

IMPORTANT SAFETY BULLETIN

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & HEALTH ADMINISTRATION RULES A FINAL DECISION ON 2 – IN/2 O U T*

The US Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has given final approval to the new 2-in/2-out fire fighter safety regulation as part of OSHA's new respiratory standard.

Now that these new rules are signed, there is no more ambiguity on this issue. The 2-in/2-out rule is now a federal mandate for all fire fighters in OSHA states and federal fire fighters. It should also stand as a strong safety precedent in non-OSHA states.

What the New Rule Says:

The 2-in/2-out rule states that whenever fire fighters enter a burning structure they must do so in teams of at least two that operate in direct voice or visual contact. Radios or other means of electronic contact shall not be substituted for direct visual contact for employees within the individual team in the danger area.

At least two other fully equipped and trained fire fighters must remain outside the structure monitoring those inside and prepared to rescue them. One of these fire fighters must be free of all other tasks in order to account for, and if necessary, initiate rescue for those fire fighters inside.

The other fire fighter is permitted to perform other tasks, but only if those tasks could be immediately abandoned without Jeopardizing the safety and health of others at the emergency scene.

It is OSHA's position that no one may serve as a standby member of the fire fighting team when the other activities in which he or she is engaged inhibit his or her ability to assist in or perform rescue, if necessary, or are of such importance that they cannot be abandoned without placing other fire fighters in danger.

* Reprinted from NAFER Newsletter, January 1998, Page 5

Student Information Sheet #1

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TWO IN/TWO OUT RULE

OSHA has determined that these regulations are in effect at any fire which is beyond the initial or beginning stage and which cannot be controlled or extinguished by portable fire extinguishers, Class II standpipe, or small hose systems without the need for protective clothing or breathing apparatus. Any fire beyond the "incipient stage" is considered by OSHA to be "immediately dangerous to life and health" (IDLH).

Also, these OSHA regulations recognize deviations to regulations in an emergency or "good Samaritan" operation involving life-threatening situations where immediate action is necessary. Such deviations from the regulations must be "exceptions" not the rule. In fact, the minimum (technical) citations are still to be issued for such deviations from the standard, but no penalties are assessed nor is corrective action mandated.

No exception shall be permitted when there is no possibility to save lives.

Student Information Sheet #2

TWO IN/TWO OUT RULE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Temporary Directive 98-9

Approved by: Jim Owen

Issue Date: September 1998

Expiration Date: March 1999

Reference: This document will ultimately become an amendment to the 1700 Health and Fitness Handbook with the new Section Number 1736.

Distribution: All holders of the 1700 Health and Fitness Procedures Handbook

This temporary directive establishes minimum requirements for interior operations within atmospheres that are immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH). IDLH is defined as an atmosphere that poses an immediate threat to life, would cause irreversible adverse health effects, or would impair an individual's ability to escape from a dangerous atmosphere. Interior operations include the physical activity of fire suppression, rescue or any emergency activity inside of buildings, enclosed structures or confined spaces. Interior structural fire fighting operations within IDLH atmospheres are those fire situations beyond the incipient stage. Incipient stage of development is defined as a fire which is in the initial or beginning stage and can be controlled or extinguished by means of a portable fire extinguisher, Class II standpipe or small hose systems without the need for protective clothing or breathing apparatus. Any structure fire beyond the incipient stage is considered IDLH.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERIOR OPERATIONS WITHIN IDLH ATMOSPHERES

- A. All firefighters entering IDLH atmospheres shall wear Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA's).
- B. The buddy system will be used. The firefighters will remain in voice and/or visual contact at all times with one another.
- C. Voice, visual, radio or signal communications will be maintained between those firefighters inside the IDLH atmosphere and those firefighters outside the IDLH atmosphere.

Student Information Sheet #2

Continued

TWO IN/TWO OUT RULE

- D. At least two firefighters trained, equipped, and available to provide effective rescue will be identified as Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC) and will be located outside the IDLH atmosphere.
1. One of the identified RIC firefighters is responsible to account for and, if necessary, initiate a firefighter rescue while firefighters are within an IDLH atmosphere.
 2. The other identified RIC firefighter may be assigned to an additional role so long as they are able to perform assistance or rescue activities without jeopardizing the safety or health of any other firefighters working at the location.
 3. The incident commander or designee is notified before the identified RIC firefighters located outside the IDLH atmosphere enter the IDLH atmosphere to provide emergency rescue.

EXCEPTION:

If, upon arriving at the scene, firefighters find an imminent life-threatening situation where immediate action may prevent the loss of life or serious injury, the above requirements may be suspended. When such immediate action is necessary the Emergency Command Center (ECC) will be notified. The ECC shall notify all responding resources that an entry is in progress. Responding resources shall provide the necessary rescue support and backup upon their arrival.