

Firehouse.com WEEKLY DRILL

DRILL # 40: THE BLITZ ATTACK

Introduction

Over the years, manufacturers have been making great headway in the design and function capabilities of fire engines. Tank capacity has been just one of these design features that has improved.

A number of manufacturers are designing their apparatus to allow for them to carry more water in the tanks. The most common size tank has been the 500 gallon tank, but more apparatus today are coming with 750 to 1,000 gallon tanks. This additional water makes it nice for departments that have to operate off the tank until portable ponds can be established to support fire-attack operations.

One tactic that is being used more and more today, as a direct result of these larger volume tanks, is the blitz attack. Many urban fire departments have a growing number of vacant and abandon structures in their jurisdiction. As a result, they are holding back on entering these structures, especially if they are boarded up, until the bulk of the fire can be knocked down. This is actually a very wise move on the behalf of the fire department.

I understand that there are going to be a lot of people questioning this move, but every effort needs to be made today to reduce the risk of injuries to firefighters. A vacant structure can burn to the ground and a new one can be put up in its place, but getting a firefighter severely injured at a vacant structure is just not worth it.

Blitz-Attack Concept

So, the blitz-attack concept works like this:

- Upon arrival of the initial engine on scene a firefighter will man the pre-connect monitor or deck-gun.
- The pump operator will then charge this appliance allowing the stream to be directed at the fire.
- In doing this, the attack is made almost instantly and without delay for taking time to stop at a hydrant or other water source.



The next-due engine company needs to be made aware that this tactic has been implemented and advised to get a water supply to support the operation.

The Pros

The advantage of this method of attack is that it catches the fire in the early stage before it has a chance to advance any further and cause additional damage to the structure. Remember, this structure is vacant and we are not sure as to its pre-existing condition. Once a quick darkening down of the fire has been made, and the bulk of fire has been extinguished, an offensive operation can begin.

Keep in mind the safety of the firefighter. If this structure has been boarded up, all doors and windows need to have these materials removed before an interior advancement is allowed. These opening may have to be used for a quick egress should things inside take a turn for the worse.

The Cons

One disadvantage to this type of blitz attack would be if it doesn't have the desired effect we wanted. Then, precious minutes will have been lost.

Additionally, should we run out of water because the next engine was delayed or unable to get the initial engine water, the fire will have an opportunity to develop.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick