

ESCAMBIA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE

Standard Operating Guidelines



_____, *Interim Chief*

4100.040

Forcible Entry Guidelines

Implemented: 05-13-2009

Revised:

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PURPOSE

Gaining entry into private residences and commercial buildings for fire alarms, public assistance, lockouts and assistance to Emergency Medical Services.

OBJECTIVE

To provide personnel with guidelines that gives a clear delineation as to when forcible entry should be used to gain access to investigate or mitigate dangerous situations.

SCOPE

All Escambia County Fire-Rescue Personnel (ECFR).

FORCIBLE ENTRY CRITERIA

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Escambia County Emergency Medical Services (ECEMS) shall be the lead agency responsible for determining the need to force entry, based on the patient information and the priority assigned by the Communications Center.

FIRE ALARM ACTIVATIONS

The Incident Commander shall make every effort to confirm or rule out the presence of smoke or other accurate indicators of a fire before a forcible entry operation is initiated. A chief officer shall be contacted whenever a forcible entry situation arises and should respond to the scene. Doors or windows that are hot to the touch, smoke blackened windows, cracked windows, smoke showing from construction openings, vents, eaves are all examples of reliable indicators of a potential fire condition. Key holder contact should be established whenever possible and patience must be exercised unless a true emergency exists.

LOCK OUTS

Once again, the Incident Commander is responsible to determine the need for forcible entry when persons have either locked themselves in or locked themselves out and cannot exit or enter in a timely manner. If non-emergency conditions exist a locksmith should be used rather than fire department making forced entry and thus becoming liable for damages.

_____, *Interim Chief***ASSISTING LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Occasionally, law enforcement agencies will request the fire department for forcible entry. If a law enforcement agency requests the services of ECFR for forcible entry or ladder access to a crime scene or a potentially violent situation, responding ECFR units will stage at the designated safe staging area and the fire department Incident Commander shall inform the law enforcement Incident Commander that we will provide them with the necessary tools to gain access, but fire department members will not put themselves in harms' way. The fire department will provide the law enforcement officers with a brief explanation and training of how to properly use the tools to accomplish successful entry.

KNOX BOX

ECFR encourages all business to take part in this endeavor to reduce the damage to the structure. The search of the exterior portion of the structure near the main entrance must be completed by the first responding units prior to any consideration or attempt of forcible entry is made. If a Knox Box is located use this device to gain entry into the structure. Please notify the building owner as soon as possible and return the key to the box after making sure the structure is secure.

OPERATIONS

The gravity of the situation should always dictate the prescribed actions. Common sense should prevail. As always, "Try Before You Pry." Always request that law enforcement respond for security purposes. Look for the safest, quickest, least invasive means to gain entry; once it's been determined that forcible entry is required. Check all windows to determine if they are locked or unlocked. Consider removing hinges if there are doors with the hinges exposed. If breaking a small, single pane of glass will give you clear access to all locks, that method should receive careful consideration. If a "Through the lock" method is employed, consider using channel locks to carefully screw the cylinder out of the threads in order to keep the threads and the lock intact. If the situation dictates a quicker access, then use an "A" or "Rex" tool, a "K" tool or an "R" tool to rapidly pull the cylinder from the door. Once the cylinder has been removed, then use the "Kerry" key to turn the cogs, which are set at either the "7:00 o'clock" or the "5 o'clock" position. It's important to consider that use of any of the "pulling" tools may irreparably damage an aluminum doorframe and breaking the glass may be the more cost effective approach. Always try to use the least invasive forcible entry method if possible. Exhaustive communication should be practiced whenever possible. Check with neighbors, under doormats and under nearby planters to try to find a workable key.