

Operating Guideline # 1504

After Action Review

February 21, 2024



PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Operating Guideline (OG) is to establish a process to formalize the tradition of informal post-incident conversations into a simple, but systematic, guided process of analyzing, refining, and improving incident response.

ISSUE/RATIONALE:

Conducting an after-action review, or debrief, enables crew members to analyze what happened, why it happened during an incident and what improvements can be made. It also provides department leaders suggestions for change, if necessary. After-action reviews in the formal sense were originally developed by the military and all effective leaders have used them as they support a culture of accountability. By virtue of its examination and analysis process, AAR has the potential to directly change the safety culture of the fire service by encouraging all firefighters to identify strengths and weaknesses and participate in the process of building on these strengths and addressing these weaknesses to vastly improve the safety of every operation and ensure that everyone goes home safe.

GUIDELINE:

1. Every firefighter shall take the After Action Review free online training from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation at the Fire Hero website, see link below
http://fireherolearningnetwork.com/Training_Programs/Everyone_Goes_Home_After_Action_Review.aspx.
2. After Action Reviews (AARs) should always use nonjudgmental communication. It may be helpful to address people in third person as the task. For example "Nozzle team 1 or Search team"
3. AAR's should be done following every incident, no matter how small or seemingly routine.
3. The first question should be What was our intention?
 - The nature of the call or assignment and whether it could have been anticipated and planned for.
 - The action plan, or lack of an action plan should be discussed.
 - Whether the action plan was formal or informal, if it worked, and why or why not
 - What were our expectations and how did we prepare
 - Consider differences between expectations and reality.
 - Consider communications en route and on arrival, did they shape our understanding
4. What went well? & What Could have gone better?

Discuss:

- what actually happened

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- Multiple perspectives, reconstruct the event from each member and each task
- Actions taken and by whom, what equipment, what techniques
- Outcomes achieved

Analyze:

- Problem Assessment
- Unanticipated barriers
- Situational awareness
- Risk and hazard recognition
- Risk management strategies
- Options considered and rejected
- What went well
- What did we learn
- Good decisions, catch people doing things right
- Experience vs. procedure
- Address risks, hazards and safety

5. What should we have done differently? Look at each point from the previous question and ask if we were to do this again...

- What might be done differently?
- What risks could we have foreseen?
- What actions, approaches, techniques or equipment that could have heightened safety or enhanced outcomes?

6. Who needs to know?

- How lessons learned help the organization get better
- Who else is likely to have this happen
- How we can share what we learned with others

7. AAR is scalable and each hotwash can be gathered by company to get a comprehensive review.

8. All responders are safe to express their views during the AAR process. All leaders need to be willing to accept the feedback that has been requested, an openness to criticism allows for an honest look at what we need.

9. AAR is important as it memorializes what we do and allows us to improve off our experiences. AAR's that have suggestions for improvement should be reported in a report that follows this OG to gain insights and improvements.

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10. The Fire Chief may cause an annual review of all AAR's conducted and take any action deemed appropriate to enhance the safety of personnel or improve emergency operations.

11. Where a formal AAR is not called for, significant incidents should be reviewed by the District Chief's on a monthly basis to identify opportunities for improvement (operations, equipment, OG's etc) and challenges encountered.

12. District Chief's should encourage all members that were involved in incidents to participate in AAR's to ensure that all members are comfortable giving feedback.

RESPONSIBILITY:

It is the responsibility of all Emergency Operations Division staff to comply with the provisions of this Operating Guideline.

DEFINITIONS:

AAR – After Action Review

REFERENCES:

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #1 "Cultural Change," which states: "Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility."