

Commack Fire Department

CFD Probationary Firefighter Basic Lesson Plan

Topic: Firefighter Rescue/Rapid Intervention R.I.T.

- **Location**
 - Station 2 Training Center
- **Level of Instruction**
 - Probationary FF
- **Equipment Needed**
 - Full gear
 - SCBA
 - 2 Dummies with SCBA
 - 2 Sets of irons
 - Stats board of FF rescue statistics from MAYDAY Project
- **Instructors needed**
 - Minimum of 6 depending on class size
- **Resources Needed**
 - Pre-burn checklist for live fire training
 - CVAC for medical
 - Burn building
 - Post burn report for live fire training
 - CFD Instruction Manual
- **Terminal Objective**
 - Probationary FF's given hands-on instruction will be able to remove a downed FF from a mayday situation
- **Enabling Objectives**
 - Probationary FF's given hands-on instruction will learn
 - Recognizing the sound of a pass alarm of a downed FF and locating FF in lights out conditions
 - Calling for a Mayday
 - Packaging a downed FF
 - Drags and carries for removing a downed FF
 - Communication skills with their partner
 - Good communication on the portable radios
- **Lesson Outline:**
 - **Discussion**
 - Discuss FF rescue statistics
 - Go over pass alarm on SCBA
 - Discuss how to call for a MAYDAY

- Discuss checking FF's air situation
 - Address knowing where you are in the building, is there a quicker exit?
 - Discuss who takes the head who takes the feet and why
 - Discuss "READY _____ DRIVE" cadence, getting into a rhythm and who does the calling
 - Air management
 - Do you need to call for a relief crew?
 - If so keep working until they get there if possible
 - If you have to leave turn on the firefighters PASS device, give a good report to relief crew as to location and issues
- **Hands on**
 - Package and move a downed FF at normal speed with no instruction
 - Package and move a downed FF at slow speed explaining each step
 - Pair up probationary FF's and have them package their partner explaining each step until they can perform it proficiently
 - Show them what can and will get hung up during removal
 - Keep them paired up and start smoked out evolution
 - One instructor follows team with TIC
 - Give instruction only as needed or unsafe operation inside smoke environment (let the drill teach the skills inside)
 - Discuss issues good/bad after your team is out and has completed the evolution
 - At the completion of all teams, reverse the partnership positions (head & feet) and restart the smoked out evolution
 - Discuss issues good/bad after your team is out and has completed the evolution
 - Have full summary/review discussion at the end of the drill
- **Summary**
 - Firefighter rescue is seldom performed by a RIT crew. Statistics show that the majority of FF rescues are performed by their own crew or by another crew in the building. That means anyone at any time can end up in a situation where they will have to rescue a downed FF. The importance of having and practicing the skills of packaging and dragging cannot be overstated. Working together and communicating with each other clearly will be a recipe for success. Stick to the program and you will have a successful outcome. Use the techniques taught to you, they are time tested and they work, if you try to take shortcuts, especially in packaging, it could result in a disastrous outcome, like 3 downed firefighters. This skill taught is another perishable skill, don't let your brother or sister down when they need you the most. Don't ever stop practicing these procedures.



COMMAK FIRE DEPARTMENT TRAINING DIVISION



Firefighter Rescue/Rapid Intervention R.I.T.

Introduction

- Firefighter rescue and rapid intervention is something we need to be proficient at for us. This is for your brother/sister firefighter, it's about the person next to you. The skills that you will be taught can save the life of a fellow firefighter when they can't save their own. There are lots of sites on the internet talking about "Them". Them being the civilians but when a mayday is called, I'm sorry Mrs. Jones, Mr. Jones will have to wait. This is about us and without us, Mr. Jones doesn't stand a chance anyway.
There are many important aspects to FF rescue as you read through this text and go through the hands-on portion, you need to burn them into your brain and never forget how to do this. Your fellow firefighter is counting on you. I don't think anyone ever wants to look at themselves in the mirror knowing they left a firefighter behind because they didn't keep proficient in their own skills enough to save another firefighter in peril.
- **R.I.T. Rapid Intervention Team**
 - A Rapid Intervention Team, or RIT is a crew solely dedicated to rescuing a down FF in the case a mayday should arise. It is usually a mutual aid department but can be the 4th or 5th due company arriving on scene depending on the personnel on scene. As you will see, statistically, the RIT team rarely makes the rescue of a downed FF. It is usually an interior crew. This does not mean that RIT is not a valuable asset to have on scene however, RIT in training is at a different level than what we are discussing in this lesson It involves special tools a certain number of people and special procedures. RIT is taught at a higher level than beginner and you will receive training for RIT team procedures later on after you come off probation.

- **Firefighter Rescue Statistics**

- The Mayday Project is a comprehensive study done by Chief Don Abbott. Chief Abbott retired from Indianapolis Fire Department as an Assistant Chief of Operations, Special Operations and Training after 24 years of service. He started it in 2015, and it is still going as of the date of this text in 2022. During this time period there were 5,299 maydays in volunteer departments and 12,223 in career departments for a total of 17,522. This number is slightly skewed and there were likely a lot more since the reporting of a mayday to the Mayday Project is strictly voluntary and when it first began it wasn't as well known as it is now. For the purpose of this lesson, we will take a look at the volunteer fire department statistics only.

- Units/Companies involved in the Mayday

- 1st Due – 74%
- 2nd Due – 15%
- 3rd Due - 7%

- Units/Company Type

- Engine Company – 92%
- Truck/Ladder Company – 7%
- Rescue Company - 2%

- Types of Maydays

- Lost or separated from hoseline – 1,289 / 24.4%
- Air Problems – 918 / 17.4%
- Falls/Collapse into Basement – 897 / 17%
- Entrapment – 731 / 13.8%
- Medical Emergency – 496 / 9.4%
- Falls Off/Through Roof – 496 / 9.4%
- No Communication With – 273 / 5.1%
- Other – 219 / 4.1%

- Types of occupancies

- 1 & 2 Family Private Dwellings – 2,672 / 50.6%
- Commercial – 2,067 / 39.5%
- Multiple Dwellings – 538 / 10.1%

- Mayday Rescues

- Self-Rescue – 2,154 / 40.8%
- Member of Same Crew – 737 / 13.9%
- Interior Crew – 719 / 13.6%
- Rapid Intervention Team R.I.T - 264 / 5%
- Other - 1,098 / 20.8%

- These stats were broken down even further in the Firefighter Survival/SCBA 2 lesson however these numbers here show some remarkably interesting facts. The main one is 68% of maydays are cleared by an interior crew, whether its yourself, your crew or another crew operating in the building.

The 1st due company is getting in trouble the most which makes sense for two reasons, they are there the earliest and they operate on scene the longest. The

reason engine companies get in trouble the most is twofold. There are more engine companies in most departments and because of that, they will likely arrive first due. This also coincides with “Lost or Separated From Hoseline”, they’re the ones on the line.

The numbers for types of occupancies can be deceiving as the commercial and private dwelling fires are close. This would make one think that the private dwelling fire is more dangerous than the commercial fire, but this is not the case. The reason why there are more maydays occurring in the PD fire is because there are way more PD fires each year than there are commercial fires. So, one could infer that if you put the amount of commercial fires that have occurred to the amount of maydays that have occurred in them, you would see that you are much *more* likely to have a mayday in a commercial fire than in a PD fire. However, being that there are more PD fires, you’re just more likely to get in trouble in general because you’re going to more of them overall.

- **The Mayday**

- You will know you have a FF down mayday in one of, or a combination of, 5 ways. You will crawl across the FF before the PASS device goes off, you will hear a PASS device going off, someone will tell you face to face, you may hear the emergency alert tone coming from the FF’s portable radio or you will hear the mayday over the radio. The only times that you shouldn’t hear the PASS device when a FF has called a mayday is when either the FF in trouble turns it off to transmit on the radio, or you turn it off to give the mayday over the radio and communicate as a crew. You should by now know how the PASS device works and how to reset and activate it with a gloved hand. But hearing a PASS device going off in the full alert, should immediately draw your attention inside a building. You need to start trying to listen to figure out where it’s coming from and start heading that way. This is one of the reasons why it is so dangerous when a PASS alarm is going off outside the building when a firefighter forgets to shut down the SCBA after they take it off. This can cause great confusion inside as well as making you numb to it because you hear happening all the time.

- **Calling a Mayday**

- Once you confirm you have a downed FF you need to call a mayday if one hasn’t been called already. The first thing you should do is turn off the PASS alarm on the downed FF’s SCBA. The background noise from it may cause your Mayday over the radio to become inaudible and the Incident Commander may not hear it.
 - What to Say
 - Who
 - What
 - Where
 - “MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY! Truck 1 irons, we have a downed firefighter in the basement, he’s out of air. We are packaging him and bringing him up!”

- It is just that simple. As previously discussed in the survival lesson, once you have the air, keep it. Do not break up your message. For instance “MAYDAY! MAYDAY! MAYDAY!” then wait for a response, “This is command who has the Mayday?” Then you go to transmit the rest of your mayday message and the third due engine chauffeur chimes in, stepping on you asking if the 1st due engine needs another hydrant, or the nozzle man wants 5 more pounds of pressure and subsequently you never get your message out. Get your mayday out in one message, if you’re not acknowledged, do it again. What should you do if you have to give it a third time because you’re not acknowledged? Get to work. Once you have the FF packaged and your ready to move you can give it again but don’t get hung up on it. Get moving, you are that firefighter’s only chance to live. For a good example of this, go on YouTube and search for the “Black Sunday Fire Audio” it is tough to listen to but quite compelling and it’s a great learning tool. You are the only lifeline back to that firefighter, don’t forget that.

- **Steps To FF Rescue/Removal Once Located**

1. FF1 will turn off PASS device on downed FF and check for downed FF’s air situation then move to the feet of downed FF

2. FF2 calls for the mayday

3. FF1, the leg FF begins packaging the FF by loosening the waist strap on both sides of the downed FF’s SCBA. (Fig,1) You then take the FF’s leg, put it over your shoulder (Fig,2), unbuckle the waist strap, put it between the FF’s Legs and re-buckle the waist strap (Fig.3). It is VERY that you NEVER let go of the waist strap with either hand once its unbuckled. If you

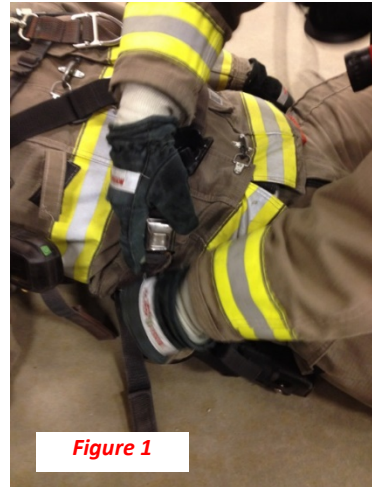


Figure 1

have to let go, re-buckle it around the waist and do what you have to do, then start again. The reason for this it is very easy to lose a strap in lights out conditions under duress in that situation. Once you have the waist strap re-buckled between the FF’s legs (Fig.3), go ahead and tighten down the waist straps again. You want it as snug as you can get it and still be able to get your hand under it to use as a handle for carrying.

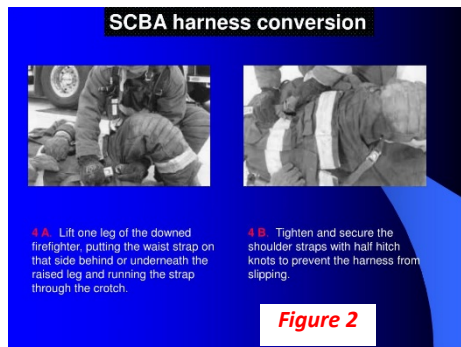


Figure 2



Figure 3

4. At the same time that the leg FF1 is packaging, FF2, the head firefighter is tightening down the shoulder straps and securing them for the drag/carry. By doing so, there is less play in the SCBA harness and it makes it easier on you as he will not be flopping around while you are dragging or carrying him out. You can, if he is a smaller person, tie the ends of the shoulder straps into an overhand knot across the FF's chest which helps keep the straps from slipping and also can keep them from getting hung up something as you're dragging or carrying.
5. Ensure that the downed FF is on his back and his head is facing the direction you want to go, moving him into position if necessary.
6. Start your drag/carry out

- **Ready (pause) Drive Cadence**

- Nine out of ten times when removing a downed FF, you will be dragging and or lifting in small segments, maybe one or two feet at a time. If you have a light FF, you'll likely make more progress with each movement as opposed to having a heavier FF. When we move a down FF, we use a READY (pause) DRIVE cadence. The firefighter at the head is usually doing the calling as this FF knows what obstacles they may have to go under, over or through because you're dragging the FF out head first. The head FF, FF2 will say READY? Take a pause and if there is no response from FF1, he will say "DRIVE". If FF1 at the feet isn't ready, he should say WAIT or STOP or anything other than NO. The reason for this is, NO sounds like GO in a mask and the head FF, FF2 could wind up pulling when FF1 is not ready, wasting time and especially energy. You need to get into a good rhythm when doing this, the faster you do so the better you'll work together and the more efficient the rescue will be. This on the FF calling it, he needs to be consistent with his cadence, if he is you will both get in that rhythm quickly. We use READY (pause) DRIVE instead of "1 - 2 - 3" or "ready set go" because there is less of a chance of confusion, do we go on 3? Do we say 3 then go? etc. Also, when you are working this hard, and make no mistake, removing a down FF is the hardest thing you'll do on the fireground, each word you say will usually use a breath of air consuming your air much quicker than a two-count cadence. Communication and using proper technique will be the keys to success.

- **Drags and Carries**

- Now that you've packaged the FF by converting his SCBA to a harness and positioned him on his back with his head facing the direction you want to go, its time for removal. There are many drags and carries you will see on the internet, they're all great, until its hot as hell and you're working in lights out conditions. For the purpose of this lesson, you will be taught only one type. We have used this method under extreme conditions and find it works best.

