

Mandatory information

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Firefighters Guidance Note #X-XX: Hoarding Conditions

Considerations for firefighter safety in hoarding conditions during emergency response.

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Background

Hoarding may result in large quantities of objects that cover all areas of a residence or other structure.

Concerns/hazards

Hoarding may pose hazardous conditions during emergency operations. Exits may be blocked, health hazards may exist and fire loads may be excessive.

Actions for employers

Employers should:

- make fire personnel aware of the potential hazards of hoarding
- develop procedures for responding to hoarding conditions
- train fire personnel on procedures
- develop a system to report hoarding locations and situations through pre-planning exercises
- consult with their Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative in the development of procedures and training

Considerations

When developing procedures for responding to hoarding conditions, consider the following:

- the additional weight of materials could compromise the structural integrity of the building and in a fire may result in premature collapse
- fires may be complex due to an increased fuel load and require a change in fire fighting tactics
- responders may not be able to stay in contact with walls
- responders may have difficulty accessing the source of the fire and/or occupants
- access or egress routes may be blocked
- falling items may block the exit point or path of travel
- the incident commander should weigh the added risk of these hazards when considering whether to send firefighters inside the structure

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)(d) for making workers aware of hazards

- clause 25(2)(h) for taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers
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Related

Learn more about hoarding disorder from the [International Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Foundation](#).

[Hygiene and decontamination](#)

[Read all firefighters guidance notes <link to landing page>](#)

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.