

Industrial Fire Brigade Checklist

7 Ways to Leverage Relationships with Local Responders



Industrial firefighting isn't like municipal response; The environments, site-specific hazards, facilities, and access are unlike most municipal response. There are different rules, personnel, business priorities, and equipment that are specific to industrial firefighting that can be challenging for local municipal responders should an incident occur.

So regardless of whether your plant has its own fire brigade, planning ahead and establishing relationships with your local fire departments before an incident occurs may eliminate delays, and overcome challenges and barriers when responding to an industrial fire alarm.

Fire Brigade Standards

Before getting into the specifics of creating alliances with local responders, it's important to know and understand the standards and best practices governing employer-established fire brigades.

Both the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and also the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) have specific standards.

OSHA Standard 1910.156 establishes the requirements for policies, training, equipment, and personal protective gear, such as a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA); it also mandates training and education for fire brigade members; which is similar to that conducted by fire training schools, such as Texas A&M University; Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute; and The New York State Department, Fire Prevention and Control.

NFPA Standard 600 details the organization of the fire brigade with respect to standard operation procedures (SOPs), and classifies the primary function of the fire brigade. NFPA also provides guidance and requirements for brigades that are assigned as incipient-stage or defensive-only teams, as well as those assigned to perform advanced exterior or interior structural firefighting. Lastly, NFPA requires use of an Incident Management system and defines the different roles within the brigade.

Having these standards in place, however, does not mean that your industrial fire brigade still can't learn a thing or two from their fellow municipal firefighters.

Indeed, they can – and should.

Coming together and getting to know the inner-workings of your local department is imperative. Why? Because it can help improve your industrial organization's response system, not to mention enhance and extend your capabilities.

Brigade-to-Brigade Reciprocity

Creating a partnership for mutual aid is extremely important because it increases resources available in an emergency situation.

Here are a few other reasons a reciprocal arrangement between municipal and industrial fire brigades is beneficial:

- Expands response capabilities on both sides
- Streamlines and standardizes response systems
- Reduces uncertainty
- Improves overall public safety
- Creates a “we’re all in this together” approach to bolster public confidence

Do not wait until you need the information, the resources, or the aid. Set yourself up now to align yourself with firefighting best practices, and ensure that your organization is well positioned for a reciprocal partnership.

Building Better Relationships Checklist

Because the ultimate goal is always, always the preservation of life and property, industrial fire brigades and municipal fire departments can, and should, work together.

Here’s a 7-point checklist to help safety directors and industrial fire brigade leaders initiate and deepen industrial-to-municipal relationships:

- 1 **Conduct pre-incident planning.** Assess and document systems, procedures, potential hazards, access to secure areas, etc.
- 2 **Invite co-participation in training and drills.** Practice emergency procedures together, then evaluate the effectiveness, compliance, etc.
- 3 **Review response and rescue plans.** Make sure everyone involved understands how to execute each and every plan.
- 4 **Get everyone in the same room.** Invite key personnel to attend the same industrial fire schools or seminars that your brigade attends.
- 5 **Review equipment compatibilities.** Ask for specifics, such as their SCBA pressures, fit testing procedures, etc.
- 6 **Share resources.** Allow local fire departments to use your programs and facilities in support of their medical and physical fitness evaluations and respirator fit testing.
- 7 **Exchange information.** Review your SOPs and organizational statements, as well as conduct in-service activities about site-specific hazards and specialized response.

About MSA

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