

FIRE



TRAINING

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FIREGROUND OPERATIONS

THE BASICS OF GARAGE FIRES

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Heavy fire envelops a detached garage and is rapidly spreading to the exposures as you arrive on the scene. Your assignment consists of two engines with four personnel each and one truck company, also with four. As you exit the chief's car, the first-due engine turns into the block and radios for instructions.

What are your options for attack? Where should the truck company personnel be sent, and what should be the assignment for the second engine?

The first engine has several options. It can stop and lay a feeder line on the way into the fire. It may work off tank water and let the second engine feed it, or it can stop at the fire, stretch off the main bed, and then lead out to the hydrant.

The first option, stopping and laying in your own feeder, establishes a water sup-

ply and leaves the engine near the fire scene. The third option, although also establishing a water supply, puts the engine and all other equipment down the street at the hydrant.

Both of these options are acceptable ways of attacking this fire, but both will delay getting water on the fire.

The second option, working off tank water, results in faster water application. If the engine is equipped with at least a 500-gallon water tank, working off tank water is a great option. The fire is too far down the driveway for effective master stream application, so the preconnect 2½-inch handline becomes the mode of attack. The engine pulls just past the driveway, leaving room for the truck to ladder the house that is most exposed. Two firefighters can

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FIREGROUND OPERATIONS

THE ART OF SIZE-UP

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Fireground performance is largely determined by the ability of firefighters to confidently navigate the fire building. Their initial actions, particularly those of the (first-in) company officers, is what sets them (and the entire incident) up for success. The capacity to rapidly assess the conditions encountered on arrival and accurately anticipate the environment in which they will operate is paramount. The groundwork for this mental skill set must be diligently laid long before the bell ever hits for the alarm of fire.

Along with fire behavior, building construction represents the very foundation upon which all strategy and tactics are framed. It must be acknowledged that the fire not only has a head-start, but also maintains the “home” advantage. In order to level the playing field, we must possess an intimate familiarity of the building stock within our communities, particularly the floor plans. The greater our body of knowledge and the deeper our understanding of how the specific built environment, the fire, and our operations are all interconnected, the more concise and reliable our decision-making process will become.

Through consistent training and drilling, coupled with a focused study of the specific construction and occupancy types which make up our communities, developing a level of competency can be achieved and continuously honed. A good place to start is by conducting area surveys to identify the composition of our respective response districts. This will provide a baseline of the prominent building styles within each particular area. With this intelligence, we can begin to profile the individual

neighborhoods/streets to narrow down the potential configurations we will be confronted with.

Once the common construction and occupancy types have been compiled, the next step is to examine how they are laid out. Residential occupancies, specifically private-dwellings, can most often be categorized into one of the following universally recognized styles:

ranch, raised-ranch (or bi-level), split- (or tri-) level, colonial, bungalow, Cape Cod, or Victorian. By characterizing each one, specifically the typical pattern of the floor plan, we can streamline our size-up and create a “mental blueprint” of the interior to provide us with the insight and guidance needed to orient ourselves and maneuver, even in zero-visibility, despite ever having set foot in the home previously. Most of us innately possess a considerable degree of knowledge when it comes to this, but we may not have connected the dots. Throughout our lives, we have likely spent a great deal of time in most of



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SIZE-UP...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5



these different types of homes. Whether we grew up in one of them ourselves or our family members and friends who we visited did, if we stop and think, we can probably envision the different floor plans in great detail.

The orientation of the rooms, however, can be opposite (mirror images) from one building to another.

Using a ranch-style house as an example, the location of the bedrooms/bathroom and the living room/kitchen are interchangeable and can be found on either side of the front door. Because of this variability, we have to utilize exterior features to identify the specific configuration of each building we encounter. The most telling characteristics is the size, shape, and positioning of the windows, as well as the chimney, and the vent/soil pipes. A large picture/bay window or a bank of multiple, full-size windows (side-by-side) in the front of the house, will indicate the living room. If the house has a chimney, it will serve that space and be located along that exterior sidewall.

Continuing to use the ranch-style house as an example, the common floor plan will adhere to following pattern: the kitchen will be located directly behind the living room (straight in from the front door), which may have a separate dining room adjacent to it (in the back corner of the building) that is open to the living room. The windows serving the kitchen will be elevated and are often casement-style, found in a series of two to four. If there is an attached garage, access to it will be along that sidewall of the structure. The bedrooms and bathroom will be located

on the other side of the home, connected by a center hallway running parallel with the front wall (the long axis) of the building. The bathroom will be located off of the backside of the hallway, between the kitchen and the rear (master) bedroom. In larger ranches, a pair of bathrooms may be found, with one serving as an on-suite for the master bedroom. The bathroom(s) will also be evident from the exterior by an elevated, smaller, double-hung-style window (which may be frosted for privacy), as well as a vent/soil pipe penetrating through the roof directly above. The door serving the stairs to the basement (if one is present) will be located directly opposite the bathroom door and will be outward-swinging. Another outward-swinging door maybe present between the bathroom and back bedroom is one that serves a (linen) closet. Across the hall, along the front side of the house, two more bedrooms will be located.

A tremendous asset for developing this knowledge and skill set is the use of real estate websites, as well as the assessor's page for your community. While conducting an area survey, any address can be entered into an internet search engine or the municipal property database and a detailed description, history, and visual of the property can be obtained. Doing so allows you and your crew to take a digital walk-through of the entire property, both inside and out, as well as the particulars of the construction and utilities. Because private dwellings are largely off limits to building inspections and surveys, every incident we respond to should be seized (when appropriate and done tactfully) to physically recon these buildings and build your familiarity with them. The most routine calls for service can be turned into some of the most impactful learning opportunities. By taking this approach you will dramatically up your "street IQ" and be able to read buildings more fluently. Armed with this mindset, you will become more deliberate in your actions and greatly enhance your efficiency of movement, improving your overall effectiveness on the fireground.

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