on air supply. These systems are especially important when firefighters are operating in environments which are Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH).

Concerns/hazards

Firefighters may enter dangerous and unstable environments to perform their duties. They may operate in limited visibility and move from one area to another. A firefighter may experience an emergency (such as an injury, structural collapse, becoming lost, SCBA emergency) at any time and in any location. In order to

effectively manage a firefighter rescue, the firefighter's identity, last known location, status and time on air supply must be known.

Actions for employers

Employers should:

- develop an accountability system that accounts for firefighters in attendance at emergency incidents
- develop an entry control system that accounts for firefighter identity, location, movement, status, crew integrity and time on air and remaining air levels in a controlled area at regular intervals or as conditions change
- establish written policies and procedures for personnel accountability and entry control
- train firefighters on the use of the accountability and entry control systems on a recurring basis
- review the functionality and effectiveness of these systems on a regular basis

Key principles of accountability systems

An accountability system should incorporate these key principles:

- accounts for the identity, location and function of firefighters at an incident at regular intervals or as conditions change
- recognizes when a firefighter is unaccounted for
- provides a notification system for the emergency removal of firefighters from the interior of a hazard zone when conditions present an immediate life hazard
- establishes a written protocol for when and under what conditions personnel are assigned as accountability / control officers
- prevents firefighters from performing work without being accounted for (commonly known as freelancing)

Entry control systems

An entry control system is more comprehensive than an accountability system, and should track the following information about each firefighter:

- identity

- task
- alias
- location
- time of entry
- movement within an IDLH atmosphere
- changes in task
- length of time using air supply (SCBA) and/or remaining air supply level
- length of time performing a task

Applicable regulations and acts

Read:

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
 - clause 25(2)(a) for providing information, instruction and supervision to a worker
 - clause 25(2)(h) for taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers

Applicable standards

Read [NFPA 1550 Standard for Emergency Responder Health and Safety](#) for the structure and operations of an incident management system and the principles of command safety.

Related

Read firefighter guidance notes:

- [2-1 Incident command](#)
- [2-3 Radio communications](#)
- [2-4 Incident safety officer](#)

[5-2 Working alone or in isolation](#)

Revised by committee: September 29, 2026