- Up then Over

When moving a down FF one of the crucial points to remember is that the FF needs to go up then over. When we say this, we are trying to say that the FF's SCBA needs to clear anything on the floor. It should be in the same movement, but we are just trying to emphasize that point. FF1 the feet FF, will use the converted waist strap as a handle to lift the FF's buttocks and SCBA off the ground enough to not have any resistance from the ground and to get over any obstacles that you need to go over. (Fig.4) The best way to accomplish this is to squat over the FF as low as you can and use your legs to lift. Your



primary function is in lifting up before over you start to move forward but this is all in one motion. Up and over. While you are doing this, FF2 is grabbing one or both of the shoulder straps (Fig.5) and doing the same thing from the same squatted position, but again its up and over. FF2 is also making all the ready drive calls as well. FF2 is also setting the pace. Using the READY (pause) DRIVE cadence, going up and over and getting into a good rhythm using effective communication is the key to removing the down FF as quickly as possible.

- If you find yourself in a situation where you are unable to stand and or squat over the downed FF, either from conditions that are too hot or a collapse situation where there is no room to be upright this will change what you're doing and the progress you make dramatically. FF2, the head FF will likely only be able to drag with one hand bracing themselves with the other. FF1 will have to put his face in the crotch of the downed FF putting his legs on his shoulders and driving forward with your legs. (Fig.6) If the downed FF gets hung up on something, which can and probably will happen, don't keep pulling, thinking he is going to just come free, that you'll power through it, you won't. Work together to free what ever is stuck and figure out a way to get him unstuck. When you have to drag the FF, you're only going to get a few inches at a time whereas when you are able to stand you may get 2 feet at a time. No matter what, communication and working together is going to make or break you.



- Relief Crew

You need to call for a relief crew under any of the following circumstances

- If you feel you don't have enough air to complete the job
- If you feel like you're wearing down and won't have enough energy to complete the job
- If you feel like you just need more help

If you call for a relief crew because you don't have enough air to complete the job but feel you'll have enough air to go out on your own when they get there, give the relieving crew a good short report of what you've done. If you feel you can't make it out before the relief crew gets there:

- Give a radio report as to where you are
- Turn on the downed FF's PASS device
- Give a face-to-face report to the relief crew if you pass them on your way out

A good report would consist of where the victim is, whether or not he's packaged and what their air situation is. If they are stuck, you should give that information as well

- **Things to Think About**

- **Air management for both you and your partner**

You need to not only monitor your own air consumption but your partners as well. If your partner is not in the same shape as you, they will be sucking down air way faster than you. So, this means you only have as much air as your partner does.

- **Getting stuck on something is a real possibility.** When you get stuck, and also when your dragging, try to visualize what's on the SCBA that could get hung up. Think about the valve on the bottle and the RIC connection. Any loose straps, anything hanging can and will hang up, murphy's law. If for some reason the FF is wearing an older SCBA with the PRA on his left side, that too will hang up. Again, if the FF gets stuck, do not keep pulling, you're wasting energy, it could be as simple as pushing the FF back 2 inches then lifting up and over to get the FF over the obstruction
- **Remember what you went over, under or through on your way to the FF.** It helps if you know what you are going to bring the FF out over, under or through so you can come up with a plan in your head before you even come up to that obstacle on the way out. Everything you passed on the way in, you now have to pass on the way out with the FF in tow.
- **You may have to stop and adjust your packaging.** Sometimes the shoulder straps will loosen up as you drag. You want to re-tighten them if this occurs. The tighter to the body the straps are the less energy loss in your pulls and the less energy you'll waste pulling.

- **You may have to stop to catch your breath.** This is another very real possibility. If you are getting so winded yourself, you may outbreath your mask and become a victim too. If you are getting too winded, tell your partner, “Hey we got to stop a second, let me catch my breath”. Even if you just rest until your pack goes into pre-alert, that can get you right back on track.
- **The human spine only bends one way.** Yes, you want to take the FF out on their back, but what if you come to a pinon point or a tight 180* turn? The body will not bend that way. When going up and down over say a collapsed floor for example, you may have to turn the FF over onto their stomach and drag them over that way using the natural bend of the body, then flip them back on their back and continue. If you come to a tight turn, you will have to sit the FF up on their butt and slide the FF around the turn. Once it’s cleared go back to your regular drag/carry.
- **The Incident Commander may be up your butt on the radio.** The IC will want to know what you’re doing how you’re making out etc. If you are making progress and making good gains and have a good rhythm, don’t screw that up. Do your best to keep the IC informed but not to the detriment of progress. If you have to take a break, that would be a great time to call them on the radio and let them know what’s up.

- **Summary**

Understand that Firefighter Rescue is in no way a basic skill. However, that doesn’t mean just because you’re a probationary firefighter, you won’t come across this situation. Once you are qualified on an SCBA, you are going to be in the building which makes you someone who needs to know how to rescue a downed firefighter. This is why it’s taught with basic firefighting skills. You have seen the numbers, and numbers do not lie. Odds are that if it happens it won’t be the RIT crew that removes the mayday firefighter, it will be you. When we do the hands-on portion of this skill, pay very close attention to detail in the packaging, communication and moving of the firefighter. Do it exactly how you’re taught using the exact techniques you are taught, and you will be much more successful and have expended much less energy taking short cuts or trying something you saw on YouTube. The fireground is no place to try something new. If you have seen something you like or somebody told you about something to do, do it training, do it with your facepiece blacked out, not in a real situation. It is a certainty that the techniques you see using webbing or a tool through the shoulder straps or different types of drags will not make it any easier in the real world and could cost you precious time, time that firefighter does not have. Use the basics, they won’t fail you.

Firefighter rescue and Rapid Intervention Team training is for us. They and firefighter survival are the only things we do for ourselves in training. Everything else is for them, the civilians. Firefighter rescue is just as if not more important. I don’t ever want to say to someone’s spouse I was unable to remove their wife or husband knowing in my heart it was because I wasn’t training on it enough. I am sure you don’t either. Firefighter rescue is not easy, if it were, cops would do it, stick with it, do what you have been taught and practice it often because you just never know when it’s going to happen. Do not let your brother or sister down when they need you the most.



COMMACK FIRE DEPARTMENT



“Back to Basics Training Bulletin”

Random Thoughts on Firefighter Rescue

Rescuing a downed FF from a fire building in a mayday situation is unarguably the toughest thing to do in a fire. Data doesn't lie, 86% of maydays combined are cleared by self-rescue, a member of the same crew or another interior crew.

Things to remember:

- **Communication** is one of the most important aspects of the situation. Working together as a team with good solid communication will undoubtedly make for a smoother removal. Getting into a rhythm with the “Ready...Drive” cadence is a must. If you get out of rhythm, you're going to go nowhere fast. You must keep that cadence in your head and be aware if your rhythm is off. If so, stop and take a second to correct it. When you're out of rhythm, one guy will be pulling while another is doing nothing. If you're the head FF and you're waiting for the leg FF to finish packaging, there is no need to talk to him/her with questions like “hey you ok, you need help?” or “how you making out?”. That FF is going as fast as they can, it's a stressful situation for both of you and silence can be uncomfortable for some people but if they need you to do something, they'll tell you. If you start asking questions like “what's going on?”, you're going to stress them out which is absolutely 100% going to slow them down because they are going to now speed up and maybe try to take a shortcut. The best way you can help with the waist FF's job is to give them light with your flashlight and shut the fuck up!
- **Technique** will make the difference between you getting the FF out and you calling for someone to come in and relieve you...Guaranteed! If you don't utilize the waist strap and shoulder straps as handles, you're going to make your life very difficult. The waste of energy will sap your strength and very quickly frustrate you mentally. If you're not working together with good technique and strong communication, you are setting yourself up for disaster. You must use the straps to go up THEN over. Every lift should be in the form of a rainbow. If there's no lift at the waist strap, you're going to get caught on absolutely everything. When the downed FF gets stuck, 99% of the time its going to be the cylinder neck/valve or some other part of the SCBA, that's where you need to start looking. If that seems clear move on to the arms and legs. When the FF does get stuck, what do we do? We pull harder, wasting more energy. If the FF is stuck, they're stuck, figure it out and *then* try again. Sometimes it's as simple as turning the FF over onto their other side or just moving the position of an arm or leg. You must use your brain the entire time and keep focused on the task at hand. Bottom line, the FF has everything on their SCBA to remove them from a building. Use the techniques taught of converting the waist strap and tightening every strap down and you'll be way better off in the long run. There's a million YouTube videos out there on FF drags and using webbing...it's all bullshit! That stuff may work on a smooth concrete or tile floor, but it aint working in the real world of carpets and steps and furniture and collapsed construction members, kids bikes, clothes and just general household junk. In training, you need to work on both scenarios where you can stand and where you can't stand. When you can't stand, I promise you it will be all about small victories, 6 inches at a time instead of 2 feet at a time. You have been given the tools needed with these techniques provided...use them!
- **The shoulder or head FF** is the navigator and the “over” FF. You're also the one calling the shots as far as “Ready...Drive”. The reason for this is it usually takes longer for this you to get reset and be ready. Often, the downed FF falls on your legs causing a delay as well. Your move is more over than up when dragging. You're probably going to get a slight arc in your pull naturally, but your concern is moving the FF in the direction you want to go. The team of two is going at your pace. If the waist FF isn't ready, don't get frustrated, they are doing the lifting. Give them time to catch their breath. Pull, navigate and communicate.

- **The waist FF** is the one who is doing the "UP" portion of the drag. You are the workhorse. You are doing the lifting. Your move is lifting by utilizing waist strap as a handle, straight up and using your legs to do so. Your concern is not "over". Let the head FF pull. You need to get that FF's ass and most of all their cylinder valve and neck as high as humanly possible letting the head FF pull them forward. If you are not doing this, if you are not utilizing the waist strap, if you decide the leg is better because you're tired...you're going to be in for a long, or more realistically, short evolution. You need to understand that you are the one making sure you're clearing that FF's SCBA from any and all obstructions that may be on the ground. I CANNOT stress this point enough because the SCBA will most definitely get hung up on whatever is on the floor...every single time. You as the waist FF make or break the movement. If you're not lifting, the downed FF is going nowhere...it is that simple.

Conclusion

If things aren't going well, if you're exhausted in the position, you're in, don't be afraid to switch. In drills its best to stay in the same position so you can understand the juxtaposition between the two FF's responsibilities and workloads, and you need to know, and be good at, both positions. In real life, however, if you're gassed and not getting it done, don't let your ego get in the way, ask to switch.

Up then over...UP THEN OVER. When we say this, it's not literal. It just means you can't go over without going up first. You're both still going on the two-count cadence. It all happens at once, but one *can't* happen without the other. You both must do your jobs and only your jobs in order for the mission to succeed.

Communicate effectively, do not rush your partner, do not let frustration sink in, be patient and be efficient with your communications. Only talk when needed.

Use the techniques taught, they work. Are there going to be times when you may have to improvise? Of course there will, but utilizing proper technique will save you air, mental frustration and physical exhaustion in the long run. Stop watching YouTube videos using webbing and harnesses and all the nonsense to go with it. If you don't believe me, next time you train on rescuing a downed FF, time yourself from point of entry to point of removal. Use your webbing and do what ever shortcut you saw on YouTube and then do it using the basic techniques you've been taught. Let me how you make out.

Bottom line. This is not easy. This is something that in training you need to do often if you want to be proficient at it. Converting the SCBA into a harness, the "up then over" drag and using proper communication are like most other skills in the fire service. They are perishable skills meaning if you don't use it, you lose it.

You have to train on this stuff often if you want to be good at it, and why wouldn't you want to be good at it? After all...it's about your brother or sister firefighter's life...Its about their families at home, it's about the bond we share and about never leaving one another behind...

So be good at it, and encourage each other to be good at it. The only way to do so is train at it...as hard as you possibly can.

Stay Safe and Keep Training

This week's edition written by Joe Digiose



THIS WEEK IN TRAINING

445 BILTMORE AVE LODD

Jay Bettencourt is a firefighter in the Ashville North Carolina Fire Department, Rescue Company 3 and is an instructor at FDTN in Indianapolis. He teaches in the firefighter survival container which some of us have been very lucky to have been a part of. The following is a play by play of the worst day of his career.

THIS WEEK IN TRAINING

445 BILTMORE AVE LODD

About Five years ago I was at a parade and a “kid” had the balls to say to me I don’t trust you because I’ve never seen you train or at any drills. He had about 3 years in the department at the time and I thought you little shithead, I’m here 25 years or so and you have the balls to say that to me? Who the F does this kid think he is to say that to me? I been in more fires than you’ve taken dumps! I was in burning buildings while you were still breast feeding... I have seen more...BLAH BLAH BLAH. We all know the lines that us “Senior” guys spout out from time to time.

Two weeks later we had a job, I was doing a search on the 2nd floor when I realized just how bad a job I was doing. Slow, knocking stuff over a little disoriented. When it was over and I had time to reflect I realized I hadn’t had a pack on in an IDLH environment in at least 6 months and that was at Yaphank and another 6 months prior to that. Worst of all, that kid was right. Not necessarily in the words that he chose but he was right in his reasoning...I was out of practice. I felt it and it showed...

As senior men in the fire service we tend to get complacent. We feel we’ve been down the hallway a hundred times and we have nothing to prove. But with the lack of work in the last few years now, training has become so important to keep sharp, live fire training especially. As a senior man on the live burn committee said, “I can’t believe how uncomfortable I felt in the mask when I first started doing this training and how quickly I got to my old self after just a couple drills. This building is the best thing to EVER happen to this fire department. These guys have no idea how lucky they are!”

If you think, and I don’t care if you have 5,10,15, or 20 plus years in the fire service, if you think at the next fire you’re going to just get on the rig, go to the scene put your mask on and everything else is just going to fall in line like you just did it yesterday you’re in for a good kick in the chicklets. It doesn’t work like that and that lesson has not been lost on me since that day.

445
BILTMORE
LODD
“WE DON’T RISE
TO THE LEVEL
OF OUR
EXPECTATIONS
, WE FALL TO
THE LEVEL OF
OUR TRAINING”

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

If you're not planning on entering a burning building next time we have a job, so be it. Don't train, but if you are, you owe it to yourself and the brothers around you to be the best you can possibly be. Oh and let us not forget about the public who needs you.

