

General Order: **02-02**

Effective Date: September 1, 2002

Revision Date:

**City of Lancaster Fire Department  
General Orders**

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**Title: Fire Fighting Rules of Engagement**

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**Originator – Fire Chief (Signature/Date):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**ACCEPTABILITY OF RISK**

All fire fighting and rescue operations involve inherent risks to fire fighters. A basic level of risk is recognized and accepted, in a measured and controlled manner, in efforts that are routinely employed to save lives and property. **A higher level of risk is acceptable only in situations where there is a realistic potential to save endangered lives.** This elevated risk must be limited to operations that are specifically directed toward rescue and where there is a **realistic potential** to save the person(s) in danger. These **expanded risks are not acceptable in situations where there is no potential to save lives or property.**

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR STRUCTURAL FIRE FIGHTING**

In recognition of the risks involved in structural fire fighting operations, all feasible measures shall be taken to limit or avoid these risks through risk assessment, constant vigilance, and the conscientious application of safety policies and procedures.

The exposure of fire fighters to an elevated level of risk is acceptable only in situations where there is a realistic potential to save endangered lives. **No risk to the safety of fire fighters is acceptable in situations where there is no possibility to save lives or property.** Fire fighters shall not be committed to interior offensive fire fighting operations in abandoned or derelict buildings that are known or reasonably believed to be unoccupied. **No building or property is worth the life of a fire fighter.**

It is the responsibility of the incident commander to evaluate the level of risk in every situation. This risk evaluation shall include an assessment of the presence, survivability and potential to rescue occupants. When there is no potential to save lives, firefighters shall not be committed to operations that present an elevated level of risk.

An incident command system shall be established, beginning with the arrival of the first fire department member at the scene of every incident. The incident commander must conduct an **initial risk analysis** to consider the risk to fire fighters in order to determine the strategy and tactics that will be employed.

The responsibility for risk assessment is a continuous process for the duration of each incident. The incident commander shall continually reevaluate conditions to determine if the level of risk has changed and a change in strategy or tactics is necessary. The incident commander shall assign one or more safety officers to monitor and evaluate conditions to support this risk analysis.

At a minimum the risk analysis for a structure fire shall consider:

Building Characteristics

- Construction type and size
- Structural condition
- Occupancy and contents

Fire Factors

- Location and extent of the fire
- Estimated time of involvement

Risk to Building Occupants

- Known or probable occupants
- Occupant survival assessment

Fire Fighting Capabilities

- Available resources
- Operational capabilities and limitations