



Today's discussion is from the
Fireline Safety Category.

REFUSING RISK ("TURN DOWN" PROTOCOL)

Every firefighter has the right and obligation to report safety problems and contribute ideas regarding their safety. Supervisors are expected to give these concerns and ideas serious consideration. When an individual feels an assignment is unsafe, they also have the obligation to identify, to the degree possible, safe alternatives for completing that assignment. Turning down an assignment is one possible outcome of managing risk.

- A turn down is a situation where an individual has determined an assignment cannot be undertaken as given, and they are unable to negotiate an alternative solution.
- A turn down must be based on an assessment of risks and the ability of an individual or organization to control those risks.
- A situation may be a candidate for a turndown if:
 - There is a violation of safe work practices.
 - Environmental conditions make the work unsafe.
 - The forces lack the necessary qualifications or experience.
 - Defective equipment is being used.
- The following steps will be used when turning down an assignment:
 - The individual will directly inform their supervisor that they are turning down the assignment as given. (Document using criteria outlined in the risk management process.)
 - Supervisor will notify the Safety Officer immediately upon being informed. In the absence of a Safety Officer, the appropriate Section Chief or Incident Commander will be notified. This step provides accountability for decisions and initiates communication of safety concerns.
 - If the supervisor requests another resource to perform the assignment, he/she is responsible for informing that resource that the assignment has previously been refused and the reason(s) why.
 - The safety hazard should be documented by the submission of a SAFENET or SAFECOM.
- These actions do not stop an operation from being carried out. This protocol is integral to the effective management of risk as it provides timely identification of hazards to the chain of command, raises risk awareness for both leaders and subordinates, and promotes accountability.

References:
[Incident Response Pocket Guide](#)

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

ONLINE | MAIL: 6 Minutes For Safety Task Group • 3833 S. Development Ave • Boise, ID 83705 | FAX: 208-387-5250

[6 Minutes Home](#)