



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



Section: 00- Administration	
SOG Number: 00.13	Effective Date: Jan. 23, 2019
Subject: Staffing during Winter Storms	
By Order of Fire Chief Steven A. Locke	

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this SOG is to reduce the risk for a delayed initiation of emergency services by the Burlington Fire Department during winter storm events.

II. Scope:

This SOG applies to all members of the Burlington Fire Department and directly applies to those Battalion Chiefs and Captains whom are operating in the role of Shift Commander. As with any emergency, the authority to deviate from this procedure rests with the Chief Engineer or his/her designee. Members shall be responsible for communicating any deviations from this operational guideline.

III. Definitions:

Blizzard Warning: A blizzard warning incorporates all of the conditions present in a Winter Storm Warning and contains sustained winds or frequent gusts greater than 35 miles per hour and considerable falling snow frequently reducing visibility for greater than 3 hours.

Ice Storm Warning: A winter weather event where ½" or greater of ice accretion of freezing rain is expected within 12 to 36 hours.

National Weather Service (NWS): The National Weather Service Office located in Burlington, Vermont.

Winter Weather Advisory: A winter weather event that may include the following conditions to arrive within 12 to 24 hours:

- Blowing Snow with visibility substantially reduced over a wide area due to wind-driven snow with winds less than 35 miles per hour.
- Any accretion of freezing rain or freezing drizzle on road surfaces.
- Winter weather event having more than one predominant hazard (i.e., snow and ice, snow and sleet, or snow, ice, and sleet) meeting or exceeding advisory criteria for at least one of the precipitation elements, but remaining below warning criteria.
- Snow accumulation of 4 inches averaged over a forecast zone in a 12-hour time frame.
- Snow and blowing snow with 4 inches of snowfall averaged over a forecast zone in 12 hours with visibility substantially reduced over a wide area due to wind-driven snow with winds less than 35 miles per hour.
- Wind chill index between -20°F and -29°F for at least 3 hours with a sustained wind speed of at least 10 mph (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, n.d.).

Winter Storm Watch: A weather notice with significant lead time published by the National Weather Service where the weather event is expected to meet the *Warning* criteria.

Winter Storm Warning: A winter weather event where following conditions are expected within the next 12 to 36 hours.

- Heavy snow with 6 inches of accumulation averaged over a forecast zone within a 12-hour period.
- Heavy snow with 9 inches of accumulation averaged over a forecast zone within a 24-hour period.
- Ice Storm with ½" or greater accretion of freezing rain in any zone.
- A wind chill index less than -30°F for at least 3 hours with a sustained wind of at least 5 mph.
- A winter weather event having more than one predominant hazard (i.e., heavy snow and blowing snow [below blizzard conditions], snow and ice, snow and sleet, sleet and ice, or snow, sleet, and ice) meeting or exceeding warning criteria for at least one of the precipitation elements (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, n.d.).

IV. Guidelines:

A). The Burlington Fire Department will utilize three (3) levels of deployment during Winter Weather Events.

1. Level One (1) Winter Staffing:

- a. The Shift Commander monitors the weather forecast utilizing the NWS website: www.weather.gov/btv/.
 - (1) A winter weather advisory or winter weather watch has been issued by the NWS to include the geographic area of the City of Burlington.
- b. On-Duty staffing remains at current operational practice (no increase in personnel).
- c. The Shift Commander will send a Department-wide e-mail, within 4 hours of the NWS weather alert, indicating that the Winter Weather Watch has been issued, including the NWS weather updated information.
- d. The Senior Fire Officer or Firefighter on duty in each Station is responsible for ensuring operational readiness of the following:
 - (1) Apparatus are fully fueled
 - (2) Reserve apparatus are inspected and readied.
 - (3) Automatic tire chain operation confirmed for units equipped
 - (4) Snow removal equipment (plow truck, shovels, hydrant shovels, etc.)
 - (5) Salt/Sand

2. Level Two (2) Winter Staffing:

- a. The Shift Commander monitors the weather forecast utilizing the NWS website: www.weather.gov/btv/.
 - (1) A Winter Storm Warning has been issued by the NWS to include the geographic area of the City of Burlington.
- b. The Shift Commander, after consulting with the DC of Operations will send a Department-wide e-mail indicating that a Winter Storm Warning has been issued. The email shall include the NWS weather updated information and the official notice of intent to move to Level Two (2) winter staffing.
- c. The Shift Commander will staff all engines and aerials with three (3) personnel 2-hours prior to the start of precipitation.
- d. The Shift Commander will staff Utility 1 with a plow operator.
- e. If the start of precipitation is to occur during the overnight hours the additional staffing should commence at 1930 hours.
- f. Requests for days off beyond those required in the CBA will be denied.
- g. Requests for personal leave that had not previously been approved prior to declaration of the Level 2 Winter Staffing condition, will be denied.
- h. Any deviation of this practice may be authorized by the Chief Engineer, the DC of Operations, or the DC of Administration.

3. Level Three (3) Winter Staffing:

- a. The Shift Commander monitors the weather forecast utilizing the NWS website: www.weather.gov/btv/.
 - (1) A Winter Storm Warning has been issued by the NWS to include the geographic area of the City of Burlington.
 - (2) Storm totals are expected to exceed 9 inches of accumulation within 12 hours, or greater than 12 inches in 24 hours.
- b. The Shift Commander, after consulting with the DC of Operations will send a Department-wide e-mail indicating that a Winter Storm Warning has been issued. The email shall include the NWS weather updated information and the official notice of intent to move to Level Three (3) winter staffing.
- c. The Shift Commander will staff all engines and aerials with three (3) personnel 2-hours prior to the start of precipitation.
- d. The Shift Commander will staff an additional Ambulance at Fire Station #4 2-hours prior to the start of precipitation. This ambulance will be the primary ambulance for District #4 during the storm.
- e. The Shift Commander will staff Utility 1 with a plow operator.
- f. If the start of precipitation is to occur during the overnight hours the additional staffing should commence at 1930 hours.
- g. Requests for days off beyond those required in the CBA will be denied.
- h. Requests for personal leave that had not previously been approved prior to declaration of the Level 3 Winter Staffing condition, will be denied.
- i. Any deviation of this practice may be authorized by the Chief Engineer, the DC of Operations, or the DC of Administration.

B). During the winter storm event, the Shift Commander on duty shall assign a member to staff Utility One to plow snow. This operator will be selected at the discretion of the Shift Commander from one of the engines or aerials.

- a. At no time, shall a single operator be assigned to Utility One for greater than an 8-hour operational timeframe.
- b. If plowing operations exceed 8-hours, another operator shall relieve the initial operator in a one to one rest-work cycle.
- c. The plow operator assigned to Utility 1 will work to ensure:
 - (1) That fire apparatus can access/egress all fire stations.
 - (2) That fire apparatus can gain access to emergency incidents, especially those which occur on secondary roads that may not have been cleared by Public Works.
 - (3) Parking areas at all fire stations are maintained to allow for recalled personnel to be able to park.

- C). While on emergency responses during a winter storm event, members should ensure the closest fire hydrants are shoveled and clear.
- D). Recall of off-duty personnel for Winter Storm events shall follow section 11.7 of the CBA, including the possibility of mandatory recall and holdover of personnel.
- E). Demobilization of additional personnel shall occur when response times on primary roads no longer become an issue, or the winter storm warning has been cancelled, whichever occurs first.
 - 1. Demobilization may occur at the direction of the Fire Chief or his/her designee.

V. **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all the on-duty Shift Commander to ensure this policy is followed and the staffing benchmarks are achieved. All members are to read, understand and follow this Standard Operating Guideline.

Revision History			
Revision Date	Section	Summary	Principal Author
		Initial release of document.	DC A. Collette

Readiness Level	Weather Notice Issued	Operations	Staffing Levels
Level 1 – Winter Storm Staffing 1	Winter Weather Advisory Or Winter Storm Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift Commander sends e-mail notification that Winter Weather Watch has been issued. E-mail to include NWS forecast information All apparatus are fully fueled. Reserve apparatus are inspected and readied Automatic tire chain operation is confirmed Snow removal equipment readied (snow plow, shovels, hydrant shovels placed on apparatus). Sand/salt for use at fire stations confirmed. 	Current Operational Practices.
Level 2 – Winter Storm Staffing 2	Winter Storm Warning Issued. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 inches of snow expected within 12 hours, or 9 inches of snow within a 24 hour period, or ½" or greater of Ice accretion of freezing rain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift Commander sends e-mail notification that a Winter Storm Warning has been issued. E-mail to include NWS forecast information and declaration of Level 2 – Winter Staffing Levels prior to hiring additional personnel All Level 1 Operational conditions must be completed. Staffing levels increased 2 hours prior to start of precipitation Requests for days off beyond those required in the CBA will be denied Personal leave requests that had not been approved prior to the storm will be denied. 	Engine Companies: 3 Personnel. Ladder Companies: 3 Personnel. Utility 1: Staffed with 1.
Level 3 – Winter Storm Staffing 3	Winter Storm Warning Issued. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storm totals expected to exceed 9 inches within 12 hours, or Greater than 12 inches of accumulation in 24 hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift Commander sends e-mail notification that a Winter Storm Warning has been issued. E-mail to include NWS forecast information and declaration of Level 3 – Winter Staffing Levels prior to hiring additional personnel. Staffing levels increased 2 hours prior to start of precipitation. Requests for days off beyond those required in the CBA will be denied. Personal leave requests that had not been approved prior to the storm will be denied. 	Engine Companies: 3 Personnel. Ladder Companies: 3 Personnel. A 3 rd ambulance is staffed at Fire Station #4 and will have the primary response to the NNE during Storm. Utility 1: Staffed with 1.