

OPERATIONS EMERGENCY



PRELIMINARY EXPOSURE REDUCTION (PER)

- The term PER defines the initial process of removing contaminants from bunker gear prior to cleaning or decontamination as defined in NFPA 1851.
- Prior to removing firefighting ensembles worn in the hot zone, a preliminary exposure reduction shall be performed to remove potentially harmful contaminants (NFPA 1851 and WAC 296-305-05002 (15)).
 - **Wet mitigation:** Members should brush large debris first, then spray each other with water to remove loose particulates from turnouts and equipment. Utilizing the pump operator for decontamination should not be allowed due to their lack of respiratory protection. The designated Gross Decon line should be deployed approximately 50 feet from the pump panel, toward the egress of the immediate danger to life and health (IDLH) zone and should be designated by a cone. Do not connect a decontamination line to a foam discharge port during foam operations.
 - **Dry mitigation:** During cold weather operations, dry brushing should be conducted to remove the toxic products of combustion from fire fighters prior to going off air and removing SCBA face pieces.

- When cleaning contaminated equipment, always wear appropriate PPE (gloves, splash gown and N95 if equipment is dry and particles could become airborne) to protect against exposures from contaminated equipment (WAC 296.62).
- All fire fighters engaged in suppression activities, overhaul or exposure to smoke should exchange their contaminated hood for a clean one every time they exit the IDLH. Replacement hoods should be readily available on scene.
- After PER and before eating or drinking, a personal hand-washing station, including hand soap and towels, will be set up. In lieu of soap and water, use disposable wipes for hands, face and neck. Personnel should wash their hands before rehab, at the end of suppression activities including overhaul, and before returning to the living quarters. The hand-washing station or wipes should be available at the entry point to rehab.
- When released from the incident, fire fighters should bag their contaminated turnouts in large, encapsulating 6 mil leak-proof bags for transport back to the station. If using a trash bag, ensure it is clear so it's easy to identify what is in the bag. Wearing contaminated turnouts back to the fire station will transfer contaminants to apparatus seats, resulting in exposure to the next member who sits there due to cross-contamination.
- To protect hands from dermal absorption of contaminants while packaging turnouts, wear a minimum of EMS latex or nitrile gloves.
- Personnel must shower upon returning to quarters, or as soon as practical.
- Keep a reserve set of turnouts at assigned stations. Clean contaminated turnouts, including hood, gloves, boots and helmets, in accordance with NFPA 1851, or send them out to a designated station or an ISP for cleaning.