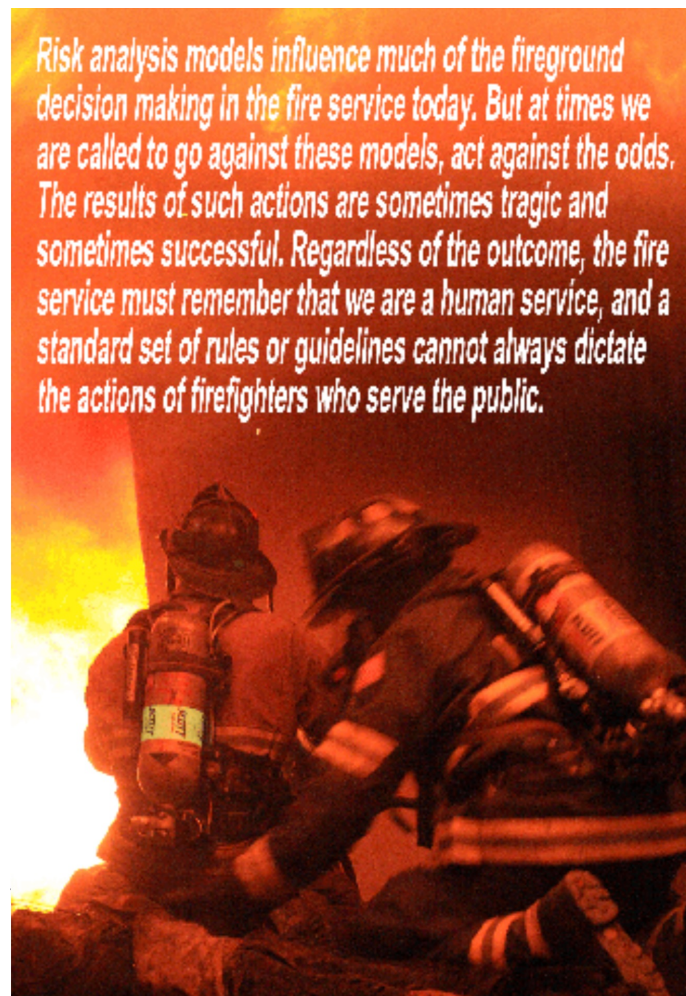
They need you to have your best day on their worst day...

The following article is fairly long. I hope you read it through to the end. I hope that it makes you think about what could happen every time we go out those doors. But mainly I hope it changes your mindset and the misconception of how good you think you are...

It sure as shit did for me...

Thanks for reading...

Digiore





FIRE



TRAINING

VOLUME 21 ♦ ISSUE 1 ♦ JANUARY 2017

FIREGROUND OPERATIONS

445 BILTMORE YOUR NEXT FIRE?

Jay Bettencourt, Asheville Fire Department

The morning of July 28 started like most shifts. We checked in with the crew working off, went over the truck and started cleaning. Before breakfast Rescue 3 responded to a HAZMAT call where we served as the RIT for Engine 11 (one of Asheville's HAZMAT Company's). We chuckled and joked through the call unaware of the tragedy that would soon unfold.

Upon returning to Station 3, I went to Ladder 10 for driver training. After driving Ladder 10 for the morning, Larry Morrow told me my truck had been dispatched to a structure fire at 445 Biltmore Ave.

I loaded my gear into my truck and started driving to the fire. I called Jeff, Clint and Brad on the way to get a size-up

or real time report about our truck assignment. I got no answer from anyone. I later found out that they were interior on their first bottle. I considered running hot, but thought it better to go routine. I drove past 3 and briefly considered going there; I dismissed this thought and went on to the fire.

It was a hot, clear day as I made my way through the city on to Charlotte St. and then Biltmore Ave. At one point I wanted to speed up, but got a feeling that I was "right on time." As I approached 445 traffic was stopped on Biltmore, and I could see some cars turning around and coming back down the hill. I pulled out of the traffic line into the oncoming lane. I

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TRAINING SAVES LIVES
FIREFIGHTERS

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BILTMORE AVE...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

went through the line of cones blocking the road and parked in a parking lot on the corner of Biltmore Ave and Brooklet. When I pulled up, I saw 3 at the NE corner, and smoke and fire on the NW side of the top floor.

A cop was walking toward me, but stopped when he saw me getting into my turnout gear. Just as I finished dressing, Josh Walton backed down Biltmore to the hydrant on the corner where I was parked. He pulled his LDH. I walked up and told him I would catch the hydrant. Josh grabbed the Hydro assist and hydrant bag for me then drove off. He turned in on the north side of the building where Ladder 1 was operating.

I was without a radio so I stood in the street waiting for a signal of some kind. I saw a guy in an RTS (a local convalescent ambulance service) uniform standing between me and Josh who seemed to know what was happening. I nodded my head to indicate we were working together and a moment later he swung his hand around in the air in a circular motion which meant Josh was ready for whatever. I charged the line.

Rescue 3 was parked on the NE corner of 445 Biltmore Ave. I jogged up the hill about a block to my truck and noticed L1 booming up as I passed the north parking lot access road. I got to 3 and pulled a radio, air pack and axe. I turned on my radio but did not select a fire channel.

I walked in front of the north side of the building and saw smoke and fire coming out of a vented window. Weezy and Josh were doing engineer stuff and Mike Russell was on the first floor of the parking deck functioning as safety. I heard him yelling to the drivers to put their helmets on. The ladder was on ground floor 1 – below the first. I went up to Russell thinking he was at staging command and asked him what I should do. He told me Rescue was inside and that I should wait for my crew to come out and join them. As he said that, Chief Burnett walked up in full turnout gear and helmet! I knew this was big at that point. Just then I saw Caption Bowen walk out of the building. I was struck to see him alone, but ran over to join him.

I yelled, “Captain, are you tryin’ to burn something without me?”

Then he replied, “Well you’re the one that wanted to drive.”

“That will never happen again.”

I followed him over to staging just on the south side of the west ground floor entrance. I saw Clint and Brad there



getting hot swaps and went to help. Paul Walker and I put a new bottle on Brad. I looked up from that to see EJ and Larry and CO standing behind E2. Chief Marzzella assigned Larry RIT and EJ said his crew was in rehab and wanted to join rescue. EJ was told to report this to command, which he did, then grabbed an axe off of E2.

Now we were going in. We walked quickly down the hall to the stairwell and headed up. The stairs were very smoky and I clipped in my regulator immediately. I was surprised at how thick the smoke was so far down the line. When I hooked up I looked up and down the line to see everyone else on air as well. We moved up the stairs and I thought about the elevators, and remembered the SOG I had recently read which stated high rise fires that were on the 5th floor or below would be fought from the stairs, not elevators. At that point I put the elevator out of my mind.

We took a long time going up the stairs not wanting to breath hard and waste our precious air. I realized, as I am sure everyone else did, that we were going to have limited time to operate on the fire floor due to our dwindling air supply.

At no point had I received a situation report about the fire or conditions or our assignment or even a radio channel, which would bite me later.

We moved up the stairs in a line. Jeff in the lead followed by Clint, myself, Brad and then EJ. On the fourth floor landing we started to encounter dry hose, which I assumed was a high-rise pack. It was attached to the stand pipe and sort-of stretched. Jeff tripped (on the hose I assumed) and Clint stopped to ask if he was okay. Jeff said he was fine and kept moving. We encountered more spaghetti hoses on the 5th floor landing and I noticed there were a lot of hoses around, but NO WATER!

