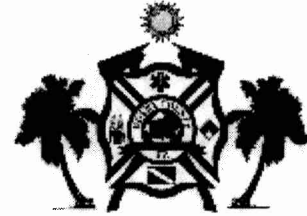




**HORRY COUNTY  
FIRE/RESCUE DEPARTMENT  
PROUD \* PREPARED \* PROFESSIONAL**



**STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE**

APPROVED BY GARRY B. ALDERMAN, FIRE CHIEF:

DATE: December 12, 2011

**SOG 721**

**FORCIBLE ENTRY**

**PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD**

To provide guidelines for forcing entry to protect life and property in instances of medical emergencies, fires, or service calls.

**SECTION 1 - DEFINITIONS**

1. **Forcible entry:** The technique used to gain access to a structure whose normal means of egress is locked, blocked, or nonexistent.
2. **Conventional Forcible Entry:** The use of standard fire department tools to open doors and windows to gain access.
3. **Through-the-lock Forcible Entry:** The practice of removing or incapacitating the door lock to gain access. (While more complicated, it is the more preferred method since it causes less damage than conventional means if done correctly.)

**SECTION 2 - PROCEDURES**

1. Medical Responses
  - A. Knock loudly on doors and announce your presence.
  - B. If no response, verify the address with dispatch and have them call the residence.

- C. If there is still no response and you have verified that you are at the correct address, advise dispatch you are unable to make contact with anyone at the residence and have law enforcement respond.
- D. If there are none on the call, a fire company (engine, ladder, rescue) should be requested to respond since they carry specialized forcible entry equipment if entry is made difficult due to steel doors or heavy-duty locks.
- E. Assess scene safety.
- F. Contact the Battalion Chief if there is no Fire/Rescue officer present.
- G. Safely attempt to look through the outside windows in an attempt to visualize any unconscious victims inside of the residence.
- H. If an unconscious victim is visualized or you have a strong reason to believe that an unconscious victim is inside the residence or if dispatch confirms that the call originated from the residence and has since lost contact with the victim, then forcible entry shall be performed using the best available and safest means possible
- I. If there was a patient, thoroughly document all of your actions in your patient care report. If there was no patient, fill out a narrative of your actions and send it to administration. The fire apparatus will thoroughly document actions in NFIRS.

## 2. Fire and Service Call Responses

- A. Forcible entry is an integral part of firefighting activities and must be performed in a quick, safe manner.
- B. Forcible entry is authorized in any life safety or property conservation activities when there is no other access present, or if a delay imposed by using another route would be counterproductive to the progress of the incident.
- C. Above cases would include but not be limited to access for: fire attack, search and rescue, checking for extension, securing of utilities, and access to stand pipes or sprinklers.
- D. Another case where forcible entry is authorized is when there is a smoke detector sounding in a residence, there is no answer, and the majority of the residence cannot be viewed from the windows. **THIS IS NOT FOR AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS, STANDARD SMOKE DETECTORS ONLY.** Standard residential smoke detectors have shown to be very reliable, and in the vast majority of circumstances when they activate there is good reason for it.
- E. If forcible entry has been performed and the building needs to be secured after the completion of the incident, then the building shall be secured by any practical means. An attempt should also be made to contact the owner or their representative giving them the option of coming and securing the property themselves.
- F. After the incident be sure to thoroughly document any cases of forcible entry in the NFIRS report narrative.

### **SECTION 3 - CONSIDERATIONS**

1. In cases of forcing entry to conserve property, the damage done while forcing entry must be weighed against the damage being done by not doing anything or waiting for a key holder. Example: weighing the cost of a lock or doorjamb against more extensive water damage during accidental sprinkler activation. In cases such as this, waiting would cause more damage and forcible entry should be performed.
2. If time allows or if the door and jamb are of significant strength, the through-the-lock method of forcible entry should be considered. Although harder to master, the through-the-lock method has been known to cause less damage than by conventional means of forcing entry. It will also be more likely to allow the property to be easier to secure.