



# Informational Bulletin

## In Service After Action Report

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Approved By: Darren L. Stevens, Fire Rescue Chief



Over the course of 6 days, the training division was able to provide a Rapid Intervention, Mayday, Engine Company drill utilizing an acquired structure in The Plains, Va. The structure was donated by a citizen who herself saw the benefit of utilizing acquired structures for training as she was at one time affiliated with a Fire Department out of state.

### Structure Description:

The structure can be defined as a 3000sqft split-level home consisting of 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 2 living rooms, family room, kitchen, dining room, sunroom, and garage. The home had a basement walkout, which was marked as off-limits for the duration of the exercise.

### Personnel Descriptions:

Crews that arrived to the training were instructed in the various riding positions. An attempt was made to facilitate those personnel who are actively engaged in driver training at the Engine level, to be placed in the role of apparatus operator. Officers remained in their respective role, and on several drills, Technician IIs filled in as unit officers. The remaining crew members acted in the capacity of firefighters for the exercise.

### Exercise Description:

During the initial phases of the construction of this exercise, it was decided that the simplest and most realistic scenario should be utilized. While there are many dangers in our line of work, it was thought best to utilize this exercise to assess various aspects of our knowledge skills and abilities in relation to our response to a single-family house fire. In addition to tactics employed during our response and arrival to a single-family house fire, it was important to incorporate an element of a Mayday situation. This mayday occurred when a predesignated crew member simulated getting lost from the hose-line, disoriented, and suffering a medical emergency in the lower level of the home.

Crews were then forced to search and locate the downed firefighter after the PASS alarm had sounded. Once found they were to transition to focusing efforts on the Mayday activation and mitigation of the event. Skills that were assessed can be found in the attached In-Service Training Plan.

### Skills Assessment:

Throughout the course of the exercise, numerous good and bad points were noted. It is imperative to incorporate an honest assessment of the exercise in an effort to facilitate adequate training as we move forward. While all names are redacted from the overall assessment review, each member who participated will receive their personal assessment packet at a later date for them to review.

We are hopeful that these assessments will be utilized by station officers to facilitate station drills focused on the improvement of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

## Firefighter Skills:

- Most staff seemed prepared and skillful in the deployment of hand-lines to the desired target entry point.
- Crews should focus on an understanding of the distance each line will physically reach when deployed. Some crews chose to redeploy lines to different entry points after the line was in place and found that the line chosen was too short to be effective.
- Staff members were less skilled in appropriately returning hose to the hose-bed after deployment. Crews should work on understanding how to appropriately return hose to a ready state, and packed in a manner it will not become dislodged from the apparatus during response or routine driving.
- Tool selection, it is important for crew members to diversify the tool selection of the crew. It is never a good idea for all crew members to be carrying the same tool.
- Entry into the structure for the exercise was simple and no forced entry was required. However, firefighter should remember life/fire/layout when opening doors.
- Crews should remember to control doors in an effort to control flow path and minimize fire travel within the structure until remaining crew members are ready to enter.
- Crew members should not enter until instructed to do so by the unit officer. During several exercises, junior crew members entered the structure without consent of the officer. This caused confusion and led to unnecessary energy expenditure by crews moving hose-lines to areas of the home, which the officer did not want.
- It is important to have information from 360 walk-around to ensure the correct tactics are employed and time is not wasted on areas not involved.
- Firefighters making decisions the officers were not aware of. We have “thinkers” and “doers” in the fire service. The unit officers “thinkers” should create a strategy and employ the tactics to ensure the strategy is conducted. The firefighters “doers” should be versed in carrying out the specific skills to complete a tactic of the overall strategy.
- All personnel should be sounding floors and stairwells to ensure stability. A handful of personnel fell down the stairs because they chose to not sound the stairs and ensure adequate footing. Remember, just because an area held the first person does not mean it will hold more.
- “Zombie Walking” personnel found themselves lost or disoriented, and in a position of danger. Remember the basics, if you cannot see your feet, you should get lower and not stand erect in an atmosphere where you cannot see anything.
- Hose-line advancement inside of the home was smooth for most crews and they were able to manage lines into the areas as instructed.
- Navigating off the hose-line was a common theme. Remember when navigating off of the hose-line in low to zero visibility it is important to maintain reference to a wall or physical landmark so to minimize the potential for becoming disoriented and separated from other crew members.
- Packaging the patient is a critical element to ensure the successful removal of said victim. Personnel should remember to utilize the “rock harness” and SCBA straps to package and then if necessary use webbing or rope to assist in removal of the victim.
- Rope and webbing that staff carried on their person seemed as if it was too long. If personnel are carrying webbing/rope for bailout and rescue, remember to take a moment to shorten the length by tying an extra knot to create better leverage when lifting and moving victims.
- Personnel should remain cognizant of smoke and fire conditions at all times. Be aware that we never want to be in a position where the bulk of the fire is below us in a basement. Always check the basement to ensure you are not walking into a greater position of danger.

## **Apparatus Operator:**

- Positioning the apparatus on arrival is important. Keep in mind that once a hose-line has been deployed from the apparatus, the unit can no longer be easily moved to accommodate changing circumstances.
- Position to facilitate the operator having a visual of the structure from the pump panel whenever possible.
- On approach, it is always a good rule to try and give the officer a visual of three sides of the building if possible.
- In the rural setting, ensure you leave room for tanker nurse operations. Remember the first tanker is typically going to stay with the first engine as a reserve water supply throughout the incident.
- Hand jacking supply line is a tough chore to accomplish. If the hose lay is longer than 200-300 feet you should not be hand jacking the line.
- Always hook up the supply line to an inlet and open the bleeder valve to prepare for the line to be charged.
- Prepare at least a single three-inch line to be connected to the tanker on arrival for nurse operations.
- Deployment of ladders is for OUR safety and the rescue of viable victims, which may be presented on arrival. A good rule of thumb is to deploy the longest ladder to side “C”/Charlie and then additional ladders to “A”/Alpha and other sides after.
- Ensure when erecting ladders that we position them in a useful manner. Make sure the climbing angle on ladders is such that it would prevent the ladder from sliding when weighted.
- If possible ensure ladder footing is lodged into the ground in an effort to prevent the ladder from sliding when weighted.
- Deployment of a second hand-line can save time for the second engine arriving to the incident.
- Positioning tools (hooks) on or near ladders that have been deployed. These tools can be utilized to vent a window or roof if necessary.
- Create a tool staging area using a tarp or clean area where tools can be prepped and placed for dissemination once additional units arrive and begin tasks.
- During a mayday scenario, the driver should dress out if needed and begin to assist crews. Assistance can be interior or ascertaining location from interior crews and looking for other viable means of egress.
- Sounding walls and windows to give crews an audible alert to a potential egress point. If breaking windows remain cognizant of fire/smoke/wind conditions at all times to ensure you are not adding fuel to the fire.
- Placing lights or shining lights through ingress/egress points to alert interior crews to exit routes.

## **Unit Officers:**

- Water supply is an essential task which needs to be adequately relayed to additional arriving units. It is important to note a primary and secondary source.
- Water supply layout should be explained simply but in depth enough to give a clear picture of what additional arriving units should be doing to complete the task.
- Remember, we can't do our job without water!
- On-scene reports give the initial picture of the incident. They should be brief but paint the picture.
- Provide guidance or instruction to crew members for initial actions.
- Complete 360 walk-around of building. Ensure you are paying attention to the building and conditions during the entirety of the walk-around. On many occasions, unit officers began to become inattentive to the building once they were about 75% complete with walk-around and missed vital clues that could have been interpreted into the action plan.

- Reading Smoke, general rule of thumb:
  - Smoke in the top of the doorway = Likely fire is above you
  - Smoke midway in the doorway = Likely fire is on same floor
  - Smoke to the floor in the doorway = Likely fire is below you
  - Smoke is heat pushed and will move faster from openings closer to the fire
  - Look for the darkest smoke, moving the fastest, from the smallest opening and you should be close to the fire.
  - Lazy, cold smoke is likely distant from where the fire is located
- Have a plan, Make a plan, Use the plan
- It is the responsibility of the unit/station officer to create overall and daily expectations for staff members. While every day is often different, creating a baseline list of expectations for crew members can be extremely beneficial to everyone and eliminate/minimize confusion amongst personnel.
- Patience is critical during an event such as this training evolution. A calm demeanor will often prevail over one who becomes excited. It is the unit officer's duty to remain calm and create crew integrity, which leads to a successful mission. A successful mission starts at shift change and in everything you do to manage your day.
- Know your building construction! There is a difference in split-level vs. split foyer.
- When conducting a scene size-up, note things that are odd or out of place. Smoke from a chimney can have different meaning based on summer vs. winter.
- Listen to dispatch supplemental. Scene size-up starts when the tones go off. You can receive vital clues about the incident based on what is relayed from communications.
- Pay attention to your approach to the scene
- If plan "A" is not working, do not be afraid to switch to plan "B". Do not get stuck in a mindset that is not beneficial to the outcome of an incident. This is true for many different call types.
- When in doubt, ask someone else. None of us know everything! But, if we work together and utilize each other's strengths, we can ensure success.

Questions regarding this informational bulletin should be directed to Battalion Chief Dale Kidwell.