TOLEDO FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

C-100 Utilities At Emergency Scenes

Emergency Manual

Date Revised: 02/01/2018

Last Modified: 09/27/2024 10:05

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Policy/Procedure

When it becomes necessary at the scene of an emergency to disrupt utility service to a structure the following steps shall be taken:

1. Electrical Service: If a fire or other emergency damages the electrical service (drop) entering a house, the domestic electrical lines, fuse or breaker box, or electrical equipment that is permanently wired, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. If electrical drops are involved, Command shall instruct Dispatch to notify the Toledo Edison Company. Power company personnel will respond and cut the drop. Crews shall exercise extreme caution around any line that has fallen due to fire. Crews shall treat all electrical lines on the ground as “HOT” until power company personnel confirm they have been de energized.
    - Crews shall avoid contact with structures such as fences that may have come in contact with downed lines. It may be necessary to post a firefighter in the area to warn members of the danger until the situation is resolved. Scene tape shall be used to mark off the danger zone.
2. If crews need to pull the electrical meter at a structure fire, they shall pull it and place the meter in a safe location. Command shall be notified the meter has been pulled and of its location. The meter may be given to a power company representative upon their arrival at the scene, or placed in Departmental mail for delivery to the Fire Shop. The open socket should be sealed as soon as practical with a plastic meter cover. If conditions at the meter socket deteriorate to the point it is unsafe to replace the meter with a cover, Command shall be notified and the area defined with scene tape.
3. If crews are dispatched on a Still Alarm to a single or multifamily residential occupancy up to three stories in height to check an electrical problem, and are of the opinion a fire hazard exists, the

Incident Commander shall instruct Dispatch to send a Toledo Edison Company crew to the location to mitigate the situation. For other occupancies, crews shall direct concerns to the Toledo Fire and Rescue Department's (TFRD) Fire Prevention Bureau, via email, citing all concerns found.

4. Ruptured transformers can be the impetus for serious oil fires. Fog streams are effective on such fires and the exposures that may be present. Crews shall avoid directing hose streams onto electrical equipment such as transformers or power lines until they have been de energized by Toledo Edison personnel.

    - **Note:** There is no way to visually determine whether a power grid is energized. Grids may be cycled on and off automatically and or remotely to diagnose systemic problems. Always treat power lines and distribution equipment as if it is energized until Toledo Edison personnel on scene have confirmed it is not. Command shall attempt to determine if the transformer contains PCB. If it does, Command shall direct Dispatch to add the Hazardous Materials Unit to the incident. Crews shall wear full protective clothing and avoid contact with the oil. The area should be diked immediately.

5. If a transformer is burning on a pole, protect all exposures and await the response of power company representatives. Most modern overhead transformers do not contain PCB's. This cannot be ascertained by TFRD personnel. Crews shall avoid all contact with spilled or dripping oil. When power company personnel arrive, they will know if the transformer contains PCB.

6. Crews shall not open high line switches (switches with a padlock and number on pole about head high, usually "D" handled) because of the possibility the entire line above will fall to the ground due to a power surge.

7. Fires in Manholes and Electrical Vaults - When responding to emergencies of this type, crews shall follow the procedures below:

    1. The first arriving unit shall establish Command and give a condition report upon arrival. Command shall direct Dispatch to notify the proper utility companies and dispatch the Confined Space Unit.

    2. If equipment is underground, as in a manhole, tunnel, or vault, Command shall allow no one to enter, even to affect a rescue, until assured the electricity has been shut off. Crews shall obtain clearance to enter only from authorized power company representatives who are part of the official emergency response. Crews shall discount the advice of bystanders, regardless of reported expertise.

    3. Crews shall not remove shutters on vaults or remove manhole covers as this action may cause an explosion.

    4. Crews shall not attempt to fight a fire in a manhole or electrical vault until certain that the equipment has been de energized.

    5. Care shall be taken upon arrival as manhole covers, weighing up to 300 pounds, can become projectiles.

6. If it is necessary that TFRD personnel will must enter electrical vaults to facilitate a rescue, Emergency Procedure C-18 “Confined Space / Trench Rescue Incidents” shall be followed.

7. Crews shall use water only if directed to do so by power company personnel.

8. While awaiting the arrival of power company representatives, crews shall protect exposures and, if smoke is accumulating inside nearby buildings, ventilate appropriately.

9. In most instances, power company representatives will want to be the only personnel inside a manhole or electrical vault to extinguish a fire.

10. First Energy and Columbia Gas have many Dry Chemical extinguishers at our disposal.

2. Gas Service: If a fire or other emergency damages the gas meter or domestic service pipes inside a structure, or equipment that is powered by natural gas, crews shall:

1. Shut off the gas at the meter, if possible. If meter cannot be shut off, the Incident Commander shall direct Dispatch to contact the gas company to arrange to have the supply shut off at the curb. If the flow of gas is hampering extinguishment efforts, TFRD personnel should attempt to locate the curb box and shut off the gas.

2. Notify the gas company following any incident in which the gas was shut off at the meter due to a defective appliance. Crews should not extinguish flames if the gas supply to a defective appliance cannot be shut off. In those situations, if possible, crews should protect exposures until proper shut-off is accomplished. Crews shall remain on scene until gas company personnel have arrived and mitigated the emergency.

3. Telephone Lines: In the event that a fire or other emergency causes a phone line to drop, the following steps shall be taken:

1. Crews shall treat all downed wires as “HOT” until the type of service they provide is determined. Crews shall be cautious the wires do not come in contact with electrical lines. If there is a possibility the downed telephone wires may pose a safety concern, the Incident Commander shall direct Dispatch to contact Toledo Edison Company/First Energy officials to rectify the problem. Prior to leaving the scene of any downed wire emergency, crews shall secure the area with scene tape.

2. If the line involved is confirmed to be telephone “drop” line from a pole to a structure, it is the responsibility of the property owner to notify the telephone company to solve the problem. Crews shall make all reasonable efforts to assist property owners with this task. If the line provides vital emergency communication capability, such as to a hospital, or that which is critical to a business, Command shall request the assistance of Dispatch to expedite mitigation of the incident.

See Also:

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Last update: **09/27/2024 10:05**