

HR LF	HR HF	Massachusetts District - 14 Fire Investigation Team 3800 – 20-003 Personal Protective Equipment/Health and Safety Considerations	Effective Date 03/15/2020
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**I) PURPOSE/SCOPE/APPLICATION**

- A) The purpose of this Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) is to ensure that all members of the District 14 Regional Fire Investigation Team utilize, as appropriate, the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they have been issued as a safety and control mechanism when encountering potential hazards at fire scenes during the investigation process.
- B) This SOG will apply to all District 14 Regional Fire Investigation Team members.
- C) This SOG should be referenced to ensure that members continuously and systematically identify, evaluate, and prevent or control general workplace hazards and less obvious hazards that may arise during on-site activities, as documented in NFPA 921, Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations.

**II) REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

- A) NFPA 921 Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations (2017 edition)

**III) DEFINITIONS**

- A) PPE: Personal Protective Equipment.
- B) Decontamination: Systematic removal of particulates and contaminants from people, equipment, and PPE.

**IV) SPECIALIZED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A) All members shall be responsible for enforcing this SOG

**V) SAFETY**

- A) Hazard prevention and control is based on the determination that a potential hazard always exists at every scene.
- B) Identifying potential hazards at a fire and explosion scene requires an active, ongoing examination and analysis of work processes, practices, procedures, equipment, and working conditions (Hazard/Risk Assessment).
- C) Identifying hazards not only helps to determine the appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to adequately protect investigators, but it also can be used to identify appropriate training and education needs.

**VI) ENFORCEMENT**

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- A) Failure to understand this Standard Operating Guideline may result in disciplinary action.
- B) Any deviation from this Standard Operating Guideline may require a written report to the Chief overseeing the team and or the District 14 Chair.
- C) 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.

**VII) STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE**

A) General

- 1) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been provided to protect investigators from hazards that may be encountered at a fire scene. This SOG should augment, not diminish, any PPE/Safety policies that members are required to follow by their own department (if the department’s policy exceeds any part of the District’s policy, the member should adhere to his/her department’s policy).

B) Hazard and Risk Assessment

- 1) In accordance with NFPA 921, one of the first tasks that should be completed before a fire or explosion scene investigation has begun is a Hazard and Risk Assessment. Depending on the specific hazard identified, the lead investigator, in consultation with the Incident Commander, will determine the likelihood (risk) that the investigation team members will come in contact with that hazard. Following the determination of the risk level, to control the hazard the investigators can utilize several methodologies that include engineering controls, administrative controls, or the selection and use of appropriate PPE (see NFPA 921, Ch. 13.4.1).
- 2) Members shall verify with the Incident Commander that air monitoring is being conducted to ensure: Adequate oxygen levels > 19.5%, Carbon monoxide (CO) levels < 35 PPM, any flammable gases or vapors in air are not within 10% of the lower explosive limit (LEL), any other recognized respiratory hazards are identified as is possible

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### C) Conditions for PPE Use

- 1) When entering a fire scene for investigation, all members are expected to wear their District-issued fire-resistant D-14 FIT coveralls. If for some reason the coveralls are not immediately available or practical (i.e., severe weather), department-issued structural firefighting gear (coat, pants, boots) should be worn.
- 2) Shoe covers (District-issued) should be worn over safety shoes or boots with the puncture-resistant sole and steel toe (department-issued).
- 3) Knee protectors (District-issued) should be worn.
- 4) Work gloves (District-issued) should be worn, as appropriate, in conjunction with nitrile gloves underneath
- 5) Helmet with eye shield (department-issued) as the incident dictates.
- 6) Respiratory Protection: At fire scenes where the oxygen level is determined to be 19.5% or higher or not Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH), and depending on the Hazard/Risk Assessment, appropriate respiratory protection, SCBA face-piece (department-issued) with air-purifying respirator (APR) cartridge (District-issued) or N-95 respirators/dust masks (department-issued) should be worn

### D) Health and Safety

- 1) Decontamination: Investigators should decontaminate or dispose of all potentially contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) prior to leaving the scene, or otherwise ensure the safe handling of items (i.e., sealed bag) to limit the potential for contaminating their vehicles, offices, and residences (see NFPA 921, Ch. 13.6.1.3). Investigative personnel shall use wipes (if available), wiping exposed or vulnerable areas such as the neck, face, arms, groin, etc. Personnel shall take a personal shower as soon as possible after the conclusion of their investigative work. It is highly recommended that investigators fill out an exposure form to be placed in their personnel file for each fire investigation they conduct (investigators should discuss this procedure with their respective fire chief prior to implementation).
- 2) Team member PPE shall be kept in good order. If an item becomes unusable or lost, the team member shall report the issue to the team leader for replacement.

### E) Gear Disposition upon Member Separation

- 1) All equipment issued by Fire District 14 shall be returned whenever an investigator separates from the team.

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**VIII) RECORDS, REPORTS, CHARTS, FORMS**

A) NA

SOG Review Dates: 1/15/19