



Policy 609  
Emergency Operations  
Storm Watch  
02/01/08

Scope:

This policy applies to all members and employees of the fire department. This applies to full time, part time, paid on call, and volunteer members and employees of the fire department.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a guideline during severe thunderstorm and storm watch.

Background:

There are three strategic goals for the Hiawatha Fire and Rescue during severe thunderstorm and tornado events.

1. Protect fire department resources including staff and equipment.
  - a. Pre staffing the station reduces risk occurring to staff members responding to the community and provides them opportunity to take care of their family.
  - b. By dispersing the apparatus throughout the community, we are less likely to suffer a catastrophic loss of service if a situation occurs at a single site.
2. Protect life by observing weather conditions and assisting in warning the public of potentially dangerous situations.
  - a. Distributing response apparatus throughout the fire district provides an improved ability to view the storm and the subsequent damage caused by a storm
3. Preparing for potential incidents that may require a response from the Hiawatha Fire and Rescue.
  - a. The disbursement of apparatus provides us the ability to rapidly respond to any calls for service.

Safety:

Personnel shall respond with full bunker gear for storm watch. Members may wear EMS or brush fire gear if it had been provided but the member must take his/her bunker gear. This prepares them for fire related responses and affords them some degree of protection from flying debris in a high wind situation.

When storm spotting, personnel should keep in mind the possible need to evacuate or take cover. Remember, that if attempting to run from a tornado in a vehicle that generally it is better to run at right angles to the direction of movement. Also it is sometimes not possible to run. Remember most injuries in a tornado are from flying debris. Stay as low to the ground as possible. The safest position is hiding in a ditch or culvert. Keep your helmet on to protect your head. When you arrive to your assigned location the officer should pre-plan and locate a place of refuge before it is needed.



## General:

### 1. Personnel Response-

- A. Staff should monitor weather conditions during storm season. They should prepare their families prior to any response to the station. Since the station does not have a suitable storm shelter, it is recommended that staff NOT bring their family to the station during storm response, except under rare circumstances.
- B. Typically we are paged well in advance of a storm hitting the area. Emergency response to the station using blue lights is not normally necessary. Respond routinely and safely.
- C. Upon arrival to the station, sign in on the sign-in sheet and wait in apparatus bay 1 near the radio room for assignment.
- D. Once the initial apparatus have been deployed with their crew the remaining personnel may move throughout the station in order to watch the storm from multiple directions from within the station.
- E. Do not enter the radio room or conference room; those rooms are reserved for the IC and their assistants.
- F. Do not leave the station until you have been released by IC. If you must leave early, notify the IC.

### 2. Radio Usage-

- A. All routine radio traffic with the station and between apparatus shall take place on Fire OPS, using truck mounted radios when possible.
- B. The Hiawatha Fire Base will answer all references from Emergency Management to Hiawatha Fire and Rescue on the assigned frequency (typically EMA)
- C. Individual apparatus traffic directly to Emergency Management will only be allowed in emergency situations. IE: Tornado on the ground.
- D. All apparatus shall monitor EMA frequency, using a separate WT where possible so not to interfere with traffic on Fire OPS.
- E. Any Ambulance or fire calls beyond storm watch will be assigned frequencies by incident commander.
- F. Each apparatus shall use City Band as a backup in the event of failure of Fire OPS radio.



### 3. Operations

- A. As with all responses, Incident Command shall be established, and a command post shall be established at the Hiawatha Fire Station.
- B. Should situations dictate, command may be moved to an alternate location; Secondary locations include, but are not limited to:
  - i. City Hall/Police Department.
  - ii. City Works Facility
  - iii. A vehicle command post at a fixed location.
- C. The Incident Commander may designate additional command staff positions as needed. Those may include but are not limited to.
  - i. Operations Section Chief: This person may roam the district and provide recon information to command, and coordinate in field responses as needed.
  - ii. Command Aides; These persons will staff the radio room, observe weather radar, monitor news media reports, and complete needed documentation as required.
  - iii. Should the storm watch develop into an extended response, other portions of incident command staff may be activated. They shall confer with the city manager regarding the activation and integration of the CITIES Emergency Operation Plan.
  - iv. Using various information and intelligence sources, Command shall determine the area of greatest threat. With the strategic objectives of life safety and protecting city resources, command shall prioritize the placement of apparatus. Where apparatus shall be placed throughout the fire district. The direction of the storm is the greatest determining factor of where to place our apparatus.
  - v. Suggested locations are:
    - 1. I-380 and Tower Terrace Rd.
    - 2. Seminole Valley Rd near the park.
    - 3. Blaris Ferry Rd near Aggregates
  - vi. Vehicles shall be staffed as fully as possible. E-284, E-285, and S-289 shall be the vehicles used for severe weather observation.
  - vii. Engine 286, Truck 1, and the ambulances stay at station. There shall be a fire crew for E-286 and/or T-1 as well as a medical crew for the ambulance assigned and ready to respond to emergency calls as needed.
  - viii. Should situation dictate, command may direct the relocation of all units.
- D. Command will attempt to keep field units posted on conditions.
- E. Command may terminate when they believe all strategic goals are met.



#### 4. Additional Responses

- A. During the course of the storm, other emergency responses may occur. Apparatus assigned to weather spotting shall wait to be assigned to calls by command.

#### Enforcement

1. If a member fails to follow this policy during the course of the response, the incident commander may direct the individual to sign out and leave the station. That individual will be referred to command staff for further discipline.
2. The Chief may take disciplinary actions against a member who fails to adhere to this policy. Action may include, but is not limited to.
  - i. Return to probationary status
  - ii. Denial of work hours or pay per call status.
  - iii. Denial of Educational or Training opportunities
  - iv. Suspension.
  - v. Removal from the department.