

OK, I Got My Monitor, Now What?

By Sally and Biz, 10/26/01

Here's a basic description of how to respond to any incident. Comments welcome.

1. Listen to Red 1 radio traffic whenever you get the chance. Read the radio use document (available on the website) to help you decipher what's going on.
2. Yikes, the monitor just went off! First, calm down. Pay attention to the address, and type of call. If you didn't catch it, don't worry, it will be repeated, and more info given as soon as somebody from Four Mile with a radio comes up on the air. After Four Mile Base comes up, switch to Red 3, or scan.
3. Think about what you should wear - is the right gear in your car? I always make it a point to pee first, unless it's likely that 15 seconds will really make a difference. It helps me calm down, and gives me a chance to make sure I have what I'll need. Besides, calls often last more than an hour, and there aren't likely to be bathrooms handy.
4. If there is any kind of violence involved in the call **DON'T GO TO THE SCENE**. We will stage, i.e. wait somewhere nearby, as a group, until the sheriff checks it out and issues a "code 4" or all-clear. We always stage for domestic violence, anything involving a weapon, and calls at the hotels (including Boulder Mtn Lodge). We also stage for campfires (often above the creek path or at the tunnel).
5. Check your maps - know where you are going before you start driving. You should have been issued maps with your monitor.
6. If the call is for mutual aid in a neighboring district, we will form a squad and go as a group. Don't go by yourself.
7. If you pass a station, and you have heard that the truck is going to roll, jump in. If you haven't heard and think it might be needed, start up the truck and use the radio to ask base if it is needed. Of course, don't plan on driving the truck unless you've been checked out to drive it emergent by the truck captain.
8. When you arrive in a PV (private vehicle), **park away from the scene**. We need to keep the scene clear for the engines and ambulance. **LEAVE YOUR KEYS IN YOUR CAR**. Put them on the driver's floor, in the ignition, or somewhere reasonably obvious. Don't lock your car. Chances of theft are real low; chances that somebody will have to move your car are not bad.
9. Get your gear on. Some people gear up before driving to the scene, but driving in bunker gear is a drag, so I do it when I get there. Wear your bunker gear to motor vehicle crashes. Forest fire gear to fallen climbers, other med calls. Don't approach the scene until you look professional.
10. Put out your Danger antenna as you approach the scene. If anything feels screwy to you, hang back, be safe.
11. Report in to Command. If somebody tries to give you a task first, turn them down. Your safety depends on Command knowing that you are on scene. If you don't know where command is, ask other Four Milers. If command hasn't been established yet,

get a Four Miler with a radio to be Command, and make sure they know your name. If nobody with a radio is there yet, your Danger antenna should be wide awake. Stay out of trouble until command gets set up. Gather information, but don't approach the crashed car, the screaming people, the FIRE, etc, unless you are comfortable with your level of training in doing so. Do you know enough to recognize all the hazards? If not, hang out, more Four Mile folks will be arriving very soon.

12. After you check in, Command will probably give you something to do. Repeat the instructions back to make sure you understand. If you have any questions, ask. Remember the rule of 3: task, the tools to do the task and reporting back in after the task is completed. If Command is too busy, collar somebody else with experience to help you get started. Be assertive about getting the info you need. If you are not comfortable performing the task, say so! Nobody is expected to be heroic; firefighter safety comes first. We have a very clean job injury record, and expect to keep it that way.
13. When you are done with the task, report back to command. If you see something else that needs doing, check with Command before doing it. This is what "no freelancing" means.
14. As the scene winds down, Command will release unnecessary people. If you need to go, tell Command, don't just leave. Command will hold a quick debriefing right at the incident, usually to talk about what happened and how we can improve our response. It's worth staying for if you can.
15. If something at the scene upsets you, talk to the other folks that were there about it, within 24 hrs. Anybody can ask for a "critical incident stress debriefing" (CISD). Sometimes, particularly if there is a bad outcome to the call, things stay with us that need to be addressed.

Now, it's time for some perspective. We only get maybe 6 serious emergency calls in a year, out of the total of 80 or so. Most calls are "nothingburgers." A lot of the time, you'll get a cancellation tone before you even get to the scene. Don't be deterred. Unless you have something more important to do, go ahead and go to the scene any ways, (always check in), and treat it as an opportunity for training.

Look at the crashed car, and compare the damage to the injuries. Where would you stage? Where would you put the engine, traffic, personal vehicles, etc. Ask lots of questions. Watch what the responders do, how they interact. See where equipment is stored, and how it's used. Listen to the radio traffic. Get to know the rest of us, what our skills and talents are. Help us get to know you and your skills and talents.