



FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT

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INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN #13-58

TO: All Fire and Rescue Personnel
FROM: Kurtis R. Wilson, Division Chief/Operations *KRW*
RE: **New Squad Companies 5, 12, & 37**

Squad Companies

Many similarly sized fire departments including FDNY differentiate the roles and responsibilities of unique companies. These unique companies, referred to as “Squads”, respond as an engine company in their first due territory. They also carry other equipment to support Hazardous Materials and Special Operations calls. Personnel assigned to these specialty units are trained to a higher level in Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) operations and could assume this duty at structure fires. This will allow the second ladder company to be assigned to overhaul.

Selection of Squad Companies

Several criteria were established for determining which units will be designated as Squad Companies. One of the considerations was geographic distribution. For this purpose, the Consolidated City of Jacksonville was divided into three pieces; they are Northside, Westside, and Southside. Station 37, Station 5 and Station 12 fall into these three areas respectively. A second criterion was equitable and reasonable distribution among District Chiefs. These newly designated Squad Companies will be assigned to Fire District 4 and managed under the purview of the Special Operations Chief. In conjunction with this move, Station 37 will be assigned to Fire District 4.

Hazardous Materials and Special Operations

Staffing at Station 4 (Special Ops) and Stations 7 and 21 (HazMat) during certain emergencies can tax operational efficiency as many routine HazMat and Special Ops calls exceed current staffing capabilities. Recent emergency events have required call in of off-duty personnel or extraordinary logistical efforts using drop off/pick up scenarios to get the appropriate personnel on scene.

Through promotion, attrition and personal choice, many qualified personnel have left our current specialty units and are scattered throughout the city. The Squads will increase operational effectiveness and efficiency by concentrating the personnel and their skill sets to three locations.



Millions of grant dollars have been spent on equipment stored at HazMat/Special Ops stations that are being maintained by fewer and fewer team members. The extra burden on personnel also contributes to burn out and attrition from the specialty teams.

Under the new proposal, Station 5 will assist with the USAR equipment cache. Station 12 will assist with the Radiation/HazMat equipment cache. Station 37 will be the flammable liquid firefighting experts with the foam tankers, foam cannons, sub-surface injection nozzles, and JFRD foam inventory responsibilities.

Rapid Intervention Team

Under current protocol, the Incident Commander may assign any unit they deem suitable to perform RIT duties. Often times it is a truck company. Other times it is an engine company regardless of the RIT training or experience of the crew.

An active firefighting department always has a high threat level of collapse or entrapment by sheer number of fire runs and types of construction found in its jurisdiction. It is time for JFRD to assign a specialized unit at *ALL* fires that is proficient and knowledgeable in the latest and greatest RIT procedures.

Response Protocols

All Squad Companies will respond as a normal Engine Company in their first, second and third due territory. All structure fires will have a Squad Company responding based upon geographic consideration and could perform RIT duties once on scene. The Squad Company will relieve the temporary assigned RIT crew to allow that unit to be used for overhaul. As mentioned previously, the geographic consideration is as follows:

- Squad 5—Westside
- Squad 12—Southside
- Squad 37—Northside

All HazMat and Special Ops calls will require, at a minimum, one Squad. This will add the staffing and specialized training needed at these events. If needed, additional Squads could be requested and dispatched based upon the size and magnitude of the events. Emergencies such as the T2 explosion, the Berkman Plaza collapse, and the American Asphalt entrapment are examples of situations where additional Squads should be called for. Future Squad Company responsibilities could grow based upon departmental needs and/or unforeseen events that change fire service responses.

Summary

The idea of the Squad Company is to be a force-multiplier during certain events. To be assigned to a Squad Company, members will be required to *have or obtain* either USAR or HazMat Technician certification, preferably both. A diverse specialty force will be sought through department wide advertisement of openings outlining specific requirements. JFRD takes great pride in pioneering industry standards and setting best practices nationwide. This Squad Company initiative will lay the foundation for a progressive and innovative operational retooling designed to improve efficiency and maximize effectiveness by making incremental changes that generate the most benefits while insuring the safety and readiness of our members.