

# SUPPORT UTILITY ARRIVING ON SCENE

SECTION  
**4**



Los Angeles Fire Department  
Support Service Volunteer Unit

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## Section 4 Arriving On Scene



Arriving on Scene	4.1	Emergency Lights for Traffic Control	4.14
Driving in the Area	4.2 - 4.3	Operation in Traffic Lanes	4.15
Size Up - Color of Smoke	4.4	Using Traffic Cones	4.16 - 4-18
Roadblock	4.5 - 4.6	Fire Line Tape	4.19
Approaching a Special Incident	4.7	Initial Apparatus Placement	4.20
Driving Over Hose	4.8	Plan a Layout for the Site-Quick Setup	4.21
On Scene wit Metro Dispatch	4.9	Volunteers Arriving on Scene	4.22 - 4.23
Reporting to Staging & Checking In	4.10	Evaluation of Staff and Services	4.24
Initial Size-Up - Key Elements	4-11 - 4.12	Working with Rehab Air Tenders	4.24
Vehicle Lighting - On Scene	4.13		



Ok your approaching the area, and about to go on-scene. What things should you be looking for as you are driving in. What should you do when you reach the road block are they going to stop you and ask a bunch of questions? What about other volunteers responding into the incident? What do they do? Where do you report and how should you size up the rehab and support needs for the incident? Where to park and setup the initial rehab area, What if a Rehab Air tender is on Scene, how do you interface with them? All of these questions and may more will go through your head as you approach the scene of an incident and get ready to start providing rehab to firefighters.

Take a deep breath, and think out what you need to take care of first. Then look at the long term events of the incident and how it will effect rehab and support. Look through the information provided in this chapter and in the scene evaluation chapter and start laying out the rehab area and lets start getting the firefighters hydrated.



Approach the area with caution, remember that people may be frustrated and trying to leave the area or not know where to go to get out of your way.

## Driving in the Area

## Arriving on Scene

- ◆ When you get close to the incident you may need to use red lights to clear traffic and get through the road blocks. Reduce your speed when you get close to the area. If you need to move around cars by going into the opposite lane remember that cars may turn in front of you trying to get out of the area.
- ◆ When drivers approach an emergency vehicle scene. Do not make the emergency scene worse. Drivers should maintain a safe driving speed, keep their eyes on the road and follow directions from authorized personnel. Be aware that other emergency vehicles may be approaching the scene.
- ◆ Also, a driver should not park their vehicles within 300 of fire department vehicles that have stopped at an emergency scene.



## Arriving on Scene

### Driving in the Area

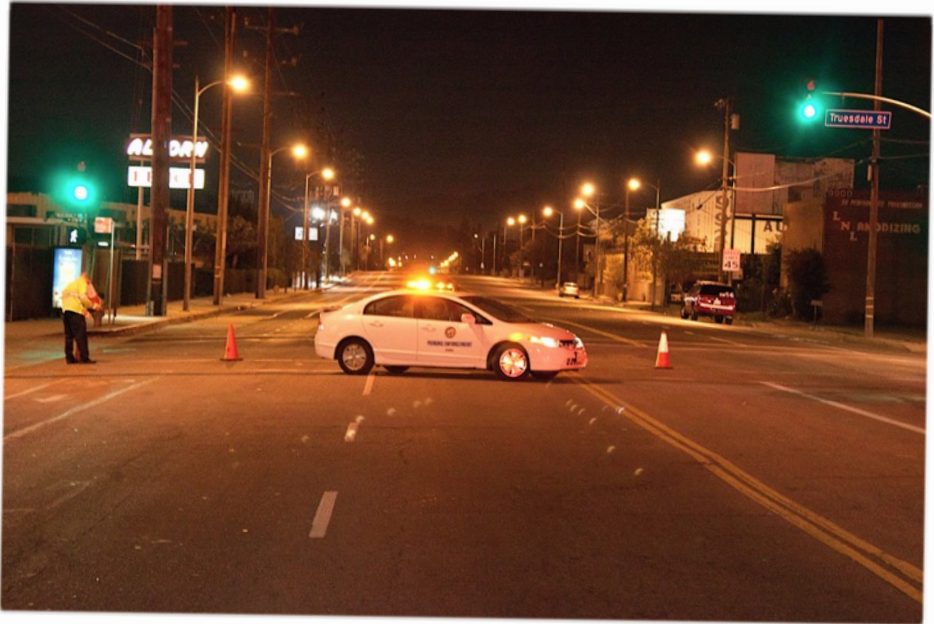
- ❖ Remember this when you arrive on scene. Don't block other fire department vehicles in. Give a good distance between you and the apparatus in front of you. This way they can take care of equipment when they are reloading, Pull the rig over to the side of the road, pull into a parking lot to setup rehab or if you have to setup a rehab station on the street, then keep it to one side so they can move apparatus around it. In some cases, moving the Rehab Area off the street so they can open the street as soon as possible.
- ❖ Never back up a fire apparatus without a spotter (someone who stands behind the Support Utility and tells you when it's safe to back up and when to stop). Many firefighters have been killed by engines backing into them.
- ❖ Know the Support Utility and its contents. The driver of apparatus is often called upon to find ez-ups, and other equipment on short notice.

