



# Burlington Fire Department



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<b>Section: 01 - Suppression</b>	
<b>SOG Number: 01.51</b>	<b>Effective Date: August 19, 2022</b>
<b>Subject: Heavy Content Operations</b>	
<b>By Order of Acting Fire Chief Derek R. Libby</b>	

## I. Purpose:

To establish safe guidelines, an operational course of action, and an effective level of response for Heavy Content Operations.

## II. Scope:

This Policy shall apply to all uniformed members of the Burlington Fire Department (BFD). This SOG shall supersede any other previous Department Directive (DD), SOG's, or SOP's of BFD.

## III. Definitions:

Heavy Content Fire: a fire in a structure that has excessive contents creating a large fire load and increasing the risk to firefighters conducting interior firefighting operations.

Hoarding: is a pattern of behavior that is characterized by the excessive acquisition of and inability or unwillingness to discard large quantities of objects that cover the living areas of the home that cause significant distress or impairment. Usually compulsive.

### Hoarding Levels:

- **Hoarding Level One:** Clutter is not excessive, all doors and stairways are accessible, there are no odors, and the home is considered safe and sanitary.
- **Hoarding Level Two:** Clutter inhabits 2 or more rooms, light odors, overflowing garbage cans, light mildew in kitchens and bathrooms, one exit is blocked, some pet dander or pet waste puddles, and limited evidence of housekeeping.

- **Hoarding Level Three:** One bedroom or bathroom is unusable, Excessive dust, heavily soiled food preparation areas, strong odors throughout the home, excessive amount of pets, and visible clutter outdoors.
- **Hoarding Level Four:** Sewer backup, hazardous electrical wiring, flea infestation, rotting food on counters, lice on bedding, and pet damage to home.
- **Hoarding Level Five:** Rodent infestation, kitchen and bathroom unusable due to clutter, human and animal feces, and disconnected electrical and/or water service.

Hoarding Levels for the Firefighter:

- **Hoarding Level One:** Small noticeable clutter.
- **Hoarding Level Two:** Interior pathways with a common exterior access.
- **Hoarding Level Three:** Interior pathways with limited exterior access. (Piles in pathway are shoulder high.)
- **Hoarding Level Four:** Limited interior pathways with minimal exterior access. (Limited usable space.)
- **Hoarding Level Five:** NO Access (Described as a dumpster with a roof.)  
See Appendix A.

## **IV. Guidelines:**

### A). Signs

1. There are a number of evident signs of hoarding which can be identified during size-up. Each of these signs, in and of itself, does not mean there is hoarding but they should be taken as signs to help aid in the decision making process. Signs include but are not limited to:
  - a. the presence of privacy fencing
  - b. cluttered exterior, overgrown vegetation
  - c. blocked entrances
  - d. windows blocked by materials
  - e. vehicles filled with contents
  - f. unpleasant odors
  - g. a lack of general maintenance around the building

### B). Operational Concerns

1. Excessive weight on the floor causing stress to the structure
2. Increased fire due to increased fuel load
3. Biological concerns
4. Narrow pathways through structure
5. Blocked exits and windows

6. Risk of entrapment / collapse from belongings
7. Residents may be over-protective of their belongings
8. Vent limited
9. Extended burn times
10. Excessive work load for firefighters

#### C). Operational Procedures at Heavy Content Fires

1. Upon identifying the fire building as a heavy content occupancy, the following actions shall occur;
  - a. Announce to dispatch and all incoming companies that the fire is a “HEAVY CONTENT FIRE”
  - b. Request a 3<sup>rd</sup> alarm or greater assignment
  - c. Request PD if not already responding
  - d. Conduct 380 Size-up with TIC
  - e. Determine offensive vs. defensive attack
  - f. Consider transforming windows into doors
  - g. Bucket brigade or human chain is a method for transporting items where items are passed from one person to the next.
  - h. Coordinated ventilation
  - i. Decontamination of gear and equipment

#### D.) Operational Procedures at EMS / Fire Alarm Incidents

1. Ensure proper PPE is utilized including N-95 for safety from biological hazards
2. Handle the medical emergency/ Fire Alarm
3. Determine if occupancy needs attention
4. Notify Battalion 1 / FMO
5. Notify Code Enforcement through dispatch
6. If afterhours and building can be secured and occupants are not in immediate need of assistance, take pictures using iPad or phone and follow up with an email to Code Enforcement Office
7. If there is an issue with site security or people are in need of immediate assistance, calling Code Enforcement after hours or the City Health Officer is the best course of action.
8. Ask dispatch to flag the address in CAD as a Heavy Content Building
9. Decontaminate gear and equipment

## V. **Responsibility:**

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

Revision History			
Revision Date	Section	Summary	Principal Author
August 19, 2022	All	New Document	BC Curtin

## Appendix A

# Heavy Content Rating Scale

**Level 1**

**Small Noticable Clutter**



**Level 2**

**Interior Pathways**

**Common Exterior Access**



**Level 3**

**Interior Pathways**

**Limited Exterior Access**



**Level 4**

**Limited Interior Pathways**

**Minimal Exterior Access**



**Level 5**

**No Access**

