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## A Message from Chief Williams

*August 21, 2020*



- #Turn Out Quickly
- #Flawless Execution of Duties
- #Love Dothan/#Love Your Neighbor

For more than 20 years I have been addressing issues related to improving response times, especially that which YOU can control...turn out times, as well as two additional primary areas (Flawless Execution and Showing Compassion). These are the three areas where Officers spend most of their time each shift (or should be) – developing and improving member performance. The fire service has been preaching for years that four to six minutes is the critical time for companies to arrive. We KNOW that if we arrive within this time frame we may delay and prevent injuries, deaths, and damage (to us and our customers). If response times are so important and quick turn out is the primary area we can improve upon, what are we doing about it?

As we all know, permanent brain damage begins after only four (4) minutes without oxygen, and death can occur as soon as 4 - 6 minutes later. We have taught for years that when someone stops breathing and their heart stops, they are clinically dead...onset (zero minutes - 6 minutes). Biological death...irreversible brain death is considered to occur beyond 6 minutes of clinical death. Seconds Count!

Research has shown that time to flashover from open flame can be as short as 1 1/2 minutes in a residential fire.

Compartment fire development can be described as being comprised of four stages: incipient, **growth**, fully developed and decay. Flashover is not a stage of development, but simply a rapid transition between the **growth** and fully developed stages

**Incipient** – This first stage begins when heat, oxygen and a fuel source combine and have a chemical reaction resulting in fire. This is also known as “ignition” and is usually represented by a very small fire which often (and hopefully) goes out on its own, before the following stages are reached. Recognizing a fire in this stage provides your best chance at suppression or escape.

**Growth** – The *growth stage* is where the structures fire load and oxygen are used as fuel for the fire. There are numerous factors affecting the growth stage including where the fire started, what combustibles are near it, ceiling height and the potential for “thermal layering”. It is during this shortest of the 4 stages when a deadly “flashover” can occur; potentially trapping, injuring or killing firefighters. In just two (2) minutes a **fire can** become life-threatening. In five (5) – six (6) minutes a structure (residence) **can** be engulfed in flames. Seconds Count!

It should come as no surprise to anyone that has been in the fire service for more than a few minutes that seconds count. Whether on an EMS response or structure fire (as listed above), our ability to arrive at an incident quickly often determines whether there will be a good outcome or a bad one.

This video ( <https://youtu.be/piofZLySsNc> ) shows a room reaching flashover in less than three minutes. Now add in the dangers of newer lightweight construction and you can see that every minute and every second really does count. **Time is of the essence.**

What can WE, YOUR COMPANY, and YOU do about it? How about when you are at the station? Every day, every shift, every run you can work towards making those seconds count. It starts when you come to work and check your equipment. By ensuring your turnout gear is on the truck in working order (First Thing!), you are saving time. The sooner you are dressed and ready to respond the quicker out the door you will be. Not only will you arrive at the scene prepared to go, as the public expects you to, but you will arrive sooner. Maybe you will have put yourself and our Department in a position to make a difference.

After arrival at work, you should not be surprised when an alarm comes in, just as you should not be surprised when you turn the corner and see a fire. Certainly not every response you go to will be the big one. In fact, most won't be. You should however “**expect fire**” on every response. Being ready to go is as much a physical condition as a mental one.

You can save time by practicing turn out drills (both outside and inside the apparatus). By knowing your response district. By training and studying the streets and intersections. By learning the best routes and even different routes in case you can't go the way you planned. Knowing your districts can also help with apparatus placement and being familiar with the target hazards.

By not doing these things, you WILL contribute to delayed responses. We must turn out, with purpose, and sense of urgency!

We are in a profession that demands vigilance at every moment. Also, it is important to remember that we are usually going from sheer boredom to complete chaos in minutes. Mentally we need to prepare for this so that when the time comes, we are ready for whatever happens.

## Fire General Order, Effective August 24, 2020

It is the expectation of all Chief Officer that everyone shows up for work dressed appropriately, prepared for duty, and eager to provide the highest level of services required to meet our organizational mission. And it all starts with #TurnOutQuickly. We will be stepping up our supervision in all areas of work preparation, turn out, and arrival of our companies to ALL incidents. We will be monitoring response times; turn out requirements (times greater than 1 minute during daytime hours and 2 minutes during sleep time **will not be allowed**...it is important to note that travel time (the second phase of response time – from enroute on radio with wheels in motion to arrival at location...plus we are evaluating the use of MDT's to assist with enroute notification) actually starts when the officer in charge calls out on the radio the unit is enroute! No officer of any emergency apparatus or vehicle is to call out enroute until all members are safely seat belted in vehicle and the vehicle is in motion! For the record, it has been the POLICY of the DFD for 25 years that turnout during daytime hours is 45 seconds and nighttime (sleep time) is 90 seconds. I am increasing this time to 60 seconds during daylight hours and 120 seconds for nighttime responses. These times will be strictly enforced!

Total response times shall be within the 4-6-minute timeframe! These are reasonable expectations and anytime companies exceed the 6-minute time, they **must justify** in the narrative of the report and explain to their shift commander why the times are in excess of 6-minutes. There are times when you cannot prevent this from happening (errors during dispatch, road closures you are not aware of, mechanical failures of apparatus, etc.). But anytime they do occur, the officer in charge must correct the report, document in narrative, and advise the shift commander. The shift commander will perform a review of the report and sign off that the report and circumstances are correct and valid. All Officers and/or acting Officers are required to evaluate and sign off on all response times prior to completing reports (prior to leaving shift). The Deputy Chief will be evaluating reports and discussing times with Battalion Chiefs when they are beyond the 6 minute timeframe.

For any response time in excess of 8 minutes, the shift commander will be required to sit down with the Deputy Chief to discuss the response in person. Delayed response times resulting from members not prepared for a response, not quickly turning out, or poor understanding of territory, will not be tolerated and will be corrected with disciplinary action. This is our MISSION! Everyone should begin immediately with developing in-house company programs to ensure this objective is adhered to and achieved. Seconds Count!