



THIS WEEK IN TRAINING

DOUBLE L.O.D.D. BRIDGEPORT CT

This week, because of time constraints and questions I was really unable to finish and really touch on the points from the drill before the dept. meeting. Hopefully this will clear up some of the questions.

THIS WEEK IN TRAINING

DOUBLE L.O.D.D. BRIDGEPORT CT

The Fire

The fire occurred in a 2&1/2 story wood frame Private dwelling. The fire was originally located in a bedroom on the 2nd floor in the front or exp1/2 corner. The fire extended to the 3rd floor via the eaves spreading into the knee walls in the third floor attic.

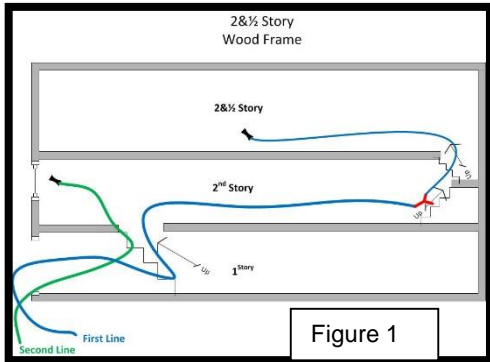
The fire on the 2nd floor was knocked down very quickly. The victims were the officer (Victim1) and can man from L11(Victim2). They went to the third floor to check for extension and do a search. When they got to the 3rd floor they had very light smoke condition but high heat. From other firefighter statements, the victims were not wearing their facepiece's at that point. While checking for extension they found the fire had begun to extend into the knee walls on the 3rd floor. They realized this through both the pulling of sheetrock and at some point the officer from Rescue 5 (R5) had a TIC which showed an extreme amount of heat in the knee walls as well as coming from the holes that were made. After the holes were made the smoke condition got extremely heavy and heat began to rise. Victim 1 called for a line to the 3rd floor for extension. The first nozzle team decided that the fire on the 2nd floor was sufficiently knocked down so the brought the line to the rear of the structure (Fig.1) where the stairs to the 3rd floor were located. They came up short. At this point victim one called for a length to be brought in, which it was. The length was already set up with a gated Y on the female side and a straight bore nozzle at the tip. The original engine company disconnected the TFT nozzle and attached the length, recharged the line and advanced up the stairs. The line was still too short to make it all the way to the front of the house. At this point, the engine companies vibralerts were going off and they exited the structure, handing the line to an unknown firefighter and exiting the structure. The R5 officer also exited to get a new tank as well.

NIOSH REPORTS

Yes their morbid. Yes it seems like were picking apart a tragedy. No I wouldn't want them to come poking around after a tragedy. But the reason why we investigate the cause of a fire is the same reason we investigate a LODD. It's to keep it from happening again. These reports are invaluable to the fire service...

**“Let No
Mans Ghost
Say His
Training Let
Him Down”**

Shortly after these FF's left, the Mayday was called by Victim1. The Mayday was never heard or acknowledged by the IC, the dispatcher or anyone else on the fire ground. It was only heard later when the audio tapes were reviewed. Shortly after the Mayday was called, a BC showed



up and advised the IC that he thought he heard a mayday, it was briefly discussed and everyone agreed that no one else heard it, no effort was made to verify whether a mayday was called or not. Now, a third FF from L11 realizing he hadn't heard from his LT or the can man in a while and seeing conditions deteriorating fast, decided to go up to the 3rd floor and look for them and also tell them that things were looking bad on the outside. As he got to the stairwell, Victim 1 came flying

