Local Fire Department

Fire Incident Reporting Standard Operating Guide

Last Date Reviewed: March 23, 2017

**Terms and Definitions**

* **NFIRS**- National Fire Incident Reporting System; a uniform standard for reporting incidents to which fire departments respond
* **FDID**- Fire department identification (number); a unique identifier for each fire department participating in NFIRS and SC State NFIRS
* **Incident** **report**- An NFIRS-standard form completed to inform what happened during a call responded to by a fire department
* **Data**- Observable facts collected for the purpose of completing an incident report
* **Software**- A means of inputting data into an incident report; can be either NFIRS’ Data Entry Tool (Client Tool) or an approved third-party vendor’s software

**Fire Incident Reporting**

* Fire reporting is an essential component of understanding the types of calls our jurisdiction has in which our department is called upon to serve. As such, we can better analyze what resources are expended, how much we are dedicating to service, and how we can reduce our community’s risk of the loss of life and property.
* Our department is expected to participate in South Carolina’s State NFIRS Program, and by extension, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) NFIRS Program. Our FDID is 47002.
* Our department is expected to write an incident report for every call made for service in our jurisdiction, including non-fire and non-emergency calls.
  + Our jurisdiction includes the County of Fire Marshal, and excludes the City of Fire Academy. Its borders are I-20 at Exit 68, Fairfield Avenue, Broad River, and Jenkinsville Street.
  + If we make a call for service outside of our jurisdiction, we will write an incident report as a mutual or automatic aid call.
  + Calls canceled en route are still documented, per the request of the State NFIRS Program Manager.
  + Calls made for public service, including education, will be documented.

**Collecting** **Data**

* Everyone is expected to collect data at a scene using observations and within the parameters of our fire reporting software.
* The incident commander (or his/her designee) will collect the data by writing it down (i.e. on a pad of paper/the run report/ a department-issued laptop or tablet) which is always available in the fire vehicle.
* The incident commander (or his/her designee) will work with fire department responders at a scene to collect information relevant to the incident, the fire reporting software, and research projects.
* The incident commander (or his/her designee) will ask contact information of owners, witnesses, and persons involved.

**Entering Reports**

* The person who collected the data at the scene will take ownership of entering the report.
* Reports are entered as soon as the responder(s) return to the fire department, but no later than 96 hours after the incident.
* It is encouraged that everyone who worked at the incident scene assists the person entering the reports, as necessary.
* A person who has completed less than five reports will work with a trained, experienced end user or administrator as his supervisor.
* Our department’s software to enter reports is the NFIRS Client Tool.
* Our department will use NFIRS’ DEBI tool on the NFIRS website to enter our reports.
* Reports are filled out in their entirety, with an emphasis on accuracy and completeness. A report is not complete until it is, at the minimum, valid per the standards of NFIRS.
* After completely filling out the report, the end user must submit the report to an administrator for quality control.
  + If the person completing the report is an administrator, he/she will ask another administrator for feedback and quality control.

**Quality Control**

* Administrators are responsible for quality controlling their department’s incident reports.
  + In our department, one administrator is responsible for the quality, submissions, and analysis of reports.
  + In our department, select administrators, designated as such by the Chief, are responsible for the quality, submissions, and analysis of reports.
* An incident report is considered to be of good quality and eligible for submission to NFIRS if:
  + It is valid per the national minimum USFA standards.
  + It meets the minimum standards set forth by the State, as explained in the State Operating Guideline.
  + It meets the minimum standards set forth by our department, as explained in the last section of this guide.
* Data and reports should be complete, accurate, reliable, and timely.
  + Completeness- In order to obtain the complete picture, reports are completed beyond the national minimum standards. Incident reports should be completed at the minimum to validity.
  + Accuracy- Data is truthful at the time it is inputted. End users should use facts to complete each data entry field in the report.
    - If there are data entry fields which no facts can be determined, the administrator should direct the end user to input “unknown” or “undetermined,” or a similar wording.
    - Sparingly use of “unknown” and “undetermined” and similar wording.
    - Reports should be updated in order to reflect the most accurate information available.
  + Reliability- Data should be entered and the report should be completed the same way each time.
  + Timeliness- To avoid data becoming inaccurate or missing, the report should be completed as soon as possible.
  + Common data entry errors include:
    - Narratives not matching the incident
    - Incident types and action taken not matching
    - Actions taken do not reflect the three most important actions taken during the incident
    - Incomplete or mismatching non-required modules which do not correlate to the basic module
    - Injuries are not updated to fatalities, when appropriate
    - Incident types are specific, rather than having 100-series codes
    - Too many unknowns/others throughout the report

**Submitting Reports**

* Because our department uses NFIRS software or the NFIRS website to enter reports, we automatically submit our incident reports to the USFA.
  + Updates to incident reports are automatically submitted as they are needed.

**Training of End Users and Administrators**

* End users and administrators are expected to be familiar with the current policies regarding incident reporting at the local, state, and national level.
* Administrators are expected to train end users so the end users will correctly input reports.
* End users and administrators will receive training from either USFA or the OSFM of South Carolina.
  + After this initial training, end users will receive training totaling five hours a month, hosted by the department’s lead administrator for fire incident reporting.
  + Administrators are expected to have trained end users at least five hours a year, with more than one hour dedicated to supervision of new end users inputting reports.
  + Training will consist of an administrator instructing end users on some portion of inputting, checking, or submitting reports. Training may also involve demonstration on the part of the end user to show proficiency.

**Review of Policies**

* Administrators meet biweekly to discuss policies related to incident reports.
* Policies discussed at each meeting:
  + Collecting data at an incident scene
  + Inputting reports
  + Local options
    - If it is decided an option should be required in an incident report, then these will also be decided upon:
      * A timeframe for beginning to use the option (usually the 1st of each month).
      * How the option should be trained for through data collection and inputting in the report.
      * When the option should be recorded in this standard operating guide.
    - This option should be trained for immediately by the end users.
  + Submitting reports
  + Quality checking
  + Analysis of the entered data
* While some options are required or mandated by USFA or the State, the department reserves the right to interpret certain data entry fields so they may be useful to the department. These options are discussed at length in the next section.

**Local Options Required at this Department**

**Basic Module**

* A basic module is required for all incident reports. Some parts of the basic module that have a local interpretation are listed here.
* A. Key Information
  + Station- The station which responded to the incident.
* B. Location
  + Regardless of the type of incident, the address of the incident is listed here and not on the Wildland module.
  + The use of “Street Address” is only for places with a physical location, such as a house or business. Other location types are used for incidents on streets or not near a physical address.
  + Intersections are listed with the main road in the Street name and any cross streets in the Cross Street field.
  + Spell out the name of the highway. Example: Highway 9
  + Always choose the name of the road to be associated with its common name, rather than the highway number. Example: Old Apple Highway, not SC HWY 19-4-12
* C. Incident Type
  + Before the report can be considered completed, any use of a code ending in ‘00’ must be approved by an administrator.
* D. Aid Given or Received
  + Departments that have automatic aid associated with them are:
  + If toned out to a mutual or automatic aid given call, and then canceled en route, write down the incident as a canceled en route call.
  + It is the administrator’s responsibility to ensure the mutual aid flags match on all incidents.
* E. Dates and Times
  + Controlled time is mandatory for all fire calls, even if the fire is out on arrival.
  + Seconds are required for all times.
  + The alarm time is defined as the time in which dispatch gets the call for service.
* E2. Shifts and Alarms
  + Shift is required for our department.
  + The number of alarms is required for our department.
  + The district in which the incident occurred is required for our department.
* F. Actions Taken
  + Before the report can be considered completed, any use of a code ending in ‘00’ must be approved by an administrator.
* G1. Resources
  + Our department will use the Apparatus/Personnel module to complete the resources used.
* G2. Estimated Dollar Losses and Values
  + Every fire incident will have losses and pre-incident value.
* H2. Detector
  + This will not be filled out unless there was a confined fire (Incident Type Code 113-118).
* H3. Hazardous Materials Release
  + Required for any spill. If the spill is greater than 55 gallons, or there were special incidents involved, the HazMat module is used.
* K1 & K2. Person/Entity Involved/Owner
  + Relevant information will be completed for every incident. Witnesses are considered any person involved.
* L. Remarks (Narrative)
  + The format for the narrative should be as follows:
    - Why were you called?
    - What did you observe when you arrived?
    - How did you resolve the situation?
    - How did you clear the scene?
  + Narratives should be free of spelling and grammar mistakes.
  + Narratives should be limited in the use of abbreviations, jargon, vague language, and slang.
  + Canceled en route calls only need the first and last questions in the narrative format.
* M. Authorization
  + Always required for every incident.

**Using Other Modules**

* EMS Module
  + Our department does not use this module
* HazMat Module
  + Our department will use this module for significant hazardous incidents
* Wildland Module
  + Our department will use this module for incident types involving natural sources:
    - 140-143, 160, 171-173, 561, 631, and 632
* Arson Module
  + Our department will use this module for incidents involving suspicious circumstances