

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #53: ELEVATOR OPERATIONS

Introduction

One acronym every firefighter should know upon arrival at a high-rise building fire is ICE, which stands for Information, Communications and Elevators. For this lesson, we are going to be focusing on elevators, the “E” in ICE.

For a successful operation at a high-rise fire, the fire department must capture and gain control of the elevators. This must be done immediately by using the elevator keys and putting the elevator into “Firefighter Service.” Elevator keys must be obtained from the building representative, security or another source. One such source would be a lock-box system, which would contain the elevator key, along with other important keys (including the master key).

As mentioned, only use elevators in Firefighter Service mode (avoid using the freight elevators as these generally are not equipped with this feature). After obtaining the elevator keys, determine whether the elevator is equipped with a Phase I or Phase II system.

For elevators using the Phase I system:

- Insert the key and turn the switch on
- Assign a firefighter to operate the elevator for the duration of the incident
- The firefighter assigned to the elevator should be equipped with
 1. Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)
 2. Portable radio
 3. Forcible entry tools
- Determine what floors the elevator services

For elevators using the Phase II system:

- Insert the key and turn the switch on
- Assign a firefighter to operate the elevator for the duration of the incident
- The firefighter assigned to the elevator should be equipped with
 1. SCBA
 2. Portable radio
 3. Forcible entry tools
- Determine what floors the elevator services
- Test for safe operations
 1. Advance up two floors and check that the door operates and check the environment on that floor



2. Familiarize yourself with the emergency methods for stopping the elevator
 - a) Push the call cancel button
 - b) Activate the emergency stop
 - c) Force open the inside door
 - d) Remove the ceiling hatch
 - e) Open the side exit panel
3. Advance several more floors and check that the door operates and check the environment on that floor. Continue testing every few floors
4. Ascend no closer than two floors below the suspected fire floor

If you are able to access the machine room, a firefighter should be assigned there to ventilate any heat and smoke throughout the duration of the incident. Any high heat or smoke conditions can adversely affect the operations of the electrical components in the machine room and possibly cause a complete failure of the elevators.

Fire companies should know the elevators in their districts. Functions, styles and fire-service operations may vary by changes in the codes as elevators are only required to comply with the code that was in effect when they were installed.

General safety issues include:

- Never use elevators below grade areas
- Check maximum capacity (don't overload with firefighters and equipment)
- Never allow civilians to accompany firefighters on the elevators

–Prepared by Russell Merrick