

# FIRE



# TRAINING

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## TRUCK COMPANY OPERATIONS

# SECOND-DUE TRUCK OPS

Second-due truck company operations are only a discussion in many fire departments—they simply don't have the staffing on the fireground to consider splitting first- and second-due truck work. In reality, second-due truck work is a continuation of the truck work that the first-due truck (or crew assigned to truck work) must accomplish.

In an ideal world, the fireground is staffed with multiple engines and trucks. With multiple companies, crews can simply fall in and perform the task that's next on the priority list. Unfortunately, we don't work in an ideal setting, and the jobs that must be performed are determined based on the fireground size-up and staffing.

In our last edition we talked about the priority list of jobs that the first-arriving truck company (or crew assigned to truck work) must perform: truck company size-up, forcible entry, search, initial engine company ventilation and laddering. To continue the discussion, let's look at the jobs normally assigned to the second-due truck company (or the crew assigned to continue the truck work on the fireground).

The duties of the second-due truck company may include ventilation, checking for extension and performing overhaul (support of the engine company), laddering, search and support of the first-due truck company. The



priority of these duties, as with first-due operations, is based on the overall fireground size-up that the second-due truck performs as well as the progress of the first-due truck company (one of the biggest factors that must be considered).

If you look at second-due truck company operations as a continuation of overall truck company functions on the fireground, then prioritizing what needs to be done immediately is a little bit easier. The age-old fireground priori-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



SECOND-DUE TRUCK WORK...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ties (life safety, incident stabilization and property conservation) coupled with the truck company acronym (LOVERS\_U) can simplify the process of determining what needs to be done at a given point.

## **SUPPORTING THE FIRST-DUE TRUCK COMPANY**

One of the most important functions of the second-due truck company is to support the operations of the first-due truck company. That's right—when the first-due truck is overwhelmed from the outset and can't complete all of its primary jobs, then the second-due must immediately assist. Some of the initial support functions would include assisting with immediate rescues, assisting with immediate forcible-entry issues, venting for the initial attack line and assisting with initial search operations. Additional support would include throwing additional ladders, providing additional ventilation to support the attack and the search, and providing support to the engine company attacking the fire.

## **VENTILATION**

The second-due truck company is usually assigned the task of ventilation. A solid ventilation size-up should be conducted upon arrival to determine the amount and type of ventilation that's needed. Ideally, the first-due truck opens up the immediate fire area (or the fire self-vents on arrival). If not, the second-due truck should ventilate the fire area as soon as possible.

The ventilation size-up should determine at the outset what type of ventilation is needed: horizontal ventilation only, horizontal and vertical or vertical ventilation only. Horizontal ventilation is all that's needed in many situations. Consider a contained room-and-contents fire. Besides venting the fire room and the immediate area to remove smoke, there really isn't much ventilation that's needed. When the room-and-contents fire has extended (into the walls, ceiling, void spaces, attic), then the ventilation function is much more involved.

When considering vertical ventilation, consider the easiest options first. Although opening the roof may be the final outcome, there are a number of venting options that are easier and quicker. Consider manmade openings as a first priority—skylights, ridge vents, gable vents and even dormer windows. All of these are much easier options than actually opening the roof with a saw or hand tools. When those options don't get the job done, then open the



roof and get down! There may be some overhaul work that needs to be done on the roof, but that can usually be done after knockdown. Remember: There's still a whole bunch of other truck jobs that need to be taken care of.

## **EXTENSION & OVERHAUL**

When the initial knockdown takes place, the engine will need help opening up the area, checking for extension and extinguishing any remaining fire. This is a high-priority job of the second-due truck company. (The first-due truck is performing search.) The engine company will begin initial overhaul of the fire area, but will probably lack the tools that are normally carried by the truck crew. The advantage of having a second truck crew available: There's minimal delay in checking for extension (around and above) and overhauling the fire area.

As with ventilation, overhaul may be simple or may involve extensive work—it all depends on the size of the fire and where it traveled. Any time the fire extends beyond the contents and into the structure (and void spaces), the amount of overhaul increases drastically.

## **LADDERING**

There never seems to be enough ground ladders thrown on the fireground. As we discussed last time, the art and skill of throwing ground ladders begins by carrying them to the fireground when you arrive. For engine-based truck departments, throwing ground ladders is made more difficult because of today's apparatus design—ground ladders are carried above the hosebed on ladder racks, requiring additional time and effort to get them down.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

SECOND-DUE TRUCK WORK...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2



For departments that are fortunate enough to have multiple truck companies on the fireground, it's simply a matter of throwing the ladders!

## **SECONDARY SEARCH**

One job that may be assigned to the second-due truck is secondary search. Although the search skills are the same as those used to conduct the primary search, it's the use of a different crew that makes this a bit more thorough. Many departments don't have the staffing to have a different crew perform the secondary search. If that's the case, try to rotate crewmembers so they aren't searching the same area.

## **SALVAGE**

What about salvage? Salvage is another one of those fireground skills that has fallen by the wayside due to quick knockdowns and short staffing. The typical room-



and-contents fire has lulled many departments into not worrying about salvage. Unfortunately, like any other skill, the less you do something, the more it's forgotten. Even when a more difficult fire comes along—one that could actually use some aggressive salvage work to prevent additional damage—the fact that it's not practiced as frequently usually results in limited or no salvage.

## **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

As with the duties of the first-due truck company, second-due truck company skills must be prioritized based on the initial size-up (by the second-due truck) and by the progress of the first-due truck.

Although it's easier to explain duties as first- and second-due, it's really a lot more complicated than that. Departments that perform engine-based truck work are already prioritizing these skills (and have been for years). It's just a matter of looking at the bigger fireground picture. Remember: Putting the fire out usually solves most of the other fireground problems or, in other words, may eliminate the need to perform some of the tasks that are typically required later in an incident.

Planning for truck company operations on every fireground is the easiest way to make sure they are taken care of when you show up.

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