



# Burlington Fire Department



136 South Winooski Avenue  
Burlington, Vermont 05401-8378

(802) 864-4554 • (802) 658-2700 (TTY)

Business Fax (802) 864-5945 • Central Station Fax (802) 865-5387

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| <b>Section: 00- Administration</b>            |                                     |
| <b>SOG Number: 00.12</b>                      | <b>Effective Date: Dec. 7, 2018</b> |
| <b>Subject: After Action Reviews (AARs)</b>   |                                     |
| <b>By Order of Fire Chief Steven A. Locke</b> |                                     |

## **I. Purpose:**

The purpose of an After Action Review (AAR) is to provide a formal review process of emergency incidents or training events intended on being utilized as an educational and training tool. It allows participants the opportunity to objectively review operations in a constructive manner. The AAR identifies effective procedures (areas of sustainment) for future emergency and non-emergency operations as well as identifying areas of improvement to upgrade effectiveness. The AAR process should identify and communicate lessons learned to enhance our firefighter's safety and customer service.

The AAR is not intended to be used to place blame or utilized as a disciplinary tool.

## **II. Scope:**

This guideline applies to all Burlington Fire Department (BFD) personnel. In order for an AAR to be effective, it requires active participation for members involved.

## **III. Definitions:**

**Formal AAR:** A planned After Action Review, triggered by incident type or the request of the shift commander to be utilized for organizational and company level education and improvement.

**Informal AAR:** A training tool that may be used by one or two companies after an incident to reflect on the potential for improvement.

## **IV. Guidelines:**

- A). After action reviews within the Burlington Fire Department may be conducted at three levels of review. The three levels are Personal, Informal, and Formal reviews.
- B). The AAR shall be conducted in a positive and professional manner. The AAR shall not employ blame of an individual or company actions. This requirement shall be shared with all participants prior to initiating the AAR. The facilitator conducting the AAR (company officer or shift commander) shall ensure this is communicated and complied with.
- C). AARs may be started at an incident scene when practical and safe to do so. An AAR can start while equipment is still deployed and in place on the incident scene. This format allows participants to visualize what occurred, what did not occur, and any unusual circumstances or problems encountered while memories are still fresh.
- D). Informal AAR
1. The informal AAR should occur on a first alarm assignments with one or two resources that require the deployment of equipment, and/or a hose line.
  2. These AARs may be conducted at the incident scene or the fire station. The location selected should be based upon practicality, time of day, and weather conditions. Consideration should be given to personnel safety, public perception, unit out of service time, and vehicular traffic.
  3. The company officer or incident commander shall act as the facilitator for the informal AAR.
  4. Participants should answer four simple questions:
    - a. What was supposed to happen?
    - b. What actually happened?
    - c. What went well and why?
    - d. What did we learn?
  5. The informal AAR should focus on overall operational improvement of the company or companies.
- E). Formal AAR
1. A formal AAR should be conducted for the following incident types:
    - a. Fire Incidents (Any fire where a supply line was laid, charged, and utilized).
    - b. Major Hazardous Materials Incidents
    - c. Specialized Rescue Incident (Technical Rescue)
    - d. Mass Casualty Incidents

- e. Fireground close call or near miss events with a firefighter injury
  - f. Civilian fire deaths
  - g. Events with significant media coverage
  - h. At the request of the Shift Commander or Chief Officer.
2. The Formal AAR process should begin at the incident scene to initiate information gathering. The informal AAR process can serve as an excellent resource for collecting data about strategies, tactics, problems encountered, and concerns brought forth through discussion/observation.
  3. The Formal AAR should be conducted as soon as practical after the incident, but no later than 30 days.
  4. The Shift Commander on duty for the incident is responsible for notifications of a scheduled AAR. The date and location of the Formal AAR shall be emailed to all personnel involved in the incident, including the command staff of the department.
  5. On large scale incidents, the Shift Commander may request that a facilitator be utilized to ensure the AAR proceeds without getting off track with prolonged discussion.
  6. Before starting the Formal AAR all participants shall have the ground rules explained to them.
  7. Unless restricted by a Chief Officer, all off-duty members are welcome to attend the formal AAR on a voluntary basis.

F). Recommended Areas for Information Gathering

1. Building Construction and Layout
2. Occupancy
3. Dispatch, en route, and response times
4. Conditions on arrival
5. Size-up considerations
6. Brief Initial report
7. Commanders intent (incident action plan)
8. Individual Company Operations – Actions Taken
9. Water Supply
10. Strategy and tactics
11. Apparatus positioning
12. Communications
13. Personnel Accountability
14. Safety Issues or Hazards Present
15. Cause and Origin

#### G). Facilitator

1. The facilitator, if possible, should be an officer who was not at the incident or had a minor role.
2. The facilitator shall control the AAR discussion and act as the Chairperson.
3. The facilitator shall appoint a person to record the results/findings of the AAR. The After Action Review Worksheet shall be utilized when conducting the process.
4. Time management is important. Keep the AAR to less than 90 minutes.
5. The facilitator should:
  - a. Avoid giving a critique or lecture
  - b. Guide the discussion by asking leading questions.
  - c. Suggest the participants discuss not only what happened, but how it happened, and how it could be done better.
  - d. Focus the discussion to ensure that important tactical lessons are made explicit.
  - e. Avoid detailed examination of events not directly related to a major training or learning objective.
6. The goal is to obtain effective feedback from participants. The facilitator draws information from each member that becomes an important part of the discussion. This information should be used to discuss alternate courses of action.

#### H). Written Report

1. When an AAR (Formal or informal) results in lessons learned or recommended changes to policies, procedures, or guidelines, the Incident Commander (Formal or Informal) must develop a written report detailing the following information:
  - a. Time, date, and location of the incident
  - b. Brief review of incident operations
  - c. Detailed explanation of all recommendations and how they will improve the organization. High importance should be placed on safety and training.
  - d. Detailed explanation of lessons learned and what members should consider when involved in a similar incident.
  - e. The *After Action Review Worksheet* will assist in the information gathering process. This form may be utilized by the report writer to help document the perspective of the companies who participated in the incident.
2. The written report (electronic) shall be forwarded to the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief of Operations, Deputy Chief of Administration, and the Battalion Chief of Training/Safety within 10 working days of the AAR. Upon reviewing the report,

the Deputy Chief of Operations will provide a response to the Incident Commander detailing:

- a. Review of recommendations and lessons learned determining their merit and overall impact on the department. An explanation will be given to support or reject items listed.
  - b. Consideration for revision of SOG's and the development of a training program to address issues brought forth.
  - c. If necessary, schedule a meeting with the Incident Commander to discuss items and obtain clarification.
3. A final report will be developed by the DC of Operations detailing the incident information, incident operations, approved SOG or Policy revisions, and lessons learned. This report shall be sent to all personnel via email and stored on the Department Server in the Fire Drive.
- a. The *After Action Review Findings Report* shall be utilized for distribution to departmental personnel.

**V. Responsibility:**

While this process may seem to be burdensome, it's intent is to progress our firefighters, our fire and EMS companies, and our Department as a whole in providing superior emergency services to our community. The After Action Review process is a crucial part of quality improvement for the department.

The Incident Commander conducting the AAR shall be responsible for ensuring the AAR is documented in all participating members training records.

It is the responsibility of all members to read, understand and follow this Standard Operating Guideline.

| Revision History             |         |              |   |
|------------------------------|---------|--------------|---|
| Revision Date                | Section | Summary      | Principal Author  |
| Initial release of document. | All     | New document | DC Collette<br>(References provided by Mark Finucane, Johnson City Fire Department, Tenn. |