Size up

Size up is:
- an ongoing mental process that starts on receipt of a call
- a means of organising thoughts logically
- a way of analysing a situation
- a means of determining a course of action
- a process from which flexible management strategies can be developed to formulate an IAP.

Size up involves the consideration of:

1. Facts	Ascertain the essential facts and arrange them in a systematic manner.
2. Probabilities	Consider the existing conditions and estimate the future probabilities.
3. Own situation	Review own situation and estimate what can be achieved with the resources on hand or available in reserve.
4. Decision	Having ascertained the facts, estimated the probabilities and surveyed own situation, the officer should be able to make a decision.
5. Incident Action Plan	This is a mental diagram of how the available resources will be employed to achieve a desired objective. At a larger incident, the plan will be written. e.g. see Ops Doc Forms 1 to 7.

Three Aspects of Situational Awareness

Perception	In order to make appropriate tactical decisions during a rapidly developing emergency incident, a Firefighter must be able to recognize and act upon the available cues inherent at each incident. At the perception level, firefighters MUST be able to see the cues around themselves.
Comprehension	At the comprehension level, firefighters are able to process what they see and make sense of it.
Projection	At the projection level, the Firefighter is able to 'forward' think from the available cues to envisage the most likely outcomes of a number of possible decisions. The ability to reason through the possible outcomes quickly and efficiently is a skill that takes a while to master.

Risk Assessment

L LOOKOUTS	Position lookouts where both the hazard and the firefighters can be seen. Terrain, cover and the fire size determine the number of lookouts required
A AWARENESS	Situational awareness is an ongoing process. It entails gathering information through observation and communications to continually change your perception of the current and predicted situation.
C COMMUNICATIONS	Set up communications system (e.g. radio, voice or both) by which the lookout warns firefighters promptly and clearly of approaching threat. It is paramount that every Firefighter receives the correct message in a timely manner.
E ESCAPE ROUTES	Establish at least two escape routes and make them known. Re-establish escape routes as their effectiveness decreases. As firefighters work along the perimeter, fatigue and distance increase the time required to reach a safety zone.
S SAFETY ZONES	Establish safety zones, i.e. locations where the threatened Firefighter may find adequate refuge from the danger. Fire line intensity, airflow and topographic location determine safety zone effectiveness.

Incident Decision Making

The QFRS uses the memory jogger, 'RECEO' to assist in the tactical decision making in order of priority.

Rescue	The first priority is to save life. Points to consider: • Are there obvious rescues to be made? • Is there probable risk to life because of the occupancy and nature of the incident? • Are evacuations necessary?
Exposures	The next priority is to stop it from spreading by protecting the exposures. Points to consider: • What is the severity of the fire? • Are adjacent buildings, assets, crops or stock endangered?
Confinement	Unless confined or contained, fire will spread in all directions. Points to consider: • Is the only option to cut off the fire spread and attempt to hold it in the areas of origin?
Extinguish	Once the fire is contained it is time to extinguish the fire. Points to consider: • Is it necessary to extinguish the fire to effect a rescue? • Are there sufficient resources available to extinguish the fire? • Is a direct attack on the fire the best option? • What is burning? What is the most suitable extinguishing medium? • What is the best method of application?
Overhaul	At the end of the job it is important to overhaul or Mop up the area. Points to consider: • Is the structure/environment safe to conduct overhaul operations? • Is there evidence of deliberate ignition? • Is there a need to preserve particular evidence?

PACT involves asking questions about the situation in each of the letters in RECEO, making decisions and having them implemented.

Prioritise	What are the Priorities for this situation
Alternatives	What the Alternative methods to achieve this objective
Choose	Choose the alternative that is most suitable
Take action	Take action by implementing the best alternative.

RECEO and PACT Pocket Card

RESCUE

EXPOSURES

CONFINEMENT

EXTINGUISH

OVERHAUL

Prioritise

Alternatives

Choose

Take action