Standard Operating Guideline OPS 16	
Subject:	Response to Utilities Incidents.
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Approval: EMS Representative:	
Fire Representative:	
Career Representative:	
Director:	

PURPOSE: The Franklin County Department of Public Safety has established the following guideline when responding to incidents involving public utilities.

POLICY:

A. Utility Pole Incidents:

1. The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) dispatchers shall direct the first due fire company to the scene of any utility pole incident. In the event there are multiple utility pole incidents in a single fire company's first due area, the dispatcher should only notify a second due company to respond to additional incidents at the request of the first due fire company officer in charge.

2. Dispatchers shall notify the first due fire company officer in charge of any additional incidents when received. The first due fire company officer in charge should coordinate responses to additional incidents with dispatch.

3. The first due fire company shall respond to and investigate any additional utility pole incidents as time permits and in a manner that prioritizes responses based on reported life safety issues.

4. Upon arrival of the first apparatus a safety zone shall be established to protect the public and responders.

5. An incident size up shall be given to the ECC by the on scene Incident Commander.

6. Any life safety issues will be addressed as quickly as possible only after it is safe for responders to enter the dangerous environment.

7. The on scene Incident Commander shall request the ECC to notify the appropriate utility company of the incident.

8. In order to relay an accurate incident location to the utility company, the on scene Incident Commander shall provide one of the following to the ECC, in the following order of preference, if it can be obtained safely:
    a. Nearest numerical street address,
    b. GPS coordinates of incident scene,
    c. Visible pole number.

9. All exposures to any fire shall be protected.

10. All fires shall be extinguished if the on scene IC determines that it can be performed safely without risk to personnel and the public.

11. If arcing power lines are present and/or there are other signs of an energized power line that is lying in or beside a public highway, the Incident Commander should notify the Virginia Dept. of Transportation to establish a detour or block traffic from entering the endangered area.

12. If arcing power lines are present and/or there are other signs of an energized power line that is lying on private property, the Incident Commander should make an attempt to notify the landowner of the danger and cordon off or erect a barricade that identifies the hazard.

13. Responding units may clear the scene if no life safety issues are noted by the Incident Commander. Prior to leaving the scene, hazardous areas shall be cordoned off with barrier tape or appropriate barricades to identify the hazardous area to the general public.

14. If the Incident Commander notes any life safety issues that are an immediate threat to the general public, responding apparatus and staff shall remain on scene and await the arrival of the utility company personnel to render the area safe.

15. The ECC shall be notified when units clear the scene.

B. General Gas Odor/Leak Incidents:

1. As a general "Rule of Thumb" apparatus should approach the scene from upwind and uphill, if possible.

2. Once on scene, apparatus should be positioned in a safe location in the event there is an actual leak. Consideration should be given for the need to stretch hose lines or obtain other needed equipment from the apparatus.

3. Do not park apparatus over manhole covers or catch basins, as vapors may accumulate in these areas.

4. Department personnel shall never attempt to turn on a gas valve or re-ignite a pilot light which has been previously turned off. This shall only be done by the gas company or other qualified person.

5. A minimum of one calibrated combustible gas indicator shall be used to investigate all gas odor/leak incidents. The sense of smell IS NOT RELIABLE enough to determine if a leak exists.

6. All personnel shall be trained in the proper operation of their respective stations combustible gas indicator(s) prior to being allowed to utilize such equipment on an incident scene.

7. Personnel shall ensure that the combustible gas indicator(s) they will utilize has been calibrated per the manufacturer's instructions prior to use on scene.

8. Combustible gas indicators shall be turned on in a "clean" location and ensured ready for use prior to entering a known or potentially hazardous atmosphere. As"Rule of Thumb" Oxygen levels should read 20.9%. All other sensors, if equipped, should read zero (0), such as Carbon Monoxide, lower explosive limits (LEL), Hydrogen Sulfide, etc.

9. It is very important to know what your combustible gas indicator is calibrated to, normally, Methane or Pentane.

10. Readings should be taken where gas is expected to accumulate, depending on the vapor density of the material. Materials that are heavier than air such as Propane will be found near the ground, lighter than air such as Natural Gas will be found at upper levels.

11. For combustible gas indicators equipped with a pump and sampling tube, personnel shall remember there is a delay in obtaining a reading due to the time it takes for the air sample to travel through the tube and reach the sensors. As a result, personnel should move slowly through an area when using the sampling tube and pump.

C. Odors/Leaks Indoors:

1. When investigating an odor/leak indoors, readings should be taken immediately upon entering the structure.

2. Do not ring doorbells, operate electric switches or appliances, or turn on or off any other device (i.e. flashlight, cell phone, etc.) that may generate a spark when operating in areas where a combustible gas may be present.

3. In the event of an active leak inside a structure in excess of the LEL, All personnel shall immediately evacuate the structure and surrounding area and wait for the arrival of the gas company.

4. If properly trained and the gas supply can be secured from the outside by department personnel, such as via the meter or shut off valve, do so without taking any unnecessary risk.

5. If it is necessary to shut off the electricity to the structure, notify the power company. Never attempt to shut-off breakers or pull the electric meter.

6. If possible, the structure may be ventilated from the exterior using natural ventilation, or with an EXPLOSION PROOF FAN, if available. Upon setting up ventilation, personnel shall immediately retreat to a safe distance to allow the gas levels to drop.

D. Odors/Leaks Outdoors:

1. When operating at a leak outdoors which cannot be controlled, notify the gas company and evacuate the area to a safe distance.

2. Always extinguish all open flames and any potential ignition sources.

3. In the event there is a gas leak with fire, actions should be taken to protect exposures without extinguishing the fire, until the gas supply can be shut off.

E. Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG):

1. When dealing with a leaking LPG tank, never approach the tank from the ends.

2. If possible and can safely be done, turn off the leaking cylinder at the value. If this is not possible, evacuate the area to a safe distance.

3. If the leak has ignited, deploy standard firefighting tactics. HOWEVER, do not attempt to extinguish the fire without shutting off the gas supply first. Extinguishing the fire without stopping the leak first may result in an explosion.

4. When approaching a leaking cylinder/tank involving fire, a minimum of two (2) 1-3/4" hose lines equipped with fog nozzles shall be utilized. Larger hose lines may be needed depending on tank/cylinder size. Personnel are to be on the inside of the hose lines with fog streams overlapping for protection, while constantly providing a cooling application of water to the tank/cylinder.

5. A firefighter equipped with a dry-chemical extinguisher, shall be located between the two (2) hose teams and coordinate the hose line advancement.

6. Upon shutting off a gas supply valve to a leaking tank/cylinder and extinguishing the fire, hose lines shall continue to apply water to cool the tank/cylinder.

7. In the event flames are impinging directly on an LP-gas tank/cylinder, use extreme caution and consider the possibility of a Boiling Liquid Expanding Vapor Explosion (BLEVE).

8. If there are warning signs of a BLEVE present, primarily direct flame impingement on the vapor space of the tank/cylinder, evacuate everyone within a minimum of a half-mile radius and allow the fire to self-extinguish.

9. As a general "Rule of Thumb", a minimum of 500 gallons per minute of water should be applied to each spot of flame impingement for larger tanks/cylinders, in the event firefighting tactics should be employed in an attempt to protect the tank/cylinder.

F. Transmission Pipeline Emergencies:

1. Upon notification of a possible pipeline emergency, personnel shall first identify the type of pipeline involved as well as its location.

2. Pipeline markers are installed at road, rail, and river crossings, and other places along the right-of-way. These markers provide pipeline operator name, product type, and a 24-hour emergency contact telephone number.

3. Markers ONLY show and APPROXIMATE location, and do not show information on the depth, number of pipelines, or the exact position of the pipeline.

4. Apparatus and personnel shall approach the scene cautiously, and from an upwind/uphill location, if possible.

5. Upon arrival, all vehicles should be positioned a safe distance from the incident and engines turned off, if possible.

6. Immediately notify the pipeline company. Be prepared to provide information including a call back name, telephone number, detailed location, type of emergency (fire, leak, etc.), potential or known exposures, special conditions (schools, homes, etc.) and local weather conditions.

7. Secure and evacuate people from the area of danger to an upwind/uphill location. Isolate the area and keep bystanders a safe distance away.

8. If a pipeline leak is not burning, take steps to prevent ignition. This includes prohibiting smoking, re-routing traffic, shutting off electrical and residential gas supplies.

G. Safety:

1. If at any time in the opinion of the on scene IC the site cannot be determined safe for the public or environment the fire/EMS company shall remain on scene and await the arrival of the utility company representatives.