



# OGLETHORPE COUNTY FIRE RESCUE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

**TITLE: Health and Safety Officer Standard**

**SECTION/TOPIC: Emergency Operations**

**ISSUE DATE: February 16, 2023**

These SOPs/SOGs are based on FEMA guidelines FA-197

This standard meets or exceeds that of:

*NFPA 1521: Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer Professional Qualifications*

## 1.0 SCOPE

- 1.1 This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements (JPRs) for health and safety officers (HSO) and incident safety officers (ISO) for Oglethorpe County Fire Rescue (OCFR).

## 2.0 PURPOSE:

- 2.1 The purpose of this standard is to specify the minimum JPRs for service as a fire department HSO and ISO.
- 2.2 This standard shall define HSO and ISO for Oglethorpe County Fire Rescue.
- 2.3 The intent of this standard shall be to ensure that personnel serving as HSOs and ISOs for OCFR are qualified.
- 2.4 The HSO and ISO shall remain current with the general knowledge, skills, and JPRs for each qualification level.

## 3.0 BACKGROUND:

- 3.1 During an incident, the incident commander (IC) has the ultimate responsibility and authority over operations, including the safety of the personnel operating on the fireground.
- 3.2 On larger, more complex, incidents, the responsibility of safety can be so broad that it prevents the IC from managing and commanding the remaining operations effectively.
  - 3.2.1 When this occurs, the IC may delegate the safety officer's responsibilities and authority to a qualified HSO/ISO.
- 3.3 NFPA 1521 outlines the role of the incident safety officer, of which this standard is based off of.
- 3.4 Statistically, more firefighters are injured and killed while operating on the scene of emergency incidents than in any other setting. Using an ISO will significantly reduce the potential for injury or death.
- 3.5 Other duties of the ISO, as outlined in NFPA 1521 include:
  - 3.5.1 Ensure that incident scene rehabilitation is established
  - 3.5.2 Monitor the scene and report the status of conditions, hazards, and risks to the incident
  - 3.5.3 Ensure that a personnel accountability system is being used
  - 3.5.4 Ensure that all personnel understand the incident action plan
  - 3.5.5 Provide the IC with a risk assessment of the incident action plan
  - 3.5.6 Suggest safety zones, collapse zones, a hot zone, and other designated hazard zones

- 3.5.7 Monitor radio transmissions to ensure proper and effective communications
- 3.5.8 Identify the need for additional assistant ISOs
- 3.5.9 Evaluate hazards associated with helicopter landings
- 3.6 For the ISO to be effective, he/she must have the support and confidence of the IC. Equally important is the support of the fire department's administration outside of the emergency scene
- 3.7 In addition to the IC's and the administration's support, the safety officer must have good credibility, good interpersonal skills, and mutual respect from fellow firefighters
  - 3.7.1 Credibility - based upon the individual's knowledge of safety-related issues, leadership, understanding of the incident management system, and a willingness to enforce the policies and practices of the fire department.
  - 3.7.2 Interpersonal skills - include the ability to remain calm during a crisis, to communicate information clearly and concisely, and to firmly introduce decisions without alienating personnel.
  - 3.7.3 Mutual respect - is attained when each party recognizes the duties and responsibilities of the other and agrees to work together as a team. The safety officer must support the decisions and directions of the IC. The IC must be willing to accept input from the safety officer and adjust his plan consistent with the information presented by the safety officer.