

Falmouth Fire-EMS Operating Guideline

Use and Cleaning of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Objective: To provide a guideline for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

General Information: It is the policy of Falmouth Fire-EMS to provide its members with protective clothing and equipment to safeguard them from injury when involved in fire department activity. The protective clothing and equipment shall be appropriate for the various activities and services the fire department members may provide. It is the responsibility of all Department members to be familiar with and follow this SOG when operating at an emergency scene.

Guideline: Falmouth Fire-EMS provides all emergency responders with the approved personal protective equipment (PPE) to effectively perform their jobs.

PPE is property of the Town of Falmouth and must be surrendered to the Department immediately upon separation of service or upon request.

Personnel are required to maintain their PPE and report the loss, theft, damage or failure of their equipment immediately upon discovery of said issue to their assigned Captain.

All Department members shall respond and operate at emergency scenes in the appropriate level of protective equipment. Depending on the hazard faced, the commander may alter the equipment worn. The minimum requirement for all structural fires or alarms is full turnout gear to include Helmet, Bunker Coat, Bunker Pants, hood, approved boots, gloves and SCBA with facepiece.

Personnel will normally don PPE prior to responding to an emergency call. Donning equipment in route will not be allowed as it will require the violation of the seat belt law. Personnel responding on a fire apparatus will don their PPE (exception of the helmet) before the apparatus leaves the station. Apparatus operators are allowed to wait until on scene before donning Bunker Coat but upon arrival at the emergency scene, the driver shall immediately don full PPE. There shall be absolutely no exception to this rule.

For EMS calls, protective clothing and equipment shall be worn as defined in the Falmouth Fire-EMS Infection Exposure Control Plan. Universal Precautions shall always be followed.

Haz Mat response equipment shall also be worn as directed by the on-scene Incident Commander to level determined to be appropriate based on a Risk Assessment conducted. Proper Decontamination activities shall also be established to ensure employee safety based also on the Risk Assessment.

When operating at a scene involving a street or highway day or night, approved reflective equipment shall always be worn. Approved equipment includes turnout gear and the department purchased Class II safety vest. Each apparatus has one vest for every riding position on the truck. In addition, many members have been issued vests.

Any use of PPE that is not purchased by the department must be approved in advance by the Fire Chief. Non-department purchased PPE will be inspected annually and must conform to current Maine Bureau of Labor Standards (BLS) for continued use. The Fire Chief has the final say on whether or not personal equipment may be used. The user takes full responsibility for the replacement cost if non-department purchased equipment is damaged or destroyed during use.

HELMETS

Helmets shall be maintained reasonably clean with proper company numbers in place. Face shield, chin strap, ear flaps and suspension shall be in good condition.

Helmets will be washed after use in a fire, and on as-needed basis.

Cleaning:

1. Helmets should be cleaned with hot tap water and mild (household) detergent.
2. The following is a list of additional cleaning materials which can be used to remove dirt and smoke stains:
 - a. Isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol)
 - b. Windex (regular, not ammoniated)
 - c. Dishwashing detergent
3. Do not use other materials such as strong (industrial strength) detergents, solvents, petroleum products, etc. These will damage the shell and face shield and reduce the protective capability of the helmet.

Repair:

1. Missing nuts face shield adapters.
2. Face shield excessively scratched.
3. Chin strap and assembly broken or torn.
4. Helmet liner worn, shredded, split, cracked or blistered.
5. Webbed suspensions broken.
6. Company numbers missing or wrong.

Replace:

1. Severely stained or split facepiece.
2. Helmet with visible cracks.
3. Helmet which is warped or bubbled from exposure to heat.

4. Helmet which has been exposed to mist or fumes which are known to weaken polycarbon.

NOTE: All items constructed from thermoplastics are susceptible to ultraviolet and chemical degradation. When the helmet loses its surface gloss and the surface begins to flake away, this chemical degradation has occurred. During inspections, helmets will be checked for these conditions and the shell will be replaced immediately if they are evident.

PROTECTIVE HOOD

Hoods will be washed after use in a fire. Hoods will also be washed annually.

Cleaning--use warm water and any mild detergent.

Replace:

1. Hoods that have holes or tears in them.
2. Hoods which are not Fire Department approved.
3. Hoods stretched out of shape and/or do not provide coverage of all face or neck skin surfaces.
4. Hoods that have burn discoloration.

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION TAGS

The personal identification name tags will be checked. Obtain or replace missing or damaged name tags.

GLOVES

Gloves will be washed after use in a fire. Gloves will also be washed annually.

Cleaning--use warm water and mild detergent.

Replace:

1. Stiff or rigid gloves.
2. Stitching worn or rotten.
3. Glove insulation is worn through.
4. Leather split.
5. Gloves with holes or tears in them.
6. Gloves that do not fit properly.
7. Gloves which are not Fire Department approved.

BUNKER COATS AND PANTS

Bunker Coats and Bunker Pants will be washed after use in a fire. Bunker Coats and Bunker Pants will also be washed annually.

Cleaning:

1. Liners and shell can be washed with mild detergent.
2. Heavily soiled spots can be removed with general spot cleaners.
3. Bunker Coats and Pants can only be dried by using a gear dryer made specifically for fire gear or by hanging in an area away from the sun.

Repairs:

1. All repairs requiring stitching must be made with Nomex thread.
2. Broken snaps.
3. Rivets pulled loose from fabric and from the objects they secure.
4. Suspenders, snaps, and leather eyes which are broken or elongated.
5. Stitching missing.
6. Holes or rips in shell of garment.
7. Frayed or worn collars.
8. Ripped liners.
9. Reflective stripes which are burned, cracked, melted or torn.
10. Wristlets that are torn or stretched.

Replace:

1. Coats and pants on which the stitching is damaged beyond repair.
2. Coats and pants on which the fabric is worn through.
3. Coats and pants soiled to the point they cannot be cleaned, or saturated with oil, tar, etc.
4. Coats with charring or evidence of other fire damage.
5. Improper fitting coats - i.e. sleeves too short.

BOOTS

Boots will be washed after use in a fire or on as as-needed basis.

Inspect the rubber boots that are part of the turnout pants.

Replace:

1. Boots that are severely cracked.
2. Boots with any holes in them.
3. Improper fitting boots.
4. Obvious excessive tread wear.

These guidelines may be changed or altered by the Fire Chief at any time.