



SOUTH LYON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Manual of Procedures 405

FORCIBLE ENTRY

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Approved: Chief Robert Vogel

I. PURPOSE

To outline fire department actions when gaining entry into private residences and commercial buildings for fire alarms, public assistance, lockouts and assistance to emergency medical services.

II. OPERATIONS

The gravity of the situation should always dictate the prescribed actions. Common sense should prevail. As always, “try before you pry.” Always request that law enforcement respond for security purposes. Look for the safest, quickest, least invasive means to gain entry; once it has been determined that forcible entry is required. Check all windows to determine if they are locked or unlocked. Consider removing hinges if there are doors with the hinges exposed. If breaking a small, single pane of glass will give you clear access to all locks, that method should receive careful consideration. If a “through the lock” method is employed, consider using channel locks to carefully screw the cylinder out of the threads in order to keep the threads and the lock intact. If the situation dictates a quicker access, then use a puller tool to rapidly pull the cylinder from the door. It is important to consider that use of any of the “pulling” tools may irreparably damage an aluminum doorframe and breaking the glass may be the more cost effective approach.

Always try to use the least invasive forcible entry method if possible. Exhaustive communication should be practiced whenever possible. Check with neighbors, under doormats and under nearby planters to try to find a workable key.

Anytime SLFD is considering or has decided to force entry into a structure with no confirmed patient or unable to make contact with potential occupants e.g. a medical alarm, SLPD must be contacted and on scene prior to forcing and/or making entry. After entry has been made, SLFD will wait outside the structure for the police department to sweep and secure the scene.

III. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- A. Knock loudly and repeatedly to summon a property representative. Attempt to look through windows to determine patient location.
- B. Confirm the address via another source e.g. another firefighter, IAR notification.
- C. If a patient is visualized and incapacitated or unable to open a door, companies are permitted to force entry.
- D. If a reasonable suspicion exists that a patient is unconscious or incapacitated at the address, companies are permitted to force entry.
- E. If a neighbor has a reason to believe a property occupant is having a medical emergency, companies are permitted to force entry.



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- F. For situations where a patient cannot be seen, reasonable suspicion does not exist, and neighbors are not available, the decision to force entry is left up to the company officer.
- G. After forcing entry the residence shall be re-secured.
- H. Thorough documentation of the reasons for forcible entry and the method shall be provided in the incident report.
- I. If forcible entry occurs and no patient or dangerous situation is found, the police department should be contacted for notification that the fire department forced entry.

IV. FIRE ALARM ACTIVATIONS

The Incident Commander shall make every effort to confirm or rule out the presence of smoke or other accurate indicators of a fire before a forcible entry operation is initiated. Doors or windows that are hot to the touch, smoke blackened windows, cracked windows, smoke showing from construction openings, vents, or eaves are all examples of reliable indicators of a potential fire condition. Key holder contact should be established whenever possible, and patience must be exercised unless a true emergency exists.

- A. Utilize the key box for entry into the structure, when available.
- B. If any indicators of fire are present, companies are permitted to force entry.
- C. If a property representative is responding within a reasonable time, the fire department shall wait for their arrival prior to forcing entry, as long as no indicators of fire are present.
 - i. SLFD shall consult the emergency contacts located in FRMS to contact a property representative.
- D. If contact with a property representative cannot be made, and conditions in and around the structure appear normal, the Incident Commander must utilize their discretion with forcible entry.
- E. Thorough documentation of the reasons for forcible entry and the method shall be provided on the incident report.

V. LOCK OUTS

The Incident Commander is responsible to determine the need for forcible entry when persons have either locked themselves in or locked themselves out and cannot exit or enter in a timely manner. If non-emergency conditions exist, a locksmith should be used rather than the fire department making forced entry and thus becoming liable for damages.

VI. ASSISTING LAW ENFORCEMENT

The South Lyon Police Department may request the fire department for forcible entry. If the South Lyon Police Department requests the services of SLFD for forcible entry or ladder access to a crime scene or a potentially violent situation, responding SLFD units will stage at the designated safe staging area. The fire department Incident Commander shall inform the law enforcement Incident Commander that SLFD will provide them with the necessary tools to gain access. Fire department members will not put themselves in harms' way. The



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fire department will provide the law enforcement officers with a brief explanation and training of how to properly use the tools to accomplish successful entry.

VII. SECURING THE OCCUPANCY

No matter the reason that forcible entry occurred, SLFD shall not leave an occupancy unsecured. It is the responsibility of SLFD, not the South Lyon Police Department to ensure that a property is secured.

If it is a crime scene, the scene shall be left with the South Lyon Police Department. If there are other circumstances, where the South Lyon Police Department is on scene, SLFD may leave the scene with the South Lyon Police Department. However, the fire department Incident Commander shall confirm with a South Lyon Police Department command officer e.g. chief, lieutenant, or sergeant that the police department is willing to stand-by on scene.

A property may be secured by placing furniture against a door that was forced, then having fire department personnel climb out of a second story window onto a ladder. If this method is used, the fire department will need to respond back to the property to allow entrance upon the occupant's return. Ways to secure a property are only limited to the imagination of the SLFD staff on scene.

If SLFD is unable to secure property:

- A. The Incident Commander shall contact Novi Dispatch to have a board-up respond to the property location.
- B. Only one fire department representative shall stand-by on scene while waiting for the board-up company. It is not fiscally responsible to keep an entire company on scene along with staff on stand-by while waiting for the board-up company.
- C. The Incident Commander shall leave a note on the outside of the property informing the property owner to contact the fire department for information regarding the incident.
- D. The fire department representative shall wait until the property has been secured by the board-up company prior to leaving the property.
- E. The fire chief shall be notified when SLFD forces entry into a structure.

Approved by
/s/ Chief Robert Vogel