



## TAILBOARD TRAINING

VFIS “Tailboard Training” is a bi-weekly loss prevention program for clients. The program is intended to provide information on current safety issues facing emergency responders in a format that will quickly and effectively communicate a safe practice to implement and relate directly to your organization. These are released every other Thursday by VFIS.

# Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Safety: Incident Commander Level - Rule #3

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“Rules of Engagement” is an initiative developed by the International Association of Fire Chief’s Safety, Health and Survival Section. The goal is to help educate individuals in the fire service industry how to make it home from emergency events. Similar to “rules of engagement” for military actions, this takes a risk-reward approach to help assure situational awareness and offers a better understanding of what risks need to be considered when taking action at emergencies.

In the fire service, a basic level of risk is inherent in efforts to protect lives and property. A higher level of risk may only be acceptable if life is in danger. By evaluating the situation, the fire company officers practice actions similar to that of military officers who make calculated decisions to enter hostile situations. Evaluating every situation will help determine acceptable risk levels.

There are a total of 11 Firefighter Level Rules of Engagement and 14 Incident Commander Level Rules of Engagement. Each of these has its own Tailboard Training segment.

## Incident Commander Level - Rule of Engagement #3 Conduct an initial risk assessment and implement a safe action plan

**Objective:** Developing a safe action plan can be very beneficial. Conduct a size-up, assess the occupant survival profile and complete a risk assessment before firefighters are placed in high risk positions on the fire ground.

Conducting an assessment helps determine the risk level of subjecting firefighters to hostile environments.

The objective is to complete the training in 15 minutes or less with participants leaving the session with a better understanding of how to keep from getting hurt.

1. Review any existing protocols, strategic approaches or SOGs on this topic prior to conducting the *Tailboard Training*.
2. Ask a member to review the last incident where this scenario may have existed.
3. Have the group discuss the actions that were taken.
4. Were they done in a safe manner?
5. Were there any actions taken that could have been done differently?

NOTE: Most “after action reviews” such as this develop a number of suggestions that actions should have been or should be done differently. The officers need to balance this immediate reaction to the reality of the situation. Was the outcome positive or negative? Would the outcome have changed if actions were done differently? Should any additional safety precautions have been taken? If so, how and what?

**Have there been such incidents in the department or in nearby departments? If so, describe a type of injury, accident, or incident that has actually occurred.**

1. **Commentary on how to prevent the incident**
2. **Review of any related departmental standard operating guidelines that may apply**
3. **Have a short open dialogue on the subject.**

**4. VFIS and IAFC References:**

[http://www.iafcsafety.org/downloads/Rules\\_of\\_Engagement.pdf](http://www.iafcsafety.org/downloads/Rules_of_Engagement.pdf)  
<http://vfis.sju.edu>  
<http://www.iafc.org/displayindustryarticle.cfm?articlenbr=39522>  
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