Falmouth Fire-EMS Operating Guideline

Response to Automatic Fire Alarms

Objective:
To provide all members of the steps and procedures to take when responding to automatic fire alarms.

General Information:
There are many homes and businesses in the Town of Falmouth with monitored alarm systems. Not all buildings with a monitored alarm system have a Knox Box attached on them to hold keys and emergency contact information. We may arrive at buildings where alarms are sounding and there is no access. In those instances, we need to gain entry to check for a fire, but every precaution should be taken to limit any damage to the building.

Guidelines:

1. The normal response to a fire alarm is 3 Engines, Tower, Chief Officer, and Ambulance (if available and in town). The Ambulance will remain divert to EMS calls that come in if possible.

2. The district Engine and Chief Officer will respond code 3 (lights and siren). All others will respond code 1 (no lights and no siren).

3. Signing on duty:

    a) All on-duty personnel will sign on duty through I Am Responding.
    b) A volunteer member performing a shift shall sign on duty through I Am Responding.

4. Responding to Emergency Calls:

    a) Apparatus should sign on with dispatch when responding and include the crew size (and highest EMS level for EMS calls). Be sure to hail dispatch, wait for them to answer, and then provide your message. Example: "Fire Alarm from Ambulance 2". After dispatch responds you say: Falmouth Ambulance 2 responding with 3 at the Paramedic level."
    b) If responding from a location other than the fire station where the apparatus is housed the crew should add the location from where they are responding. For example: "Falmouth Ambulance 2 responding with 3 at the Paramedic level from Mountain Road."

1

5. Unless directed by the Incident Commander, apparatus will respond, and park as follows:

    a) First Arriving Engine – Attack Engine – Just past or just shy of the front of residence giving aerial room to take the front ("address") or driveway.

    b) Second Due Engine – Supply Engine – Stage at the closest fire hydrant and prepare to hook to hydrant and lay a water supply in to Attack Engine. For non-hydrant areas, stage near the end of the driveway or road and prepare to hook up to the rural hitch or LDH to provide water to the Attack Engine if needed. Leave space for the Aerial to pass if needed (see Rural Water Supply SOG).

    c) Third Due Engine– For hydrant areas stage on C-side and/or Sprinkler Fire Department Connection (FDC) for commercial buildings. If there is no C-side access or for residential buildings, stage at 2nd closest fire hydrant. For non-hydrant areas respond to closest water source (dry hydrant or hydrant) and prepare to fill tankers (See Rural Water Supply SOG).

    d) First Due Aerial – Driveway (if room) or front side of the building (the "address").

    e) First Due Ambulance – Stage ambulance on the main road on the hospital side of the scene, keeping clear of fire hydrants and other locations where responding fire apparatus will be parking. Be prepared to take an injured party to the hospital.

6. The first arriving personnel, typically the district engine (minimum of 2 interior firefighters with SCBA, hand tools, TIC, meter) shall form an investigation group and check the annunciator panel to ascertain the location of the alarm. If Command is not yet established the first arriving personnel will establish a Mobile Command until later-arriving personnel can set up command outside (see Incident Command SOG).

7. A 2nd group, typically Ambulance 2, will be the initial 2-out crew and will perform a 360-degree survey of the scene if not already performed by the Incident Commander.

8. If the building is locked (such as after working hours for commercial buildings), the fire company shall attempt to enter the building, without damage, to determine whether a fire exists.

    a) If, by exterior check no apparent fire exists, companies may wait to enter a locked building for a reasonable

period while Fire Alarm attempts to locate a responsible party who may provide entry to the building.

b) If a party cannot be located within a reasonable period, companies may enter the building to verify no existence of fire. In entering a locked building, companies should use forcible entry techniques, which will best allow them to re-secure the building should they need to.

c) If forced entry is to be made contact Fire Alarm and request a Falmouth Police Officer to the scene for documentation and a witness.

d) If forcible entry is used, it must be written on the Owner Acknowledgement Form and the form shall be left at the scene.

9. Once the location of the alarm is identified, the investigation group (or another group assigned by the Incident Commander) shall then proceed to the indicated area to investigate the potential cause(s).

10. A 3rd group called Panel Group may replace the initial group at the alarm panel and await further instructions.

a.) Once the building is confirmed to be fully evacuated the Incident Commander may request the panel be silenced.

b.) The panel is not reset until the Incident Commander requests it to be.

11. After checking the location identified by the alarm panel, the investigation group shall take the necessary action.

a) Notify command of the situation found.

b) If there is no fire or obvious emergency, ask Command to have alarm panel silenced.

c) If action is needed, take action (reset pull station, replace detector, extinguish fire, ventilate, shut off power, etc.) and let Incident Command know.

d) If there is no apparent problem, make request to the Incident Command that the alarm be reset.

12. An additional group(s) may be sent in by the Incident Commander to assist in the investigation. This is often done for large structures or buildings with multiple floors or businesses. If there are multiple investigation groups, each group will be given a number. For example: Investigation Group 1, Investigation Group 2, Investigation Group 3, etc.

13. It is important that the fire alarm not be silenced until crews have determined that there is not an emergency.

14. It is important that the fire alarm not be reset until the location of the alarm has been checked or, if no location is given, that the entire building has been checked.

15. It is desired that no alarm has been silenced or reset before the Fire-EMS Department has arrived on scene.
    a) If an alarm is silenced or reset before arrival of Falmouth Fire-EMS, Incident Commander should document this in the narrative section of the run report.
    b) Incident Commander should let occupant(s) know the possible issues that can arise by silencing or resetting an alarm prior to our arrival. These range from not alerting all occupants to evacuate (if silenced) during a fire to not knowing which detector may have been activated (if reset).

16. If the alarm is caused by an alarm company being present on scene, please note this in the incident narrative and code the fire call under the call type: "Alarm Company on Scene". If possible, document the alarm company name in the report narrative.

17. Once the alarm has been reset, the Incident Commander shall notify dispatch and advise them briefly on the steps taken to restore the problem. All units will be released by the Incident Commander.

18. If the alarm is not able to be reset, the Incident Commander will speak to a representative of the building and advise them of the situation and ask that they contact their alarm company to repair the system. The Incident Commander may request a fire watch be set up by the occupants, depending on the number of occupants in the building and the occupancy type (example: nursing home, senior housing, apartment building, etc.).

19. Once all units are in service the Incident Commander will clear all units and terminate Command.

20. All units shall complete a fire report for the incident. The Incident Commander is responsible for making sure all reports are entered into the run report system.

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