



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures

1.19 Acting Fire Chief



ACTING FIRE CHIEF

Effective: June 26, 2026
Scheduled Review: June 26, 2029
Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

To establish expectations and requirements when the fire chief appoints an acting fire chief. At the fire chief's discretion, and on a case-by-case basis, the fire chief may appoint an acting fire chief on a temporary, incident-specific, rotational, or short-term basis when operationally necessary.

This acting role will be communicated via email to the named employee and via the "Situation Report."

II. RESPONSE

It is critical that the acting fire chief maintain situational awareness of what situations are occurring or may occur in the City of Ann Arbor. The acting fire chief is subject to the 24/7 on-call requirement set forth in the Assistant Chiefs collective bargaining agreement. There are situations and emergencies that require the acting fire chief to respond back to the City of Ann Arbor. The acting fire chief is expected to initiate a response regardless of whether a specific request is made by the battalion chief when the conditions identified in this SOP are present.

When designated as acting fire chief, the acting fire chief is expected to make reasonable efforts to respond to the City of Ann Arbor as operationally feasible, within 90 minutes of notification through the department notification application or other communication methods, including but not limited to text message, telephone call or Teams notification. If the acting chief is unable to respond within the 90-minute time-line, they shall communicate their estimated time of arrival with the battalion chief and if the EOC is active, the emergency manager.

The acting fire chief shall respond back under the following conditions:

- A. Mass casualty incident, active shooter / assailant.
- B. Significant transportation incident, e.g., airplane crash, train derailment, bus crash.
- C. All on-duty apparatus are committed.
- D. Any response of the Washtenaw County Hazardous Materials Team or Technical Rescue Team into the City of Ann Arbor.
- E. Incident requiring the evacuation of any school building, hospital, apartment complex, high-rise, business, commercial, or university occupancy.
- F. Critical injury to personnel requiring ambulance transport.
- G. Crash involving apparatus with significant injury to personnel or civilian.
- H. IMT or EOC activation.



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The acting fire chief is expected to provide on-scene command support, assume incident command when appropriate under ICS principles, participate with the Incident Management Team – SOP 6.14, and / or actively participate with EOC operations. If the acting fire chief is not the assistant chief of operations, the acting fire chief and assistant chief of operations shall communicate and coordinate how each can best support the incident.

Compensation shall be administered consistent with the Assistant Chiefs collective bargaining agreement.

III. LIMITATIONS OF AUTHORITY

If the fire chief is completely unreachable / offline during which there is an urgent need for a decision, the acting fire chief does not have the authority for significant finance, budget, and human resource decisions.

Unless explicitly authorized by the city administrator or fire chief, the acting fire chief shall not:

- Implement long-term strategic or organizational changes.
- Enter into contracts or agreements beyond delegated authority.
- Make permanent personnel decisions, e.g., hiring, termination, promotion.

For any urgent human resource matter that arises and the fire chief is unreachable, the acting fire chief shall immediately consult with the HR director or deputy HR director prior to implementation of employment-related decisions when feasible under the circumstances. If operational conditions require an immediate decision before consultation with HR leadership can occur, the decision shall be documented and referred to HR leadership at the first available opportunity.

For any urgent finance / budget matter that arises and the fire chief is unreachable, the acting fire chief shall immediately consult with the chief finance officer or financial manager prior to implementation of finance / budget decisions when feasible under the circumstances. If operational conditions require an immediate decision before consultation with finance leadership can occur, the decision shall be documented and referred to finance leadership at the first available opportunity.

Should the fire chief be unexpectedly incapacitated, the city administrator will provide direction on fire department leadership.



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IV. DECISION-MAKING EXPECTATION

The acting fire chief is expected to:

- Exercise sound judgment aligned with department values and precedent.
- Prioritize life safety, incident stabilization, and property conservation.
- Document significant decisions and actions.
- Seek guidance from the fire chief or city administrator when appropriate.

Operational conditions, availability, communication limitations, and incident-specific circumstances will be considered when evaluating compliance with this SOP.

V. DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING

Upon completion of the acting assignment, the acting fire chief shall provide via email:

- A summary of significant incidents and operational decisions
- Notable personnel or administrative issues.
- Any pending matters requiring follow-up.

VI. TRAINING AND PREPAREDNESS

Personnel eligible to serve as acting fire chief shall:

- Be familiar with City of Ann Arbor administrative policies and procedures, fire department standard operating procedures, and labor agreements.
- Have proficient knowledge, skills, and ability in the use and function of the notification application used by the fire department. The acting fire chief shall have alert settings set to afford necessary alerts, sounds, notification, or other means to make the acting fire chief aware of all severe weather alerts, callbacks, and / or box alarms.
- Maintain competency in incident command and emergency management systems.

VII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR NOTIFICATION

The acting fire chief shall make reasonable efforts to directly notify the city administrator as soon as practical under the circumstances if any of the following occur:

- Line of duty death
- Serious on-duty injury to an employee
- Fire that is second alarm or greater
- Incident or situation that poses major risk to the City of Ann Arbor
- Civilian fatality