

Mandatory information

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Firefighters guidance note #5-1: Firefighter accountability and entry control

Ensuring firefighters are accounted for at an incident.

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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 while operating in an IDLH (Immediately Dangerous to Life & Health) environment.

Concerns/hazards

Firefighters may be required to enter dangerous and unstable environments to perform their duties. They may operate in limited visibility and move from one area to another. Firefighter(s) may experience an emergency (injury, structural collapse, becoming lost, SCBA emergency etc.) at any time and in any location. In order to effectively manage a firefighter rescue it is imperative that the firefighter's identity, last known location, status and air supply are known.

Actions for employers

Employers should:

- develop an accountability system that is functional and effectively accounts for firefighters in attendance at emergency incidents
- develop an entry control system that is functional and effectively accounts for firefighter location, movement, status, crew integrity and time on air in a controlled area
- establish written policies and operational guidelines for personnel accountability and entry control
- train firefighters on the use of the accountability and entry control systems
- 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 location and function of firefighters at an incident
- recognizes when a firefighter is unaccounted for
- provide 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
- changes in task
- length of time using SCBA
- length of time performing a task

Applicable regulations, acts and standards

Read:

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

[NFPA 1561 Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety](#)

[Guidance note 2-1: Incident command](#)

[Guidance note 5-2: Working alone](#)

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 the law based on the facts in the workplace.