

CHAPTER II	Operations
SUBJECT	Firefighter Safety
TOPIC	Rapid Assistance Teams (R.A.T.)

A. **Scope**

To establish procedures outlining the operations of a Rapid Assistance Team at a structure fire. The goal of this procedure is to create a proactive Rapid Assistance Team to prevent the necessity of a firefighter rescue by removing all barriers to exit allowing the firefighter to self-rescue.

B. **Assignment**

On the initial dispatch of a one-alarm fire the third closest available Truck Company will be designated as the R.A.T. Truck and the third (fourth on high hazard alarms) closest Engine will be designated as the Safety Engine. The Safety Engine will increase the size of the RAT Truck by at least two members and will supply two members, one being the Officer, to be designated as Accountability. (See Section 202.07 Accountability).

C. **Designation and Reporting**

The radio designation for the RAT Truck will be “RAT” followed by the appropriate Company number. (Example: Truck 32 responding as the RAT Truck will be designated “RAT 32”) Upon arrival of the Safety Engine, the Officer and one other member will assume the duties of “Accountability”. The other two / three members will now become part of the “RAT” Truck and will remain as such for Accountability purposes throughout the Incident. They will report to and be the responsibility of the “RAT” Officer.

D. **Proactive RAT Truck actions and tasks**

Upon arrival and after reporting to the Incident Commander, the RAT Truck will perform an initial RAT size up of the structure. This size up will include a complete survey around the structure (360°) identifying all possible means of entrance and egress from the structure as well as conditions and/or obstacles that may prevent a firefighter from rapidly exiting the structure. (Example: Doors padlocked closed, Security bars on windows, etc.) The RAT Company officer shall report all findings to the Incident Commander. All impediments to rapid firefighter exit from the structure shall be removed. All members of the RAT Truck, except the Accountability member, shall perform this size up. **All members of the RAT Truck must stay together as a Company and not involve themselves in any activity that reduces their ability to perform their primary function of firefighter rescue!**

If firefighters are operating above ground level, portable or aerial ladders should be placed to upper story windows or roofs on each side of the structure where appropriate. These ladders will provide an escape route should interior positions or roof operations become untenable. A safety fire line shall be stretched and placed in front of the building. This line is **not** to be used for firefighting purposes. This is to only be utilized if needed during a “RAT” operation or rescue. Once this has been accomplished lights shall be set up to illuminate all means of egress out of the building if this task has not already been performed by another Company.

Proactive RAT Truck Action Checklist:

1. Report to Command – Face to Face as an entire company. (Report to IC as “RAT 32”)
2. Perform size up of the structure – A full walk around of the structure (360°)
Report findings to Incident Commander
3. Remove any obstacles to firefighter exit (Doors, Window bars)
4. Place portable ground ladders to upper stories of structure
5. Stretch a safety line to the front of the building.
6. Remain alert to the radio and available on the **exterior** of the structure. (Most fires will require the RAT to remain on the exterior of the structure however; a high-rise or large commercial structure may require the RAT to stage in a forward position.)
7. **Stay together as a Company.**
8. Upon arrival of the Safety Engine, two (2) additional members will report to the RAT Officer making the entire RAT team six (6) members.
9. Determine if additional Rapid Assistance Teams are needed and advise Command.
10. Illuminate means of egress on outside of the building.

D. Responsibilities and Actions to be taken in the event a “Mayday” is declared.

1. Incident Commander:

- a. Shall immediately transmit an additional alarm to be placed in staging
- b. Shall immediately request Dispatch to initiate the “Mayday” procedure which includes: an additional Alarm for staging, additional RAT Team, and an additional District Chief.
- c. Shall appoint a RAT Chief to command the rescue operation
- d. Shall clear the fire ground radio channel.
- e. Shall order all fire suppression Companies operating on the scene to the Mayday Channel on the assigned Fire Ground Talk Group leaving the distressed firefighter(s) on the original operating Fire Ground channel.
- f. Shall conduct a PAR as soon as possible to determine who and how many firefighters are in peril.
- g. Shall continue to direct the firefighting effort to extinguish the body of fire to the extent safely possible, thus making the structure more tenable for rescue operations. (The I.C. must focus his attention on controlling the fire and allow the RAT Chief to manage the rescue

effort. The attack on the fire must continue)

- h. Shall designate a Staging Officer and Staging area for all incoming units.

2. **DISPATCH**

- a. Immediately Dispatch an additional Alarm.
- b. Immediately Dispatch a 3rd District Chief to replace the 2nd in District Chief that has now become the RAT Chief
- c. Immediately Dispatch an additional RAT Company.
- d. Page the Administrative/Command Staff. (All Call Page)

Note: The Incident Commander may have to decide to evacuate all members out of the structure including the Rapid Assistance Team. The goal is to preserve as many lives as possible.

3. **RAT Chief**

- a. Shall report directly to the Incident Commander. (This position is subordinate to the Incident Commander even if the Chief's are of equal rank)
- b. Shall direct the rescue effort of the RAT Team from the exterior of the structure or a forward Command location in the event of a high-rise or large structure.
- c. Shall assemble RAT Assist teams to assist with the rescue efforts. This may entail laying additional hose lines to protect the RAT Team and/or victim. If victim is trapped, a protective hose line shall be put in service.
- d. Shall communicate directly with the downed firefighter on original fire ground channel.
- e. Shall maintain accountability for all RAT teams deployed into the structure.
- f. Radio designation shall be "RAT Command"

4. **Rapid Assistance Team**

- a. Upon declaration of a "Mayday" shall report immediately to the Incident Commander to determine last known location of distressed firefighter from Accountability Officer and retrieve RAT Pack.
- b. Determine with assistance of RAT Chief the best location to make entry to search for distressed firefighter.
- c. Shall perform a rapid search of the structure with emphasis on the distressed fire fighter's last known location
- d. The use of a tag line while searching is highly recommended.
- e. Upon finding the distressed firefighter, shall immediately transmit to RAT Command the condition, location, Company, and identity of the firefighter.
- f. If no extrication is involved, the RAT Team shall remove the firefighter from the structure
- g. If the firefighter requires extrication, the RAT Team shall determine the most efficient access to the distressed firefighter, communicate this information to the RAT Command, and deploy the RAT Rope to the

exterior of the structure. The RAT rope will signify **the most direct route to the firefighter from the exterior of the structure**. The RAT Company Officer shall perform a rapid size-up of the extrication needs and request the necessary equipment and personnel from RAT Command.

- h. The RAT Company Officer shall be in command of the rescue effort from the interior. The RAT Officer answers directly to the RAT Chief. If the RAT Officer must leave the structure he/she will designate another interior rescue Officer for the RAT Chief to communicate with.
- i. The RAT Company Officer shall maintain close supervision of his/her members and shall be cognizant of their air supply and physical condition.

5. **Heavy Rescue Company (s)**

- a. Upon declaration of a firefighter "Mayday", the Heavy Rescue Company shall be relieved of their firefighting duties if operating on the scene.
- b. The Heavy Rescue Company shall immediately report to RAT Command in full PPE with fully charged SCBA and await orders.
- c. The Heavy Rescue Company shall not be used as part of the search effort
- d. The Heavy Rescue Company primary responsibility will be to perform technical extrication once the RAT Team locates the victim.
- e. When the Heavy Rescue Company is/are deployed inside the structure to extricate a firefighter they shall report to the RAT Company Officer. The Heavy Rescue Company is/are in charge of the extrication however the RAT Company Officer has responsibility for the interior rescue effort

6. **RAT Assist**

- a. The RAT assist team(s) can consist of an Engine or a Truck Company depending on the nature of the task to be performed and will report to RAT Command and stand by.
- b. RAT Assist teams may be utilized to place a protective hose line between the fire and the RAT Team and/or the distressed firefighter.
- c. RAT Assist Teams may be utilized to place ground ladders or to transport SCBA cylinders, tools and equipment to affect the extrication of the distressed firefighter.

7. **Safety Engine**

- a. Will be dispatched on all one-alarm dispatches.
- b. The Officer of the Safety Engine will assume the duties of Accountability Officer and will be assisted by another member of the Safety Engine.
- c. The remaining members of the Safety Engine will report to the RAT Company Officer forming a six (6) to eight (8) member RAT Team.

8. **Accountability**

- a. Is the Officer of the Safety Engine.
- b. Shall immediately set up the MSA SCBA Monitoring System Computer in the District Vehicle (Incident Commander's vehicle).
- c. Shall set up the Tactron Accountability Board (magnetic board) and track the location of all Companies on the scene. **All on scene Company Officers must report any change of location on the fire ground!** (I.E. "Truck 21 has an all clear on the first floor and is moving to the second floor.")
- d. Radio designation is "Accountability"
- e. If Accountability is uncertain as to the location of a Company, Accountability shall request location verification on the fire ground channel. (I.E. "Accountability to Ladder 21 – Location?" Ladder 21 can simply reply, "Ladder 21 second floor")

9. **Safety Captain (SO2)**

- a. In charge of overall scene and operational safety.
- b. Reports directly to the Incident Commander
- c. Shall evaluate the proactive RAT tactics of the RAT Company and take actions to correct insufficient RAT operations

Notes:

- Incidents of large geographical size or large structures such as high-rise buildings may require the use of multiple RAT Teams.