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BILTMORE AVE...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

TRAINING SAVES LIVES

We entered the 5th floor into very smoky conditions, but not much heat. This has been a point of contention with other companies and firefighters. Some firefighters came out reporting extremely high heat; however, due to the leap frogging of crews on this fire every company saw this fire in a different state. The smoke was grayish and diffused my light. There was about 2-3 feet of visibility. Our team moved through the thick haze fast, following a hose line and darting around corners. As we circled our way around the building I knew I was becoming disoriented, but felt it was important to keep up with the man in front of me. I assumed he had a good idea of where we were going.

The smoke seemed to be lighter as we traveled along the line. I saw a clamp that belonged to Brad holding a door open. I was glad to see he had used one of his new clamps, and that it seemed to be working well. We went through the chocked doorway into a room where the hose ended. Our company formed a circle around the nozzle and squatted down. We stayed there for quite some time in a circle.

We waited there for a couple of minutes while Jeff called for water and we all burned our air supply. I noticed everyone checking their air, and I thought we would be ineffective due to our low air and lack of water. I thought we should be searching for victims or fire extension, but there we sat waiting for water. Jeff called for water. Then Chief Denning told us to come out if we had no task. Jeff said we would stay and wait for water or stand by in case another crew needed us. Captain Eddie Wyatt called on the radio and said we needed to open the stand pipe valve. The valve was open. Later Russell called to E6 and told

them the ladder was their method of egress. I had no idea where that would be or where the fire was, or how to get back to the stairs other than following the hose.

Around this time 6 gets water and calls it into command. Jeff gets on the radio and asks 6 if they could use our help. They said yes and we were off swerving through the dark and smoky abyss. We made our way into a hallway that had an alcove off of it containing six small rooms. We stopped there while Jeff did god knows what. It was very hard for the 5 of us to communicate well since our crew was too large for everyone to take part in interactions. I trust my company and my officer. I knew Captain Bowen would lead us in the right direction. I told Brad I was going to search the small rooms even though I thought they had already been searched. We didn't have anything else to do at the time. Due to our lack of water I felt ineffectual throughout the operation.

After that I poked my head into a room across the hall from the alcove. This room was full of files that were burning in the decay stage. There were little camp fires on top of every box. It was a room with an exterior wall lined with windows. Talk began about breaking the windows. Someone checked in with Jeff and he gave the all clear. EJ radioed down to command to have the ladder operator stand clear while we took the windows. After we took them I looked out and the ladder was nowhere to be seen. We were on the west side of the building and had mistakenly thought we were on the north side, where the ladder was. I saw how truly lost I was. At about this time Brad's low air alarms started going off. He told Jeff and, after some, delay we started making our way out.

continued next month...



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APRIL 23-25, 2017





FIREGROUND OPERATIONS

445 BILTMORE
YOUR NEXT FIRE?

PART TWO

Jay Bettencourt, Asheville Fire Department

Continued from last month...

I thought that this was collectively the best decision we had made. As we worked our way out along the hose line, I saw a helmet and a light pop out from around a corner. I asked who it was and if they were okay. They said they were good and we moved on. There was a lot of starting and stopping as we made our way out. I was too far back in the line and it was too dark for me to be clued in.

The order heading out was Jeff, Clint, Brad, me and EJ. We rounded a couple of corners and ran across Mike Branon flaking out a high rise pack. I asked who it was and by his cursing I could tell it was Mike!

“Oh f#ck this f#ckin’ hose. F#ck Man. God Damn it.”

Our overabundance of limp useless hose was very clear to me. Again we stood around for a while then started moving out. At some point the order of our line changed. As we got to the stairs I saw Clint go down followed by Brad, then Jeff blew by the stairs and started heading down an unfamiliar hallway.

In hind sight it was clear where we were, but at the time I was very confused. I looked back at EJ in shock and said, “We gotta get him.” So off we went chasing after Jeff. I was yelling, “Jeff, Jeff, we have to go down, there is no one here. We have to go down. Let’s go.” But every time I got close to him he would dart off and go deeper into the fire area. I could not imagine why Jeff was doing this; his low air alarm had started soon after Brad’s. Mine started just as Jeff darted away, and I knew we were

in a bad way. Around this point I thought to myself, “I bet they will give us the rest of the shift off for this bullshit.”

Jeff made his way back into the alcove where we finally caught him. He looked surprised as if he was expecting something to be there that was not, maybe a downed firefighter, maybe a charged hose line. At this point I grabbed Jeff by the pack straps and yelled, “We are leaving!”

I was taking control. EJ was behind pushing Jeff on. We made it a few steps and I realized I had no idea where to go. I yelled to EJ, “You keep pushing him. I am going ahead to find our way.” I turned and took maybe 3 steps around a corner and realized what a bad plan that was. The smoke had intensified and was getting darker. I turned to go back and Jeff was right there as I turned around. He said, “I am out of air. I need to buddy breathe” in a frantic voice. My heart fell to my boot. Though I was scared, Captain Bowen seemed to be back in the game and that gave me some comfort.

As Jeff and I started moving, a mist of steam and hot water hit EJ on the side of his face. He turned to see where it was coming from; knowing it meant the nozzle company was operating in that direction. When EJ turned back to face Jeff & me, we were gone. He stood there for what must have seemed like an eternity looking for us. EJ was sure we would pop out of one of those doors of the alcove. He felt confident we were still there, he just couldn’t see us. He noticed his low air alarm had stopped going off, which meant he must be dangerously low on air, and

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445 BILTMORE...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5



he considered calling a Mayday. As he considered his situation in that smoky dark hell, he decided to walk ten steps in the direction the mist had come from. When he got there he saw Jake Long manning a nozzle and he knew where to go from there.

EJ hurdled Jake and made a beeline for the door running along the hose line. He followed the hose through a breached wall to a broken window and jumped out onto Ladder 1's bucket. Just as EJ landed on the bucket he heard our Mayday go out. He wondered if we had called a Mayday for him, alerting command that we had lost a firefighter. So he told Captain Hendricks who was acting as division command, to call IC and tell them "I'm OK." While this radio traffic is going on another Mayday comes in. And EJ realized that Jeff and I were in grave danger.

It is my great regret that I lost track of EJ during that scenario. I was overwhelmed and didn't have the mental capacity to keep track of him. I am very grateful that he had the wherewithal to save his own life. It should be noted that after this incredible ordeal that he went through — on his second working bottle — EJ saw that there was still fire to fight and went back in for two more bottles.

Meanwhile, I had been buzzing for a considerable time and I knew I had little air for one, much less two. I yelled back to Jeff, "Call a Mayday!" and started pulling my buddy hose. My buddy hose was attached to my pack with a quarter turn latch and I had some trouble accessing it. I think at this point I took off my gloves for better dexterity. I dropped to my knees to pull Jeff's hoses and within a few seconds I hooked up to him.

And, oh how my heart broke when I heard his regulator vibrating and free flowing down by his waist. It only took a couple of seconds before I was sucking rubber and had to unclip. I had listened to Jeff call the Mayday as I was hooking up to him, but I wanted to call my own. Jeff dropped down to his knees and we started crawling out. He was standing up in the smoke when he unclipped from his regulator due to running out of air. I can't help but wonder if this could have made the difference between living and dying.

