

Fire Engineering®

BACK TO BASICS: DRILLING FOR THE ENGINE COMPANY, PART II – OPERATING THE FIRST HANDLINE

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DOOR/ENTRY PROCEDURES:

- ❖ Control the door to the fire area until the handline is ready to flow
 - Sweep for victims (checking behind the door) & evaluating conditions first
- ❖ Arrive at drop the point with the working length(s)
- ❖ Flake out the line to aid in the advance
 - Toward the hinge-side on inward-swinging doors
 - Toward the knob-side on outward-swinging doors
 - In stairwells/landings, flake excess up the wall or the next flight (if needed)
 - On landings or in hallways, flake excess into an opposing unit/space (if needed)
 - On stairs, position as high up as possible
- ❖ Ensure the coupling for the next length is with the nozzle at the drop point
- ❖ Clamp the line with your shin when charging²
 - On stairs, capture the next section of hose as well – just behind the coupling
 - Prevents the bite from sliding down the stairs
 - Once charged, open up the bite to span the width of the stairs
- ❖ Flow water for about 10 seconds after it is fully charged and check for 'AVP':²
 - **A**ir – bleeding it all out
 - **V**olume – flowing good water

- **P**ressure/**P**attern – appropriate nozzle reaction/tight stream
- ❖ Open the door when ready to advance
 - Position on opposing side when opening – using the wall/door for protection
 - “Stay low and let it blow” – observing the “4-L’s:” using a handlight ^{1,2}
 - **L**ift – smoke layer/neutral plane (evaluating presentation)
 - **L**ife – potential victims (checking behind the door)
 - **L**ocation/**L**ayout – visible fire/floor plan

ADVANCING TO THE SEAT:

- ❖ Evaluate the conditions to determine your mode of advancement: ²
 - Move --> No visible fire or heat
 - Hit & Move --> Fire knocks back/heat subsides
 - Push --> Fire/heat returns upon shutting down
 - When in doubt, default aggressive – using “overwhelming superior force”
- ❖ When fire/heat is encountered, flow water (bale fully open) until you achieve: ²
 - **Cooling** – relief from the heat
 - **Return** – water droplets hitting the floor
 - **Lift** – smoke layer (neutral plane) rises
- ❖ “Flowing water at smoke” is acceptable *if* you are experiencing a heat condition
 - Heat = combustion (fire)
 - Smoke can “camouflage” flames overhead (rollover) ²
 - Flowing water cools the fire gases, ceiling & (upper) walls
 - Returning droplets will cool the floor and contents (“anchoring the fuels”) ³

ADVANCING TO THE SEAT:

- ❖ Keep your head up and monitor conditions
 - Watch out for fire extending overhead or wrapping around you
- ❖ Use the reach of the stream – “keeping a long-distance relationship with the fire” ³

- “Hit the leading edge” of the fire²
 - Work the stream side-to-side, from high-to-low (walls – ceiling – seat of the fire)²
 - Attempt to “seal off” the involved compartment²
- ❖ Use your lead leg to continuously sound the floor/stairs as you advance²
 - ❖ Sweep the floor every few feet while advancing – cooling embers & washing away debris

One of the greatest day-to-day challenges facing any fire company is consistently providing training that is both practical and interesting. Compounding this issue are the time and budgetary constraints that we all must work around. Aside from the call volume and mandated training requirements, many agencies lack a training facility and/or the funding necessary to purchase realistic props and other training resources. Although these may be limiting factors, they do not, by any means, absolve anyone from conducting quality training.

The ability to adapt, improvise and overcome has always been the hallmark of the fire service. With a little ingenuity and sweat equity, anyone can put together a quality drill, regardless of your circumstances. Opportunities for learning are constantly presenting themselves if we just open up our eyes and use our imagination. Each run we take in, we are granted access to a different building. After the incident has been mitigated, seize that moment (when appropriate) to use the property as your drill-ground. Opportunistic training, while incredibly simplistic, not only addresses the aforementioned deficiencies, but typically becomes some of the most impactful.

A good practice is to have all of your members perform their own personal size-up upon arrival, no matter the type of call. Doing so forces them to slow down and critically evaluate their surroundings. This exercise breeds a habit that will greatly improve their situational awareness – allowing them to create a mental blueprint prior to making entry. Once the incident is completed, discuss the construction, occupancy type and layout. Identify the location of access points, stairwells, and particularly the ‘long hallway.’² If remaining inside the building is not possible, (discreetly) take a few pictures of the configuration (if appropriate), sketch it out on the EMS pad, or simply commit it to memory. Once back at the firehouse (or any ample space you have available to train) and recreate it using whatever materials are at your disposal.

An efficient and cost-effective way of constructing such a prop is to use pallets. They are (usually) free, easy to find, and can be easily broken down and stored for future use. Once created, these ad hoc training props can be used for conducting a variety of engine company drills: refining handline deployment, advancement and operation; door control; (pre-)entry procedures; communication; etc. The potential configurations and added variables are endless, allowing for the evolutions to be as simple or complex as you desire. Although these props may not look like much, they are highly effective, and when it comes to training, function always trumps form.

REFERENCES:

¹Conboy, Mickey, Practical Search Operations Lecture, November 5, 2016.

²Fields, Aaron. (2016). The Nozzle Forward Curriculum and Manual.

³LeGear, Dennis. (2016). Facebook Commentary – Truck Floor Training Group.