

Emergency Scene Wash Down Protocol

The emergency scene “wash down” or “gross decon” protocol is intended to encapsulate and wash off cancer causing toxins encountered at a fire scene. Personnel exposed to these carcinogens shall participate in this process of “wash down” including water, Dawn dish soap, agitation with a brush, and finally rinsing off the contaminants with water. This type of emergency scene “wash down” has been recommended by the CDC/NIOSH as the most reliable process to date. When performed thoroughly, this process can remove up to 80% of the contaminants before firefighters begin to remove and handle their gear. This can result in limiting the cross-contamination that occurs when removing and handling the turnout garments.

The “wash down” kit consists of:

- (1) 5 gallon reflective green LeakTite bucket with lid
- (1) Dawn dish soap (small)
- (1) Hose: Goodyear Flex Flat Hose ½”x50’ (pressure rated up to 400 psi)
- (1) Nozzle: Pro Series Water Cannon
- (1) Adaptor 2.5” female to .75” male GHT
- (1) HDX Bench Brush
- (1) Duct tape
- (4) 55 gallon 6 mil bags (clear)
- Educational Items (USB Drive)



“Wash down” set up:

1. Identify a safe area that is easily accessed.
2. Remove the content of the bucket.
3. Connect the 2.5” adaptor, hose and nozzle to a 2.5” discharge.
4. Add a small amount of Dawn dish soap to the bucket and add water.

Step-by-step “wash down” process:

- When directed by the Incident Commander or company officer, the firefighter(s) will remain on air and report to the designated “wash down” area.
- Contaminated personnel will wash each other off. This prevents respiratory and dermal exposure to personnel not protected by turnout gear and SCBA protection.
- Spray water on the contaminated firefighter, top to bottom without over saturating or introducing water through the neck area.
- With the soapy water from the bucket, scrub the areas of the helmet, jacket, and pants.
- Rinse the soap and contaminants from the firefighter.
- Repeat the process for remaining personnel.
- Once personnel have completed the “wash down”, they are cleared for removing their gear.
- To prevent inhalation or dermal contamination from removing the hood, keep your SCBA on and pull your hood over your head and down around the SCBA regulator hose. This will limit the chances of breathing in contaminants before unclipping the SCBA regulator.
- If there is a need to put the wet gear back on for ongoing fire ground tasks, it may be done with less chances of contamination since it has been washed down.
- To adhere with the “clean cab” philosophy, each individual shall place their washed down gear in the 55-gallon 6 mil clear bags prior to driving back to the station.
- Once back at the station or at any time necessary, use gloves and other available protection when handling the gear.