



What's Happening

Navy Fire and Emergency Services Newsletter
Protecting Those Who Defend America



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Your Annual Checkup: The State of the Department

By Ronny J. Coleman

We just finished another calendar year. What did you accomplish last year? What do you intend to accomplish this coming year?

The answers to these two questions are extremely important to a fire chief. To the first question, the answer is the chief's experience. The answer to the second question represents the chief's potential. If a chief officer is unable to respond to either question in anything other than vague ambiguities, he may be suffering problems in controlling his own destiny. There is a simple solution. Basically, it is the discipline of establishing and evaluating goals and objectives on an annual basis.

Like the cliché, "If you have no idea where you are going, then any path will take you there," a fire department without measurable goals and objectives is an organization that is wandering aimlessly. Furthermore, the peripatetic fire chief on that path is anything but a professional.

Establishing a goals and objectives program in a fire department is one of the first steps to provide structure and productivity in that organization. To be effective, the program has to be utilized as both a short term and long range planning device.

The Mission Statement

First, a fire service agency has to have a mission statement. In my review of organizations, I have been surprised to find that many fire departments do not have any form of mission statement. There is only the assumption that the organization exists to fight fire or some other vague or altruistic responsibility. Unfortunately, the lack of a mission statement can create both ambiguity and conflict for the organization.



Supporting the Fleet, Fighter, and Family



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One might visualize the mission statement of an organization as being like the top of a pyramid. The statement is the capstone of the organization, basically stating why that organization exists. It delineates the differences between one department and another. It also defines the community's needs, because the organization would not exist if the problem or problems described in the mission statement did not exist in the community.

A fire department without a clear-cut mission statement may find it is dealing with responsibilities that do not fall within its purview. The worst case scenarios involve fire departments in conflict with law enforcement or emergency medical services in dealing with emergencies that have not been clearly defined for all the agencies.

A mission statement should exist within the enabling legislation that forms the organization. When a fire chief assumes responsibility for a fire department, one of the first things he should do is to check the enabling legislation to determine two things: A clear-cut definition of the department mission and that it is up to date.

While I was performing a management audit of a fire department, I found the mission statement for that organization had not been changed in the enabling legislation since 1928. The department had assumed a wide range of other responsibilities, including emergency medical services, paramedic EMS activities and hazardous materials situations. Yet the municipal code clearly stated that the mission of the fire department was restricted to responding to fires, explosions and fire-related emergencies. An immediate revision of that mission statement was suggested to encompass the scope of duties the department was currently delivering.

I have heard many debates over the question of the difference between goals and objectives. Everybody has their own definition. Some people regard them as being synonymous, while others consider them as being significantly different. Probably the best way of describing the difference between goals and objectives is to look at the old saying, "Win the battle, but lose the war." An individual battle in a combat situation represents an objective. Frequently the military is sent out to capture a specific piece of terrain that has been given a number and that number reflects an objective.

On the other hand, when involved in warfare, winning is everything!

You might make the case that it is possible to win many small objectives and yet lose the war. Goals are what you want to see accomplished and objectives define who is going to do it, as well as when and where they are going to do it. Goals are end results and objectives have end results. Both goals and objectives tend to be long-ranged.

It is axiomatic that you must achieve a majority of your objectives to accomplish your goal. On the other hand, it is also true that you may fail at one or more objectives and still achieve the goal. The corollary is that if you fail at all of your objectives, the goal will never be achieved.

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If all this sounds like a game in mental gymnastics, it does have a point. In the fire service, we don't have as many goals as people think we do. In fact, if you look carefully at most fire departments, one of the goals is to prevent fires. Assuming that all fires are not preventable, another goal of an organization may be to perform effectively in combating fires when they occur.

I think most of us would agree that we would like to reduce the number of fires through fire prevention. Being realistic, we realize we are still going to have fires. But we all can agree that a major goal of a fire department is to prevent those fires that are preventable.

Fire department objectives should be specific statements that contain information on who is going to do what, including where and when it is supposed to be completed. Objectives should contain specifics - names, locations, dates and tasks. Objectives also contain a verb that describes the behavior that links all four of those elements together. Action verbs such as produce, deliver, create or remove can be used to make an objective statement into a definitely measurable event.

For example, let's use the idea of a goal statement describing the public attitude in the community. The statement might read: Achieve a high level of public awareness of fire safe behaviors. One objective that could support that goal would state: Inspector Smith to produce a stop, drop and roll program for the first to fifth grades in all elementary schools by 31 December 2020.

It follows that for every one of the major goals that support the mission statement; there will be a larger number of objectives to achieve that goal. This building block approach has a multiplication factor to it. One mission statement might produce four goals; each goal might produce our objectives for a total of 16 objectives.

What comes next? How are those objectives going to be accomplished? What tools, resources, materials or time allocations are required to achieve each objective? You might consider these as the raw material of objectives. In one sense, we could look at a fire department's budget and characterize it as being a material of raw supplies. When we budget for manpower to be in fire stations, fire apparatus, communications equipment ready to serve, and so on, we are essentially creating a reservoir of potential activity. That reservoir can remain dormant and react to events as they occur. Or, that reservoir can become active to shape the problem the organization exists to solve.

The task level in an organization is where most of the money, manpower and materials are located. However, it is not automatic that these raw materials produce anything. A conscious decision has to be made in an organization to further subdivide these raw elements into allocations directed toward achieving a specific objective. The multiplication factor sets in again.

In our example of Inspector Smith creating a program for elementary schools, we know he is not going to be able to do that overnight. It will take x-number of weeks of his time, an allocation from the budget to purchase materials, an allocation of time to meet with school officials and an organization of plans to schedule and carry out these events.

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Each task must follow one after another in a chronological fashion until the objective has been achieved. The task level is what we do every day.

Objectives are somewhat like milestones along a highway, marking off how far you have moved toward a goal. Unfortunately, goals are much more elusive. And, it is not uncommon for us to set goals that are ultimately beyond satisfaction. But that's okay. I once heard that a man's grasp should exceed his reach.

Those things that are forever beyond our acquisition are a source of motivation. Every once in a while we achieve that goal - a goal - and we drastically improve the quality of life for everyone.

Let's say in the fire service that our goal is to eliminate all fire deaths in the United States. There is ignorance, apathy, indifference, even malevolence that will result in people dying from fire. However, just for the sake of argument, what will happen when we achieve that goal? What if we only achieved 75% of it? Would we be winning the war?

These are interesting hypothetical questions, but let's get down on a more realistic basis. Are you losing the war in your own area? The purposes behind setting mission statements, establishing goals and creating objectives are much more realistic when used on a local level. The World Future Society admonishes those who wish to change the future to "think globally - but act locally." The purpose of this article is to encourage you, as chief officer, to use goals and objectives to resolve local needs.

It is important to document a goals and objectives program once it has been established. It should form some type of an action plan that starts at the top of an organization and filters down to the lowest level. Before anyone reacts to this concept by stating "I've seen all these management by objectives programs and they end up being a paper nightmare," let me characterize an effective MBO program as being one that is succinct and readable.



An effective program starts with the chief, who must establish the mission statement, develop goals and write objectives for the function of the fire chief, thus providing structure to the chief's daily tasks.

Only then can a fire chief ask the subordinate officers to look at that snapshot of the future and develop their own goal statements, objectives and work plan based on those criteria.

An effective MBO program is growth from the top down and works from the bottom up. In addition, the most effective MBO programs are those that are captured on a single - or at most - double-sided sheet of paper. I favor a system where the officers engage in a brainstorming session with key chief officers just prior to setting the annual calendar of events. This allows everyone to fit their goals and objectives together like a gear train, so that the organization begins to function in synchronization.

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Ronny J. Coleman

Once goals and objectives have been reduced to paper, they can be typed, collated and shared with one another. A written document outlining the goals and objectives of the supervisory personnel of an organization is a measurable device that can be reviewed periodically, with successes or failures clearly identified. This kind of a system helps to make sense out of the often trivial and seemingly irrelevant details we carry out on a daily basis.

Michelangelo was once asked, “How do you make a beautiful statue out of such an ugly piece of stone?” He responded, “I begin to work on it by chipping away everything that does not look like a statue.

Sooner or later the image begins to emerge” And so it is with the tasks we perform on a daily basis. We chip away at something almost invisible at first, but then as it becomes more sharply in focus, we chip away in a systematic and structured fashion.

The plan is everything. The plan shapes the future. A goals and objectives program in an organization is not an exercise in paperwork, it is a prediction. It is the future.

At the beginning of this column I stated that if one does not care where he goes, the path will take them there. As a college student, I once engaged in a little game with my roommate. We’d take off for the weekend and provide our direction by a flip of a coin. The objective was that every time we reached a major intersection, we would flip a coin. Heads we would go left, tails, we would go right. We soon found ourselves heading back to where we started. We changed the rules of the game.

You are the person who is in the position of making the rules for your organization. Is it coin-flipping time - or are there goals and objectives in your future?

Combs Cartoon



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Reluctant Coach



Last Alarms

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Last Alarms

The USFA reported 57 line of duty deaths in 2019 and six so far in 2020. The following line of duty deaths were reported since we published our last issue:

Otis Isaacs, Jr. ♥
North East, MD

John Bresnan ♥
Homewood, AL

2019 Totals

♥ 33 (57%) 🚒 11 (19%)

Charles McCormick
Peculiar, MO

David Hill 🚒
Lubbock, TX

2020 Totals

♥ 2 (33%) 🚒 2 (33%)

Mark Horwich 🚒
Spencer, WV

Daryl Drusch ♥
Howard Lake, MN



TCoOO Update



Taking Care of Our Own

There are currently nine 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
Neil Hogan	Navy Region Southwest HQ, CA	Joyce.Matanane@navy.mil
Dana Carneal	Fort Carson, CO	Karen.M.Connors2.civ@mail.mil
Thomas Maury	CBC Gulfport, MS	Matthew.Spreitzer@navy.mil
Rosa Ferreira	Naval Base San Diego, CA	Joyce.Matanane@navy.mil
Chris Bishop	Navy F&ES Gulf Coast, FL	Daniel.Chiappetta@navy.mil
Joshua Thompson	Yakima Training Center, WA	Lynn.T.Hizon3.civ@mail.mil
David Bailey	Norfolk Naval Shipyard, VA	Marc.J.Smith@navy.mil
Kevin Stuebs	DLA Columbus, OH	Brent.Moreland@dla.mil
Philip Eubanks	Navy F&ES Gulf Coast, FL	Daniel.Chiappetta@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.

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Back in the Day

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Naval Air Facility-Adak, Alaska

By Tom Shand



The history of military installations on Adak Island can be traced back to the Japanese invasions of Attu and Kiska Island in the Aleutians during June of 1942. American defenses at that time were located in Unalaska, some 700 miles to the east, as the need for an advanced base became evident. Adak Island is 1200 miles southwest of Anchorage with construction for an Army Air Corps base starting in September, 1942. As the most westerly naval operations base from the fall of 1942 to the end of the World War II, Adak's strategic location provided support to the ships and submarines of the North Pacific Force.

In July, 1950 the Air Force transferred the Davis AFB to the U.S. Navy which established an anti-submarine warfare base and surveillance of naval surface vessels from the neighboring Soviet Union. During the decade of the 1980's over six thousand Naval personnel were assigned to Adak with the facility officially closing in March, 1997.

Fire protection for the military installations on Adak Island included both structural and airfield vehicles, at one point operating from three fire stations. Adak Island was known for having severe weather conditions including high winds with over fifty four inches of rain each year. It is most interesting that several of the structural engines assigned to the installation during this period were open cab design.

Over the years the U.S. Navy acquired many four wheel drive fire apparatus including several pumpers from the Four Wheel Drive Company in Clintonville, WI. FWD fire apparatus were utilized by many municipal departments including Baltimore, Chicago and FDNY, which operated large fleets of FWD pumpers and tractor drawn ladders equipped with 75 foot, two section wooden aerials. FWD was more widely known for their heavy transporter and snow plow trucks which were also employed at many military installations.

After World War II many communities which had gone without any new fire trucks for several years and as a result the major suppliers of apparatus for the military shifted their production to meet these demands. During 1953 the U.S. Navy placed an order for seven model F75-T pumpers from FWD. These units were built with an open cab and a massive front engine cowl for the Waukesha 145GK engine.

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Tom Shand

The engine was capable of producing 240 horsepower at 2250 rpm using a five speed manual transmission. The fire pump was a Waterous model CMA rated at 750 gpm with a 300 gallon water tank.

The open cab chassis was built with a 160 inch wheelbase and by today's standards the bodywork was straightforward with open running board storage for appliances and extinguishers. A top mounted booster reel together with hard sleeves and ground ladders rounded out the equipment supplied with each apparatus. The Adak FWD pumpers were outfitted with additional ground ladders, cowl mounted siren along with a pole mounted beacon ray warning light behind the front seats. One of the engines also carried a three inlet Samuel Eastman deck gun for master stream operations.

The engine company crew rode on the exposed back step and due to the open cab design, all members were subjected to the island's harsh weather conditions. During 1954 the U.S. Navy took delivery of an additional fourteen pumpers from FWD, with these units having an enclosed cab. Other custom chassis pumpers acquired by the U.S. Navy Back in the Day were produced by American LaFrance, Ward LaFrance and Mack Trucks. While each of these pumpers had their own unique designs, none of them could match the maneuverability of the FWD apparatus.

