

# FIREHOUSE®

## Weekly Drill

### DRILL #104: ACCOUNTABILITY

#### Introduction

Over the past decade, accountability issues have been playing a big role in the fire service. As the Incident Commander, or for that matter as a Safety Officer, accountability should be ranked high on our list of events to keep a handle on during an incident. Should a Mayday be transmitted by a firefighter, having a good understanding of where our firefighters are within the structures will become important for deploying the Rapid Intervention Crew (RIC).

#### The Riding List

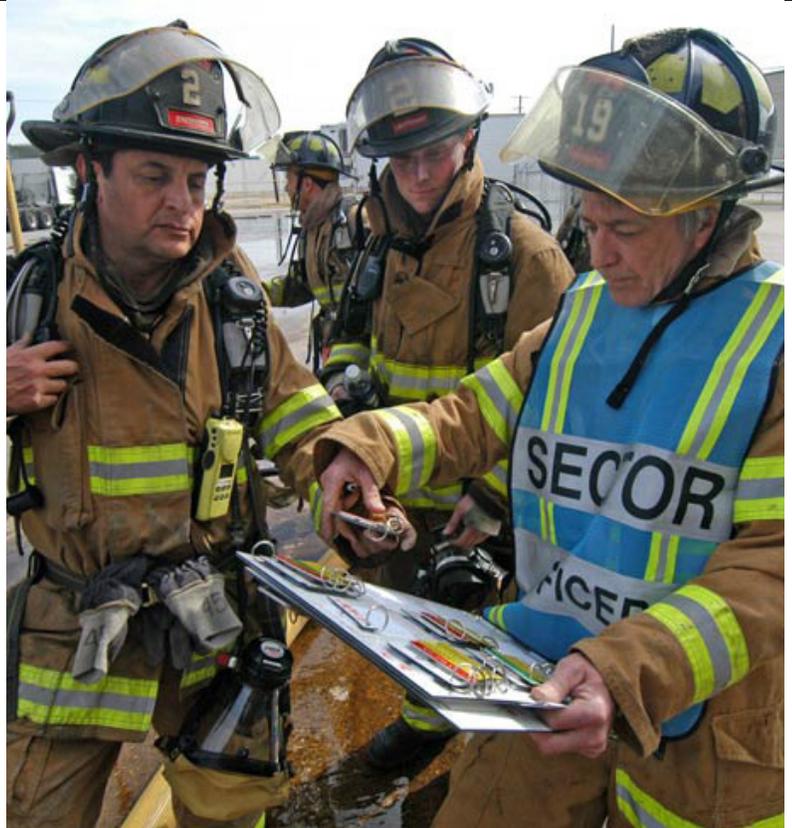
A tool that can assist with accountability is that of assigning position to firefighters on the fire apparatus. This is often referred to as a “riding list” and can be as simple as writing the firefighters names on a slip of paper or an official form. A number of departments have been using a tag system, often called a “Passport Accountability System.” In either event, for accountability purposes, this list should be readily accessible for the commander should he request it.

A simple riding list or accountability system should not only have the names of the firefighters on it, but also the position they are riding, and the duties assigned to that position. Looking at an accountability system for an engine company it might look like this: FF Smith – driver/pump operator; Lt. Brown – right front seat/officer; FF Jones – left rear set/hydrant man; FF White – right rear set/nozzle man.

It is important that this list is accurate and updated. In some instances, a firefighter may be out sick or has to switch out with another firefighter to attend a meeting or training event. In these situations, remove the name of the firefighter who is leaving and write the firefighter’s name on the riding list that took his place. If your department is using a passport system, remove the tags of the firefighter leaving and place the tags of the firefighter taking his place.

#### The Accountability Officer

At a major incident, the Incident Commander might assign an Accountability Officer. This position will be a key element with responsibility of maintaining and tracking all personnel on scene for the duration of the incident, or until he is assigned a different task. If that



happens, responsibility for accountability will fall back to command.

As a company officer, it is your responsibility to assure the accuracy of the riding list or accountability tags. Should command request that a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) be conducted, the Accountability Officer needs the accuracy of those firefighters assigned to your company. The PAR can be performed via the radio, or better yet face-to-face.

If a firefighter is not accounted for, or cannot be located, a Mayday should be initiated. Having good information on the firefighter’s last known location (obtained from the Accountability Officer) becomes a critical piece of information for the RIC during their deployment and activation.

Keep in mind that accountability is not just the responsibility of the Company Officer, it is the responsibility of all firefighters!

*–Prepared by Russell Merrick*