

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #79: CELLAR PIPES

Introduction

Fires are unique. Each one takes on a characteristic of its own. A cellar fire is one of the most unique types of fires. We always attempt to have a successful operation. One that requires us to quickly locate, enter, confine and extinguish the fire. However, sometimes we cannot always advance on the fire in as safe and as efficient manner as we would like. This is why we have special tools and appliances.

Act Quickly

Cellar pipes or distributors fall into this category of special appliances. They can get water on the fire in cases that are too dangerous or impossible for firefighters to reach. The key to their success is a quick realization that they are needed right at the beginning of the fire attack. If a significant amount of time passes before deployment, it may be too late or too dangerous to have firefighters working above the fire that has weakened structure.

As is the case with any operation, monitoring the effectiveness of the cellar pipe is necessary because relocating the appliance may be required to knockdown the fire. Once the fire has been knocked down, handlines should be advanced to finish the extinguishment and begin the overhaul operations.

Getting the cellar pipe into operation does not come without some difficulties. One problem may be the placement of the appliance on the floor above the fire. This location may be very hot, smoky and dangerous as the stability of the floor and structures are under attack by the fire. Teams will need to protect themselves by advancing a hoseline along with them. This hoseline is not only used to protect the advancing team, but once the hole is cut in the floor, it is used to protect the extension of fire.

Know Your Pipe

Knowing which type of cellar pipe your department is using is very important, as each type of distributor has its own specific capabilities. The revolving nozzles, as found on the Bresnan distributor, have limited range. The diameter of this nozzle is in the neighborhood of 15 to 20 feet. Think of it as a large sprinkler head being deployed by firefighters.



On the other hand, a Baker pipe has a much greater reach (which can be as far as 50 feet). However, unlike the revolving nozzle, the stream from this appliance will flow water in only one or two directions at a time. For this reason firefighters have to be careful to direct the stream in the direction they desire. One of the advantages of the Baker pipe is that because the reach is greater, firefighters may be able to operate it from a safe distance.

Ease of Operation

Sometimes, the appliance may have to be relocated. For ease of operation, a shutoff valve or gate should be used one length of hose back for the appliance. This means communications is going to have to be maintained between the firefighter at the gate and those locating the appliance.

Should the environment conditions deteriorate and become untenable, leave the appliance running and immediately evacuate the building so a Performance and Accountability Report can be conducted.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick