**Glossary of Fire Department Terms**

**Aerial operation** – means master streams flowing from elevated locations, generally the tips of aerial ladders or platforms during defensive operations.

**All clear** – means that a primary search has been conducted and nothing was found.

**Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta** – these terms are used to designate the sides of a structure. Generally speaking, the “alpha” side is the front of the structure, the “bravo” side is the left side of the structure, “charlie” is the back of the structure and “delta” is the right side of the structure.

**Assuming command** – means that the first arriving unit has assumed responsibility for the incident and will be directing the activities of all other units until relieved by a Chief Officer. It will also be announced when a later arriving Chief Officer takes over for the first arriving officer and assumes Command responsibilities.

**Back me up** – is a message fire officers regularly send to a later arriving fire crew. It is an assignment that means deploy a 1 3/4” handline and come in behind me to provide protection as we engage in firefighting activities.

**Battalion** – refers to a Chief Officer (Battalion Chief). “Batallion 6 on scene assuming command” means that the Chief Officer from Batallion 6 has arrived and will be in charge of the incident. The SAFD breaks the city up into 7 geographical areas. Fire stations within each area report to a Chief Officer. Each area is referred to as a Battalion; therefore the Chief Officer is referred to as a Battalion Chief.

**Blitzfire (or ground monitor)** – is a ground mounted master stream device.

**CAFS** – a CAFS unit is an Engine that has a special foam system called a “Compressed Air Foam System.” This system mixes foam, water and air to create an extinguishing agent that is more effective than water and much lighter. The light weight makes it easier for firefighters to move handlines thereby reducing fatigue.

**Command** – refers to the individual in charge of the incident that is directing the activities of all other responders.

**Defensive** – means that conditions are too dangerous to allow firefighters to operate inside of the structure.

**Division (Sector)** – is a geographical area where firefighting activities are taking place. For example, firefighting operations taking place in the front of the building may be designated as the Alpha Division. Operations in the rear may be designated as the Charlie Division. All personnel working in a Division are under the direct supervision of a Division Supervisor.
**Engine** – is a fire truck that carries and pumps water.

**Extension** – means the fire has extended into concealed spaces within the building. “Checking for extension” means that firefighters are opening up concealed spaces to see if the fire has extended to other parts of the building.

**Fast attack mode** – means that the first arriving officer, based on conditions encountered, has determined that it will be necessary for him/her to participate in the fire attack instead of taking a stationary Command position.

**Group** – refers to a one or more fire companies responsible for a specific function. For example, a group responsible for ventilating the structure would be called a ventilation group.

**Handline** – is a firefighting hose that is operated and maneuvered by firefighters (usually a 1 ¾” in diameter).

**Knocked down** – means the main body of the fire has been suppressed.

**Ladder** – A fire truck that has an extension ladder, carries certain firefighting equipment and can be set up to flow large quantities of water from an elevated position is called a “Ladder Truck.” When communicating over the radio, a reference such as “Ladder 35” is referring to the crew of Ladder Truck 35.

**Laying an inch and three quarter line** – means that an fire company has pulled a 1 3/4“ hose (handline) and will be engaged in fire suppression activities.

**Laying our preconnect** - means that an fire company has pulled a 1 3/4“ hose (handline) and will be engaged in fire suppression activities.

**Level 2 Staging** – At a typical structure fire, the first arriving Engine and first arriving Ladder will proceed to the scene while all other units will stage in the direction of travel at the nearest intersection. When an incident escalates to a 2nd alarm or greater, the Incident commander will designate a location for arriving units to assembled while awaiting an assignment. Staging at a specified location is called “Level 2 Staging.”

**Marginal** – means that conditions are severe and pose a significant risk to firefighters entering the structure. The only justification for entering the building when operating under the marginal mode is to check for and remove endangerd occupants.

**Master stream** – is a fixed firefighting stream that flows large quantities of water (500 to 2000 gpm). Master streams may be elevated or set on the ground.

**Mayday** – is any emergency transmission that means a firefighter is in trouble and is in need of rescue.
Mobile Command – means that the command is not operating at a fixed location

Occupant Services – The term Occupant Services is used to describe the coordinated process of managing the needs of displaced occupants. Firefighters assigned Occupant Services duties attend to the provision of food, shelter, clothing, and other such post disaster needs.

Offensive – means that conditions are safe enough to allow firefighters to fight the fire from the inside

On-scene – means that a unit has arrived at the scene of the emergency

Overhaul – is the process of confirming that the fire is completely out. It generally involves digging through rubble, wetting down hot spots and other such actions necessary to confirm that the fire is completely out.

Preconnect – refers to a 1 3/4” preconnected hoseline that is our basic firefighting line. A common radio transmission is, “We’re laying our preconnect.” which means there is an active fire and firefighting operations are in progress.

Platform – is a fire truck that has an extension ladder with a working platform at the end, carries certain firefighting equipment and can be set up to flow large quantities of water from elevated positions.

Primary search – is a rapid search of unburned portions of the fire building for trapped occupants.

Redline – is a small diameter handline (usually 1” in diameter and used for small fires).

Responding – means a unit is enroute to the emergency scene

Return to quarters – means that the fire unit is not needed at the incident and may return to the fire station.

Reverse lay – means that an Engine company is deploying a supply line and is laying the line from the fire to the hydrant.

Salvage – is the process of protecting unburned valuables. It generally involves removing or covering valuable items to protect them from water damage.

Secondary Search – is a slow methodical search after the fire is out. The purpose of the secondary search is to determine if there was a fire victim that may not have been found during the primary search.

Staging – means that a unit has arrived on the scene and is standing by awaiting an assignment from the Incident Commander.
**Staging Area** – an area where on-scene resources can assemble while awaiting an assignment.

**Straight lay** – means that an Engine company is deploying a supply line and is laying the line from the hydrant to the fire.

**Supply Line** – is a large diameter fire hose that is used to move water from a fire hydrant to a fire apparatus.

**Under control** – means that the fire is no longer a threat to the building and the operation is transitioning from fire control to overhaul operations.