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| Storm Mode | Related Policies: | |
| *This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee’s civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.* | | |
| Applicable KY Statutes: | | |
| OSHA: | | |
| NFPA Standard: | | |
| Date Implemented: | | Review Date: |

**Purpose:** This policy is intended to establish guidelines for the prioritization of emergency resources during peak demand periods created by adverse weather conditions, and other situations that deplete the availability of fire and EMS resources. It provides dispatching priorities, response direction, and radio discipline during storm operations and is intended to maximize available resources, reduce radio traffic, and set operating channels for response and on-scene operations.

During the course of a declared disaster, this policy may be superseded by orders of the Fire Chief or designee, and/or the Emergency Operations Center.

**Policy:** Weather related conditions such as hurricanes, thunder storms, tornadoes, ice storms, and floods can be particularly challenging to fire and emergency organizations not only because they tend to tax available resources, but because they impact neighboring communities. As a result a community facing such a weather event finds itself alone to cope with emergencies without, or with limited access to, the availability of mutual aid resources.

It is the policy of this department to address storm related resource shortages by prioritizing incidents to better enable the department’s ability to respond to emergencies.

1. **Storm Mode Activation**
2. Storm Mode will be activated during one of the following circumstances:
3. Report from the National Weather Service declaring severe weather warning.
4. Request from the ranking Chief Officer in command of the department at the time
5. Request by the Fire Chief or the Executive Command Staff
6. Request by the dispatch supervisor due to a high call volume
7. Special events or circumstances requiring the use of Storm Mode
8. Whenever possible, the decision to activate the Storm Mode should be made ***before*** high call volumes deplete available resources.
9. Upon Storm Mode activation, all stations should be alerted using station alerting devices as well as a radio announcement. Dispatch shall make the following Storm Mode Activation Announcement:

*“Attention all units and stations, dispatch is now operating in Storm Mode; all personnel are ordered to monitor their radios until further notice. Incidents shall be dispatched directly over the radio without further station alerting.*

**Editor’s Note:** Departments with volunteer personnel or that need to recall off-duty career personnel should also utilize the following language, or customize their own.

* *All available volunteer personnel are ordered to staff their stations*  (or)
* *Off-duty personnel are ordered to return to their assigned stations*

Dispatch shall initiate appropriate recall paging/text messaging.

1. After making the Storm Mode Activation Announcement, Dispatch will initiate storm mode dispatch plans.
2. All fire department personnel shall monitor their portable radios for emergency dispatches. The use of station tones and pager activations will be discontinued and not used during Storm Mode in order to speed up dispatches and lessen the burden on dispatchers.
3. The Fire Chief or a designated chief officer shall respond to the Dispatch office to assist with the management of resources and/or move-up of companies to efficiently manage calls pending.
4. Storm Mode will remain in effect until terminated by Dispatch. As call volumes return to normal levels and fire companies return to their primary districts, Dispatch will confer with the Fire Chief or the ranking fire officer on duty to determine if it is appropriate to return to normal operations. When appropriate the Fire Chief will issue the order to terminate “Storm Mode”. Dispatch will initiate the station alerting procedure outlined and advise personnel using the following broadcast:

*“Attention all units and stations, Dispatch is now returning to normal operations, Storm Mode is terminated.”*

1. When more than ***one-third of the engine companies or ladder companies*** are deployed simultaneously, any request from a neighboring community for mutual aid shall be denied. In any case, the dispatch of resources to another community on mutual aid shall not cause more than ***one-third of any type of resource*** to be unavailable.

**Editor’s Note:** This section should be coordinated with mutual aid agreements and local policy. The intent here is that in a community that has 6 engines if 3 are deployed, a request for mutual aid will be denied. In addition if 1 engine is deployed and a mutual aid request is made for 2 engines, only 1 can be sent.

**II. Dispatch Priorities**

1. When storm mode is activated all requests for emergency assistance shall be prioritized by Dispatch as follows:
2. Priority I – Highest
   1. Fire or smoke in a structure or threatening a structure (exposure)
   2. Accidents involving life safety
   3. Medical emergencies – life threatening
   4. Wires down with fire and/or injuries
3. Priority II – Medium
   1. Alarm activation with no other information
   2. Accident with injuries reported to be minor, no entrapment
   3. Water flow alarms
   4. Wires down with no other information
   5. Vehicle fires (no exposures)
   6. Outside fires (no exposures)
4. Priority III – Low
   1. Alarm activation with a follow up telephone report as a false/accidental alarm
   2. Tree down, no injuries or fire
   3. Wires down, no injuries or fire
   4. Accident with no injuries
   5. Requests for pumping of basements

***Editor’s Note:*** *The above listing are some preliminary suggestions. Each fire department needs to put considerable thought into the above prioritization based upon conditions in their community and resources available.*

1. Dispatch shall re-prioritize incidents as additional information and circumstances dictate.
2. Dispatch shall endeavor to ensure adequate coverage of all areas of the community to the greatest extent possible. This shall be accomplished by:
3. Relocating in service units as necessary
4. Reducing companies dispatched to Priority II and III incidents
5. For Priority III calls Dispatch may assign any available unit to respond to investigate. This may include a single fire company (engine or ladder), Chief Officer, Command Staff member, Training Officer, Brush Truck, or staffed utility vehicle.
6. When ***more than 50% of engine companies and/or ladder companies*** are deployed or otherwise unavailable, no additional engine and ladders shall be dispatched on Priority III incidents. All such Priority III incidents shall be held in cue pending availability of additional engines and ladders or handled by other units.

***Editor’s Note:*** *Each fire department needs to put considerable thought into the above paragraph, determine if it is conceptually appropriate for their department, and if so the appropriate threshold. In addition, the paragraph should be extended as appropriate for other types of units such as tanker/tenders.*

1. When more than 75% of engine companies and/or ladder companies are deployed or otherwise unavailable, no additional engine and ladders shall be dispatched on Priority II incidents. All such Priority II incidents shall be held in cue pending availability of additional engines and ladders or handled by other units.

***Editor’s Note:*** *Each fire department needs to put considerable thought into the above paragraph, determine if it is conceptually appropriate for their department, and if so the appropriate threshold. In addition, the paragraph should be extended as appropriate for other types of units such as tanker/tenders. An alternative to not dispatching units to Priority II incidents is limiting the dispatch to a single unit.*

1. Whenever staffing permits, pumping of basements shall be assigned to staffed utility vehicles leaving fire units available for emergency duty. These utility vehicles may also be used to handle Priority III incidents.

**III. Dispatch Channel**

1. The dispatch channel will be used to initiate a response for all incidents. Units will acknowledge responding on the assigned operational channel, not the dispatch channel. Information given during a dispatched call will include:
2. Units to respond
3. Type of incident
4. Location of the incident with the cross street
5. Operational channel
6. It is very important that all dispatch related information be received and understood, but any acknowledgement and feedback must be given to Dispatch on the assigned operations channel, not the dispatch channel.
7. In the event the dispatch channel becomes busy/overloaded, Priority III incidents may be dispatched via telephone or an alternative radio channel as circumstances permit.
8. Units dispatched to Priority III incidents may receive up to three Priority III calls in one dispatch. Units will respond to each Priority III incident while monitoring their radio and investigate each incident. If the radio channels are busy/overloaded, the unit dispatched will announce out once, check the assigned calls and then report the status back to Dispatch and their unit availability after they have checked the three calls.
9. Priority I and II incidents shall be dispatched one at a time.

**IV. Operations Channel**

1. An Operations channel shall be assigned during the dispatch. All units assigned to the incident shall announce the following information:
   1. The unit (s) responding
   2. Address of incident
   3. Type of incident
   4. Operations Channel

EXAMPLE: Engine 8 is responding to 123 Main Street, wires down, Channel 2

1. This will allow Dispatch to correct any wrong information and will allow other responding units to confirm the dispatched information.
2. Depending upon the availability of Operations channels, single company responses to medical incidents, vehicle fires, auto accidents, and Priority II and III incidents may be assigned to the same Operations channel.
3. When a confirmed or possible working structure fire, the dispatched units will be assigned to an available Operations channel that is not being used by other units whenever possible.
4. In the event a working incident is assigned to an Operations channel being used by other units, Dispatch will notify those units already on the channel of the working incident, and priority will be given to those units operating at the working incident.
5. Units assigned an Operations channel shall stay on that channel unless directed otherwise by Command or Dispatch.
6. In the event of multiple incidents on the same channel, use of the appropriate named command will be critical.

EXAMPLE: Main Street Command to Main Street Division C as opposed to Command to Division C

1. **Second Alarm or Greater Response**
2. Units responding to a second alarm or greater will use the following procedure to minimize traffic on the primary operations channel of the incident.
3. The officer or on-scene incident commander who requests a greater alarm will activate a Level II staging area and advise Dispatch of the location when requesting the greater alarm.
4. Dispatch will assign the appropriate units, advise them of the greater alarm, give the units the assigned operations channel, and give them the staging location.
5. All responding units will report they are responding on the assigned Operations channel and report on-scene “reporting to staging” to Dispatch.
6. The first unit to arrive at the Level II staging location will become the Staging Officer and communicate with Command over the assigned channel.
7. Units will monitor the assigned Operations channel while responding.
8. As other units arrive they will report to the on-scene staging officer.
9. Command will request resources from Staging over the assigned Operations channel.
10. During Storm Mode, Incident commanders shall avoid requesting unnecessary resources and shall return unneeded units as soon as possible.

**VI. Arrival Information**

Upon arrival, units shall state the location or scene they are on. This will minimize confusion when multiple units are on-scene at separate incidents at the same time.

EXAMPLE: Engine 8 is on scene 123 Main Street

**VII. Radio Discipline During Storm Mode Operations**

* 1. Short-specific

Before transmitting know what you are going to say. Choose precise terms to communicate the desired message as clearly and briefly as possible without wasting airtime.

* 1. Task Oriented/Company Oriented

Command’s orders to operating companies should indicate a specific task assigned to the company. They should be of a magnitude that can reasonably be performed by a single company alone or in concert with other companies available on scene.

CORRECT EXAMPLE: Command to Engine 8, stretch an attack line and cover Exposure C

INCORRECT EXAMPLE: <Command speaking> – I need a line to Exposure C

* 1. Indicate Objective

In addition to being task and company oriented, assignments should indicate an objective to the action. The company should know exactly where to go, to whom to report, the task assigned, and the objective of the task. Orders should tell what to do - not how to do it (unless Command needs something specific).

* 1. Clear Tone/Self-Control/Effective Rate

Speak clearly at a practiced rate . . . not too fast . . . not too slow. Control your emotions and excitement deliberately. If you do not consciously control your voice, it will become garbled under stress.

* 1. Well Timed/Spaced

1. Prioritize your messages. Do not use up valuable air time with unimportant messages and insignificant details. Let critical messages go first. First arriving units have priority so that they can give size-up and situational reports. Maintain an awareness of the overall situation and your role in it.
2. Do not interrupt conversations unless you have Emergency Traffic. Listen before transmitting and wait until a message transaction has been completed.
3. Pause between consecutive messages. This will make it clear when one message has been completed and another started. It will give other units a chance to get on the air with important messages.