

FIREHOUSE[®]

Weekly Drill

DRILL #69: STANDPIPE CLASSIFICATIONS

Introduction

In general, many high-rise buildings are equipped with a standpipe system making it easier for firefighters to advance hoselines to the fire. However, most firefighters take these systems for granted and give them very little thought. The fact is there are three classifications given to standpipe systems.

The National Fire Protection Association NFPA #14 has designed the different classes as follows: Class I System, Class II System and Class III System. As we look at these different systems we will have a better understanding as to their classifications.

Class I System

A Class I System is equipped with a 2½-inch hose connection. The intent is that fire departments will connect their hose to this connection in the event of a fire. The standard also states that those trained in handling heavy streams may use the connection, but in 35 years of firefighting I have yet to see anyone other than the fire service personnel use this connection.

Class II System

The Class II System is equipped with a 1½-inch hose connection for fire department personnel to hook their hose to, or it may be outfitted with a hose station. The hose station will have a minimum of a 1-inch hose, however, most will have a 1½-inch hose attached to the outlet connection. This hose is to be used, once again, by trained personnel.

This leads one to ask, who are these trained personnel? In a typical high-rise building, there are several personnel who have received training on fire extinguishers, and in some situations, on how to use the hose in a standpipe hose station. These are usually the floor fire wardens who have the responsibility for a given floor and making sure all persons working on their floor are accounted for. In reality, they will do little to no firefighting.

As of late, many building owners are removing the hose for liability reasons as they do not want untrained personnel trying to advance a hoseline into an IDLH (immediately dangerous to life or health) atmosphere. If you think about it, why would anyone want to advance a hoseline toward a fire



without proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and training!

Class III System

The third system is a Class III System and is outfitted with both a 1½-inch hose station or outlet connection and a 2½-inch hose connection. Once again, the 1½-inch hose station is for trained personnel and the 2½-inch connection is for fire department use. Here again, many building owners have removed the hose from the hose stations for liability reasons.

A quick rule of thumb for remembering these different systems and who can use them is from a firefighters view point. Class I is for me (the firefighter), Class II is for you (the civilian), and Class III is both of us or we. So its I me, II you, III we.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick