




**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER**

General Order Number: 06-37	Effective Date: April 8, 2021
Division: Emergency Medical	
Chapter: Emergency Incident Gross Decontamination	
By Order of the Fire Chief: Tiffany D. Green 	Issue Date: April 8, 2021

POLICY

This General Order establishes an on-scene gross decontamination process and is intended to reduce our personnel's exposure to carcinogens and other toxins associated with structural firefighting. The gross decontamination process shall be utilized when Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) is worn and/or personnel are exposed to products of incomplete combustion. Using a soap and water solution to clean PPE immediately after exiting an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) atmosphere has shown a median reduction of fire ground contaminants of up to 85%.

DEFINITIONS

On-Scene Gross Decontamination – A physical process used to remove or significantly reduce accumulated surface contaminants, products of combustion and substances that have been identified as harmful.

PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Gross Decontamination

- A. After exposure to the products of combustion or any potentially harmful toxins, it is the responsibility of the Incident Commander, the company officer, and each member to ensure that all personnel complete the on-scene gross decontamination process. This shall include all personnel operating in an IDLH atmosphere, and other emergency or non-emergency incidents including, but not limited, to:
 - 1. Structure Fires
 - 2. Training Fires (to include flashover simulation)
 - 3. Vehicle Fires
 - 4. Other incidents where products of combustion occur

- B. On-scene gross decontamination is a strategic priority and a personal safety benchmark identified in *General Order 06-01, Standard Operating Procedures for Structural Fires*.

- C. Required Equipment
 - 1. Decontamination buckets shall be placed on all front-line suppression apparatus (engines). Each bucket will contain the following:



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- a) 3/4" garden hose
- b) garden hose nozzle
- c) pump panel adapter
- d) soft bristle brush
- e) personal wipes
- f) 45 gallon trash bags should be added to the bucket for post decontamination gear collection as needed

II. On-Scene Gross Decontamination Process

- A. Once out of an IDLH atmosphere, or at the direction of the Incident Commander, gross decontamination shall be completed as soon as practical. All members shall complete this process prior to reporting to Rehab.
- B. The wet decontamination process should be used if ambient temperatures are above 40 degrees Fahrenheit. This is the preferred method as it reduces the most contaminants.
 1. Personnel will return to the apparatus for gross decontamination. Special Service companies should utilize the closest engine.
 2. Personnel must remain in full PPE and "on air."
 3. Starting at the helmet, personnel should have all visible debris brushed off using a downward motion and continue until all PPE has been brushed.
 4. Using the dedicated decontamination hose line, and being cautious not to saturate PPE, personnel should be sprayed with water from head to toe, working around the body and finishing at the boots.
 5. After rinsing the exterior portions of their PPE and SCBA, personnel may go off-air and begin to doff their PPE.
 6. Use the included "fire wipes" to wipe face, neck, throat, arms, and armpits.
 7. Personnel shall now complete post-incident rehab.
 8. If personnel are called from Rehab back into operations and are re-exposed to an IDLH atmosphere, they shall complete an additional on-scene gross decontamination.
 9. Once released from the incident scene, PPE should be doffed, stored in a plastic bag and placed in an exterior compartment or apparatus catch-all.
- C. The dry decontamination should be used when temperatures are below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The process is as follows:
 1. Personnel will return to the apparatus for gross decontamination. Special Service companies should utilize the closest engine.
 2. Personnel must remain in full PPE and "on air."
 3. Starting at the helmet, personnel should have all visible debris brushed off using a downward motion and continue until all PPE has been brushed.
 4. After brushing the exterior portions of their PPE and SCBA, personnel may go off-air and begin to doff their PPE.



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5. Use the included “fire wipes” to wipe face, neck, throat, arms, and armpits.
6. Personnel shall now complete post-incident rehab.
7. If personnel are called from Rehab back into operations and are re-exposed to an IDLH atmosphere, they shall complete an additional on-scene gross decontamination.

III. Post-Incident Procedures

A. Return to Station

1. To ensure complete decontamination, the Incident Commander or respective Battalion Chief shall designate crews “out of service for decontamination” for up to one (1) hour after being released from the incident.

B. Transfer companies shall remain at the alternate worksite until decontamination has been completed or they are released by the Battalion Chief.

1. PPE that does not need to be cleaned by a vendor can be cleaned at the station as recommended by the manufacturer. If practical, PPE should also be cleaned using one of the Department’s extractor washing machines, installed at various stations.
2. All tools, hose, and nozzles that were exposed to an IDLH shall be cleaned with warm soapy water or as recommended by the manufacturer.
3. Portable radios shall be cleaned following the manufacturer recommendations.
4. Personnel shall clean SBCA harnesses and bottles with warm soapy water or as recommended by the manufacturer. If able, allow SCBA harnesses to dry prior to returning them to the apparatus.
5. PPE that has been damaged or needs professional cleaning shall be bagged and sealed in accordance with *General Order 08-13, Personal Protective Equipment*.
6. Contaminated work uniforms shall be washed and dried at the station.
7. To reduce the toxin absorption rate, all personnel that operated in the IDLH or encountered carcinogens shall shower and change into a clean uniform. Special attention during the shower should be given to areas that are commonly associated with increased cancer risk (face, neck, hands, arms, legs, and groin).

IV. Returning to Service

A. The officer in charge shall ensure the following actions have been completed prior to returning to service:

1. Tools and equipment have been cleaned and dried.
2. PPE that is wet shall be allowed to dry and be replaced with a second assigned set.
3. Apparatus cab has been cleaned.
4. Personnel have showered and changed into a clean work uniform.
5. All personnel have stated their operational readiness.



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REFERENCES

N/A

FORMS / ATTACHMENTS

N/A