
Ocean City Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines

General Policies

Subject: After Action Review
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Section: 245.00

245.01 Purpose

To provide guidance in conducting the after action reviews of emergency incidents, non-emergent programs and Fire Department of Town of Ocean City events. This SOG provides guidance in developing a program for evaluating the effectiveness of operations. The following are goals of an After Action Review (AAR):

- Assess and evaluate the quality of customer service delivery.
- Determine the capability to successfully complete incident objectives or program goals.
- Assess, and, as warranted, improve safety.
- Identify training issues, assess apparatus operations, assess equipment and tool needs, and other resource needs.
- Evaluate compliance with current Standard Operating Guidelines and applicable standards.
- As necessary, create new and/or modify existing Standard Operating Guidelines.

245.02 Policy

After Action Reviews are intended to serve the Ocean City Fire Department as a positive and constructive lessons learned experience that provides the opportunity for individual and organizational development. The focus should be on what went well, and this will serve to reinforce good decision making and command actions

There will also be the occasion that the AAR will identify events that went wrong. When actions and events that went wrong are identified, it is the intention of the AAR for this to be an information sharing approach that enables others to learn from those actions and events. It should be noted that an After Action Review is not intended to criticize individuals, but it should be an opportunity to enhance our development as an organization. Properly designed After Action Reviews that adhere to this philosophy of learning will typically result in a positive learning experience.

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After Action Reviews will be conducted for the following incident types:

- Working fires
- Mass Casualty Incidents
- Motor Vehicle Collisions with Extrication time greater than 20 minutes
- Technical Rescues
- Any other incident as deemed appropriate by a member of the Command Staff (Battalion Chief or higher)

245.03 Definitions

- A. After Action Review – A systematic and structured process for assessing and evaluating the performance of Fire Department and allied response organizations during emergency incidents or non-emergency activities and events. After Action Reviews shall be utilized as a learning tool that are intended to recognize the positive actions conducted at an incident or event, and identify any strategies, tactics, tasks, or use of deployed resources that could be improved for future incidents.
- B. After Action Review Officer – The individual designated as the lead for conducting the AAR, this will typically be the individual in command of the incident.
- C. Informal After Action Review – A review of incident operations conducted at the company or shift level. A brief AAR may be conducted on scene, but it is preferable that be conducted once crews have returned to quarters, completed the necessary rehabilitation measures, and apparatus and equipment placed back in service.
- D. Formal After Action Review – A formal analysis and review of an incident or operation requested by the Fire Department Command Staff. The Command Staff shall have the latitude to determine the extent of the AAR for a specific incident. Attendance at a formal AAR shall be determined based upon the needs of the Fire Department. It is recommended that formal AARs be completed within 30 days of the incident in question. Formal AARs may be appropriate for the following types of incidents:
- Large scale, multiple company/agency incidents
 - Tactically complex incidents
 - Fires involving civilian injuries/fatalities
 - Fires involving uniformed personnel injuries/fatalities
 - Multiple Casualty Incidents
 - Special rescue incidents
 - Hazardous materials incidents with technician level deployment

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245.04 Blueprint Information for the Critique of Major Incidents

The following information is derived from the U.S. Fire Administration's Special Report: *The After-Action Critique: Training Through Lessons Learned*, and is an outline that may be utilized to collect the incident data needed to complete the After Action Report.

- A. Fire Suppression Incident Commander
- Date and time of the incident.
 - Incident location.
 - Weather conditions at the time of the incident.
 - Type of occupancy (fixed property use).
 - Topography of the incident scene.
 - Describe conditions upon your arrival; specifically, did the conditions warrant offensive or defensive tactics?
 - Identify all problems encountered and actions initiated to overcome them, if possible.
 - Did transfers of Command go smoothly?
 - Describe actions initiated by first-arriving units. Were they appropriate?
 - Provide site drawings of incident layout, apparatus positioning, attack line placement, Rapid Intervention Teams (RITs), accountability locations, Staging, firefighter rehab, etc.
 - Provide overview of responsibilities and activities assigned to each section.
 - Describe rescue problems encountered, and actions taken to overcome them.
 - Describe ventilation problems encountered, if any, and the steps taken to overcome them.
 - Was the initial assignment adequate to handle the incident, and if not, what additional units were requested and why?
 - Describe how many and where RITs were deployed.
 - Describe any exposure problems, and the steps taken to protect them and so forth.
 - Describe all safety-related concerns.
 - Develop a sequential incident organization chart detailing Command and Group/Division assignments.
 - What could have been done differently to change the outcome of the incident?
- B. Fire Suppression Units
- What conditions confronted personnel upon their arrival?
 - Describe apparatus deployment.
 - Provide sector assignments and assigned objectives.
 - Was the initial water supply adequate? If not, what was done to provide adequate supply?
 - What size supply lines were deployed and where?
 - Describe the position and size of attack line(s).
 - Was the initial attack line adequate?

