

7010.05	Safeguarding the Scene Standard Operating Guide	
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This procedure is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The procedure should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this procedure, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.

Related Policies: Article III, 334.01 thru 339.08., Chief's Memorandum 2017-027, Handling of Patient Personal Items Policy.
Applicable HI Statutes:

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Guide is to establish clear protocols and procedures for the Hawaii Fire Department (HFD) personnel to safeguard valuables, evidence, and equipment at the scene of emergencies. This guide aims to ensure the integrity, security, and accountability of all items encountered during emergency response operations.

II. APPLICABILITY

The Standard Operating Guide is applicable to all Employees within the Hawai'i Fire Department.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. Safe Handling of Debris. At fires, no debris is to be thrown from a height unless essential in the extinguishment of fire. When it is necessary that materials be thrown or glass be broken, it must be verified that the falling material will do no damage or cause injury to anyone.
- B. Leaving Extinguishment Equipment Serviceable. On premises where fire has occurred, sprinkler systems, standpipes, fire escape ladders and other auxiliary firefighting equipment used shall, where possible, be left in a serviceable condition.
- C. Protection of Valuables at Fires. Members shall make every effort to prevent loss or theft of money, jewelry, or other valuables at the scene of an alarm. Full authority is granted by the laws to Fire Department officers in charge of fires to remove and exclude all persons who in their judgment are not essential to the fire extinguishment or preservation of the surrounding property. This authority shall be used to keep away all people who do not have business at the scene of fires. Before leaving the scene of a building fire, the last fire company shall see that the owner, his/her designee, or the police are notified to assume responsibility for the building contents.
 - 1. Any member finding money, jewelry or other valuables at the scene of an alarm will immediately report to his/her immediate superior who will report to the officer in charge. The officer in charge shall retain the valuables unless the proper owner can be located and sign a receipt for the valuables or receive the valuables in the presence of a Hawaii Fire Department witness. In either case, a report accompanied by any receipts secured will be submitted through channels promptly.



2. Any member receiving a complaint of theft or loss of valuables at the scene of an alarm will immediately report to his/her immediate superior who will report to the officer in charge. As quickly as possible, the officer in charge will institute an investigation. If he/she cannot immediately clear the complaint, he/she will report the complaint and his/her preliminary investigation to the Assistant Chief of Operations. Subsequently, unless otherwise directed by the Deputy Chief, the Assistant Chief will make his own investigation and report the results in writing to the Chief within 24 hours after the start of his investigation.

D. Situations Where a Patient is Transported by Medic (HFD Or AMR).

1. The patient's personal belongings shall be given to the patient or a family member and documented identifying the chain of custody on the PCR.
2. If there is no family member at the scene, the patient's personal belongings shall be given to the MICT in charge and transported with the patient, and then passed on to the ER personnel or HPD if transported to a location other than a medical facility. All personal belongings shall be documented along with the name or badge number of the person that the items were given to on the PCR.
3. If the personal belongings are too bulky or not feasible to be transported with the patient, the belongings shall be given to the family or left in the custody with a relative, HPD, or HFD personnel at the scene and documented accordingly on the PCR.
4. If the personal belongings are too bulky and the patient is alone (no HPD or family), and rapid transport is necessary, the item(s) can be left at the scene but documented on the PCR. If such items are deemed valuable (utilize best judgement), FCCC shall be notified who will then advise HPD. If practical, another HFD unit can transport the item(s) back to their station and secured until HPD can take over custody.

E. Situations Where a Deceased Victim Is Turned Over To Hawai'i Police Department (HPD)

1. The patient's personal belongings shall be given to a family member, relative, or HPD at the scene and documented identifying the chain of custody on the PCR or incident report (Ocean Safety).
2. For all drowning incidents, notate what type of swim equipment (if any) was being used by the patient, i.e. one or two piece mask and snorkel, SCUBA, fins, boards, etc., and document on the PCR and/or incident report. All equipment must be secured with their personal belongings and retained as identified above.

- F. Accounting for Equipment. Company Commanders shall, before leaving the emergency scene, make an inspection to determine that all their equipment is accounted for. If it is not, and it is reasonable to do so, a search will be made before leaving the scene. Upon return to quarters all Company Commanders who have excesses or shortages of equipment will notify their Battalion Chief and be guided by their instruction.



1. Battalion Chiefs shall thoroughly investigate any reports of missing Department property and promptly submit a written report of the investigation.
- G. Notifications for Responding Chief. The responding chief officer shall be notified immediately when any of the following circumstances exist at the scene of an alarm:
1. Suspected false alarm violators who are apprehended, or information is obtained which may lead to their apprehension.
 2. The alarm was the result of an explosion.
 3. Fatalities occur at fire scenes, or people critically burned are found.
 4. The fire is of suspicious or incendiary nature.
 5. The fire is a repetitious one caused by juveniles.
- H. Cause, Loss and Other Information. During fire operations, members shall be on the alert for any evidence of the cause of the fire. Every effort shall be made to preserve evidence of incendiarism. In the absence of a chief officer, Company Commanders should give careful consideration before removing debris or disturbing the conditions surrounding the fire.
1. If the company leaves the scene of a suspicious or incendiary fire prior to arrival of a chief officer or Fire Inspector, a member shall be left to prevent disturbance of conditions surrounding the fire and to deny entrance to anyone not specifically authorized by fire officials. Members on this assignment shall refrain from discussing the fire except with the chief officer in charge.
 2. It shall be the responsibility of the officer in charge to determine the cause of all fires. If the cause cannot be readily determined, the chief in charge may refer it to the Fire Prevention Bureau for investigation and report.
 3. Officers operating at fires and emergencies shall avail themselves of information necessary to complete the required reports. For large structural or suspicious fires, every attempt shall be made by the officer in charge to identify witnesses for use in future investigations.
 4. Losses, when occasioned by the following, are not chargeable against the fire loss estimate of the County of Hawaii, and no estimate of loss will be made by the officer in charge of the fire.
 - i. Explosions.
 - ii. Vessels arriving in port with fire aboard.
 - iii. Aircraft fires, when the result of crashes.
 - iv. Fires on military installations or properties.
 5. In making a loss estimate, the officer should consider the cost of replacement rather than the original cost of construction. He/she should bear in mind that it is about 10-percent more expensive to tear and rebuild than to build new, and that the value of an old building is generally less than the value of a new one of the same type. The County of Hawaii Building Division replacement cost estimate can be used as a guideline. No set rule can be followed in estimating the loss to furnishing and clothing, but estimated acquisition cost, less depreciation, may be used as a guideline.

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6. After an incident of importance is brought under control, the officer in charge is authorized to issue verbal statements to news media representatives upon request. This statement is to briefly summarize to the best of his/her knowledge what has happened at the incident.

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