over the knee wall and landed on his seat on the stairs with his mask intact and no signs of distress, no PASS alarms going off or Vibralert going off, he went past him and followed the line into the 3rd floor. He made it in about 10' and that's when he heard the order to evacuate and also heard the air horns going off. When he got to the stairs, he found Victim1 sitting in the same spot he was in when he passed him just 3 minutes before. He nudged the victim to go down the stairs and realized something was wrong when the victim slumped over from the nudge. He called another mayday and began to remove the victim. This mayday was acknowledged by the dispatcher but instead of initiating the mayday tones and procedures, she hit the evac tones and told everyone to evacuate the building. After bringing down his LT, Victim 1 with some help from other FF's, the FF from L11 went back up to find the other member of his company, Victim2 because he knew something had to be wrong if the LT and Can Man were not together. He followed the handline in to about halfway across the 3rd floor where he located Victim2, wedged between a wall and a couch, laying prone on top of the line facing out but without his facepiece off (Fig2). He called another mayday and eventually got help and removed the victim.

Cause of Death

Victim1 died of asphyxiation. When he was removed from the building, his facepiece was found to be sucked to his face and tank empty. One of the many odd things about his death was that he only had a 4% carboxyhemoglobin (COHb) which is not enough carbon monoxide to kill or even disorient you. He did however, have some artery blockage not due to smoke and combustion products indicating that he may have had a heart attack, went unconscious but was still breathing until he ran out of air and eventually his mask stuck to his face dealing the final blow. It is really the only way to explain why he never removed his regulator or mask. Due to the other smoke inhalation problems there was no way to tell if that's what happened.

Victim2 was a different story in the sense that his COHb was 44% well above the level of carbon monoxide poisoning which makes sense because his tank was empty and facepiece off when he was found.

What Went Wrong

As I said last night, it's always more than one thing that goes wrong in any LODD. This fire in particular had more than usual. The fire was doomed from the start.

The first line nozzle-man broke his ankle before he ever applied a drop of water to the fire. Then he took the only ALS ambulance on scene.

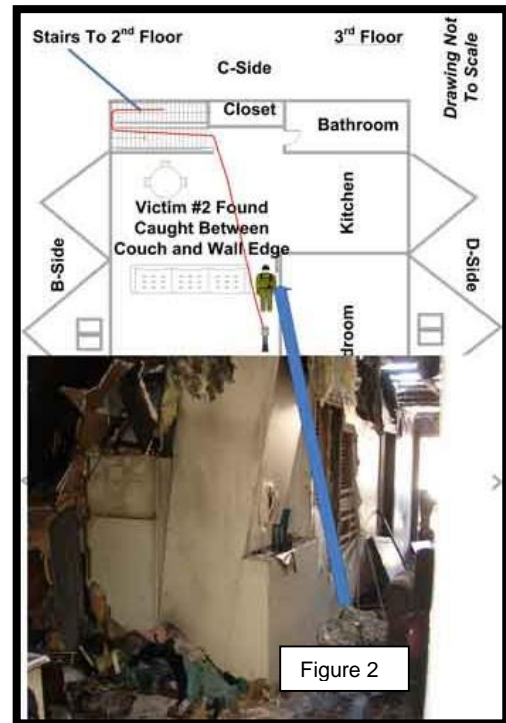
Radio communications were horrible at their best and unusable at their worst. Of the five maydays transmitted at this fire, only two were heard by the IC. The civilian dispatcher heard a mayday and instead of alerting everyone on scene of the mayday, she dropped the evacuation tones and told everyone to get out of the building which caused a delay in rescuing the 2nd victim.

Fire behavior and the floor above was a factor as well. The fire in the knee walls (Fig.3) was concealed from view giving firefighters on that floor an initial sense of security and causing them to not put their SCBA facepiece on until maybe it became too late, the damage may have already been done to their pulmonary systems by the time they put the mask on. We'll never know for sure but it does seem likely as other FF's stated they weren't wearing them at some point. The fire in these knee walls also became vent limited and the tremendous amount of heat and smoke build-up inside these voids came pouring out into the living space when inspection holes were made. These holes were made prior to the line coming up and also the can man's extinguisher was found some distance from where his body was found, with the pin still in it unused...