We made it to the next doorway when I stopped Jeff and told him we needed to unclip our buddy hoses for ease of movement. That went fast, just a couple of seconds. Then we made our way out the door

to the center of the floor where the elevators were. I called a Mayday, and then told Jeff I was going to find a way out. He was on his hands and knees over his radio. I could hear radio traffic and I assumed Jeff was calling in the cavalry. I later found out that Jeff was vomiting in his mask.

I crawled a short distance and ran into the elevator bank. The smoke was banked down below the buttons, and I was confused because I had not seen the elevators on my way in due to the heavy smoke. This made me feel even more disoriented. I considered hitting the buttons if I could find them, but I didn't want to take the time to look for them, and then wait for the car, if it came at all. The idea of dying while waiting for an elevator was unappealing to me, so I moved on. I later found out that the elevator was blocked open at the bottom floor and would not have come up. I started sleeping easier when I found out the elevator would not have saved us.

I left the elevator and found a limp hose. I started to follow it just like we were all taught. It did not take long for me to remember the mile of limp hose all over the floor and realize this fucking hose could be a road to nowhere. When it's all limp there is no way to tell what's what.

At that moment I became a little angry. I thought of all those frantic people outside, no doubt scrambling to do something to help. But what could they do? Jeff and I were all alone up here. I remembered watching Cool Hand Luke with Jeff at the station. The line, "We in here diggin' and dying and they out there livin'" came to me and really



hit hard.

A moment before I left the hose line I had a vision of my family. Not a thought or a memory, but a clear vision. Just their faces right in front of me. And without words my dear, sweet son's face said to me, "Daddy come home, are you going to come home?" I shrugged my reply and said "I don't know, but I'm not going without Jeff."

Then I had my turning moment. I saw Jeff in a vision just like my son lying there suffering and in pain, and I decided I would rather he live and I die. I wanted to take all of Jeff's pain and give him all the loving kindness in the world.

I abandoned the hose line and called my next Mayday, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Come fucking get us!" As I was talking on the radio I looked up and saw a window on the west side of the building. I thought about Lowering Captain Bowen out the window then bailing out but I didn't think I could throw him out the window and then catch him on my rope. I wondered if that tiny corner of sunlight shining through the vertical blinds of that window would be the last time I would see the sunshine. I had an overwhelming feeling that no one was coming so I ditched my mask, helmet, and radio. I did not want to take the time to put my radio back in my pocket. Every breath of that thick poison was one closer to death. Everything I did was a tradeoff for the breath it took to do it. Now that I was on my own I wanted to be light and fast. I felt sure that what ever happened to Jeff and me was up to me. I had to get us out. It was time to go.

Just by instinct I started down a hallway doing a left handed search in a rapid crawl. I kept my axe and ran into one locked door, then another locked door. Then I came to a dead end and yet another locked door. It had a sign on it saying something to the effect of employee's only, no admittance. I shook my head and prepared myself for death.

I kept my left hand search going working my way back up the other side of the same hallway. I came to a corner and a door. I reached up and opened it and there before me was a clear lit stairwell. This stairway seemed like a stairway to heaven. I threw my axe in the threshold of the door and did a crawl back to Jeff. He had not moved and was making some groggy noises, kind of mumbling (Jay?) I grabbed him by the shoulder straps. I considered for a second doing a thigh conversion, but decided to just go. I would do it if I needed to, but lucky I didn't. Jeff and I moved easily to the stairs and I started to drag him down. We got down to the fourth floor landing and I thought it

best to call command and let them know where we were. I rolled Jeff over to get to his radio pocket, but when I got to it, his radio was gone. Now I regretted ditching mine. Ah fuck it, we both called 5th floor Maydays, those fuckers can come find us.



Captain Jeff Bowen

So I started pulling Jeff again and I was getting so tired my legs burned. I thought of doing the Filthy Fifty (a CrossFit work out) with Rick, the regular back man I work with on Rescue 3 and I was so glad I had done that. I was getting CO dumb, but I had to keep going one flight after the next. On the flight above the third floor a little bungee loop from Jeff's gear caught on mine. It took me a moment to make sense of it. When I did, I went for the knife Clint gave me for Christmas, but could not find it. As I was jostling around looking for it, the loop fell off and I was free. I realized how bad off I was at that point. As I was pulling Jeff down the next flight of stairs, I saw his face for the first time since I had left my truck to go drive 10. I thought of how peaceful and exposed he was. Sliding my hand under his right cheek, I cradled his head as I dragged him down the stairs. He landed funny on the next landing and his legs flopped over and lodged him in place. One at a time I moved his legs out of the way, and just as I was doing this I heard a voice from above yelling down to us. I yelled back, "HELP ME! HELP ME! HELP! HELP!"

Finally they were here. The help has finally arrived. I did not mean to, but hearing that voice made me let my guard down, and for a moment I felt like I might pass out. Jeff was set to go, and even though the troops had arrived I still went for one more flight. I was too tired to drag him

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like before. So I put my feet up high near Jeff, grabbed him with both hands and fell back. I dropped my ass and pulled Jeff down on to me. (DO NOT BELIEVE THE VOICE!!) I have asked everyone in the building at that time and no one called to me. It was a hallucination that caused me to let my guard down and nearly lose my life.

The next thing I remember is Paul Monrow over me trying to put his mask in my face. My airway was too damaged from the smoke and soot. I had to push it away. I tried to say, "Give it to Jeff", but I don't know if it ever came out. Paul asked me if I could walk and I said, "No". Somehow Jeff got in front of Paul and me with his rescuers. I tried to stand and fell down. Paul got me up again and we staggered toward the elevator on the second floor. Paul and I started going the wrong way and Kenny Radford called to us to follow him.

We made it to the elevator and I collapsed in the corner under the buttons. The car was packed. I felt like a little kid looking at everyone's pants. The door opened just after it closed and I heard people groaning and saying something, but I could not tell what. I felt sure one must have had a boot in the threshold of the elevator and the doors came open when they hit. I later found out that we had gone to the first floor but needed to go to the ground floor, one level below us.

When the doors opened on the ground floor I rolled backwards out of the car. It was important to me to get out of the way, so Jeff could be brought out. I knew he was worse than me, but was not sure how bad. As I looked around in the hallway I saw firefighters and medics at the west entrance and an ambulance outside. I couldn't hear anything at first. Crawling toward the door I found myself lifted by a thousand hands, and delivered to a waiting stretcher. These few seconds seemed to go in slow motion. I looked up and all these faces kept appearing in front of me. Clint pulled my turnout gear off and kept me steady on the stretcher.

I saw my friend Thomas. I said, "Thomas, give me some water." So in his southern drawl, he said, "All right man." He opened a bottle of water and totally missed, pouring it all down my shirt. Later Thomas told me when he did that I gave him a "real dirty look" and he then he knew I would be OK.

I was loaded into the ambulance, and I saw Foster, a medic I know from working at 3. He told me I needed to strip down, so as I was lying on the stretcher I took off my pants and shirt, and was embarrassed because I was wearing my one and only pair of pink underwear.

I asked Foster about Jeff and said he didn't know. He told me that his main concern at that moment was me. It was a 30 second drive to the hospital. Then Foster rolled me off the ambulance and into the ER. I was quickly assigned a room, and before I knew it I was surrounded two deep by frantic doctors and nurses.

I saw Kricken, a medic I know in a flight medic uniform. I asked him if he could give me a ride in his helicopter, he said no. But proved him wrong. My thoughts went back and forth from, "I should just get up and go," because I was truly fine, to wondering when I would die.

I asked about Captain Bowen several times, but no one would give me an answer. Eventually I started screaming his name hoping he would yell back to me. "JEFF! JEFF!" I would scream. He never called back.

At one point a nurse started praying near my head, and I felt sure I was going to die. I asked one of the nurses if we could have some music, and wondered aloud if he had an iPod. When he laughed me off, and said "no", I started rapping aloud. WU TANG CLAN AIN'T NOTHING TO F#CK WITH, WU TANG CLAN AIN'T NOTHING TO F#CK WITH, WE BRING THE RUCKUS, WE BRING THE MOTHER F#CKING RUCKUS.

I could hear them in the background, saying, "This guy is freaking out." And I said, "No, this is what I'm like. This is me." I looked over and saw a doctor greasing up an intubation tube, a 12 inch long rubber schlong. I looked up at her and said, "Doc. Please put me under before you shove that thing down my throat!"

The next thing I remember is waking up unable to open my eyes. I couldn't move any part of my body. And felt sure I was under paralysis. I had an overwhelming urge to kick my feet and I felt like that was the key to my survival. I tried with everything I had, every ounce of strength, but my feet would not move. After this effort I passed out.

Later Kricken told me every 40 minutes or so they would see me stirring in the helicopter. They would have to be quick in getting more sedatives into me, because I would try to pull the intubation tube out of my mouth.

I came to again, and once again tried to kick my feet. This time I was successful, and was very pleased with myself. I vaguely remember feeling the sheet bounce off my legs, and losing consciousness. Sometime later, I opened my eyes and saw the outline of my wife's face. I closed my eyes, and the outline moved to the other side of my head. Her face was directly above mine. I could only



see her face. Everything else was darkness. I thought I might be dead.

The next time I woke up I could tell I was in a dark hospital room. It was quiet, and seemed like the middle of the night. I was all alone, and realized I was restrained to the bed with a giant rubber tube shoved down my throat. Throughout my time in the fire I thought I was in some sort of hell realm. I must get myself and Jeff out to escape this hell. Waking up in the hospital in that strange condition in incredible discomfort seemed like I was in a new form of hell.

A very helpful nurse came in who must have noticed that I was starting to regain consciousness. She put on a country music channel and put the remote control in my hand. Some country singer was whining at me about some loss she had had in her trailer park. My new mission in life was to make her shut up. Through some highly sedated ciphering I realized the remote control was in my hand. And though I was unable to read the words, I could make out the arrows. I started stabbing one of the arrows with my thumb as fast as I could to make this woman stop. But unfortunately it was the up volume arrow. Now Reba was whining in my ear at full pitch. "Yes, I am truly in country music hell," I thought.

It took several hours to convince the hospital staff to remove the intubation tube. By using only my eyes and my restrained hands to communicate I let them know that I desperately wanted it removed. At first they told me, "later." To a nurse in her comfortable uniform without a ball gag in her mouth, later means most of a graveyard shift. To me in my condition, later means five minutes. So I hit the nurse call button about every five minutes. Then they would say, "A doctor has to take it out." To this I would indicate with my eyes only, that we are indeed in a hospital, and there should be a doctor almost everywhere. Once again, my eyes lost the debate.

I could see the clock across the room from my bed. Although in my drug delirium state I could not read it. I think it was about five hours until the doctor came and ordered the nurse, who told me she needed a doctor to take it out, to take out the intubation tube which I felt decidedly annoyed by.

I started asking about Captain Bowen immediately, and no one would give me an answer. I was told my wife was in the waiting room. So I grabbed my room phone and

tried to call her. After two or three failed attempts. I called the nurse and told her my room phone was not working. She asked me if I was trying to call a local number, and I said "Yes, it is an Asheville number." And using her best Georgia peach accent, she said to me, "Honey, you're in Augusta, Georgia. They flew you here last night."

I started justifying why no one would tell me about Jeff. He must be back at Mission Hospital. Maybe they flew him to Raleigh. Then the doctor, who had ordered my intubation tube removed, came in. I asked him if he knew about Captain Bowen. He looked at me as though he was about to lance a boil, and said, "Oh. He's dead." Just like that.

He told me that I dragged him out of the fire, and that I was a hero. I wanted to punch this doctor in the face. A moment later a wheelchair came for me, and took me to a hyperbaric chamber. There, I spent the next 90 minutes in Plexiglas tube hacking up half dollar sized chunks of black bloody yuck and contemplating the death of my friend and mentor.

When they brought me back to my room, my wife Lucy came to see me. After a few minutes with her, the firefighters that brought her down came in, along with my mom and stepfather. After a couple hours of tearful greetings, I was released to go home.

A four hour surreal drive delivered me to my house where Chief Burnett was waiting, along with other chiefs, city officials, and a barrage of firefighters. I went around and hugged each one of them individually. This trip was no small task, due to my condition. And then I told Chief I was going in. And there I was back on my sofa. Just over 24 hours after the original call to 445 Biltmore had gone out. I was at home in a daze. What just happened? Is it still happening? When will it stop happening?

I cannot express the gratitude for the firefighters who came in for Captain Bowen and me after working through the point of exhaustion on this shorthanded fire, and continued to work long after we were gone. There was still a fire to fight. Or for all the brothers that came in off duty when the news of our MAYDAY spread through the city. These people truly exemplify what it is to be a firefighter.

TRAINING SAVES LIVES





COMMACK FIRE DEPARTMENT TRAINING DIVISION



Practical Skills Checklist – Firefighter Rescue RIT

Name:	Badge:	Date:
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Task	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Firefighter Removal – FF1 Feet Firefighter		
Locate down FF via PASS device		
Reset PASS Device		
Check downed FF air situation		
Move to feet, put FF's leg on shoulder		
Loosen FF's waist strap		
Unbuckle FF's waist strap and re-buckle between FF's legs		
Does not let go of waist straps until re-buckled		
Tightens down FF's waist strap		
Communicates to FF2 when downed FF packaging is complete		
Positions FF to go out headfirst when ready		
Uses waist strap to move FF "up and over"		
Communicates clearly when working		

Comments

Task	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Firefighter Removal – FF2 Head Firefighter		
Locate down FF via PASS device		
Calls for a mayday		
Recheck downed FF air situation		
Tightens down and adjust shoulder straps of FF		
Ties loose ends of straps in a knot		
Communicates to FF1 when downed FF packaging is complete		
Positions FF to go out headfirst when ready		
Uses “READY (pause) DRIVE” cadence		
Communicates with FF1 clearly as FF2 navigates obstacles		
Uses shoulder straps to move FF “up and over”		
Communicates clearly when working		

Comments

Evaluator	Date:
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Overall Performance	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
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Written: 9/2022

Version #1

Revision #: _____

Date: _____

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