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- Were any operational problems encountered during the incident?
 - Describe the events/actions the crew initiated to obtain assigned objective.
 - Describe all events/actions that hindered accomplishing assigned objectives.
 - Were any safety problems encountered during the incident?
 - Did the crew experience any equipment failures during operations?
 - What could be done differently next time to improve operations?
 - What changes are recommended to existing plans and procedures, or training as a result of the incident?
- C. Dispatch/Fireground Communications
- Provide audiotapes of the phone reports, dispatch, and tactical communications to the point where the fire was reported under control.
 - Did the IC make routine incident updates and at what intervals?
 - Provide computer-aided design (CAD) printout of the incident timeline.
 - Identify any communication problems encountered during the incident, and the steps taken to resolve them
- D. Logistics/Fleet Maintenance
- Identify all support assets committed to the incident.
 - Identify all responsibilities assumed by the support asset and their effectiveness (i.e., firefighter rehab, logistical support, financial, fleet maintenance, etc.).
 - Provide a summary description of equipment or apparatus performance, repairs, refueling, etc.
 - Identify all problems encountered during the incident.
- E. Public Information Officer
- Obtain copies of raw news media video, photographs, etc.
 - Provide overhead projector and white board for illustrating the incident.
 - Produce transparencies of incident depicting apparatus positions and attack line deployments and sector assignments.
 - Provide site photography, including aerial shots, if possible.
 - Obtain copies of video taken by civilians and/or residents of the community
- F. Code Enforcement
- Provide a legal description of the structure, including the number of floors, basements, type of construction, type of roof structure, mechanical systems, number of and locations of exits.
 - Describe the type of fire detection and suppression systems in the building, and whether they functioned properly.
 - Were the building fire suppression systems effective in containing and/or extinguishing the fire?

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- Describe the effects the fire had on the structure.
 - Did the structure suffer either a partial or a total collapse?
- G. Fire Investigations
- Provide a description of the origin and cause of the fire, including type of ignition (i.e., accidental electrical, suspicious, flammable liquids, etc.).
 - Describe the factors that influenced fire spread (i.e., were accelerants used, attack lines placed improperly, ventilation techniques employed improperly).
 - Did the fire suppression actions compromise the building's structural stability?
 - At any point during the fire did the structure pose hazards to firefighters? If so, where?
 - Provide a value and loss assessment of the structure.
 - Provide a historical overview of all building fire inspections, code violations, use of occupancy certificates that have been issued, and a description of all modifications made to the building.
 - Ascertain whether the structure met current building and fire codes and identify all outstanding code requirements not met.
 - Describe the type of fire detection and suppression systems the building was equipped with, and whether they functioned properly.
 - Provide a list of all structural design features, protective systems, and other building components that were not provided, that would have reduced the spread of fire, fatalities, and injuries, or would have reduced property loss.
- H. Emergency Medical Services
- Provide a summary of basic life support (BLS) and advanced life support (ALS) units dispatched on the initial response. Were additional EMS required? When were they requested?
 - Were EMS supervisory personnel on the emergency scene?
 - Were medivac helicopters used to transport patients?
 - Were EMS communications adequate?
 - Were multiple medical control communication points established and with what medical facilities?
 - Provide a summary on patient distribution by hospital, number of patients to each hospital, triage category at site, hospital priorities, etc.
 - Provide followup summary report on patient injuries, expected outcomes, etc.
 - Describe what went well, and what could have gone better.
 - Was a critical incident debriefing team used?
- I. Hazardous Materials Incident
- Provide a summary of Hazmat response and evaluation by section officer.

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- Provide a summary of Hazmat mitigation efforts and resources deployed.
- Provide description of hazardous materials present and level of management and procedures.
- Provide description of exposure hazards to firefighters and suggested incident.
- Provide copies of Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines and other related literature and reference sources used.
- Provide a summary of cleanup operations.
- Provide lessons learned from any in-house critiques of Hazmat incident activity

245.05 After Action Report Format

The final after AAR report should follow the following format:

- A. Event Overview – This section provides background information on the event and participating agencies and jurisdictions, such as the date and location of the event, the type of event/incident, the lead agencies, the participating agencies, and an overview of the event.
- B. Event Goals and Objectives – The goals and objectives for the exercise of the actual event.
- C. Event Synopsis – This section provides a synopsis of the scenario and the major actions that were taken by the players. This information is useful in understanding what happened, when and where it happened, and how the events affected performance of critical tasks and achievement of mission outcome.
- D. Analysis of Issues – This section analyzes the issues raised during the exercise. The issues evaluated should be based on the incident/exercise objectives. It should be organized by objective and should address each objective, including those that were performed as expected. Each issue write-up should be organized as described below.
- E. Issue – This will be completed for each issue
 1. Activity – a short description of the activity (i.e. “Gather and Provide Information: Upon establishing Command, gathered, organized and documented the incident situation and resource information from all sources...”)
 2. Observation – a short, complete sentence that describes the general observation (i.e. “Area for Improvement: Agencies lacked regular, consistent updates from the field.”).
 3. Reference(s) – specific plans, policies, procedures, laws, or regulations that apply to the observation may also be referenced, as well as relevant tasks related to the observation. Also, if no references relate to the observation, it is acceptable to record “not applicable” for this section (i.e. “National Response Plan, Emergency Support Function #5 – Emergency Management”).

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4. Analysis – a description of the behavior or actions at the core of the observation, including a brief description of what happened; the consequences(s) of the action or behavior (positive or negative); and a root-cause analysis of the contributing factors (i.e. “Reports arrived at the operations center at erratic intervals, and often contained contradictory or inconsistent information. Some of the challenges faced in this area may be attributed to the lack of classified communications capacity available to the operations center.”).
 5. Recommendations – broad recommendations to address identified areas for improvement, based on the judgement and experience of the evaluation team (i.e. “Provide information reporting requirements to agencies during the planning phase of the exercise.”).
- F. Conclusion – This section should provide a brief summary of the major conclusions of the event.
- G. Improvement Plan – Develop an Improvement Plan that lists each exercise finding, the improvement actions that will be taken, the responsible party or agency, and the expected completion date. Please see the attached document.