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| ***REPLACE WITH YOUR MASTHEAD*** |
| **VFIS logo black JPG** | **SOG Title:** |
| **SOG Number:** |
| **Original Date:** | **Revision Date:** |
| **ABC Fire Department General Operating Guideline** |

**Station Tours**

***This is a sample of a standard operating guideline (SOG) on this topic. You should review the content, modify as appropriate for your organization, have it reviewed by your leadership team and if appropriate your legal counsel. Once adopted, make sure the SOG is communicated to members, implemented and performance monitored for effective implementation.***

**Purpose:**

One of the most useful methods of reaching children in our community with fire safety education is through the ever popular fire station tour. These visits to the local fire station are no longer just an entertaining field trip for students; they are an educational experience as well. The intent of this SOP to provide officers and firefighters guidance in the conduct of fire station tours, and make all fire station tours uniform.

**Scope:**

This applies to all personnel.

**Procedure:**

We are in the life saving business - whether it is with a response after ignition or, more importantly, before it happens. The only sure & absolute way to save children from fire is through knowledge of prevention and proper action to take when fire strikes.

A general awareness of fire should be instilled in the citizens of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, especially children. By teaching children the ways of prevention, the community will be safer today, and the adults of the future will be more aware of fire safety. The responsibility of teaching children fire safety cannot be fulfilled during one week in October which is designated as "Fire Prevention Week". **It must be a year-round effort.**

The most dangerous fire and burn hazard in the country is the attitude that "it will not happen to me." We know, however, that it can and does happen at the rate of thousands of deaths and burn injuries yearly. Because this attitude does prevail, one of the primary responsibilities of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is to acquaint the public with the fire problem, and then to educate them how to avoid the tragedies of fire.

The fire station is an ideal setting and the tour is an ideal opportunity for sharing this type of knowledge. The "tour" must become a carefully planned and executed learning experience for all persons involved. The learning experience helps students become aware of fire dangers and how to protect themselves.

If the officer shows dislike or an attitude of triviality to the visit, the other personnel, no doubt, will pick up on this air and it will result in an unpleasant experience for all. Fire education is a primary method of saving lives, and fire officers must realize that it is just as significant that they share this knowledge and attitude with firefighters as the proper attitude toward suppression. Both are strategies to save lives, prevent injuries and reduce property loss.

The officer should be selective in which firefighter(s) conducts the tour. Naturally, some firefighters enjoy this more than others, just as one enjoys teaching ladders or rescue more than others. The selection should never be made on the basis of punishment or reverse seniority. Forcing an unwilling firefighter to teach children a short class on fire safety is defeating our purpose of the tour. He/she will be ineffective and the students will detect insincerity. The firefighter is more inclined to give partial or careless answers to questions and this could cause misunderstanding in the minds of the students.

The desire to teach an effective class is essential in order to help the students gain the most knowledge possible. If the desire to do a good job is present, the firefighter, officer or anyone else will learn how to present material to the students in an enthusiastic and effective manner.

Hopefully, the information contained in this guide will help all of our firefighters become more aware of message content, format and delivery and gain confidence in conducting the educational learning experience known as The Fire Station Tour.

General objectives:

Teach them something which will help save them

In the past, the fire station tour has been thought of as a time to show the equipment and apparatus. While this is a part of the visit, the students should never leave the station without having learned something which could save them from injury or death from fire.

Usually, the fire station tour is enjoyed by children from the ages of four or five years (pre­school) through fifth grade. After a student passes fifth grade, they are not as excited about visiting the fire station. Day care centers and elementary schools, however, often plan a field trip to the local fire department at least once during the year. The ages vary and the program and/or delivery should vary accordingly. This should be considered in preparation and be reflected in presentation.

When the tour group arrives, make sure to meet the supervisor(s) responsible for the group and explain how the tour will be conducted.

Before showing the apparatus, and explaining the equipment, get the students in one spot and share a short learning experience--a class on fire education. This can range from 15 minutes upward, depending on the age. Suggested subjects include stop, drop and roll and/or match safety for pre-school through third grade, "**911 - Your Emergency number**", is an important new addition to the information they should know. With older students, other subjects could be included such as home escape planning and home fire hazards. Guard against trying to cover too many subject areas. Usually, sticking to one or two topics is more effective because of time and attention span limitations.

Have a subject in mind as well as what you wish to accomplish. Teach stop, drop and roll, and then have the students practice it. Utilize the station mounted smoke detector to show children what smoke detectors are, sound like, and tell them what to do should they sound!

Maintaining the learning atmosphere

When you have completed the fire safety lesson, lead the students to the apparatus. Give necessary instructions and precautions on where to stand, what they are, and are not allowed to do, and then proceed with this part of the tour.

At no time should vocabulary or explanation become too difficult for the students. A repeated error is trying to explain to young children technical examples of our work. We don't want them to become experts in friction loss, or fire chemistry. While the adults in the group may seem interested, young students don't care, will become disinterested and your purpose is defeated. They understand that water goes from a hydrant through the truck and out the hose (or a comparable situation) which the firefighter holds. Keep all the comments and explanations simple and the audience will remain interested.

When participating in any teaching situation, it is necessary that the students understand what you are saying. If they don't what you are saying doesn't matter.

Supervised activities such as letting the students sitting anywhere in a piece of apparatus is not allowed to the risks associated by possible cancer causing contamination. No protective clothing should be worn or touched; unless it has been recently decontaminated (new gear should be used for this purpose). Always think of maintaining the necessary number of firefighters to make an activity safer and more easily performed.

If the group is large, have one or two firefighters take half of the students to another truck rather than trying to talk to 40-50 students at one time. A helpful method of placement might include having the students form a semi-circle at the side of the apparatus. If they try to "bunch up" around the firefighter, only a few can see and it makes talking to them difficult.

Weather permitting; a booster line with each child taking a turn at the nozzle is an unforgettable experience. Aerial ladder demonstrations need not be part of the basic tour.

Station Tour Guidelines

1. Tours should be arranged as not to interfere with normal fire- rescue duties. Tours will be scheduled by the duty officer.
2. Officers shall prepare in advance for a tour. Material packets will be distributed in advance by the training officer.
3. Upon arrival of the tour, the officer should introduce himself/herself and others who are assisting as the official welcome is given.
4. Explain the sequence of receiving an alarm, have the emergency communication center broadcast a test announcement, and advise teachers and students where to go and what to do if an alarm should be received.
5. Talk briefly about a firefighter's responsibility in helping children learn about fire stations. Don't try to cover too much material.
6. Show the children stop, drop and roll, cover smoke detectors home escape.
7. Ask for questions - be sure they understand stop, drop and roll. Students should be allowed to talk and ask questions but not monopolize the time.
8. Show equipment/apparatus.
9. Dress a firefighter with all firefighting gear including SCBA gear while children are watching. Let them look but not touch unless the gear has been recently decontaminated.
10. Summarize briefly what they were taught.
11. Give literature to teacher to hold for the students
12. Invite them to visit again; goodbyes.

***This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm or damage to personnel, property and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control representative.***

**References:**

Fairfield (CT) SOG “Fire Station Tours”