

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #108: RAPID INTERVENTION CREWS

Introduction

Rapid Intervention Crews (RIC) and Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT) are synonymous with one another and are important components within the management of any incident. Don't take these resources for granted. Every member assigned to the RIC should train to perform the duties that come along with the task, much like a firefighter assigned to a specialty team. After all, that's what they are; a specialty team! Back in the day, these individuals were known as the "two-in/two-out" team.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) revised their standard regarding respiratory protection. The regulation requires that interior structural firefighting procedures provide that at least two firefighters be inside the structure with direct visual or voice contact between each other and direct, voice or radio contact with two firefighters outside the structure. Hence the term "two-in/two-out."

The sole purpose of this team is to provide for the safety, search and rescue of any lost, trapped or disoriented firefighter within the structure. The formation of this RIC team is mandated by OSHA law, as well as being mandated in the National Fire Protection Association's NFPA 1500, NFPA 1710 and NFPA 1720.

Firefighters appointed to the RIC must receive training and be proficient in all basic firefighting skills. However, these firefighters are going to be confronted with having to perform in adverse conditions and should be able to perform advance skills. The stress levels for rescuing civilians are high, but these will be elevated even more when performing rescues on other firefighters.

Depending on the nature of the incident, once the RIC is activated, their operations can and will become labor intensive, taking more than two firefighters to remove a downed firefighter. Studies have indicated that it could take upwards of 12 firefighters to perform this task. Some studies have also indicated that some of the firefighters performing the rescue can become victims themselves; needing to also be rescued.

Due to the intensity of the tasks that the RIC team may encounter, a simple set of five goals should be kept in mind should they get deployed:



Five Goals

1. Focus on locating the firefighter in trouble
2. Gather information on the immediate environment and the condition of the firefighter
3. Make an emergency air supply available for the troubled firefighter
4. Attempt to remove the firefighter to a safe area
5. Once the RIC is deployed, be sure to call for additional resources

A somewhat controversial subject is that of other functions the RIC team can perform. These additional tasks should all focus around safety and being proactive. Items such as putting up additional ground ladders, securing the utilities or removing security bars or other devices on windows can be performed. However, every fire department looks at this differently, therefore, those tasks deemed acceptable by your department should be called out in a standard operating guideline (SOG).

—Prepared by Russell Merrick