

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 2-2

ISSUE: THE BUDDY SYSTEM

One of the oldest principles taught to firefighters is the “buddy system.” Firefighters entering a burning structure or hazardous area must employ the buddy system by entering, working and exiting in pairs.

The purpose of the buddy system is to ensure that if one firefighter becomes injured, trapped, or unconscious, the buddy will be available to assist or call for help.

Some fire department's operational procedures use an entry team of 3 to 5 firefighters with or without a company officer in charge. When operating in attack teams of this size, it is even more important that the principles of the buddy system are adhered to, because it is easier for one firefighter to go missing before someone notices. Under the team attack concept no one exits a hazardous area alone. If a situation makes it necessary for one member of the team to exit, such as a malfunctioning SCBA, the team members exit in pairs or the entire team exits.

Fire departments should develop operational guidelines that lay out entry and exit principles that suit each fire department's response capabilities. Firefighters should be trained, using their own department's operational guidelines.