

NEW SOUTH WALES FIRE BRIGADES



OPERATIONS BULLETIN 2001/03

CAR FIRES UNDER RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Information from operational officers and analysis of AIRS statistics has shown a recent increase in car fires located under blocks of residential units. In nearly all cases these fires have been determined to be suspicious in nature or deliberately set. Of greatest concern is the number of smoke inhalation injuries to residents that have been reported. The following guidance is provided to supplement existing instruction and training and ensure efficient and effective operations at this type of incident.

1. **Firefighter safety is the first priority.** Conducting a rapid risk assessment **before** taking action, and continually assessing the risks present throughout the incident can assist Incident Controllers to ensure operational safety is maintained. The initial size-up must include the life risk to occupants from fire and smoke spreading into units.
2. Initial search and rescue must be accompanied by an immediate determination of whether the vehicle, or vehicles involved are LPG-powered, and the initiation of appropriate firefighting and evacuation actions if this is the case (see SOG 10.10 *Liquified petroleum gas*).
3. Greater firefighting and emergency services resources may be required to deal with the possible competing operational priorities of evacuations or informing residents to shelter in place, firefighting, exposure protection, and ventilation of the affected building. Consider the use of installed fixed protection systems such as EWIS for evacuation, internal hydrant systems, mechanical ventilation systems and PPV fans.
4. Incident Controllers must be alert to the risks posed by possible fire damage to the premises' utilities, and the appropriate actions to minimise these. As an example, a number of incidents have involved damage to PVC sewerage piping, resulting in firefighters having to deal with escaping bio-waste hazards.
5. Firefighters should note that often these car fires remain undiscovered for considerable periods of time, leading to longer pre-burn times and well-established fires that may be spreading to the surrounding structure and /or other vehicles. This will require greater initial weight of attack, with larger diameter hoselines.
6. Station Commanders and appliance drivers should be prepared to overcome difficulties in accessing the site, the building's parking area and/or in gaining entrance through security to any affected residential units.
7. Fire Safety Section is to be notified of any breaches of fire safety regulations.

Reference: Standard Operational Guideline 10.10 *Liquified petroleum gas*
Firefighters' Training Manual Vol 1: Topic 3, Section 5 *Liquified petroleum gas*

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Noted:		

**Previous Operations Bulletin – 2001/02 Procedure for 'white powder'
incidents – Federal Election Day**