

Firehouse.com WEEKLY DRILL

DRILL # 38: LIFE SAFETY RULES

Introduction

The primary mission of the fire service is to protect lives and property. This is not an easy task. Every incident responded to will dictate specific actions that will need to be taken to bring the fire under control. What we always have to keep in mind is life safety. We are going to look at five basic rules that should be followed to keep the fireground operations focused on life safety.

Rule 1

As mentioned, our mission is to protect life and property, hopefully at the same time. However, when the incident does not have sufficient manpower on scene to begin these functions simultaneously, life safety must take precedence.

Upon pulling up on location, a quick size-up must be conducted. Should there be any victims hanging out of any of the windows, performing a rescue should be the first thought we have. There are several options available to us as to how we are going to perform this rescue; the fastest and safest method will be that of placing a ground ladder to the window sill. This is not an easy and will require coordination, but it can be done.

Using the interior stairs is the best way to remove victims, however, this generally means placing a hose stream in position to keep the fire in check while firefighters perform a search and rescue. With limited manpower, this solution will not be successful and could pose not only serious injury or death to the trapped victims, but also to the firefighting personnel as well.

Rule 2

Those in greatest danger must be removed first. It is not uncommon to have more than one victim in need of rescue. When this occurs, we must focus rescue efforts on those in the greatest danger. The process will generally be to get those persons in the immediate area of the fire. Once these individuals are removed, rescue operations should then be focused on victims directly above the fire. From this point, operations should advance to the upper most floors and begin working downward and outward to remote locations. Any person located below the fire would be considered a lesser priority. Keep in mind that the incident may require us to diverge from this order at times.



Rule 3

Protect the greatest number of victims when resources are not on scene to perform all needed tasks. This is a tough decision that the incident commander is going to have to make, as some victims may lose their life.

Rule 4

An aggressive combined attack on the fire and a swift search of the occupancy is the best use of our resources. When adequate resources are on scene to both perform fire suppression and rescue operations, we are able to reduce the threat to life by confining the fire and removing the victims simultaneously. Keep in mind that there are a number of operations that have to take place, including forcible entry, hoseline placement, ventilation and search. For this aggressive combined attack to be successful, the NFPA requires a minimum of 15 firefighters.

Rule 5

Firefighters should always be our first priority. If there are no civilian lives being threatened at the incident nor are there any reported people trapped, all necessary precautions should be focused on firefighter safety. Firefighters take extraordinary risks to their welfare when they hear that there is a possibility of people trapped. However, as soon as this no longer is the case, their aggressive efforts should be drawn back.

Remember:

- We risk a lot to save a lot
- We risk little to save little
- We take no risk to save nothing.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick