



What's Happening

Navy Fire and Emergency Services Newsletter
Protecting Those Who Defend America



April 2020

OMNI CEDO DOMUS

Vol 18 No 4

Email the Editor:
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Analysis-Paralysis

By Ronny J. Coleman

Decisions are choices. Either you either accept or reject something and and it moves you in a specific direction. The antithesis of decision is indecision. It is when an individual or an organization fails to act or to reject a course of action. When that happens they stay in sort of a state of suspended animation.



The term for this is analysis-paralysis.

It's when a fire department or an individual faces a problem, and chooses not to select any specific direction for a variety of reasons, but mostly because they lack confidence in themselves to act. One of the excuses is that people won't decide because they don't have enough facts. Then, when they are given more facts they are still afraid to make the decision because the information raises more questions. Then they ask for more facts. It's a vicious circle

Analysis-paralysis is a debilitating process because it often brings an organization almost to a standstill. It also results in missed opportunities and reduces the credibility of an organization due to its inability to respond to change.

Admittedly, rushing to judgment is equally dangerous. One phenomenon that's witnessed in some organizations is called the "ready - fire - aim" syndrome. This occurs when individuals rush to judgment quickly because they believe that the decision is more important than the consequences. Rushing to judgment doesn't result so much in missed opportunities as it does back tracking. Often mistakes are made that result in having to go back and revisit decisions time and time again. A lot of rush to judgment situations are created when people try to solve symptoms for problems, but fail to solve the fundamental cause of the problem.

What kind of decision processes are we trying to achieve in our organizations? Shouldn't we have a balance between the details we need to make effective decisions and the demand for action in a timely fashion? For purposes of this column I'd like to define decisions into basically two generic categories. The first of these I would refer to as being those decisions that are important but not critical. The second are those decisions that are critical but unclear.



Supporting the Fleet, Fighter, and Family



Clipboard (Cont.)

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There is a concept called the Pareto principal that defines the boundary lines between the two of these. Pareto's concept was that about eighty percent of anything results in about twenty percent of the output. Conversely, he hypothesized that twenty percent of anything results in eighty percent of the consequences. We translate this back to my last paragraph we can see that many of the decisions we make are extremely important to make but they are not critical at the time. They are just merely decisions that must be made in order to implement processes into moving an organization along. The same concept essentially says that there are certain decisions that are very critical that we must make and we must make them right for us not to have consequences in the long run.

I have used the Pareto principal in analyzing decision making and have come up with two observations of my own. The first of these is that the tougher a decision is to make the smaller the number of people should be that are involved in actually making it. Relatively important, but not critical decisions can often be shared, delegated, even participative management techniques can be used to arrive at conclusions. However, really critical questions often come down to ownership by the person who ultimately has the responsibility to perform them. The principal here is that when there are decisions to be made that affects an awful lot of people but not with a great deal of consequence then you're well advised to use as many people as possible to develop the decision.

But, when the ultimate responsibility rests on an individual's shoulders, it is important that they own that decision.

How in the world can we tell the difference? Earlier on in the column I mentioned the fact we need to balance the details with a demand for action. Therein lies one of the first clues. If a decision has a large number of details, but there's no immediate clamor for the decision to be made, then it likely falls into a broad generic type of problem that can be shared and resolved. On the other hand, when there are details totally lacking and there's a crisis deadline that must be met then it's time to move into the Pareto twenty percent phenomena.

This leads me to my second clue regarding the distinction. One of the first things to look for in any decision process is the deadline that applies. The second thing to look for is the consequences of failure. If you have something that is coming at you real fast and that the consequences are very severe then it's time to apply a personal decision making process. Alternatively, if the deadline is a long time off in the future and there's an overwhelming amount of details associated with it then it's time for you to apply as much pressure as you can to do some things to assure that it is a good decision.

The first of these is to make sure that adequate research is conducted of available facts. Secondly to assure that adequate evaluation is conducted of all those facts to make sure that you have not omitted important details. Thirdly that you take the time to test the decision before you implement it, but that you do not delay making the decision simply because you do not know everything

We started the column off with the idea of analysis-paralysis. Unfortunately, many decisions that fall into our second category i.e., critical and consequential, are treated as if they are issues that can be debated forever.

Clipboard (Cont.)

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Analysis Paralysis

over-analyzing (or over-thinking)
a situation so that a decision or
action is never taken.

This is where analysis-paralysis gets it start.

There are many ways you can get into trouble by not dealing with very important decisions in a timely fashion. The first is to underestimate the consequences of failure to act. The second is to assume that if you do not act that the problem will go away, because normally it doesn't". The third is to allow people to provide you with information they think you want to hear instead of information that you really need to hear. This is a form of perverse loyalty that can get you into a lot of trouble.

The appropriate strategy for almost all decision making processes has a couple of steps to it. The first is that no matter what kind of problem you are attempting to solve you need to clearly define the problem. Often people attempt to solve the symptoms of a problem and never get to the root of it. Problem definition consists of looking carefully at the causes of the problem instead of the consequences initially.

The second step of effective problem solving is to collect as much information as you possibly can in an appropriate time frame to support the resolution of the problem. Faulty research in this area often results in inaccurate information being provided to the decision makers. Accuracy is far more important in this area than experience. Unfortunately, many times people face decision making processes and start to base decisions on previous assumptions which were erroneous. Mentioned earlier was the fact that one of the ways you can get into trouble also is by having people tell you what they think you want to hear instead of what you need to hear. This is where this phenomenon plays itself out most frequently, by people repeating assumptions from past experiences.

Missed directed input is a form of loyalty or betrayal, depending on how you look at it. Those individuals who are attempting to provide you with accurate information are very valuable. If they do their very level best to give you the best information even when they give you information contradictory to your own point of view are truly the most loyal. Those individuals who look for clues from you as to what to say and how to say it essentially might be looked upon as being on your team, but they are more sycophant than they are supporter.

Once again I will invoke the Pareto principal as a concept to aid in decision making. The tougher the decision is and the closer the deadline it is the more important that you use the information you have available instead of relying on what you do not have. If eighty percent of the facts are present the other twenty percent may take more time to collect than they are really worth. The significance of that is that frequently individuals will start delaying a decision because they haven't got the last final detail to make it work. That is not an appropriate strategy when you have a decision to make that is of severe consequence. That last detail may be unimportant in relationship to the consequences of failing to act.

Digressing back just a few paragraphs, one of the other points that needs to be made here is that the dissenters needs to be listened to in intense decision making processes. An individual who gives you the best advice is an individual who may often tell you something you don't want to hear.

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Ronny J. Coleman

The degree to which you discount them or have them isolated from decision process increases your personable vulnerability in making tough decisions.

Equally important is to avoid what I call the “last spoken word” syndrome. Quite frankly, when people are engaged in tough decision making processes there’s often an exchange of dialogue among the team members that is directed to the person who must make that decision with an emphasis on whoever speaks last is the person who is in the right. The implication is that the most authoritative speak last and determine the direction of the decision. Therefore, most important concept to remember here is that the last person who must talk is the person who must make the decision. It is appropriate, if not altogether essential, that when you’re making a tough decision that you reiterate what you know before you actually declare what the decision is that will be forthcoming.

As I examine the notes to prepare this column I was recalling the fact that there is a distinct difference in the fire service between the fire ground decisions we make and the administrative decisions we make. I believe that most of us are very comfortable with judgments made on the fire ground because we realize that the conditions are changing so rapidly that often a faulty decision will be obscured by the events overtaking it. This is very much responsible for the development of a rush to judgment approach in the remainder of fire service decision making processes.

Unfortunately, it’s counterproductive.

The measure of a man’s importance is not whether they’re working on difficult problems in society, but whether they’re still working on the same problem they had last year.

-John Foster Dulles

The decisions we make in the fire house are not fire ground decisions. They are decisions that affect the credibility of our organization both internally in the area of labor relations and externally in terms of public relations. A well thought out decision making process that allows for an appropriate balance between the information that’s needed to make an accurate decision and the need to meet certain kinds of time frames, so that people do not feel that analysis-paralysis has taken over are very much a part of the fabric of a fire chiefs administration.

Decision making can be a trip-wire that can mar the credibility of an individual and it can actually shape the perception of the organization. The use of various techniques to make decisions in a department can fall somewhere in the use of the breed of principal are far more useful than those that are on the opposite extreme ends of the spectrum, i.e., analysis-paralysis or rush to judgment.

John Foster Dulles once was quoted as saying “the measure of a man’s importance is not whether they’re working on difficult problems in society, but whether they’re still working on the same problem they had last year.” Decision making is intended to allow us to move on.

Any organization that is paralyzed is immobilized. And if an individual or an organization is immobilized they’re vulnerable.

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Battle Maps



Frederick "Bob" Seibel III



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Navy F&ES Hall of Famer Answers Last Alarm



Frederick R. "Bob" Seibel III passed away 9 April 2020, at home with family. Chief Seibel faithfully served in fire and emergency services organizations at the federal, state, county, and municipal levels for more than 62 years. Chief Seibel was a member of the Navy F&ES Hall of Fame and the National Fire Heritage Center Hall of Legends, Legacies and Leaders.

He began his fire service career as a volunteer in 1955, with the Cape St. Claire Volunteer Fire Department. Chief Seibel began his Navy fire service career as a firefighter at the Naval Engineering Experiment Station and retired as

Assistant Fire Chief at the United States Naval Academy. He is survived by his wife, five children, nine grandchildren, sixteen great-grandchildren, one great-great-grandchild, and one great-great-great-grandchild.

Chief Seibel's body was donated to science, and a celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Last Alarms

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Last Alarms

The USFA reported 26 line of duty deaths in 2020. The following line of duty deaths were reported since we published our last issue:

Michael Field
Valley Stream, NY

James Waters ♥
Tryon, NC

John Schoffstall
Terre Haute, IN

Franklin Williams
Detroit, MI

John Kuchar III
Burlington, KY

Mario Araujo
Chicago, IL

Israel Tolentino, Jr.
Passaic, NJ

Eduardo Ramirez ♥
El Paso, TX

2020 Totals

♥ 7 (27%) 🚒 5 (19%)

♥ Indicates cardiac related death

🚒 Indicates vehicle accident related death



TCoOO Update



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Taking Care of Our Own

There are currently five DoD firefighters in the Taking Care of Our Own program.

Taking Care of Our Own invites all DoD F&ES personnel to donate ONE HOUR of annual leave to DoD F&ES members in need to enable them to focus on recovery rather than financial distress.

| Name | Location | Point of Contact |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Kevin Stuebs | DLA Columbus, OH | Brent.Moreland@dla.mil |
| Richard Keat | Navy Region Mid Atlantic District 3 | Marc.J.Smith@navy.mil |
| Steve Holekamp | Tinker AFB, OK | Thomas.Trello@us.af.mil |
| Alfie Soyosa | Metro San Diego, CA | Nicole.Stacy@navy.mil |
| Scott McGee | Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, NH | Marc.J.Smith@navy.mil |

We provided all the service component chiefs with the proper procedures to enroll someone in the Taking Care of Our Own program. There was a trend of people using their own formats and forms which worked okay until the inevitable breach of personal identifying information (PII). We were very concerned about protecting PII when the program was stood up in 2003 and we designed standard procedures and forms to address those concerns.

Please contact your service component chief if you haven't seen this information recently.

Back in the Day

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Commercial Chassis Structural Pumpers

By Tom Shand



The majority of U.S. Navy Fire Department apparatus fleets were comprised of several different models of two door, commercial chassis pumpers that entered service during the early 1960's. Custom chassis apparatus at naval installations were few and far between with the exception of aerial ladders along with some vintage American LaFrance and Mack pumpers that were acquired between 1954 and 1956.

Due to the number of replacement apparatus that was required to rebuild the fleet, the choice was to develop a standard Navy configuration pumper using an enclosed two door commercial chassis which would enable installations to easily obtain service and spare parts. The first order for these units was awarded to Fire Trucks Incorporated in Mount Clemens, MI. Between 1963 and 1967 FTI produced several large orders for pumpers based upon the International model R-185 chassis. These units were originally painted red and were equipped with a Waterous pump rated at 750 gpm with a 300 gallon water tank, along with a top mounted booster reel and four body compartments.

Several other apparatus builders produced pumpers for the Navy during this period including Darley and General Safety Equipment. After delivery several installation departments modified the pumpers with the addition of crosslay hose beds, master stream appliances and externally mounted SCBA equipment in place of the hard suction hose mounted on the left side of the body to meet the needs of their response districts.

An example of the ingenuity of department members was evident in the work conducted at the Cheltenham Naval Communications Unit in Maryland on Engine 791, a 1967 International-FTI pumper. The body was rebuilt with new yellow paint scheme, warning lights, preconnected deck gun, installation of crosslay hose beds and standpipe packs. Property number 73-01905 was given an in-house rebuild which extended the service life of the apparatus for several years.

The next generation of Navy pumpers were also produced by Fire Trucks Incorporated and were based on a GMC two door enclosed cab with similar bodywork to the earlier vehicles.

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Tom Shand



Between 1969 and 1973 FTI produced a number of these model pumpers which when compared to today's engine apparatus were spartan in appearance and required personnel to ride on the rear step, exposed to the weather and elements. Several of these 750 gpm rated pumpers were modified to include a rear body windshield to protect the crew, preconnected intake lines and fixed deck guns for master stream operations. Property number 73-03122, a 1969 GMC FTI pumper was assigned to NAS Patuxent River, MD and was modified to include additional scene and warning lights, body mounted equipment along with the rear body windshield.

The first custom chassis apparatus produced for the U.S. Navy were acquired during 1975 when fifty-two pumpers built by Fire Trucks Incorporated using both Duplex and Pemfab model canopy cab units were placed into service. The design of these units incorporated diesel engines, automatic transmissions and rear facing jump seats. Back in the Day apparatus innovations were common as manufacturers strove to keep ahead of the competition with new cab designs and components. From this point forward all engine company apparatus were built on a custom chassis from several manufacturers including FTI, Seagrave, Ward LaFrance and Pierce Manufacturing.

New World Order



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Sign of the Times at NAS Lemoore



L-R Rear: Fernando Hernandez, John Kellerhals, Steven Hallert, Seth Randalls, James Salazar

Front: Miranda Winsor, Malory Meiss

SA Matters!

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Interruptions: Barrier To Situational Awareness

By Rich Gasaway, PhD.

Like many of you, I do my best work when I am not interrupted. Whether it's someone trying to carry on a conversation, a phone ringing or a text message, an interruption disrupts the train of thought. And when the train of thought is disrupted, situational awareness can be adversely impacted.

The sketchpad in your mind

For those who've attended the Mental Management of Emergencies or the Flawed Situational Awareness program, you will be very familiar with the mental sketchpad and the role it plays in forming and maintaining situational awareness. For those who've not had the opportunity to attend a program yet, let me provide a short explanation...

When your senses gather information (sometimes termed clues and cues), the information serves as proverbial puzzle pieces that, when combined, form situational awareness. It is on the mental sketchpad that the puzzle pieces are put together. While this sounds like a simple process there are many things that can go awry when it comes to capturing, piecing together, and understanding these puzzle pieces.



The sketch pad is also the location where mental predictions of future events occur. Thus, this is a very busy place and the sketch pad has to pick and choose what it allows on to the pad.

Shifting attention

When you have something on your mind, whatever that may be, that thought is occupying your sketchpad. Stated another way, you are giving your conscious attention to whatever is on your mind. What happens when you shift attention to something else? There are a couple of possible outcomes. First, your current thought may go into a temporary memory buffer (i.e., get pushed off to the corner of your sketchpad). Or, the current thought may be completely lost (i.e., gets pushed completely off the sketchpad).

Unfortunately, you have little direct control over what gets set aside or gets pushed off. And there are many factors that influence what will happen, including the presence of residual visual or audible clues that will bring you back on task quickly, stress associated with the former task, your emotional attachment to the former task and your familiarity with the former task just to name a few.

Likewise, the strength of the visual or audible clues, stress, emotions and familiarity with the new task may impact your ability to shift attention back to the previous task.

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The Interruption

Interruptions can be expected or unexpected. If expected, you've likely already prepared yourself mentally for the event. In anticipation, you may make a note about what you are working on so that when the interruption is done, you can quickly and easily get back on task. If unexpected, the clues and cues of the interruption come flooding on to your mental sketchpad with reckless abandon, caring not what they trod over, push aside or even push off the pad.

Controlling the interruption

If you are able to anticipate an interruption, it is much easier to control its potential situational awareness devastation by making a note of where your thoughts were and what you were doing at the moment the interruption occurred. You may also be able to control the interruption by consciously choosing not to allow your attention to shift from the current task at hand.

For example, when your phone rings, you have a choice to make about whether or not to answer it. I am continually amazed at how often I witness someone answering the phone while deep in the middle of some heavy mental lifting, only to tell the caller that it's not a good time to talk. If it's not a good time to talk, the receiver of the call could have chosen to simply not answer the call and let it go to voice mail. This would allow the receiver of the call to control the interruption by playing the message back, and returning the call, at a more convenient time.

Humans are social creatures and there is a certain desire or expectation that we be polite and accommodating when approached by another person wanting to address us. Depending on the task you are engaged in, stopping what you are doing to accommodate someone else may have little impact. However, if the task is critical to a mission or safety, the interruption could have a catastrophic impact.

Dr. Gasaway's Advice

There are numerous documented examples of tragedies that occurred because someone who was engaged in a critical task was interrupted. The shift in attention caused a higher priority task to be pushed aside or forgotten completely. It can happen so easily.

Most of us think we are much better at managing our short-term memory buffer than we really are. When you are under stress, the ability to manage the shifting of attention to multiple tasks can become especially challenging. This is how some people who may believe they are pretty good at multitasking (under non-stressed conditions) get themselves into a tight jam when they try to shift attention among multiple competing inputs under stress. The outcomes are often predictable.



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Rich Gasaway, PhD.

The best practice for interruptions is to ensure you have a means by which to put a placeholder on where you left off and to control what you choose to let hijack control of your sketchpad. There's nothing wrong with telling a person who comes up to say something to you: "Can you hold on for just a second while I complete this thought." Or, "Give me just a moment to write something down." Or, "Could we schedule a time to talk about this?"

Obviously, this method of buying yourself time isn't going to work in a dynamically changing environment full of stress and consequence (like an emergency scene). In this case, make a mental (or written) note of where you left off. Or, if possible, use the services of a second person to serve as a scribe (your note taker) or to run interference (e.g., handle the radio traffic for you, or answer the phone for you, or talk face-to-face for you with the person who has information they feel you need to know).

Action items

1. Discuss a time when your thought process was interrupted and led to an adverse consequence.
2. Discuss a time when you approached someone and interrupted their thought process and it had an adverse consequence.
3. Discuss strategies for how you could manage interruptions while working in environments that are high-stress, high consequence with dynamically changing conditions.

MFHF Honors



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Military Firefighter Heritage Foundation Honors

The Military Firefighter Heritage Foundation would like to congratulate this year's Lifetime Achievement Recipient and Hall of Fame Inductees.

2020 Lifetime Achievement Recipient, Chief Ricky Brockman, Deputy Director, HQ US Navy Fire and Emergency Services

2020 Hall of Fame Inductees:

Chief Ricky Brockman

Deputy Director HQ US Navy

Chief Dave Donan

Chief Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

Chief John Thompson

Chief Ramstein AB

Chief John Staub

Retired Director US Army

Chief Michael Jones

Retired Chief Navy Region Hawaii

Chief Charles Byrd

Retired Command Chief, AETC



Congratulations to all this year's recipients and a special thanks to Chief Denny Heitman and the selection board for their hard work on selecting these firefighters for these honors.

On the Job – Fort Worth

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Captain Davis and Crash

By Samson J. De Sessa, Assistant Fire Chief

While we are all versed in the stories of old where Dalmatians were used by fire departments to run alongside horse-drawn apparatus to clear pedestrians during responses and make sure the horses stayed on course, many are unaware of their current affiliations. NAS Fort Worth JRB Fire Captain Thomas Davis and his certified therapy Dalmatian “Crash” have volunteered hundreds of hours in many settings, including but not limited to nursing homes, assisted living facilities, rehab facilities, mental health institutions, schools, hospitals, cancer centers, hospice facilities, college campuses and in patients’ homes.



Research suggests that utilizing therapy dogs in response to traumatic events can help reduce symptoms of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. In a career-field where we statistically have a greater chance of dying by suicide than on the Fireground (FFBHA.org), these services are paramount.

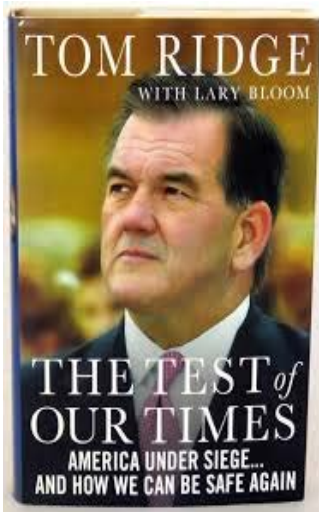
Crash was rescued by Tom from Dalmatian Rescue of South Florida when she was 1 year old in 2009. She immediately began participating in 9/11 runs at NAS Key West with the fire department and spending time with the Firefighters there. She also rode “shotgun” in the annual Veterans Day Parade for several years. After moving to NAS Fort Worth in 2016, Crash and Captain Davis joined Paws Across Texas (P.A.T.) as a Therapy Dog Team.

Crash’s job includes rehabilitation work for patients that have had surgery or diminished use of motion. Crash will encourage use of the diminished side as an occupational-type therapy in a controlled rehab environment. Along with basic obedience training, Crash works on commands that will elicit a smile by simply rolling over, laying down, sitting on a chair for easier reach of the patient, laying down next to a child that is bed ridden and any number of things just to make patients feel at ease.

Crash has walked in the City of Fort Worth Veterans Day Parade, stood with our Fire Department at NAS Fort Worth JRB 9/11 Remembrance ceremonies, participated in the City of Hurst Christmas Tree Lighting, acted as a real-live “Sparky” to assist the NAS Fort Worth Fire Prevention Team at local schools and raised awareness for therapy dogs at the Paws Across Texas Fort Worth Home Show. The positive impact that Thomas Davis and Crash have made in thousands of peoples’ lives cannot be overstated, yet they remain very humble about what they do. This is absolutely incredible considering they merely seek smiles for compensation.

Risk

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Risk Management at Every Level

By Robert Wagner

Risk management? That's that thing chiefs sit around and talk about when deciding how to allocate our annual budget, right? I'm just a line firefighter; that's above my pay grade. Not so fast.

What if I told you that you – the hose-line stretching, vent-hole-cutting, apparatus-riding, shift-working firefighter – are an expert at managing risk?

Tom Ridge, America's very first secretary of Homeland Security, said it best in his book *The Test of Our Times: America Under Siege ... And How We Can Be Safe Again*: "Risk management is a concept all of us practice in our daily lives, but we don't call it that. People make financial decisions, without ever thinking they're practicing risk management. Do we really need to pay more in order to raise the coverage ceiling on our auto and home insurance policies today? .. Do we need a car that has side air bags? Should we bother with our seat belt, or should we make appointments to get a flu shot?"

Just as Secretary Ridge was making the concept of risk management relatable to the everyday American, I want to show how it applies to you – the men and women on the fireline.

Whether you realize it or not, your job is full of risk management. From deciding when to don your SCBA to what diameter hoseline to stretch, you're always subconsciously conducting a risk-benefit analysis – you're always sizing up how much risk you're willing to accept in exchange for efficiency in getting the job done. Secretary Ridge put it quite simply when he wrote, "Risk management involves making choices – trade-offs." Every time you read smoke to predict the time to flashover, decide which rooms in a burning building should be searched first, or put on your PPE, you're managing risk. You do this every day – and you're really good at it.

The mental game of risk management

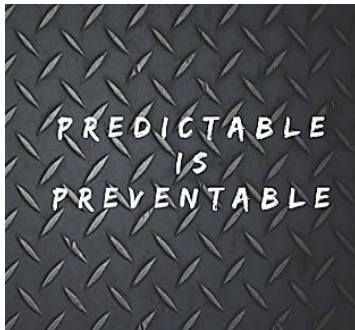
If I'm already great at managing risk, why waste time reading this article? Why study risk management? The world is infinitely complex – too complex for our minds to even grasp just how complex it truly is. In *The Knowledge Illusion*, Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach explain that our brain is flooded all day with information about our environment, yet our mind doesn't seem to get bogged down in the details. How does it do this? How are we able to successfully navigate an endlessly complicated world?

Cognitive scientists once believed that our minds functioned like a computer, but thinking about how a computer works quickly shuts that theory down. Like humans, computers are logical – too logical. They analyze every input of information they are given thoroughly – too thoroughly. Computers lack the ability to see the big picture. In other words, as Sloman and Fernbach put it, if your mind was a computer, you'd never get anything done.

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Risk (Cont.)

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Unlike a computer, your mind is built for pattern recognition. When it encounters a problem in the form of a familiar pattern, it's able to quickly reach into memory and produce a response based on what worked to solve a similar problem in the past. In *Deep Survival*, Laurence Gonzales calls this a mental model, and it's the shortcut that allows you to see the big picture and make quick decisions in fast-paced situations. It's that gut feeling that tells you where to cut that vent hole and when to open the nozzle. Your mind says, "I've seen this before, and I know precisely what to do – I have a model for this."

We find ourselves in trouble when our mental model doesn't match our environment and, in an infinitely complex world, that's not hard to do. Gonzales underscores that our environment is constantly changing, and our models can easily grow outdated or encounter foreign situations. We simply can't know it all, and we can't foresee everything.

So, we need to constantly be preparing for the unthinkable and setting ourselves up for success when things don't go according to plan. How do we do that? Easy: We manage our risks, and we do so by practicing safety. This requires that we identify hazards (things that can hurt us), anticipate their probability of doing us harm, and take steps to minimize the chances of that occurring.

As the risk management guru Gordan Graham likes to say, "Predictable is preventable." We may not be able to see into the future or completely eliminate all our risk, but we can implement safety measures to reduce the likelihood of bad things happening.

6 easy steps to staying safe

The quality of firefighters I admire most is that they are pragmatic; they like actionable information without the fluff. In this spirit of efficiency, here's a practical list of six things you can do every shift day to ensure you are effectively managing your risk and staying safe.

1. Train: Half of you are shouting "amen" while the other half are rolling their eyes at "those guys." I get it. For some of us, this is a job and, for others, a passion. I'm not here to launch into a sermon about how into the job anyone needs to be. No matter where you stand on the debate of how much (or little) we should be training, we can all agree that nobody wants to feel incompetent at their job, everyone wants to go home alive at the end of their shift, and we all want to do the right thing.

In this career, we have the potential to find ourselves in situations that require us to react quickly but don't encounter often enough for our brains to develop an automatic response. As such, we must artificially build models for these instances – the mental models described by Gonzales – and we do that through training.

Chances are most people reading this article have never had to call a mayday while operating at a fire, yet they can probably rattle one off without giving it much thought if prompted. How are they able to do this if they've never actually had to do it? Simple: They practiced calling maydays under stress while attending the fire academy. Their fire instructors artificially built them a mental model – one that, should the situation arise, could very well save their lives.

Risk (Cont.)

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Things we have to build artificial models for, like calling a mayday, are called critical tasks. These are things we don't do often but really need to be proficient at should the need arise. We should train on critical tasks every day we are at the firehouse.

Effective training for critical tasks doesn't have to be long, drawn out or complicated. When I conduct my morning check of my SCBA, occasionally I'll practice putting it on, securing the waist belt, turning it on, and donning my facepiece – all while wearing my fire gloves. Early in my career, I had my facepiece knocked off during a collapse. It's not fun, especially if you aren't prepared to quickly remedy the situation. Adding this simple training drill to my morning routine not only provides me an effective way to prepare for such dynamic situations, it also builds my familiarity with a critical piece of my PPE – an awareness that could possibly save my life in a mayday event.

2. Work out: By now, it's been drilled into our heads that heart attacks are the leading killers of firefighters, but are you aware that the NFPA has identified overexertion and strains as the leading causes of fireground injuries? Maintaining your physical fitness isn't just a matter of preventing heart disease, it's about ensuring your body is fit to do the job. A fit body does the job well, and performing well is the foremost way we stay safe.

And while you're at it, don't forget to drink water – a lot of water. Dehydration is a risk that can be easily managed.

3. Take a shower: I can hear your significant others applauding in approval from here. Cancer prevention is a huge topic in the fire service right now, with debates focusing on the best ways to protect firefighters. Regardless of where you stand, we can all agree that you should probably go back to the firehouse and take a shower after a fire.

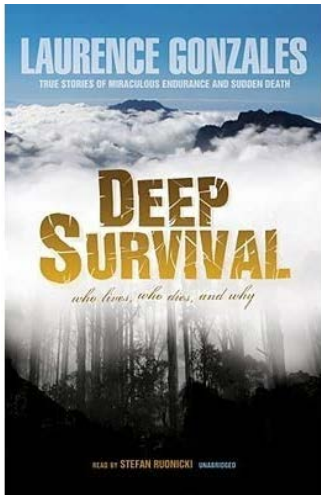
During every hazmat lecture I give, I conclude by reminding students to go back to the firehouse and take a shower after the response. The hazmat industry recognizes that, in most cases, contamination can be effectively mitigated by removing your clothing and washing off. In fact, if you ever attend the Hazardous Materials Technologies Course at the Center for Domestic Preparedness, colloquially known as the Live Agent Course, you'll probably end their decontamination process with a shower.

Research shows that dermal absorption is a significant source of our exposure to carcinogens during structure fires. We can easily manage this risk by simply practicing good hygiene. Even if you don't buy in to the arguments for post-fire contamination reduction, your coworkers will appreciate you not stinking, as will your significant others.

4. Rest: Yes, I've just told you to nap on the job. Before I'm flooded with angry letters from chiefs and taxpayers, let's consider the science. For firefighters, risk management is a game that requires extensive use of the mind. The sleep deprivation and interruption that come with 24-hour shift schedules wreak havoc on firefighters' ability to perform cognitively. They also contribute to fatigue, depression, cancer, and host of other health issues that negatively impact firefighters' ability to do the job well.

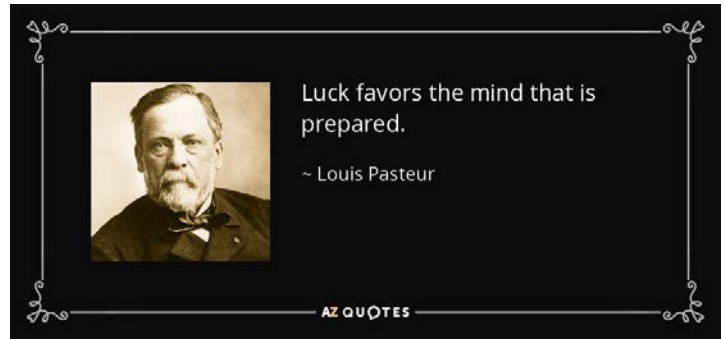
Risk (Cont.)

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As the famed Dr. Louis Pasteur said, “Luck favors the prepared mind” – and a prepared mind is one that’s well rested. Firefighters must show up to emergencies



mentally and physically ready to make good decisions and take quick actions under unfavorable circumstances. Napping and going to bed early increase the likelihood that you will perform optimally under stress.

5. Communicate: In almost every post-incident critique I read, poor communication is listed as a contributing factor to failure. It is fascinating how people can be so terrible at something they do so frequently. It proves that communication isn’t inherent to humans; it’s a skill. Fortunately, skills can be learned, practiced and improved upon. By doing so, you ensure your ability to operate successfully and safely under high-stress conditions.

In *Team of Teams*, General Stanley McChrystal, former commander of special operations forces in Iraq, explains that teams that promote an atmosphere of openness, transparency and mutual trust among members are the most successful at facing adversity. Be a thinking firefighter, actively engaged in the tactical decision-making process on the fireground, not a well-programmed robot. Understand the overall strategic aims of your officers, and trust the judgment of your teammates. Most importantly, speak up when something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. This is your mind’s subconscious way of saying, “I’ve seen this before, and I know how the story ends.”

6. Study failure: As Gonzales advises in *Deep Survival*, “If you could collect the dead around you and sit by the campfire and listen to their tales, you might find yourself in the best survival school of all. Since you can’t, read the accident reports in your chosen field of recreation.” In your case, study the investigatory reports covering line-of-duty deaths and serious injuries. By learning from the fatal mistakes of others, you can steer clear of similar situations.

Safety IS risk management

Risk management is not an obscure, abstract idea or strategic game played out in the offices of agency executives; it is a mental process we employ every day. By practicing safety, we manage our predictable risks and prepare for the day our mental models fail to accurately forecast the future. While you are already great at managing risk, including these six steps in your daily routines will improve your chances for success when the stakes are high.

About the author

Robert Wagner is a firefighter with the Indianapolis Fire Department, assigned to Engine and Tactical 7. He’s a hazardous materials specialist for Indiana Task Force 1, a radiation specialist for Indiana’s Radiation Nuclear Detection Task Force, and a USAR/CBRN subject-matter expert contracted to U.S. Army North. Wagner is a nationally registered paramedic and currently pursuing his master’s degree at the Naval Postgraduate School.

Firefighter Suicide

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Risk Factors & Warning Signs

By Billy Wusterhausen

In 2016, the Round Rock, TX, Fire Department responded to a medical call for a reported suicide. The suicide was a firefighter who was employed by another department and lived in our response district. It was evident to the responding crews that there were no lifesaving measures they could provide for the deceased firefighter.

This event caused concern and discussion in the department about the chances of this happening to one of our own firefighters. If this could happen in the other department, which appeared to have all the right resources available, then how susceptible were we to a firefighter suicide of one of our own? It was possible that some of the same stressors that haunted the firefighter from the other department were affecting some of our firefighters.

National problem

Suicide is a national problem; in fact, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, it is one of the top 10 causes of death in most age groups. 75 firefighters died in the line of duty in 2016, per National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) statistics. The Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance reports that were reported to have died from suicide in the same time period, and these numbers are likely under-reported due to the stigma surrounding suicide and because of the different ways in which deaths are categorized and reported. This means that firefighters were nearly 1½ times more likely to die from suicide than they were to die in the line of duty.

Risk factors

Someone may experience a crisis that seems overwhelming or cause them to consider suicide. The most critical period is during the first 48 hours from the onset of the crisis, and proper intervention and support may allow the crisis to recede. Firefighters who understand the risk factors of suicide and suicide indicators are better prepared to assist themselves and others. Suicide prevention is possible and consists of effective intervention and controlling risk factors.

The risk factors that most contribute to suicides can be categorized as external stressors, mental health, demographics, past exposure to suicides, and other non-categorized risk factors.

External stressors include:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Relationship issues | Death of a loved one |
| Job-related issues | Health issues |
| Financial stress | Other adverse life events |

Mental health risk factors for firefighters include:

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Post-traumatic or critical incident stress | Loss of self-esteem |
| Mental illness | Physical or sexual abuse |
| Depression | The feeling of being a burden |
| Loss of hope | Intent to die |

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Firefighter Suicide (Cont.)

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Other risk factors for suicide include:

- Health issues
- Access to lethal means
- Alcohol abuse

When a firefighter suicide occurs, peers often ask if there was a sign, a signal or a hint that would have allowed intervention and prevented the suicide. Those who attempt suicide are in such pain and desperation that it affects their ability to generate alternative solutions. They are feeling so much hurt, coupled with feeling like they are a burden, and are attempting to find a solution that will end their pain. Fortunately, the fire service lends itself to camaraderie and a culture where firefighters refer to each other as brothers and sisters, and consider their peers to be their second family. This culture allows for firefighters to be in the best position to identify suicide indicators and to help each other.

Warning signs

Many people who have committed suicide had given definitive signals or indicators that they intended to commit suicide. These indicators or warning signs are a considered suicidal communication and can be in the form of verbal statements, or expressed as emotions or actions. The more of these warning signs that are present, the higher the risk of suicide. Some warning signs are more serious, serve as a stronger indicator than others, and should receive greater attention.

Warning signs are changes in behavior that include:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Isolation and withdrawal | Discipline issues |
| Aggression | Giving away possessions |
| Difficulty sleeping | Ending significant relationships |
| Changes in mood | Humiliation and irritability |
| Loss of interest in activities | Loss of confidence in abilities and skills |
| Acting reckless | Retirement |
| Anxiety | Absenteeism and poor work performance |
| Overreacting to criticism | Neglecting appearance |
| Depression | Writing a will or buying insurance |
| Difficulties at work | Making funeral arrangements |

Additionally, while alcohol is a risk factor, alcohol use may also serve as a warning sign.

While most of these indicators need no explanation, retirement as an indicator deserves a little more explanation. Firefighters' memories remain long after they are no longer closely connected to their fire service support system or network—groups that firefighters have historically relied upon to help deal with the issues. The status of “inactive firefighter” gets internalized and interpreted to a status of ignored or irrelevant. It is sometimes when things start to slow down in a firefighter's life that some of the memories begin to come back—and sometimes without warning.

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Firefighter Suicide (Cont.)

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Verbal communications and topics that the firefighter talks about can also provide suicide indicators. These verbal indicators include:

- Statements about being a burden to others
- Statements about feeling hopeless or no reason to live,
- Statements about feeling trapped or being in unbearable pain
- Statements about a lack of support or belief in the system
- Dwelling on problems with no apparent solution

Lastly, the most significant suicide indicators can be in the form of a suicide plan, such as:

- Searching online for ways to commit suicide or collecting tools to commit suicide,
- Tidying things up
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye

The list of warning signs is very extensive. A single warning sign does not usually mean the firefighter is contemplating suicide, but a firefighter exhibiting numerous signs is at a higher risk for suicide. The death of a loved one may seem overwhelming but can be manageable with a good support system. A firefighter who comes into work hungover one day out of the year may not be anything more than someone who went to a late party. A firefighter coming to work hungover each shift should be a concern to everyone on the crew. In this regard, it is essential to look for pattern. Small changes in a firefighter's behavior may be an early warning sign.

Taking action

It is important that observed indicators are addressed early and often. Supervisors may be accustomed to correcting unsafe behavior problems in the fire service that are a result of lack of training, but often cringe at the task of having a difficult conversation with a firefighter who is not focused because of a personal problem.

An effective initial intervention consists of active listening, being empathetic and being non-judgmental. Many people avoid talking about suicide for various reasons. Asking a fellow firefighter if they are considering suicide, or otherwise talking about suicide, will provide a starting point for identifying solutions. To determine a firefighter's intent on suicide, ask questions about if the firefighter has access to lethal means, if the firefighter has a plan on how to commit suicide, and if the firefighter has determined when to commit suicide. Early intervention provides the best chances of success and allows someone to get help before a point of crisis is reached.

The NFFF has created ACT Now! Ask. Care. Take as part of their efforts to support its Initiative : Psychological Support, which is one of the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives to reduce firefighter fatalities.

Firefighter Suicide (Cont.)

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Billy Wusterhausen

Until one can attend a suicide awareness and intervention training program, firefighters can do the following for a firefighter in need:

- Listen carefully
- Offer friendship and understanding
- Suggest professional assistance
- Validate his or her feelings
- Call the police or bring the distressed person to a hospital, if necessary
- Avoid under or overreacting
- Suggest alternatives to suicide
- Remove any stressful obstacles
- Remove the person from the workplace
- Do whatever is needed if a life is on the line

The NFFF suggests that the fire service should consider including suicide or mental health identification curriculum and should consider including depression screening as a part of a firefighter’s annual physical.

Self-check

The Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance created a short 16 questions self-screening questionnaire for firefighters to determine how they are doing and if they need counseling or assistance. At the end of the 16 yes or no questions are specific recommendations based on the answers. Visit ffbha.org for the survey, and do a personal mental check-up for yourself, and follow the recommendations. It may just save your life.



NWO 2



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Sign of the Times Ventura County



Captain Martinez, Engineer Webber, Captain Ruppert, Engineer Marin, Firefighter Gomez, Firefighter Collins

The Public Speaks

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Citizens Thank El Centro Firefighters

Battalion Fire Chief
 Naval Air Facility Fire Department
 2024 Bennett Road
 El Centro, CA 92243

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with grateful appreciation we thank the firefighters from your city for the tireless hours they spent to help fight the recent New River Canyon fire in Brawley. We were privileged to meet some of them that "stayed watch" on our property for many hours.

To know they were concerned for the safety of ourselves, our home, and our property, gave us a great sense of security during the entire ordeal! Their persistent efforts to contain the fire, their selfless desire to sacrifice their safety to combat the blazing fire and their compassion for all the residents' homes in our area is a tremendous tribute to your team.

We will always be grateful to your first responders, to the dedication they demonstrated on the job and we thank God for the service they rendered to our rural community of Brawley. May He always bless you and your team!

With Grateful Appreciation,

Ken Jones
Shirley Jones
 Xen & Shirley Jones



THE FLAMES LEAPED HIGH

The sky was filled with smoke the day our canyon burned below;
 It filled the sky with hues so grey and oh, the winds did blow!
 Its wispy billows reached so high as though they grasped the sky,
 And then we saw the flames so bright, their angry fingers cry!

The flames did move with such a force, it made one understand
 The vengeance that this furnace had, it could get out of hand!
 However, when we looked around, we had no fear at all,
 Because the first responders came and stood so strong and tall!

The fire did race with speeds of might, it ran its course to win;
 But with their courage, strength and might, the firemen knew they'd win!
 The race raged on for many hours, but thru the night they fought,
 These firemen are a sturdy bunch; their spirits were for naught!

The fight was fought; their course was held; in the end they won!
 The battle did have many trials; they fought 'til it was done!
 We praise our Lord for men like these, who put their lives at stake
 To always heed the beckon call, and never take a break!

Our thanks goes out to all of you who came and risked your lives
 To keep our homes and buildings safe, we owe you all high-fives!
 We pray that God will touch your lives, with blessing from above,
 Surround you all with Peace and Grace and His abiding Love!

Shirley Jones
 Shirley Jones
 April 8, 2020

Officer Development

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From The Jump Seat to The Officer's Seat

By Justin Adams, Battalion Chief Chesterfield County, VA

Promotional opportunities are an exciting time in a young man or woman's life in the fire service. It is the first official step in a leadership role and one that places a tremendous amount of responsibility on the shoulders of the person who is moving seats.

While this new transition seems difficult, it doesn't have to be, provided we all work and understand the principles of leading, managing and building trust with those who work with us.

Following are some general tips that have served others well when making this new transition and moving from the jump seat to the officer's seat.

Leadership equals influence

Leadership is defined as the act of guiding and directing people. However, if we dig deeper, we often find that leading or leadership is the ability to get others to do something that they would not normal do or accomplish on their own or, as author John Maxwell states, "Leadership is about one life influencing another."

As we move seats in our career, the importance of adding value to those who work with us has never been more important. Your view may change, but the level of responsibly has only increased.

The new seat affords you the opportunity to lead and influence every day, so what will you do with it? We have an opportunity to lead and influence every time we communicate, whether in person, via email or various other types of communication mediums. Therefore, the opportunity exists every second of every day. What do you do when you have someone's attention? I have yours right now. Wouldn't it be a shame if I wasted it?

You use this time wisely, lead with your heart and manage with your mind. These small things will go a long way in making your move successful.

Set the example for the team

Moving seats allows you to set the tone and the example for what you and your shift will collectively accomplish in a shift, month and year.

Notice, that I have spoken in terms of your shift and team. There is no "I" in team, but as a TEAM – Together Everyone Accomplishes More – you will shine when your people and those who work around you are in the spotlight. You set the example by leading, being the first one to the apparatus, the first to do PT, the first to do house duties and station chores. They will want to model the behavior of your leadership style because you are modeling the behavior that you as a company officer expect.

As you move seats, be the first to do everything except eat; officers eat and shower last. It shows that you care about the mission, that your team comes first and then yourself. Set the example by being the first one on the battlefield and the last one to leave.

Officer Development (Cont.)

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Accountability goes both ways

As you move seats, remember to whom you are accountable. Accountable to the organization, the men and women who you supervise, their families, your family and the fire service. Do not take this lightly and make sure that those who work with you hold you accountable.

Accountability starts by addressing the small stuff. If we hold people accountable inside the fire station, it is reasonable to think that the other stuff will fall into place with a little guidance from time to time. If people know you're going to address the small things, then the big stuff will be less likely to happen. Be accountable to them at all times, and never walk past a problem you can solve.

Trust is key for success

Building trust with your subordinates is the single most important attribute that you can achieve when moving seats, largely because you have developed some level of trust prior to participating in the promotional process. Your people have to trust you before they will follow you. Sounds simple, yet it can be difficult to achieve.

Trust starts by investing time, effort and energy into those who are on your shift. It begins by having meaningful conversations – what makes them tick, what ignites their passion, and where to do they want to go and achieve in their careers. These are must ask questions if you want to develop trust with your peers.

You can't just tell them you care; you **MUST** show them by being in the trenches, investing in their successes and being willing to hold them accountable for their actions, both good and bad.

Trust means having a difficult conversation to make the person better because you care about his or her success and failures. Trust means being critical of the conduct but never of the person. Trust takes time to gain, but only seconds to be lost or tarnished forever. People have to trust you in their most challenging times.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said that he would sum up leadership in one word: trust. You will know people trust you when they follow you if only out of curiosity. I can think of no better analogy the words of Powell related to the importance of trust.

It's no longer about you

As you move to the front seat, make the most of your view. Communicate the mission, hold your peers and yourself accountable, and build a legacy of trust with those in your department. Remember that from this point forward, it is no longer about you; it is all about those who work with and around you. You will shine and be rewarded when those who work around you are in the spotlight. When things go right, they did it, and when things go wrong, you own it. Be the change agent in your organization, set the example and be the one who people want to follow.

Bread and Butter

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Do You Have a 'Parking Lot' Fire Department?

By Charles Bailey

A few weeks ago, an older firefighter – the kind with the long mustache and grizzled look – remarked at the kitchen table, "If there is ever a parking lot on fire, we are the best-trained fire department in the world."

The power of this statement is a sublime comment on our most common training modality — pulling lines and flowing water in parking lots.

Is your fire department a parking lot fire department?

As the amount of working fire activity goes down, the amount of training needed to maintain basic skill proficiency goes up. Many times, competing priorities emerge but the need to maintain basic proficiencies cannot be denied.

Sometimes it is just easier to drive around to the back of the station and pull the lines off to test the probationary firefighter, but does that really accomplish anything?

The real fireground is full of friction, and friction is anything that can possibly interfere with the timely and efficient execution of tasks.

Training in the parking lot is like trying to apply high school physics to NASA rocket launch flight plans. In high school physics, most of the problems disregard normal friction and only consider how things behave in ideal conditions. However, firefighting occurs during less-than-ideal conditions ... and friction matters.

Training alternatives for pulling hoselines

Company officers need to consider friction as they map out training for their subordinates. Understandably, we do not always have houses or abandoned buildings that have passed the NFPA 1403 test to train in. Sometimes that same old burn building at the academy is more boring than it is useful. This is where creativity comes into play.

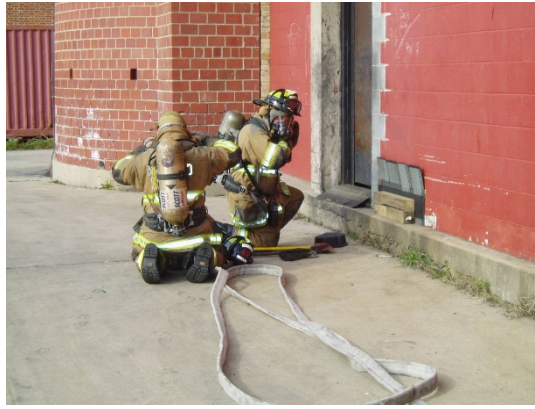
Consider conducting operations in parking garages on the weekends or at night. You typically have enclosed stairways to stretch hoses in, and these stairways mimic the tight spaces of high rises and apartment houses.

Another good choice for training is apartment complexes. You have to be careful of property damage from hose streams, but stretching to the front door of structures without actually entering can teach younger members how to estimate hose lengths, and stretching around fences and cars teaches teamwork with some friction or difficulty.

With a few phone calls to management, you can usually get permission to run dry hoselines in high-rise apartment buildings. Even without charging lines, your crews can get a good sense of the challenges involved with stretches on the upper floors.

Bread and Butter (Cont.)

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On cold winter days, another option is hose drills in the engine room. Crews can practice coupling hoses with gloved hands and darkened facepieces to simulate low-visibility conditions inside of structures. If the engine room has good floor drains, you can even charge lines and practice following the hoseline with full gear and darkened facepieces.

Any way you look at it, the onus is on the station officer is to develop and maintain basic skills without creating parking lot fire departments. A little creativity can go a long way to creating fun and challenging firefighter training evolutions that are harder than stretching hose across the same old field but that don't require acquired structures or long trips to the training center.

2020 Safety Stand Down

IAFC Announces Roadway Safety As Theme

By Laura French

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Safety, Health and Survival Section has announced the theme of this year's Safety Stand Down is "Building a Superhighway to Safety – Protecting our Responders on Roadways."

Agencies will be encouraged to suspend all non-emergency activities to focus on training and education related to the hazards first responders face while performing their duties on roadways during the week of June 14-20.

"Operating in roadways during an emergency incident is one of the most treacherous threats that first responders encounter on the job," the IAFC said in a press release. "This important initiative encourages everyone to refresh their safety techniques and learn new skills based on current research, nationally recognized best practices and a growing number of distracted drivers on streets and highways."

Information, training resources and videos will be available on the Safety Stand Down website.

The Safety Stand Down is co-hosted by the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) and the NFPA. The NFPA will be hosting an online quiz related to this year's theme; those who complete the quiz will be entered into a sweepstakes to receive a commemorative Safety Stand Down challenge coin.



Navy F&ES POCs

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