



National Urban Search & Rescue Response System

2020 Safety Stand Down

When used appropriately, a Safety Stand Down provides an opportunity for employers and employees to talk about hazards, preventive methods, and a company's safety policies, goals, and expectations.

The Safety Stand Down was originally conceived in 2014 by OSHA as part of a National Campaign to prevent falls in construction, to raise awareness surrounding the severity of fall hazards in construction, and the importance of preventing them. Today, many entities like the IAFF, IAFC, US Military, Aviation Industry, National Safety Council, OSHA, Professional Companies, and the Construction Industry embrace and leverage the use of Safety Stand Downs. The National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System (the System) has adopted the use of the Safety Stand Down concept.

During the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, the System responded to seven hurricanes (Douglas, Marco, Laura, Beta, Sally, Delta, and Zeta) and the Oregon Wildfires. These responses resulted in cases of increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections and exposures that required treatment, quarantine, and isolation. System General Memorandum (GM) 2020 032 (and revisions a, b & c) *COVID-19 Operational Guidance* was issued as guidance for System responses to improve the health and safety of System personnel. COVID-19 related impacts that occurred as a result of the 2020 deployments were treated as an Incident within an Incident (IWI) and the operational, logistical, and worker's compensation requirements had major impacts in the System. A preliminary review of these cases showed a concerning lack of knowledge, understanding, and compliance with the guidance and information provided by the USR GM 2020-032 series.

The COVID-19 Priority Ad Hoc Group was established to review USR GM 2020-032c and the 2020 System responses. The Ad Hoc Group was tasked with four priority items, and with developing an improved communication plan to ensure all System members understand the most current policies. This Safety Stand Down and the accompanying Blue Sheet distribution were both identified as critical steps for Systemwide knowledge and compliance. The overall health and safety of System personnel is the highest priority.

This System Safety Stand Down is educational in nature and requires **NO** Out of Service time. System task forces are encouraged to utilize all virtual communication platforms that have been widely utilized in the current pandemic environment. The overall goal and instruction for this Safety Stand Down is for all System personnel to:

- Receive, review, and become knowledgeable of the Blue Sheet and the newly updated COVID-19 Operational Guidance. This could include e-mail distribution, Zoom/Microsoft Teams meetings, teleconferences, etc.
- Provide Leader's Intent as given by System leadership during the Phase One COVID-19 USR Forward Plan.
- Ensure support and compliance with new operational guidelines.

Any questions related to this Safety Stand Down should be directed to: Doug Nakama, douglas.nakama@fema.dhs.gov, or Michael Davis, michaelb.davis@fema.dhs.gov.