

# Firehouse.com WEEKLY DRILL

## DRILL # 51: SALVAGE COVERS

### Introduction

I would like to say that salvage operations rate as a high priority at incidents, however, most of the time salvage operations are an afterthought. Why is this? Salvage operations are used to minimize the loss of personal items – whether it is clothing, furniture or other items of value. Conservation and Preservation of Property ranks as the third strategic incident priority that the Incident Commander should be concerned with.

Most fire incidents require us to perform salvage operations on the interior of the structure – generally throwing covers to protect furnishings from further water damage. Sometimes, however, salvage operations need to be performed on the exterior of the structures. It can be as simple as placing a cover over a car or moving a piece of lawn furniture.

While on the topic of salvage covers, let's examine the different types of covers used in the fire service. Many fire departments have converted over to using lightweight (vinyl or plastic) material covers as opposed to the older covers that were made of heavy, waterproof canvas. Each has its place in performing salvage operations. Some of the more progressive departments are using rolled plastic in place of these salvage covers.

One use for the old canvas covers is when you have to remove a smoldering mattress from a high-rise building or move it to a remote location within a structure. You can't always just throw it out a window (safety measures need to be taken when performing this type of operation). Salvage covers can also be used for staging equipment on at incidents, especially in winter months.

Another style of salvage cover that is not used as much as it could be is the floor runner. Depending on conditions, placing a floor running down can protect floors and carpets from becoming unnecessarily soiled. This type of action will improve customer service and highlight the department's professionalism.

Another salvage operation is that of water removal. The quantity or volume of water encountered will dictate the strategy and equipment needed to remove it. A flooded basement will require the use of submersible pumps to remove the bulk of the water. Once these



pumps have finished their task, the remaining water can then be removed using a water vacuum, squeegees, mops and buckets.

Additionally, water can be removed from a structure simply by fabricating a water chute. Water chutes are formed using either pike poles or ladders draped with salvage covers. These chutes are then configured to remove water out of the structure through doors or windows. If chutes are not going to accomplish the desired results, firefighters can make a catch-all or a pool to capture water. Once this water has been captured, it can be pumped out using the water vacuum.

Other miscellaneous salvage tools are:

- Hammer and nails
- Staple gun and staples
- Tar paper and lath (tar paper is slowly being phased out in favor of rolled plastic)
- Utility knife
- Saw
- Plywood and 2x4s
- Sprinkler stop

Remember, just like any other tools or equipment used on a fire incident, salvage covers need to be maintained. From time to time, salvage equipment can become contaminated and will need to be washed, inspected and dried before it can be placed back on the apparatus. In any event, the difficulty is going to be in finding a place to dry the salvage covers.

*–Prepared by Russell Merrick*