ISFSI

INSTRUCT-O-GRAM

THE HANDS-ON TRAINING GUIDE FOR THE FIRE INSTRUCTOR

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FIREFIGHTING STRATEGY AND TACTICS II

TASK

The instructor will deliver the basic concepts of firefighting strategy and tactics. The focus of this drill is to allow the student to develop an understanding of the various water-related tasks involved in a firefighting operation and how they are to be implemented on the fireground.

INTRODUCTION

The student should have a basic understanding of their role in the fire department, and the role they are to play during firefighting operations. In order to better participate in the fireground operation, the student should have an understanding of what strategy is and how they fit in to the scheme. It is up to the instructor to stress the concept of risk and create an awareness of its impact on firefighting operations.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. A discussion of fireground risk
2. The discussion of the concept of exposure protection
3. A discussion of the interior fire attack
4. A discussion of tactical water delivery
5. A discussion of the hoseline as a rescue tool
6. A discussion of the need for an adequate firefighting water source
7. Examples of tactical fire attack problems
8. Examples of proper attack skills

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Our review of the **National Fire Protection Association Standard 1021, Standard for Professional Fire Officers Qualifications** makes absolutely not reference to the actual conduct of firefighting operations. They make great mention of how to manage a fire, how to establish command, how to transfer command and etc. However, they make no reference to a need for developing those necessary skills to conduct a firefighting operation.

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Elements of Risk and Their Impact on Your Firefighting Operation

Fireground Risk is a critical element in the decision-making process used by the **Incident Commander (IC)**. Risk is generally defined as the chance of injury, damage, danger, or loss. These are all of the elements that might kill or injure

- You underestimate the fire's growth potential.
- You fail to anticipate your apparatus, equipment, and staffing needs at the scene of a fire.
- You fail to call for fresh troops.
- You fail to stop the flow of water to opposing hose streams who are fighting each other, rather than supporting each other.
- You fail to monitor the progress of your attack

There will be more tips in upcoming issues of the **Instruct-O-Gram**.

Acknowledgment

This Instruct-O-Gram was created by Dr. Harry R. Carter, MIFireE, a municipal fire protection consultant from Adelphia, New Jersey. Dr. Carter is the First Vice President of ISFSI.

Student Reference

Firefighting Strategy and Tactics – An Eight-Step Method, Harry R. Carter, Ph.D.

Fire Protection Publications, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, 1998

- Never position yourself in front of the door to a burning room. Come at the attack from an angle using the wall as your shield until you can knock enough fire down to enter the room. People have been burned by being in the way of any fire that might be attempting to make its way out of the room.
- Do not crowd the attack team. If the people on the nozzle need to get out, they don't need to force their way through a crowd of their fellow firefighters.
- Never pass a fire. Any fire that you pass might be the fire that flares up and traps you.
- Engine companies should always work as a team. Do not split your forces.

The Hoseline as a Rescue Tool

In his classic 1972 text, **Fireground Tactics** the late **Emmanuel Fried,** of the New York City and Chicago Heights, Illinois Fire Departments, set the tone for how to use water to rescue people. He noted that, **"... It is important to note that the judicious use of a hose stream ... May save more lives than raising ladders to rescue people visible at the windows."**

A great many rescues have been made where an attack hoseline team beat the fire back to allow people to make their way down the stairs. Every person who is charged with the delivery of water at a fire must make this thought a permanent part of their mental reservoir of firefighting bag of tricks.

The Need For An Adequate Firefighting Water Source

This is a very simple lesson. You use water to extinguish a fire. Regardless of the size of the fire, you must secure a source of water that is large enough to allow you to confine, control, and extinguish that fire. The first decision, as we have said is to determine the attack mode for your strategy. Once you have done this, you must then find sufficient water to allow you to conduct that attack.

You may get your water from:

- Static sources such as lakes, ponds, and reservoirs
- Fire hydrants
- Water tankers
- Drafting points
- Portable pumps
- Portable tanks

Many places have municipal water systems. Other places do not. To help you understand a bit more about water supply, let us look at the components of a municipal water system:

- Source of supply (wells, lakes, reservoirs, etc.)
- The processing facility that allows you to treat the water to make it drinkable
- The means of moving the water (gravity, pumps, elevated tanks)
- The storage and distribution system (tanks, reservoirs, etc.)

It is critical for you to determine the manner in which water is supplied to your fire department. Learn all you can, and drill on how to use the available water.

Some Tactical Attack Problems

Here is a list of problems you might encounter. By recognizing what makes these issues problematic, you can further improve your ability to place water at those places where it is needed during firefighting operations.

your firefighting staff. Some of the generally accepted fireground risks are:

- Structural collapse
- Thermal injury
- Trip and fall dangers
- Potential for explosion
- Holes in the floor through which people might fall
- Backdraft conditions, rollovers, flash fire incidents
- Firefighting heat stress

The IC must consider these elements as they may bear on any particular firefighting operation. To ignore them is to invite death and/or serious injury.

The Concept of Reasonable Risk

Far too many members of the fire service do not understand when to enter a burning building and when to stay outside. This has a lot to do with the concept of **reasonable risk**. The **IC** and all who participate in a firefighting operation need to understand the need to evaluate the danger in a given situation and the need to exercise caution when appropriate. A single simple question may assist you with this decision.

As you are sizing up a given fire just ask yourself, **"... Is it stupid to send people into that burning building?"** I am of the opinion that there would be fewer fire deaths if we asked this one question.

The Concept of Exposure Protection

Many times an instructor will glance over the importance of **Exposure Protection** during a class on firefighting principles and practices. Too many fire people become focused on the actual fire, much like moths are attracted to a flame. By ignoring where a fire might go, you can allow the fire to gain headway and spread outward from the room, floor, or structure of origin.

There are three elements **exposures** that must be considered. They are:

- Life exposure
- Internal property exposures
- Exposure of buildings near the fire building

Each is important and must be considered by the **Incident Commander**. Failure to consider the problem of exposures can lead to a much larger fire incident, and a greater potential for injury and the loss of human lives.

The Concept of An Aggressive Interior Fire Attack

Rule one in firefighter needs to be quite simple. **Firefighter lives should never be risked for property.** When in doubt, go to rule two, which is always obey rule number one. There are a number of recommended firefighting practices that have been found to make a firefighting operation more effective.

- Do not shoot smoke at water – You will upset the thermal balance of the fire and allow the cool smoke to drop to the floor.
- If you can attack the fire safely, go through the door and conduct an aggressive interior attack.
- If you have a big fire, use big water
- If you have a little fire, use little water
- When moving an attack hose line up the inside stairs of a structure, knock down as much fire as you can, then shut the hoseline down and move up the stairway until you come to the next area of fire. There is no need to fight fire and the physical laws of energy.