The Handlines. After the first line came up short, a length that was pre-rigged and set up for this exact scenario came up short again. They were prepared for a scenario like this and still came up short a 2nd time.

The R.I.T. The RIT team which was the 4th engine on scene, was pulled from RIT and ordered to stretch another line to the 2nd floor to cover for the first line that went to the third floor. When the RIT team was asked for, they were busy stretching another line. An extra engine was dispatched for RIT but by the time it arrived the Mayday's were basically over and everyone was out.

Face to face communications were also questionable at best. When the engine crew gave up the line on the 3rd floor to an unknown firefighter which was likely Victim2, they never told



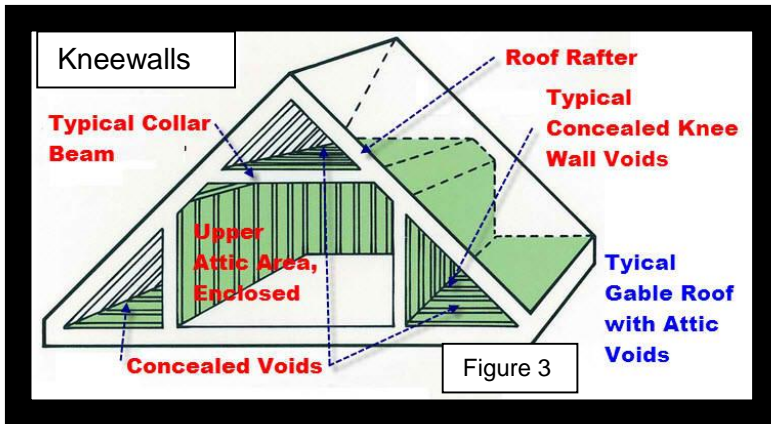


Figure 3

Figure 3

anyone they were coming out and an engine company never replaced them. Because of the conditions up there it seems like they just assumed whoever they gave the line to, had it covered.

The radio communications were basically nonexistent. The two major problems were the communications bureau had just been completely

civilianized, so no fire personnel were in the control room when key decisions were being made. More than likely at a minimum the mayday procedure would have been followed instead of the evacuation procedure when she heard the mayday over the radio. The other major problem that has since been corrected, their fireground channel was their repeater channel and their dispatch was their direct channel. For obvious reasons this was a major problem.

Conclusion

The scary thing for me about this fire is a couple of issues. For starters it seemed like a “ham &egger”. It was routine. It was a fire that was their bread and butter. They went to these fires all the time and somehow things got completely out of control causing the loss of two men. The other scary thing is that we have these types of voids in our district...tons of them. If you go behind Mayfair shopping center, every other house is a cape in that neighborhood.

Every problem they ran into is a problem that we currently either have, have had, or could very easily have going forward.

The knee wall problem nearly took the life of a Huntington Manor FF, Brian Windsor a few years ago and he has the burn scars to prove it. Right now we are having problems with our radios. Because we’re not seeing as much fire as we used too, our face to face communications are lacking which has been witnessed in some of our live burn drills. As far as the RIT goes, we don’t really do this but, when other departments call us for mutual aids for RIT, how many times are we put to work when we get there and then their IC calls for another department who *might* be enroute but is not on scene yet to be designated as RIT? That leaves the fireground and everyone on it, including us, without the protection of a RIT team until that other fire department finally arrives.

The drill last night wasn’t to pick on another department or say hey you did it wrong and two guys are no longer here. That is what the NIOSH reports are for. If you’re ever sitting around the firehouse with a bunch of guys, all you have to do is Google “NIOSH LODD report” and it will bring you right to the site and you can pick a report, print it out and in 20 minutes you can

have a great discussion about what took place. What went wrong? Can this happen to us? How can we avoid this? The knowledge gleaned could save a life, you just never know.

Thanks for reading and listening last night

Have safe week,

Fire Marshal Digiose

For this LODD report from NIOSH, follow this link:.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/fire/reports/face201018.html>