Photo from the collection of Mark Redman

NFA Vacancies



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Community Risk Reduction Course Vacancies

By Mike Weller, Program Manager Community Risk Reduction National Fire Academy

The next on-campus offering of the National Fire Academy Station-based Community Risk Reduction (SBCRR) course (R0673) will be 23-28 February 2020. There are currently 11 vacancies. I am very interested in expanding our instructor team to include multiple people from DoD. This represents an excellent opportunity to get the DOD folks on-board as SBCRR is our introductory course in the CRR program.



Course Description

R0673 – Station Based Risk Reduction. This six-day course is designed for Company Officers who want to learn how to conduct a risk assessment of their service area. This will lead you to develop an action plan with effective intervention strategies and activities targeting a specific risk. You will learn the steps to follow to do risk reduction in an organized and planned process to keep you on track at the station level. This course is open not only to company officers but firefighters, administrative personnel, as well as fire officers who want to learn about community risk reduction and how they can support the company officer in station based risk reduction.

Joyful Reunion

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Boy Meets First Responders Who Saved His Life

By Sarah Fearing, www.wavy.com



A 5-year-old boy who was run over by a car on 3 December 2019 is out of the hospital and has been reunited with the first responders who helped save his life — this time under more positive circumstances.

Jason Jones, 5, visited Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads-Northwest Annex Fire Station #16. It's the same station that responded to the scene when Jason was run over while riding his bike down the street in a Chesapeake neighborhood.

Jason was accompanied by his brother, Grayson, and his mother, Coreen Bunting. "I am so grateful for what they did for Jason that day," Bunting said in the news release. "I did not expect [Jason] to be out of the hospital in a week. This is definitely the best possible outcome."

When Jason was hit, he was rushed to Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters, suffering from a lung injury, at least one broken rib, a broken left clavicle, internal bleeding and much more. He underwent a three-hour surgery and placed into the intensive care unit for recovery. Despite his extensive injuries, Jason was only in the hospital about a week.

While at the station, Jason was given an award and recognized as a honorary Navy firefighter.



Personal Health

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Don't Feel Well? Don't Make it Your Farewell

By Chris Shimer, Contract Support to Marine Corps F&ES

Each and every month when I read What's Happening, I take a look at the "Last Alarms" and am amazed, but also concerned at the number of line-of-duty-deaths that are attributed to cardiac related causes, as indicated by the heart insignia after the individual's name. Each year, the majority of LODDs are attributed to cardiac related events, and as indicated in December's issue of this newsletter, 56% have died of this cause in 2019. Although we have done a relatively good job in reducing the total number of LODDs, it doesn't appear as though we have made much headway in reducing cardiac related deaths.



The Secret List provides notification to its subscribers of LODDs, many of which are cardiac related. When available, limited details of the event are provided. Quite often, you read "during the incident, Firefighter X did not feel well and..." or "Captain Y was evaluated by Paramedics and advised to seek medical treatment, but..." Instead, we should be reading "Firefighter X reported that he was not feeling well and was transported by Medic 999, where he was treated for a heart attack. Due to his prompt recognition of symptoms, he suffered minimal heart damage and is expected to return to full duty soon."

Gary Ludwig, President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs had his own don't feel well story and as a result of his experience and those of others, has made it a priority to reduce the number of firefighter cardiac deaths. In February of 2020, he will launch his presidential initiative "If You Don't Feel Well, Don't Make it Your Farewell." As part of the campaign, Gary has assembled a group of representatives of IAFC Sections to assist in this effort and wants to hear from those who have actually experienced a cardiac event. A survey has been developed to help identify the tools, information and resources to assist fire department members.

Anyone who has personally experienced a cardiac event is encouraged to complete the survey, which can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/dontfeelwell>.

If you have not experienced an event yourself, but are aware of others who have, please share this information with them and encourage them to participate.

I am aware of an individual in Marine Corps F&ES who suffered a significant cardiac event and speaks openly of his experience. What started as rather benign symptoms ended up being a full-blown heart attack. When relating his story to me, he stated that "Something just didn't feel right." If not for his recognition of symptoms and acceptance that something might be wrong, he probably would not be around to share his story.

So remember, **"IF YOU DON'T FEEL WELL, DON'T MAKE IT YOUR FAREWELL"**

Critical Infrastructure

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Fire Departments Are Not Businesses

By Eric Saylor

Imagine if your doctor prescribed a daily dose of cocaine to maximize the production of your heart. After concluding your heart is underperforming 98% of the time, your doctor suggests she wants your heart run more like a business, at max capacity at all times. Recognizing the shock on your face, the doctor explains she is trained in business as well as medicine with a focus on competitive advantage. Concerned, you ask, “but if I am already at my maximum heart rate while at rest, what will happen when I need to run?” Solemnly, your doctor concludes that you will likely collapse and die from any additional work load, but that is the cost of keeping your heart competitive. Realizing the insanity of mixing dissimilar domains of medicine and business to manage your heart you stand up to leave. Intuitively you recognize your heart lacks competition since it is unique to your body and should be resilient opposed to competitive because it is unique. You avoid the daily ingestion of cocaine as well as further advice from physicians trained in business.

Frequently I hear the comment that fire departments should run more like a business. Having two business degrees and starting multiple companies, I understand the temptation to run government entities as optimized machines. But one could not be more wrong, public entities fail when operated like a business, just as businesses could not be competitive if managed like a government entities.

Businesses are easily replaced and profit driven; Fire departments are critical infrastructure and community driven. Like your heart, fire departments cannot be replaced if they fail; there are no competitors to fill the void. When it comes to disaster response, the fire department is the community’s first and only option.

Forming its origins in the 1998 Marsh Report titled “Critical Foundations,” critical infrastructure is defined as “an infrastructure so vital that it’s incapacity or destruction would have a debilitating impact on our defense and national security.” Recognizing the fire service is an indispensable part of homeland security, Presidential Decision Directive 63 (PDD-63) placed fire departments into sector 3, “Emergency services” in 1998.

DHS critical infrastructure slide

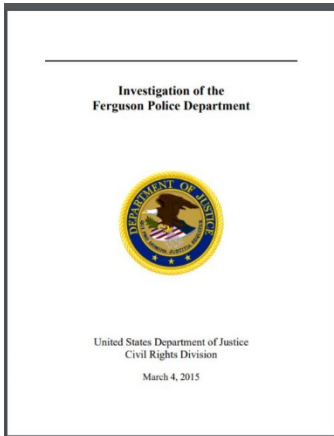
In 2009, “The National infrastructure protection plan” (NIPP) outlined two strategies for managing Critical infrastructure (CI): “Risk informed decision making” based on risk assessments and “resilient informed decision making” based on the ability to bounce back after a shock.

Maximizing profits and competitive advantage, the foundation of businesses, are not a part CI operation, but rather DHS suggests a methodical process to ensure long term survival by building robust and redundant systems.



Critical Infrastructure

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Profit driven vs community driven; the Ferguson report

Public entities unravel when they operate like businesses, placing profit over the community. Consider the 2015 Department of Justice (DOJ) [Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department](#) following the public uprising in Ferguson Missouri. Once the dust settled on the shooting of Michael Brown and subsequent trial, the DOJ launched an investigation into why there was such a massive public uprising. The answer, “the City’s focus on revenue rather than public safety” sowed deep mistrust in the community, undermining the “government’s legitimacy.”

The report stated Ferguson’s “emphasis on revenue generation has a profound effect” on policies, creating a series of metrics based on “productivity” opposed to “public safety.” “Productivity” referred to officers writing citations and the courts collecting fees. Job performance reviews and promotions were based on “productivity,” shifting the mission of the agency from public safety to revenue.

City officials routinely urged the police chief and the courts to generate more revenue, resulting in the creation of erroneous citations covering all aspects of life such as “High grass and weeds,” “barking dog,” “running dog,” “permit to use trash service”, “permit to rent an apartment” and “manner of walking.” The result was 90,000 citations to a population of 20,000 residents, producing 3 million dollars of revenue in 2015.

Ferguson’s attempt to run like a business lasted for five years before the complete collapse of public trust, resulting in civil unrest and a deployment of the national guard. Ferguson’s focus on revenue forced the removal of the Police chief, City manager, and Municipal Judge. The city will attempt a new start with emphasis on public safety and trust. Unfortunately, the damage done to the community during the “business” and “revenue” era may be insurmountable, lasting for generations.

The fire service is not profit driven, but rather community driven with the general mission of saving lives and property. Profit driven companies tend to be fragile while community driven entities must be resilient.

The fragility of company’s vs. the resilience of public entities

Companies, such GM and Goldman Sachs that survive the past fifty years are scarce events, while fire departments older than fifty years are the norm.

Companies have short life spans because they are forced to take risks, maximize profits, and optimize efficiently to stay competitive. As company’s trim costs and stretch every dollar, they lose the resilience to survive shocks. Small changes in the market force businesses into insolvency, which is why the average length of a company is only ten years. Companies come and go through a process known as creative destruction, as one company exits the market, another is quickly formed to fill the void. And the companies that have survived for long periods of time typically owe their resilience to government support due to the designation of “too large to fail.” Think of General Motors and the insurance giant AGI post the financial collapse of 2006.

Critical Infrastructure

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Eric Saylor

As the machine of creative destruction churns fragile business, the fire departments must remain resilient.

After 158 years, Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. (LEH) declared bankruptcy in 2008 because it could not bounce back from the subprime mortgage crisis. Lehman's employees packed up their belongings and left the building to find other work.

After 136 years, FDNY faced a crushing shock in 2001. While the Twin Towers burned, FDNY employees fought for the citizens they took an oath to protect. When the event overwhelmed FDNY, firefighters from around the nation responded. No one packed up their belongings and left until the incident was stable and the community secured.

After almost two centuries, the profit driven Lehman Brothers is no more, while the community driven FDNY is stronger than ever.

When digital cameras hit critical mass, Kodak closed its doors, when the housing market fell, Washington Mutual filed bankruptcy. Businesses fail at the first shock and are quickly replaced.

When the 62 story First Interstate Bank Building burned, the LAFD doubled down; when the twin towers fell, FDNY kept coming; as the Cedar fire grew to 270,000 acres, nearly every fire department in California responded. The fire service cannot quit. It is the community's only option.



Profit driven and easily replaced, business can fail from small shocks; but the fire department must have a massive capacity to survive the unimaginable, such as the "whole city" of Houston being underwater.

If you find yourself talking about revenue more than public safety, read the Ferguson report.

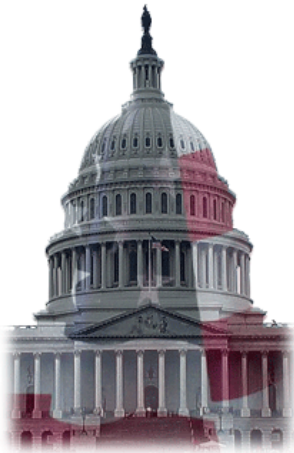
If you think you should run critical infrastructure like a business, consider the average life of a company is ten years.

If you think your community can rely on the state or federal governments to solve your emergencies, consider that the DHS relies on the local fire departments as critical to national security.

Don't try to run a part of critical infrastructure as one would an optimized business, your community may pay the ultimate price.

Eric Saylor is an instructor, author, pilot, consultant, and 3rd gen firefighter with a Master's degree in security studies from the Naval Post Graduate School

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The New Year Brings Good News

By Erich Wagner, GOVEXEC.com

The year that began with the longest partial government shutdown in history ended on a surprisingly high note for federal employees. In addition to a pay raise, a new law ushered in the most significant improvement in federal benefits in decades—12 weeks of paid parental leave for the birth, adoption or fostering of a child. There were other changes as well, both good and bad: health care costs are rising, there are changes to the Thrift Savings Plan investment program, and some work-life balance programs are going away.

Here are the highlights:

Paychecks will get bigger. Starting with the first full pay period of 2020, beginning 5 January, feds will see a 2.6% increase to their basic pay and an average 0.5% increase dispersed across the various locality pay areas. That translates to an average 3.1% raise for federal workers. In late December, the Office of Personnel Management published the [2020 pay tables](#) and [locality pay area definitions](#) outlining the precise pay rates in various regions across the country. OPM also published a handy general schedule [salary calculator](#) to help feds figure out their precise raises.

New parents will get paid time off. Beginning on 1 October, federal workers will be entitled to 12 weeks of paid parental leave for the birth, adoption or fostering of a child. This new benefit puts feds in the ranks of high-performing private sector employers and should help agencies in the war for talent. OPM is now working out the details of how the program will be administered. American Federation of Government Employees National Secretary-Treasurer Everett Kelley described the agreement as a “watershed moment,” noting that the union has been advocating for the benefit for decades.

Your health care costs are going up. OPM estimates employees will pay an average of 5.6% more for their health insurance premiums in 2020, but the government’s share of Federal Employees Health Benefits Program premiums is also going up—by 3.2%. The government also will cover an average of 70% of each enrollee’s total premium costs. Of course the actual increase in insurance costs for individuals depends on what plans they’ve signed up for. And there’s some good news as well: FEHBP will include more benefits for mental health and substance abuse treatment and plans will offer more services to help enrollees quit smoking.

Employees will have new TSP withdrawal option. In September, the agency that administers the federal government’s 401(k)-style retirement savings program, the Thrift Savings Plan, implemented the TSP Modernization Act, allowing participants to make multiple post-separation partial withdrawals. Federal workers ages 59 and a half and older may make up to four in-service withdrawals per year under the new rules. Participants may also choose whether their withdrawals come from their Roth accounts, traditional accounts, or a combination of both. Those who have already begun receiving monthly payments can now change the amount and frequency of their payments at any time.

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On the Job - Virginia

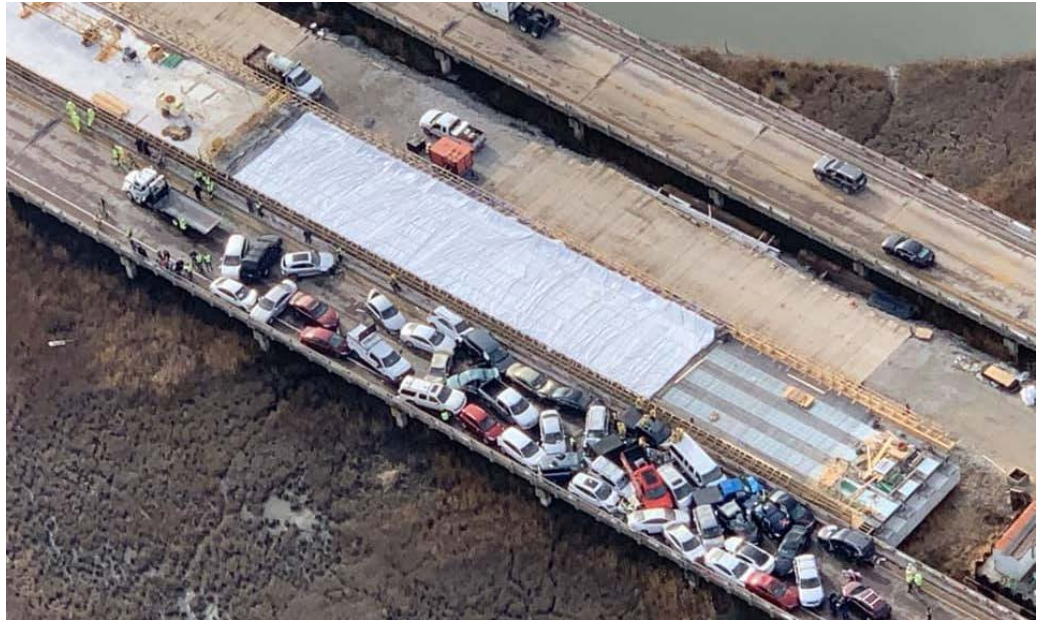
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Historic MVC/MCI in Virginia's Historic Triangle

By Firefighter/Paramedic Anthony Balog, B.S, NRP and Firefighter-EMT Paul Owens



Sunday 22 December 2019 started out like any normal shift. On the way into work, there was fog in the Jamestown-Williamsburg-Yorktown area, Virginia's "Historic Triangle," but it was not too bad. Navy Region Mid-Atlantic (NRMA) Fire Station 13 at Naval Weapons Station Yorktown had just completed morning apparatus checks and station chores when tones were dropped for the neighboring York County Department of Fire and Life Safety for a multi-vehicle MVC on Interstate 64 in the area of Camp Perry and mile marker 238. Subsequent call comments described at least two people trapped and one person having a possible stroke. York County Ladder 3 arrived on scene and established command. Command initially stated there appeared to be approximately 30 vehicles involved, and requested additional ambulances from the City of Williamsburg and James City County. Upon further evaluation of the scene, Command requested NRMA Ambulance 23-P as a special call, and upgraded the incident to a Level 3 Mass Casualty Incident (MCI).

AMB-23P responded with FF-PM Anthony Balog and FF-EMT Paul Owens. While enroute, Command advised all units that they were to use surface streets to get to Exit 238 and come the wrong way down the West bound side of I-64, as all West bound traffic was shut down. During the response, the fog was getting thicker and forced AMB-23P to slow down in order maintain a safe visual of the roadway and see other vehicles. It got to the point where visibility in some areas was only about 5 feet. During this time, multiple units from York County, James City County and Williamsburg were navigating their way to the scene through the fog. Command requested helicopters via dispatch. The request went through four separate EMS helicopter services in the Hampton Roads and Richmond areas, and all denied service due to visibility issues. Command advised dispatch that there were at least 2 Red patients at this time. One patient was trapped in a vehicle that was underneath another vehicle, and one patient had a partial amputation.

On the Job – Virginia (Cont.)

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AMB-23P's initial assignment was to come and assist with patients. Upon arrival at the lead cars involved, they noted ambulatory patients with minor injuries walking out of the scene and staging by the first fire apparatus. The team left their stretcher at the lead accident vehicles, as there was no way to bring it any further due to the mass of wrecked cars and trucks. At this time, York County Battalion 1 assumed Command and Ladder 3's captain was assigned as the Operations Division Officer.

Command advised the AMB-23P crew to start searching and clearing vehicles and instructing ambulatory patients to go out to the triage area if they were able. After crawling over a couple of vehicles, the crew found a patient who was having left leg pain with swelling to the left lower leg. The patient denied any other pain or injuries and was triaged as a "Green" patient. This patient was assisted over the trunk of another car in order to get to a space where he could be assisted to Triage.

At this time, Command advised FF-PM Balog of a patient with back pain in a mid-size SUV. The vehicle was close to the middle of the accident scene and the vehicles all around it made access difficult. FF-PM Balog arrived and found the patient in the passenger front seat with the knees on the floorboard and body lying on the seat facing the rear of the vehicle. The patient complained of pain, and a visual deformity was noted in the patient's spine, with step-off in the lumbar 1-2 area. FF-EMT Owens and a crew from Williamsburg Medic 20 arrived. Command was advised extrication would be required for this patient.

York County firefighters and a York-Poquoson Sheriff's Deputy removed passenger side windows and the windshield, and cut the "A"-posts using 2 battery-operated reciprocating saws. Both saw batteries died before cuts could be completed on the "B"-posts. Balog and a Williamsburg paramedic continued to check on the patient while additional extrication tools were enroute.

James City County firefighters arrived with two hydraulic cutters, and cuts to the "B"-posts and relief cuts in the roof were made. The SUV's rear seat was cut out via access from the rear of the SUV for backboard placement. After removal from the vehicle multiple firefighters were required to "leap-frog" the patient over other cars until clear space was reached, and the patient could be placed on Williamsburg Medic-20's stretcher and be transported to VCU in Richmond.

Balog and Owens were next assigned to transport the leg injury patient they had assisted out of the heap earlier. The patient's leg was immobilized, pain management administered, and the patient was transported to Riverside Regional Medical Center, a Level 2 Trauma Center in Newport News. After this transport was completed, AMB-23P was released by Command and returned to service.

According to the 22 December 2019 edition of the Daily Press Virginia Gazette, Virginia State Police reported there were a total of 69 vehicles involved in the crash, with 51 people transported to four area hospitals. Ultimately, the patient with the partial amputation had to have a full below-the-knee amputation due to excessive tissue damage. The patient with the spinal deformity and pain was determined to have C3-6 and L1-2 fractures with ligament tears, rib fractures, a left radial/ulna fracture, liver laceration, pericardial bleeding, and kidney laceration. This patient has since started physical therapy.

SA Matters!

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Understanding Stress – Part 6: Auditory Exclusion

By Rich Gasaway

Welcome to Part 6 of the Understanding Stress series. In the last segment I shared with you some of the ill-effects stress can have on vision and I made brief reference to a term that may be new to many readers – auditory exclusion. This is an important consequence of stress that can have tremendous implications for situational awareness so I want to spend some additional time with it.

Auditory exclusion

Most firefighters and emergency responders are aware of tunneled vision because they were taught about it in their basic training program or perhaps in a medical training program. Tunneled hearing (a.k.a. auditory exclusion) is far less known, but every bit as dangerous.

The physical and psychological responses to stress have been well documented and summarized in the previous segments of this series so I won't rehash it here. While training and techniques to control stress can prevent the severity of the response, make no mistake about it, once the hormonal dump occurs, you are no longer in control of the consequences.

Functional MRI machines now allow researchers to peer inside the brain, non-evasively, to see how the brain is functioning during the process of thinking and making decisions. Some pretty cool things have resulted from this technology. One lesson has been our understanding that the conscious brain is a horrible multi-tasker. (NOTE: The subconscious brain, on the other hand, is a wonderful multi-tasker.) Unfortunately, we see and hear with our conscious brains. This means the visual cortex and the audible cortex have to share resources or, in some cases, take turns processing information.

In the presence of high-stress visual stimulation, the processing of audible information may be dulled. Hell, it may be turned off completely! Hence the word exclusion. If the audible cortex is still functioning but its acuity is turned down, the person may describe the sounds they hear as muffled or distant. During my research, one of my firefighter participants described this phenomenon as if they were hearing the teacher on a Peanuts cartoon.

The eardrums

During a high stress event the ears are working just fine... sort of. Physically, all the right parts are moving and taking in the sound waves but something can happen to diminish their effectiveness. I recall reading one research study where participants were hooked up to an audiometer to test their base-level hearing. Then the participants were put on a treadmill and the hearing test continued as the heart rate increased (simulating the heart rate increase under stress). The results were very telling.

Once the heart rate got over 175, hearing diminished. The researchers concluded the blood rushing through the eardrums at that speed actually creates noise that cancels out what the person is hearing.

SA Matters! ***(Cont.)***

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Rich Gasaway, PhD.

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That noise may come off as static, a hiss, or ringing in the ears. Hmm... do firefighters and emergency responders working under stress ever experience heart rates above 175? You know they do. If your hearing is diminished from the ill-effects of a rapid heart rate, there is nothing you can do to rectify the situation other than lower the heart rate. You can't squint with your ears.

Tune it out

The brain, in an effort to help you make sense of what is happening in a high-stress, high-consequence situation, can also filter out what it perceives to be noise – those sounds it determines to be unimportant. Sometimes this can be helpful. Other times it can be devastating. While full of Darwinian good intentions, the brain may filter out the sounds of the very thing that could kill you.

Sensory integration

What happens when the brain tries to sort out conflicting information? In other words, what the eyes are seeing and what the ears are hearing do not align (not congruent). In this case the brain does its darnedest to make it all fit together in a coherent way. If you've ever been to a movie theater, you've experienced sensory integration. If you've never been to a movie theater, turn off your computer RIGHT NOW... and go see a movie.

In the movie theater the speakers are not behind the screen. They are on the walls. When someone on the screen is talking, the speaker is not where their mouth is. Yet it appears as though the sounds are coming out of their mouth. This is because the brain takes the cues from the eyes and the cues from the ears and integrates them... fits them together in a way you'll understand and you have the appearance of the sounds coming from the mouth on the screen... which they aren't.

Vision overrides all

When there is a conflict between what the ears are hearing and what the eyes are seeing, vision will be the winner. This is why the sounds appear to be coming from the star on the movie screen, even though they're not. A very simple, albeit perhaps juvenile, exercise can be used to test this phenomenon on an unsuspecting person. Tell the person to "Touch your finger to your nose" while actually touching your finger to your ear. Chances are very good they're going to touch their ear, despite your verbal instruction to touch their nose. The brain takes its instructions from the eyes, not the ears.

On an emergency scene this can have some critical implications. For example, if you hear one thing on the radio yet see something else with your eyes, there's a risk that in the process of sensory integration, your visual cortex wins and what you see is what is processed. The audible message, in turn, loses (is changed, distorted, or tuned out). It's almost like the visual image convinces the brain to disregard the audible message because it doesn't make sense. As you can imagine, this can wreak havoc on your ability to develop and maintain situational awareness.

Accountability

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Accountability Systems Explained

By Kenneth Willette

Lack of a system has been cited by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) as a contributing factor in dozens of firefighter line-of-duty deaths (LODDs), and recently, a fire department was cited by a state department of occupational safety and health for the lack of an accountability system at a fire that resulted in an LODD.

Such a system should provide the incident commander (IC) with three basic pieces of information: who is on the fireground, to what company/function are those who are on the fireground assigned, and which, if any, firefighter is experiencing a mayday.

There are three types of accountability systems that can deliver this information: manual, autonomous and hybrid.

System details

Manual accountability requires firefighters—or a select member of their company, such as the company officer—to input all notifications and to maintain all data themselves. (“Firefighters” includes all types of personnel—wildland, aircraft, rescue and structural—during all fireground operations, including personnel who perform support functions, traffic control, apparatus operation—even if they are outside of the immediately dangerous to life and health environment.)

Riding lists and physical passport tags fall into the manual accountability category. The information that’s contained in these must be transferred to the IC or incident passport collection point. If that transferal doesn’t occur—riding lists left on the apparatus or in a company officer’s pocket—the command will have no knowledge of who is on the fireground or, at minimum, it will result in the loss of precious time.

Autonomous accountability systems allow for notifications to be sent automatically by radio frequency or digital signal upon the occurrence of a triggering event. In other words, firefighters don’t have to initiate actions. For example, a PASS alarm can activate automatically when a firefighter is motionless for 30 seconds or more. Also, an IC can monitor the breathing-air supply of firefighters’ SCBA tank and be alerted to the arrival of a responder at the incident scene.

Hybrid accountability systems rely on manual and autonomous features. One such system automatically checks a firefighter into the incident, but it can require the firefighter to manually: activate a mayday alarm, which is transmitted to the IC; acknowledge receipt of an evacuation or abandonment order; or respond to a personal accountability report (PAR) request. A dedicated radio frequency or other wireless communication platform is required.

Accountability (Cont.)

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Strengths and weaknesses

Manual accountability systems, including riding lists and passport systems, undoubtedly depend the least on technology of the three modes. Therefore, they can be created at the department level, which means that they can be adapted to the needs of a department that doesn't have the luxury of assigned riding positions or of every firefighter arriving on the scene on apparatus.

Not a surprise, these systems have the lowest acquisition and maintenance costs. Riding lists can be placed into service for less than \$100 for a midsize department. A passport system can be placed into service for less than \$5,000 for the same department. This includes passport tags and a monitoring board that the IC uses to visually track who has checked in and where personnel are deployed.

On the flip side, manual accountability systems aren't effective unless each firefighter complies with 100 percent of the operating procedures. Anything less and there's no certainty that accurate data is available to the IC. Even with 100 percent firefighter compliance, data might not find its way to the IC (or safety/accountability officer) amid the chaos of an incident.

Manual accountability systems are limited in the amount of information that they can provide to an IC; they can provide a snapshot of where personnel were upon arrival but not where they are as the incident develops.

From a commander's perspective, comparison of a PAR against a collection of tags or a riding list takes time. It also mandates that an aide be assigned to that duty, so the IC doesn't lose command focus on the incident and on the needs of all of the responders who are on scene.

Autonomous accountability systems have the advantage of monitoring a firefighter's actions and status with no act required of the firefighter except to activate the system. These systems often are integrated into other firefighter safety devices and equipment (PASS devices, SCBA components, portable radios), and that's good, because it links the firefighter to the IC and directly notifies the IC of an event.

Autonomous accountability systems also have the capability to provide real-time monitoring of SCBA end-of-service time indicators and of the length of time that a firefighter has been on air, which would alert command to when safe operating limits are exceeded.

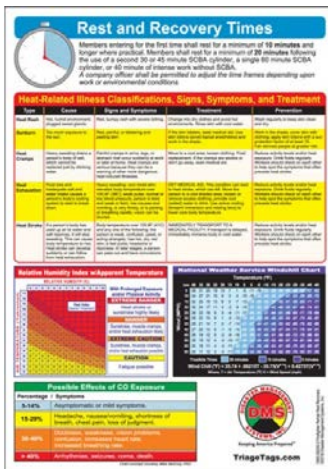
As technology evolves, these systems might receive and transmit data about the firefighter's operating environment, such as levels of heat and carbon monoxide, and the firefighter's physical exertion.

In selecting an autonomous accountability system, the accountability function that you seek might be embedded within another piece of equipment. Firefighters will have to understand how to perform the manufacturer's recommended daily testing of all aspects of the equipment, including the accountability features. If the accountability system is embedded in equipment that isn't used by mutual or automatic aid partners, a second system will need to be monitored by the IC during a joint response operation.

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Another consideration: the possibility of a false-positive—for example, PASS alarms activating when a user is standing by awaiting assignment, leading to the PASS wiggle.

Because a hybrid accountability system allows the firefighter to respond to a pre-alarm notification, resetting the device and preventing an unintended alarm, this reduces false positives, which minimizes the chance of “alarm fatigue” and the problems that it causes by desensitizing firefighters and hindering immediate action.

That said, the hybrid functionality is a challenge, too. The firefighter must be attuned to which manual actions he/she must take and when to take them to activate the system. In other words, nothing substitutes for maintaining situational awareness; firefighters still must read the environment and react.

All three modes of accountability systems have one thing in common: They must be supported by standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are understood and practiced by everyone on the incident scene, including mutual and automatic aid partners.

Accountability SOP

To sensibly evaluate which system might be best for your department, when you deploy your existing system during an incident, look for the Achilles heel.

Do passport tags routinely go uncollected? Is the paper riding list only carried by the company officer?

Is there such a level of frustration with an autonomous accountability system that the automated reporting features are minimized? Is command familiar enough with an autonomous system that situational awareness of the fireground is maintained and that SCBA end-of-service time levels are monitored via a tablet display?

Whatever accountability system that you have, use it on all calls, no exception! Your life counts, so be sure you are accounted for!

Know Your Equipment

An incident that occurred in July 2018 and was reported on firefighternearmiss.com illustrates perfectly the necessity for firefighters to understand their accountability system and how the manual and autonomous features work.

As a team of two firefighters advanced a hoseline into a room of a single-family home, a sudden change in conditions separated the team onto opposite sides of the room. With no warning, the floor gave way beneath one firefighter, dropping his lower body into a void space. A bureau then fell on top of his lower body, trapping him.

The trapped firefighter couldn't get his partner's attention, so he activated his TPASS—but didn't declare a mayday. The incident commander (IC), having been automatically alerted to the TPASS activation, called the trapped firefighter by radio to verify his status, but the firefighter didn't hear the transmission and continued to yell to his teammate until he was heard and successfully rescued.

The autonomous reporting feature of the TPASS did its job by automatically notifying the IC, but the failure of the firefighter to declare a mayday hamstrung the IC from immediately responding to the situation. Firefighters need to fully understand the components of their accountability system.

Tricks and Tools

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The Battle-Ready Pump Operator

By Mike Murphy

Today's fire scenes are ever-changing. Fire progression, tactics, and oil-based materials are a few of the culprits. An often-overlooked portion of the tactical fireground is the pump operator.

The pump operator/driver position is one of if not the most important positions on any fireground or vehicle accident. A good operator will take care of anything and everything an engine company officer could need done on the exterior. Or, he can stand at the pump panel and verify the correct pressure until the scene is under control. I suggest the latter.

A well-trained and "battle-ready" pump operator is someone to look up to and appreciate. At no other time does one person hold so many lives at his fingertips. Between response to and from calls, vehicle accidents, medical calls, and even a trip to the grocery store, the driver-operator is in complete control of getting to and from your destination. It's a more important job than we give it credit for. Some things that can assist in current or up-and-coming driver-operators to become better operators follow.

1. Experience. I'm not talking about driving. I'm talking about riding seat three or four and learning your job as a firefighter first. This will assist you with driving by understanding the way certain calls will roll—i.e., what is the firefighter position's job responsibility on a vehicle accident? It could be anything from patient care to setting up tools. Learn the job as a firefighter first so there is no confusion with what should take place. The same goes for a structure fire. Learn your seat assignment and become a master. You shouldn't need to be told step by step what to do on every incident. A brief description of the task should be all that is required to accomplish the job at hand. Being a good firefighter will assist in roles down the road as you promote through your career. Most firefighters have a good understanding of what the first, second, third, and even fourth engine companies are accomplishing and can roll right into their role in sequence.

2. Take time and care in educating yourself. Once you get the nod from a superior to start driving and operating the rig, make sure you take the time to learn as much about it as you can. There are usually some basic courses that have to be taken prior to this happening. In Florida, most departments require a minimum of an emergency vehicle operators' course (EVOC) and possibly fire service hydraulics before you can even start training on the truck. Take these courses and truly learn from them. The training does not end when you are finished with whatever prerequisites are required.

There is plenty of hands-on training that your company can get in on. Someone has to pull and hold the lines while you learn what and how to pump appropriately. Hydrant connections, secondary supply, fire department connections (FDCs), dual pump vs. relay pump—the options are unlimited with the amount of training opportunities available. Also, pull from senior firefighters/engineers for nuggets of wisdom and training. Believe that most of those folks have seen it and done it in their careers.

Tricks and Tools (Cont.)

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Let them show you what they do and what they did when they had their own issues on scenes. The experience that the senior personnel can give you in training is worth the price of admission for sure and usually only costs a little respect to be given.

3. Learn your streets! By learning your run area and the specifics of that area, you can greatly improve your use as a driver-operator. Knowing things off the top of your head like hydrant locations, FDCs, or even preplans is a huge benefit for you personally but also for your officer and crew. The officer has a lot to deal with while responding, and having trust and faith in his driver is a huge relief. The only way to get to this point with your officer is to show proficiency. Ask to go for a drive around your main run area. Explore your first due and learn the little nuances of the zone. Is there a bridge maybe that the truck is tight going over? Is there a long driveway the rig won't fit down that would require long hoselays to reach? You never find this out unless you go out and find it. Don't be afraid to pull a line and see what you get out of it. If you pull a 200-foot preconnected line and barely reach the door, you'll know you need to deploy an extension line simultaneously. Knowing these issues and areas ahead of an actual emergency can greatly assist in a positive outcome for all involved.

4. Know the rig! This is probably the most important step for operators. Knowing some small insignificant things about your personal apparatus may assist you in recognizing a problem early on that may allow you to correct it before it becomes an issue. Take pride in the fact that your district or municipality trusts you with its investment. It is not hard to spend \$500,000 on a fire apparatus these days. Costs increase every year, and replacing something like that doesn't happen overnight. Learn the subtle nuances of your rig. What revolutions per minute are required to read 150 pounds per square inch (psi)? What does the pump sound like when running at 150 psi? The reason I say this is, what happens if a gauge quits working and you can't accurately read discharge pressures? Believe me; it happens. Small things like these on a fire scene can key you into what is happening with your pump and are invaluable to the operator. Also, before each shift, I like to go around the rig and open all of my discharges. This includes loosening the caps and tightening them—hand tight for me personally. Each driver should take the time daily to prepare his rig for the potentials of the day. Sure, we don't always have "the big one," but don't we train every time as if we will? Why not treat your morning truck check as an extension of that training? It saves you valuable time on the actual scene.

5. Be progressive with your scene. While you were a backseat firefighter, you learned the pace and sequence to different types of calls. Vehicle accidents go certain ways depending on the severity of the accident. You may be responsible to pop a door on one and possibly only do tool setup on another. Know your tools regardless, so you can be as effective as possible. On a structure fire, one of the first tools the first-arriving engine company will look for once the fire is knocked down never fails to be a pike pole or New York hook. Crews will be looking to open a hole in the ceiling to check for extension. Tool placement outside the point of entry is something that will greatly assist the interior crews. I like to hang pike poles from gutters, if available, or stand them directly next to the entry door.

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This way, they are out of the way and do not cause trip hazards but are also within sight when exiting a structure. Somewhere close to the point of entry but out of the way is a great place for tools. When in doubt, the driveway is also a great spot. Also, keep tabs on your equipment using a grease pen or mental note. This way, you know what came off the rig and have an idea of where it went so it can be returned later.

6. Understand and use technology to your advantage. Most departments don't have the staffing to spare an operator who does nothing but stand at the pump panel. The operator has the ability, with modern advances in technology, to creep farther and farther away from a pump panel and still be in tune with it. A major advancement is the pump pressure governor. This is like a Ron Popeil Showtime grill of the fire service: "Set it and forget it." It's not that simple, of course, but it's a good reference to it. The pressure governor allows you to pump and maintain the highest pressure that is being pumped out of a discharge. This simple but awesome piece of technology greatly reduces the number of pressure spikes felt on the lines by the firefighters and keeps the pressure regulated based on what's coming in and going out. It's a huge advancement for the fire service, and its usefulness cannot be understated. If a supply is established to your rig and one second everything is fine and the next the pump is screaming at you, you know you are putting out more pressure and gallons per minute than you are receiving. You can quickly identify this and figure out the problem so as not to disrupt water flow to interior teams. What could be the cause? Anything from a supplying engine having an issue to an onlooker driving over your supply can cause this. Again, believe me, it happens. When I hear a firefighter say that he doesn't use a pressure governor because it makes pumping "too easy," I cringe. It's there for a reason—use it! By no means am I advocating not to teach classic pump operations. But if it is on your apparatus, you owe it to yourself and your crew to know how to use it to the best of your ability.

7. If you mess up, own it! We all make mistakes, but the important thing is the ability to learn from them and use them to make you better at your job. Something as simple as passing an address by a house or two can be a learning experience. My fire district has many areas where addresses can be slammed up to one another or spaced apart to the point where they don't make sense. But, knowing these areas is a huge benefit to you to not delay response looking for a numerical or blowing an address completely. Don't be afraid to admit a mistake, especially if it's something small and insignificant. Your crew will appreciate the fact that you are willing to own up and will respect you more for it. Nobody is perfect no matter what they might say.

To reiterate, the driver-operator position is one of the most important positions on any call. Do you want to be OK at it, or do you want to be the go-to operator? You make the call, but ask yourself, who would you want on the panel the next time you go inside?

MIKE MURPHY is a 17-year fire service veteran of Southern Manatee (FL) Fire Rescue and Canaveral (FL) Fire Rescue and is a 14-year apparatus driver-operator.

Firehouse Humor

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The Donation

A fire started on some grassland near a farm. The county fire department was called to put out the fire but the fire was more than they could handle. Someone suggested that a nearby volunteer department be called. Despite some doubt that the volunteers would be of any assistance, the call was made.

The volunteers arrived in a dilapidated old fire truck. They rumbled straight towards the fire; drove right into the middle of the flames and stopped! The firefighters jumped off the truck and frantically started spraying water in all directions. Soon they had snuffed out the center of the fire, breaking the blaze into two easily controlled parts.

Watching all this, the farmer was so impressed with the volunteer fire department's work and was so grateful that his farm had been spared, that right there on the spot he presented the volunteers with a check for \$10,000.

A local news reporter asked the volunteer fire captain what the department planned to do with the funds. "That ought to be obvious" he responded, wiping ashes off his coat. "The first thing we're gonna do is get the brakes fixed on our truck!"



The Siren



A fire fighter is working on the engine outside when he notices a little girl next to the station in a little red wagon with little ladders bung off the side and a garden hose tightly coiled in the middle.

The girl is wearing a fire fighter's helmet and has the wagon tied to a dog and a cat. The fire fighter walks over to take a closer look.

"That sure is a nice fire truck," the fire fighter says with admiration.

"Thanks," the girl says.

The fire fighter looks a little closer and notices that the girl has tied the wagon to the dog's collar and to the cat's tail.

"Little Partner," the fire fighter says, "I don't want to tell you how to run your fire truck, but if you were to tie that rope around the cat's collar, I think you could go faster."

The little girl replied, "You're probably right, but then I wouldn't have a siren."

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