

Tuesday, September 19, 2006

Dear Chief:

In answer to your question, If a fire station is locked when not occupied, YES, all firefighters must have a key.

Explanation:

1. City Liability

If the first firefighter to arrive at the fire station does not have a key, this would contribute to a delayed response by the fire department and if there was loss of life or property damage as a result of this delay, the city could be held to be negligent and would be responsible for the additional loss that was caused by the delayed response. If the plaintiff in this (not giving keys to all firefighters) case was aware that this was a city policy, they could then argue that the city was guilty of gross negligence and therefore the tort liability limits would be waived and the city could be liable for an unlimited judgment.

2. ISO credit

If the fire station is not accessible to the first arriving firefighters so that a delayed response is possible, ISO would not look favorably on this policy. It is likely that ISO would reduce points for this policy and the reduction in points could result in worse ISO rating and higher insurance premiums for property owners in your city.

3. Bad policy

If a firefighter cannot be trusted with a key or entry to a fire station, they should be removed from the fire department. The fact that the city has allowed them to be on the fire department gives them legal entry into all property within the city during an emergency. It stands to reason then, that if you are going to give these firefighters a "carte blanche" pass to go into every home in the city during an emergency; surely they should be trusted with a key to the fire station.

Additionally:

- Fire Stations should be locked at all times. => Homeland Security issues require that fire stations have very tight security. There is a very simple solution to this problem. Install a security system at the fire station and change the door locks to the type that requires an entry code instead of a key. Each firefighter should be assigned a different entry code. With this process, all firefighters will have access and you will be able to see who entered the building and at what time. When a person is no longer allowed to enter the building, their individual code is disabled.

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