

COLUMBIA COUNTY OFFICE OF FIRE COORDINATOR

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TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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ENGINE COMPANY OPERATIONS IN PRIVATE HOMES

The objectives of firefighting are to protect life and property by performing rescues, and by locating, confining and extinguishing fires. The single most important factor in determining the success of the operation is the positioning and operation of the first handline aka hoseline.

If conditions dictate, an aggressive interior attack will have the most favorable outcome. The handline which we use is a 1 3/4" handline with a solid stream nozzle or adjustable fog/straight stream tip. It will penetrate to the seat of the fire. This means we are working to the point where the fire began, extinguishing any fire on the way. We will initially operate with a straight or solid stream only . Fog will not be used until the fire is knocked down. I will get into nozzle operation more later.

2 1/2" hand lines would almost never be used inside a house fire. The maneuverability and weight limitations of the 2 1/2 make it very impractical for all the turns and close quarters in a home. It also requires more personnel and slows down the attack.

There is much I would like to say about if we are going interior vs exterior attack, and that will come later, but first let's look at the individual assignments of the engine company personnel.

PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS - THE ENGINE CO. OFFICER

In the FDNY every seat on the engine, ladder, squad and rescue company apparatus carries a specific name, assigned areas of responsibility at a fire, where they will operate and tools taken. Nothing is random or planned at the last minute. Making a plan when you are flying down the street with sirens and radios blasting and people getting their gear on is not the most efficient way to use our resources. And don't forget the stress from knowing you are going to a working fire which is not an everyday event.

The advantages to this system are enormous. First of all, any company in any part of the city can operate in unison with any other company at a working fire. No one has to guess where they are supposed to go and what they are supposed to do. If I'm a member of Engine 1 but working with Engine 2 I know my job because it's uniform everywhere down to the individual

person. I endorse this for here because pretty much all of our structural fires involve mutual aid. That means if a guy from Philmont gets on the hose line inside the building with a guy from Niverville and he is the second guy on the line he would know exactly what to do. He would know he is the Back Up Man and where he should be and what is expected of him. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Each person on the engine has an assignment as follows: The Chauffeur, the Officer, the Nozzlemans, Back Up Man, DoorMan and Control Man. This system can be adjusted to just 3, 4 or 5 people on the engine. 6 people on the engine is a luxury and most municipal departments adjust to less people due to their staffing. We can do it with only 3. However, it would be best to get more on an engine if possible even if it means waiting a minute or 2 for more people to show up. Heading out the door with your team intact and not winging it at the scene would be way less chaotic and way more productive.

This system also lets everyone know where the other companies are. Generally the assignments are the first engine company arriving has the fire floor. If the first engine can handle that and doesn't need a second handline backing them up then the second engine company goes to the floor above. If exposures are a big concern then the SOP allows adjustment for that. Also a benefit of this system that has been used is if someone gives a MayDay it may give some insight to where they would be.

In an ideal world the Engine Company would have an officer whose main function is to direct the hose team. If the actual person you call the company officer, being the Lieutenant or Captain isn't there then someone interior can take this position. Even a chief can take this position if necessary.

If your manning allows it, a hose line should not be taken into a building without an officer or someone who is directing it's operation. The people moving the hose have enough to focus on. There should be someone who is supervising and not hands on. We need someone removed from the actual hands on operation who is paying attention to the overall operation. If their hands-on assistance is necessary then it should be performed and then return to their responsibilities. The officer must always be close to the nozzle man or nearby. He also may have to step out of the way in close quarters.

What the engine officer does:

The officer will ride in the shotgun position of the cab. This will give them access to the radio for information and orders. It will also afford them the best view for size up and determining apparatus positioning.

The officer will conduct a size up.

The officer will make sure there is enough hose to reach the objective. He will make sure if using preconnects that too much hose or too little hose isn't stretched. This is a whole chapter in itself.

The officer will monitor hose line pressure and call for more if needed.

The officer will communicate for the team via radio about conditions and what is needed etc to the IC or other companies working inside.

The officer will have to be the leader of the hose team especially if the fire location is uncertain. If there is no ladder company to work with (which will be a later discussion) the engine officer will have to locate the fire. As fire is being knocked down the officer must be continually making sure the nozzle man knows the location of the fire.

The officer will direct the nozzle man as to where to operate.

The officer will be the one monitoring the radio and assessing conditions for the hose team to see if withdrawal may be necessary.

The officer should operate with a TIC looking for signs of fire location.

The officer will give directions to the nozzle man. "Come straight down this hallway 15', then turn left into this room where the fire is."

The officer will make sure the hose team crawls if there is no visibility. This is especially important at the beginning of the operation where all the conditions haven't been assessed yet.

The officer will direct the nozzle man to exactly where the fire is. Verbally or tugging him by the coat if necessary.

The officer will monitor the use of water. A quick attack with the booster tank may be the way to go. A hose line should not be operated on smoke unless there is a high heat condition threatening flashover. More discussion later.

The officer will order when the nozzle is opened and closed. Once fire is knocked down the nozzle will be closed to allow smoke and heat to vent and give the remaining fire a chance to light up so extinguishment can be continued. We may also need to conserve water.

When fire is knocked down the officer can order a fog or broken stream directed out a window to assist in removal of smoke and heat.

The officer will make sure that hose is properly flaked out for easier advancement and to eliminate piles of "spaghetti" in the street.

If there is no Ladder Company present the Engine Officer must remove anything that may impede the progress of the hoseline, such as boxes, furniture, etc.

In future newsletters I will go over the other Engine Company positions. And then go through a few scenarios. In the future we will discuss all this in the classroom with more detail. Any questions please feel free to reach out to me at dennis.gordon4@verizon.net.