



October 31, 2025

Dear Boulder County User Agencies,

Recommended Use of the Training Center Burn Building while Closed from the Boulder County Regional Training Center Board (BCRFTC) in conjunction with recommendations by the City of Boulder Fire-Rescue.

Introduction

The burn building at the Boulder County Regional Fire Training Center is a cornerstone of modern fire service education, providing a controlled environment in which firefighters hone their skills, improve safety protocols, and build teamwork in simulated emergency scenarios. While many burn buildings are designed for both interior and exterior training evolutions, there are instances where use must be restricted to exterior operations only. Currently the training center burn building is closed due to structural concerns, maintenance, and instability of the structure for training objectives. This letter explores the safety considerations and programmatic benefits associated with utilizing the training center burn building for specific exterior use only.

It is the recommendation of the BCRFTC Board and City of Boulder Fire-Rescue that the burn building remain closed for ALL interior operations and be available for only the exterior operations listed in this letter.

In addition, during times when the interior of the burn building is under repair, renovation, or scheduled for preventive maintenance, it may remain available for exterior evolutions. This maximizes facility utility and minimizes downtime.

Structural Integrity and Safety

One of the primary reasons for restricting the burn building to exterior use is the concern for structural integrity. As stated in the report from Elliott, LeBoeuf & McElwain, there are concerns with the interior structural integrity of the burn building. When there is any indication that the structural support or interior finishes are compromised, it is prudent to limit personnel exposure by restricting activities to the building's exterior. This approach prioritizes participant safety while still making valuable use of the facility. After a recent walk through of the building and review of

the report with Boulder Fire - Rescue personnel, it is the recommendation of the Training Center Board and City of Boulder Fire - Rescue that the burn building be limited to exterior ladder training and practice of arrival and size up training limited to only the following:

Incident Command and Size-Up:

Simulate arrival, establish incident command, conduct 360-degree assessments, and communicate initial reports.

Ladder Operations:

Practice raising, positioning, and climbing a ladder. There shall be NO transitioning from any ladder from the outside to the interior of the building. There shall be no interior operations at any time.

A-Side Restriction: No access should be permitted on the A-side exterior (FDC side) of the structure. There appears to be a significant risk of debris falling from several windows on this side, posing a hazard to personnel both inside and below.

Exclusion Zone: An exclusion or falling debris zone has been established extending approximately 20 feet outward from the A-side. This zone will prevent personnel and apparatus from operating in areas that could be affected by falling debris.

These additional safeguards allow for continued beneficial use of the structure while reducing the risk of injury or damage should pieces of the building become dislodged. To assist in these efforts, the Training staff has already established the A-side exclusion zone with cones. In addition, the training division has utilized appropriate technical resources to shore key interior damage points to enhance stability and protect both exterior and interior areas during future inspections or evaluations.

The following windows are the ONLY available windows to be used for this training:

Bravo, Charlie and Delta side windows.

The only personnel allowed inside the above windows would be instructors with the purpose of observing techniques of the training and they MUST avoid the A side of the structure.

Instructors would be required to wear the following personal protective equipment, at minimum:

Helmet
Gloves

Steel toed boots

The following are examples of practical, realistic training scenarios that can be conducted using only the exterior of the burn building:

Incident Command and Size-Up: Simulate arrival, establish incident command, conduct 360-degree assessments, and communicate initial reports.

Ladder Operations: Practice raising, positioning, the extension and roof ladders for rescue, ventilation, or roof access.

Safety Considerations :

Prior to conducting any of the above training, the following safety considerations shall be completed:

Pre-Training Inspection: Conduct a thorough exterior survey of the building before each use, noting any hazards such as deteriorating masonry, unstable doors, or loose debris.

Zone Control: Clearly mark hot, warm, and cold zones, ensuring that only authorized personnel enter the immediate training area.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Require all participants to wear full turnout gear (based on intended outcome), including helmets, gloves, and eye protection, appropriate for the level of training and expected hazards.

Equipment Checks: Inspect all ladders, tools, and apparatus before evolution, and remove any items with evident defects.

Instructor-to-Student Ratios: Maintain proper oversight with one instructor per small group, focusing on safety and skill acquisition.

Rehabilitation and Medical Monitoring: Provide a rehab area for hydration and rest, with EMS availability.

Benefits of Exterior Ladder / Size Up -Only Training:

Focused Skill Development: Trainees gain proficiency in tasks that are most often performed on the fireground, such as ladder deployment, scene size-up, and command functions.

Reduced Wear and Tear: Limiting training to the exterior helps preserve the structure and extends the lifespan of the burn building.

Enhanced Safety: Reducing interior exposure lowers the risk of injury from structural collapse, toxic atmospheres, or confined space hazards.

Adaptable for All Experience Levels: Exterior drills are accessible for new recruits and allow advanced members to refine leadership and command competencies.

Conclusion:

Restricting the use of the burn building at the Boulder County Regional Fire Training Center to the above exterior operations does not diminish the quality or value of firefighter training. Rather, it encourages instructors and trainees to focus on foundational skills, operate safely, and make efficient use of resources. With careful planning, ongoing assessment, and a commitment to safety, exterior-only training can play an essential role in developing competent, confident, and prepared fire service professionals. Any violations of the safety expectations by a fire district/department/agency will be addressed by the board.

The BCRFTC also realized that this is a hardship on all agencies within Boulder County and limits their live fire training evolution scenarios. As a result, we have moved the burn trailer over to the vehicle extrication area so it is readily available for live fire training, near the pallets, hydrants and equipment normally stored or used near the burn building. We also realize it has probably been sometime that agencies have used the burn trailer. It is still the recommendation of the training center board that all live fire evolutions follow 1403 guidelines. Please reach out to Robert O'Donnell and/or Russ Benzel for training on the burn trailer prior to use. Use of the burn trailer is not an optimal long term solution and it is imperative that a time line for complete repair and safe availability of the entire building is established in the next several months.

From Boulder Fire Rescue - *"we appreciate the Board's collaboration and shared commitment to maintaining a safe and productive training environment. We fully recognize the importance of a burn building to all departments who utilize the resource and are actively working toward a permanent solution. We are moving forward with applying for 1B funds within the 2025 Boulder County Fire Protection District Grant Program."*

Please feel free to contact the BCRFTC Board with any questions.

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