

Management Minute New Techniques

By Fire Chief John M. Buckman, III, (Ret.) Evansville, IN

"The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it."
- Thucydides, Ancient Greek Historian and Athenian General

What do I want in 2014? I very seldom speak in the singular term and most often "I" speak in the term "we". I would hope the things that I'm about to say in this commentary is looked upon as something we need to adopt individually and collectively as a fire service.

So what do I think the fire service needs in 2014?

1. Not accept firefighters being injured in abandoned buildings. Quit making excuses for why we continue aggressive tactics in abandoned buildings. Abandoned buildings are different than an unoccupied building. We continue to see, hear, read reports and news accounts of firefighters who were allowed to make aggressive interior offensive tactical operations on buildings that have long been abandoned and in many cases are boarded up.
2. Adopt the term aggressive "defensive operations". When we look at the term aggressive it means movement, and defense in many cases means stationary, but the concept of aggressive defensive operations is indicative of the fact that firefighters will be moving forward in an effort to suppress the BTUs being put off by the fire. The intent of aggressive defensive operations is to go all exterior operations as the first choice in all situations. That is not my intention. But, we need to put water on the fire as quickly as we can and in large volumes as soon as possible in order to stop the destruction of the building. This tactic is not to say that we will not be in an aggressive offensive operations based upon the situational analysis. In reality most of our fires are not full-blown fully involved past the flashover stage upon arrival. Those fires will require an aggressive offensive operation with a primary search component.
3. Stop doing what the other guys are doing just because. Because of what? Because of why? My father used to say if your friends jumped off a bridge, would you jump off a bridge also without knowing why? Thinking firefighters do it different. Create a survival mentality.
4. Reduce firefighter injury occurrence during training and eliminate firefighter death during training. There were a total of 7,140 injuries to firefighters

during training in the 2012 calendar year. I would expect that many of those are avoidable with proper planning, proper execution and proper supervision.

5. Use the response time as one of the components in the strategic analysis of the problem in determining what our strategy and tactical operational deployment model will become. The longer the response time, the less options we have in choosing our strategic and tactical options.

The incident commander will make realistic strategic and tactical operational choices based upon the definition of the problem, capability of the personnel, factors known about the situation, complexity of the problem, the available resources and the predicted outcome of the event.

6. In 2013, tons of research was conducted on how best to suppress the fire and construction of buildings. Although the research conclusions are not complete and have not been finalized, it is fairly obvious to those who studied the dynamics of fire for many years that change is on the horizon. A firefighter needs to know the difference between the stages of fire, ventilation, entry, search and the risk associated with those factors. In today's environment it is also critical that firefighters understand building construction and occupancy load and survivability in order to make an informed, rational not emotional decision to deploy firefighters interior or exterior based upon the facts of the situation at the time they are presented. It is time for serious incident command students and firefighters to read the research to make an informed decision. By making an informed decision you reduce the risk to firefighters and the occupants. There's much to be learned from the research being presented by Underwriters Laboratory. We have two of the most engaged scientists working on this project with many team members to help the fire service make the right choices when confronted with the structure fire.