## Size - Up. The Color of Smoke



On question that goes through my mind is what color is the smoke and how dense is it. At the beginning of fire suppression the smoke is very dense or thick and may be going straight up in the air. (If it is dense and against a bright sky it may appear dark. If it is less dense and the light behind it may appear white). The smoke color is darker and heavy looking before we start putting water on it, then it starts going white and lighter. The colors of smoke are:

- ◆ **Black** = Oil, Tar, Plastic, or Rubber (A petroleum based fire). A heavy black smoke indicates involvement of synthetic materials, vinyl siding, asphalt roofing or other plastic/combustible-liquid related materials. This will take a lot of resources to deal with.
- ◆ **Brown** = Grass, wood and brush (smoke will have white ash in it)
- ◆ **White** = We have got water on it and it's starting to turn to steam A light white smoke, may be from a fire being knocked down by sprinklers or attack lines; it may also be a fire in its early stages.
- ◆ **Yellow-Brownish** (think dirty diaper) = Puffing ("breathing") smoke, signs of flashover, this can indicate a nasty working fire that will take time and resources.

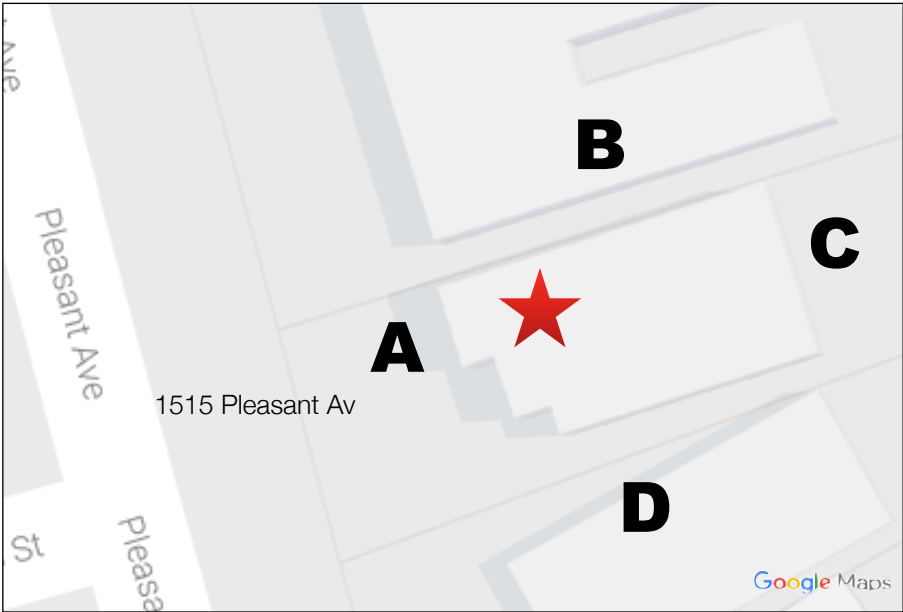


## Roadblocks

When you are coming upon a road block, you can turn on your emergency warning light to go

through the intersection and traffic control officer will normally pick up a cone or lower the fire line tape. It is important that you approach the intersection slowly. Enter the intersection only when it is safe.

Remember to stop at the intersection and make sure no one is coming. Do not use the siren when entering a roadblock area. If the roadblock is un-staffed, be careful not to run over a hot flare, You may need to move a cone or lower the traffic tape, drive through then put the cone or tape back in place.



## Division Designations - Structure Fire

The front or address side of the building is designated “Division A or Division Alpha, and the remaining sides are given a designation of B, C and D in a clockwise manner. For situations where the incident has an odd geographical layout, the Incident Commander will clearly designate and reference the “Division A” side of the incident.

For clarity during an incident the radio communications will use the phonetic degeneration of “Alpha, “Bravo” “Charlie, and “Delta” are used.

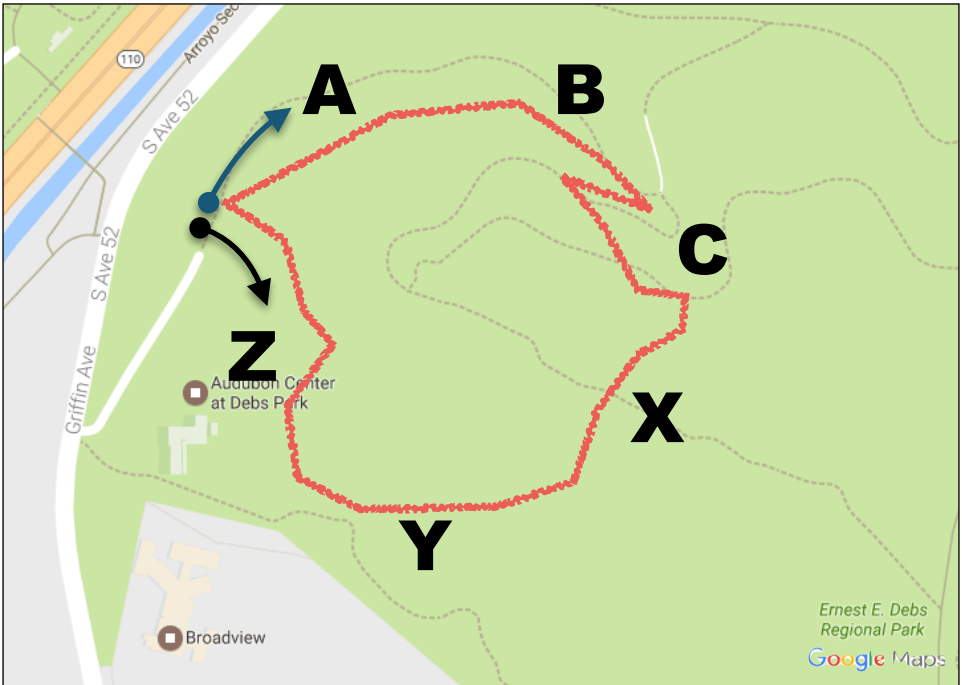




## **Division Designations - Multi-Story Incidents**

Divisions are the organizational level having responsibility for operations within defined geographic areas. The Division level is organizationally between Single resources, Task Forces, Specialized Groups such as RIC and Rescue Group. The Divisions may be broken down into Branches on larger incidents.

This incident has an A, B, C and D Divisions around the structure. It also has Division 2 for the second floor, and Roof Division for the Companies ventilating the room.



## Division Designations - Brush Fires

On brush fire incidents the Division designators start at the “point of origin” (where the fire started) and branch out with Division A going clockwise, B, C and D. Then the Divisions branch out counter-clockwise in the other direction starting with “Division Z” Y, X, and W.

The same radio communications will use the phonetic degeneration of “Alpha, “Bravo” “Charlie, and “Delta” are used, along with “Zulu” “Yankee”, and “Xray”



## LAFD Initial Response

The initial fire response will consist of one to five single Engines, one to two Light Force Companies, one to two rescue ambulances, and one to two Battalion Chiefs that are dispatch to a reported emergency. This is the *first-alarm assignment*.

Special resources such as a Squad, Brush Patrol, Water Tender, and Helicopter may also be added to the initial dispatch depending upon the type of incident.

# Roadblocks

## Directing Traffic at a Roadblock

Please be aware of the following types of signals from traffic control personnel:

- ◆ Someone with their left arm held downward at a 45° angle away from the body with the palm of their hand facing you, usually wants you to stop near them so they can give verbal instructions.
- ◆ At night time you may see a lighted wand at a 45° angle pointing towards the ground. This direction means the same as above.
- ◆ Someone with their arm extended straight towards you, and with the palm of their hand facing you usually wants you to stop where you are. This may be to allow other traffic to proceed, or due to another possible danger to you. Please note that this person may have their back to you at times. Do not proceed unless you have eye contact with the person giving you the signal to go ahead.
- ◆ If someone is moving just their fingers or hand in a certain direction, they usually want you to move in the direction specified at a slow speed.
- ◆ Please note that the same thing would be done at night time, however this may be harder to see in the dark.
- ◆ At night time, the person directing traffic may have a lighted wand, and if small movements are made with it, it has the same effect as the directions mentioned above. Someone is using their entire arm to signal you to move in a certain direction, this usually means the way is clear, and to proceed with caution. Please note however that if someone is directing you towards the side of the road with one or possibly both arms, they more



## Approaching Special Incidents

While responding into the incident you may be thinking about any special needs:

- ◆ If the incident is hazmat in nature, what approach information must you have while responding? Where is the Staging Area.
- ◆ What specialized equipment may be used to help you determine facts of an incident at a safer distance?

When approaching a fire scene (or other emergency), keep in mind that there are fire fighters and spectators that you may not see, and also they may not see you. Keep your eyes on the road, not on the fire. Be aware of your surroundings. Keep the radio volume low in the vehicle. Be aware that there may be additional emergency vehicles approaching from all directions.

If there are members of the DOT, police or fire department directing traffic, obey their signals, and keep an eye on that person. The person may have signaled the vehicle in front of you to stop, and you may get into an accident. If they try to stop you, you may want to find out why. Is there a hazard ahead?



**Driving Over Hose** At a fire scene, motorists can not drive over a fire hose stretched across the street, unless a fire department official gives them permission. Ask the engine that is pumping if you can drive over the hose. They may want to have a firefighter stay at the hydrant in case you rupture the hose line. They may want you to find another way out or have you wait until they are done.

A hose that has water flowing through it is considered charged. If it is a supply line then it could be 4 or more inches in diameter.

The most ideal way to handle fire hose on the street is to drive around it. Go around the street and come up the other way or another street. Try not to cross a charged fire hose supply line. If you must cross it then, try to hit it at an angle so not to drag it across the concrete or asphalt. Do not drive over the connection or fittings. This may damage the fitting and make it so they can't uncouple the hose. Some hose can cost over \$700.00 so don't run over hose unless you have no other options.



## Contact Metro Dispatch - The SU is On Scene

Switch back to the  
Dispatch Channel and

notify Metro Dispatch that you are on scene or **Press F4 = ONS** then transmit on the MDC.

**Remember** to switch back to the Tac channel and re-set Volume Levels so that you can hear the radio if you leave the cab.





## Report to the Staging Area

If the Command Post does not have a specific area for rehab to setup report to the Staging Area. You may want to park in the staging area and walk to the Command Post (CP) check in with a Emergency Incident Technicians (Staff Assistant) or Chief Officer and get details on the rehab operations.



## Initial Size-Up Key Elements

After being deployed and arriving on scene at an incident, the first task for Support Utility personnel is to:

- ◆ Check in with the incident command post and receive an assignment.
- ◆ Locate and assist the Rehab Air Tender or EA-1 (if assigned to the incident) and assist the assigned personnel.
- ◆ Evaluate the incident and select a site for setup. (if needed)

### **Notify Volunteer Coordinator**

On many incidents your Coordinator or the Duty Officer may want you to give him an update when you arrive on scene. This may be done by cell phone or text message. You should setup and have the incident tasks completed before contacting the your supervisor. The main question will be "do you need assistance or relief for the incident"?



## Vehicle Lighting • On-Scene

When you arrive on scene you will pull up to the last of the resources on the street and hold. Park the Support Utility and see if you have a place to go or if you need to get out of the Support Utility and find the Command Post or Rehab Air Tender. What warning lights do you leave on? Look around you. Are the other engines sitting there with their four way flashers on or is the rear amber lights or all the emergency lights. Normally if you are the last vehicle I like to use the rear ambers or four-ways. Turn off your headlights when you park.

If you are getting ready to setup you then you should use the sidelights and flood lights to illuminate the area. Remember to start the engine on a regular basis if you have the lights on for a long period.

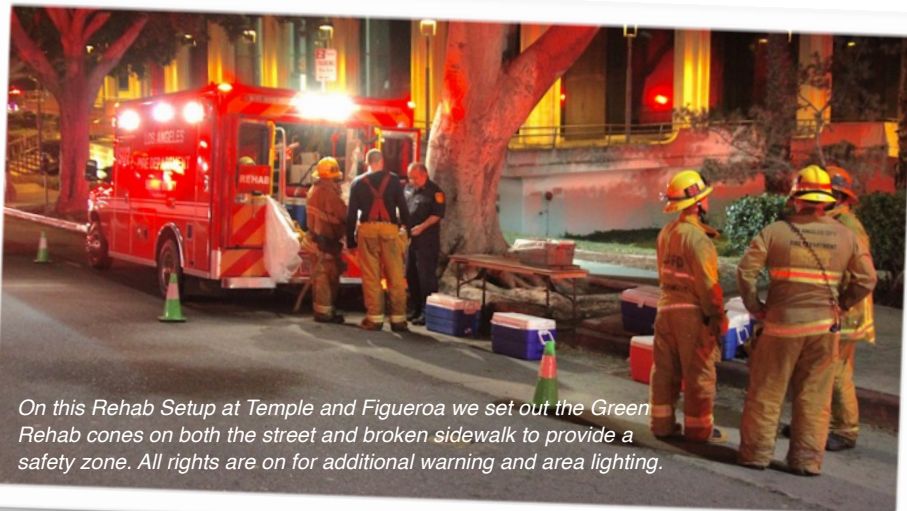


## Vehicle Lighting • for Traffic Control

Emergency lighting is most effective when a incident blocks travel lanes and traffic control devices are not yet

deployed. Once responders deploy traffic control, the emergency lighting should be reduced. Emergency lighting does not provide traffic control and is not considered a traffic control device. Excessive or misdirected lighting can create confusion for approaching drivers and increase the chances a traffic accident. Motorists approaching a incident from the opposite direction on a divided medium are often distracted by emergency vehicle lighting and slow down, sometimes abruptly, to look at the incident as they pass, posing a hazard to themselves and other travelers. The lingering effect of this distraction contributes to increased congestion and resulting delay.

- ◆ Minimize the use of emergency lights by multiple response vehicles as channelization and advance warning are established.
- ◆ Monitor and adjust emergency lighting during the incident to improve the visibility of traffic control devices and reduce onlooker delay.



*On this Rehab Setup at Temple and Figueroa we set out the Green Rehab cones on both the street and broken sidewalk to provide a safety zone. All rights are on for additional warning and area lighting.*

## **Operating in Traffic Lanes**

Setup traffic cones to help direct traffic into the other lane. Use extreme caution when setting up in traffic. You **MUST** wear your reflective safety vest when working in traffic areas. Motorists are often not paying attention to activities in the roadway. In addition to talking on their cell phones and other in-car distractions mix and it is quite possible that you could be struck at a roadside setup. Turn on the emergency light bar to warn traffic. If you are in a closed off street you can cut your light bar to amber only. Leave the vehicle motor running to keep the battery charged if you will be sitting for a long time.

If the road is open or you are setting up in a blind spot then place the Support Utility or another vehicle so the rehab area is away from on coming traffic. If someone drives into the area they will hit the vehicle before the firefighters.

Traffic flare can be used to direct traffic away from the incident. Do Not use flares on hazardous materials incident, brush areas, hills or when you have wind in the area. Traffic flares are carried in Compartment 5 on the curbside of the Support Utility.



## Setting Up Traffic Cones

The Rehab Air Tender are equipped with four 18” high orange traffic cones, additional cones are carried on the

Support Utility. The Support Utility carries a large number of traffic cones in both orange and lime green, in both 18” and 28” sizes. The lime green cones are only carried on the Support Utility and should be use for staging area or to indicate a rehab area. Place traffic cones to block off the street, parking lot or driveway that you need to control the vehicle access.

If the road is not closed and the Support Utility is going to be setup in a traffic area, traffic cones should be placed out before moving the apparatus into place. The traffic cones should be setup to direct traffic away from the rehab area and give direction to oncoming drivers of the need to change lanes away from where you are working. If possible the traffic cones should start 100 feet away from the rehab area. You should also wear your traffic safety vest and make sure that the emergency lights are also on and leave the vehicle motor running to keep the battery charged.

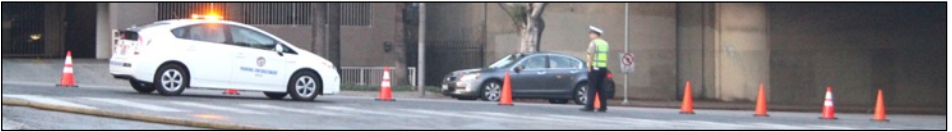


## Setting Up Traffic Cones

Utilizing Traffic Control at an Incident helps move motorists safely and expeditiously past or around an incident. This will reduce the likelihood of a traffic accident and keeps motorists from entering the affected area. Traffic Control includes devices such as traffic cones, and warning signs as well as the use of manual traffic control (flagging) when needed. You should always:

- ◆ Use safe practices for accomplishing your tasks in and near traffic.
- ◆ Be aware of your visibility to oncoming traffic Always wear safety vests and carry lights.
- ◆ Set up appropriate temporary traffic controls.
- ◆ Reassess traffic control devices regularly—about every 15 minutes is recommended.

Take some steps, however small, to improve traffic at the incident scene, such as straightening or extending cone lines, relocating a responder vehicle, or reducing emergency lighting.



## Setting Up Traffic Cones

The Support Utility crew may be asked to set up short-term traffic control to make incident safer.

Traffic cones serve as safety devices as well as effective traffic control devices. Traffic Cone Placement for Lane-Blocking Incidents:

- ◆ We carry at least 16 cones on the Support Utility.
- ◆ Set out traffic cones in a taper to guide approaching traffic into available lanes to safely pass the incident.
- ◆ Start deploying cones at the rear of your vehicle or the vehicle that is determined to be the rear vehicle and work your way upstream.
- ◆ Reinforce and straighten traffic cone lines and tapers after their initial placement to increase effectiveness and maximize visibility of the cones.
- ◆ Remember to always face traffic while placing or removing cones.
- ◆ Space cones equally at least 20 feet apart.
- ◆ Use 12 cones for the lane closure taper, which should be approximately 250 feet, and four cones along the activity area to quickly make the scene safer. Place cones around response vehicles and place at least one cone downstream past the incident to allow a parking spot for the ambulance or EMS vehicle.
- ◆ Use striping marks as a distance reference to help with cone placement. Roadway striping on freeways typically has a 10 foot painted stripe and a 30 foot gap.
- ◆ Increase the number of cones and the distance between cones as the speed of approaching traffic increases. This gives motorists more time to react, slow down, and merge.
- ◆ Delineate traffic tapers with cones.
- ◆ Use cones when working at night.
- ◆ Borrow additional cones from other resources if needed.
- ◆ Improve traffic flow by moving the transition taper further upstream from the activity area as additional traffic controls are put in place.





## Fire Line Tape

Fire line tape can be use to close off an area or a street from public use.



## Initial Apparatus Placement

When arriving on scene the initial vehicle placement is important to establish safety for the Support Utility and crew. This is important where at a lane-blocking incident:

- ◆ Place the Support Utility in a visible location between the incident and approaching traffic. Turn on the emergency warning light and the amber rear lights to warn motorists and direct traffic around the scene as you set up your lane closure taper with traffic cones.
- ◆ Relocate the Support Utility as needed to best utilize the warning lights once the traffic cones are in place.
- ◆ Consider repositioning Support Utility to allow more room for emergency vehicles to pass.
- ◆ Continue to look for opportunities to improve traffic flow and scene safety.



## Plan a Layout for the Site

### Quick Setup

When you arrive you need to have drinks setup for the first hydration (Quick Setup).

- ◆ When you first arrive, pull up and open the back doors. Pull out one of ice coolers and set it outside (out of the way) to give yourself some working room. Move first top cooler over. Grab a trash bag out of Cabinet R and tie it to the door. You are ready to serve. This gives you some time to decide how you are going to setup the rehab area.



## Volunteers Arriving on Scene

The incident maybe supported by volunteers from the Departments Support Service Volunteer Unit, and local CERT response Units. The Support Service Volunteers are dispatched to scene through Metro Fire Dispatch. The CERT volunteers are requested by there Battalion Chief. The CERT volunteers will respond directly to scene and may help setup and support the Rehab Air Tender while the Support Service Volunteers respond with a Support Utility that carries rehab supplies to assist in longer rehab operations.

In some cases the Support Service Volunteer Unit Coordinator may have local SSVU volunteers respond directly to the incident and report to the Rehab Air Tender or Support Utility for support.



## **Volunteers Arriving on Scene**

The Support Service Volunteer Unit is the volunteer unit responsible for rehab and support for emergency incidents. The Support Utility and its staff can be used in many areas on an incident. The staff and Volunteer Coordinators will evaluate the services and levels of services needed. In some cases CERT volunteers may be released when the Support Utility arrives.



## Evaluation of Staff and Services

When the duration and support requirements have been established, a Volunteer Coordinator will determine the staffing needs for the rest of the incident. Each volunteer should be asked their availability and in most cases a members from both CERT and Support Services will remain on scene for the completion of their shift. On scene the two units will merge and work together as one. New staff may be rotated in for a new shift.



## Working with Rehab Air Tender Crew

For most Department incidents an informal Rehab Area is established utilizing the Rehab Air Tenders and Support Utilities. Firefighters are encouraged to come and leave as they please, without checking in and out. For most incident medical evaluations and vital signs are not taken as part of the Rehab Area. As the type of incident and the stress on firefighters increase, the Rehab Area and types of services placed in the Rehab will also increase.

When an incident is large enough, with fire suppression and control requiring firefighters to exchange SCBA air bottles and return directly back to the fire fighting situation, it is time to start increasing the type of services to be provided in the Rehab Area. If bottle exchange without rest and rehab is required, those firefighters need to be evaluated by a medical crew before returning to full duty.

On incidents such as high-rise fires when a large number of firefighters use multiple air bottles, a full service Rehab Area should be setup and maintained until the incident is under control.

# Notes







## Los Angeles Fire Department Support Service Volunteer Unit



Support Utility Handbook  
Section 4 - Arriving on Scene