

FIRE TRAINING



SPECIAL EDITION

A REFRESHER COURSE IN

VENT-ENTER-SEARCH

Jim McCormack, Lieutenant (ret) – Indianapolis, IN, Fire Department



One of the fireground search techniques that seems to tweak a nerve (or start a heated discussion) is vent, enter, search (VES). You'll hear people say things like, "We don't do that; it's too dangerous!" or "We don't have enough people to do that!" So before we get into the actual skill, and how and when it is performed, let's try to have a civil discussion about why it is indeed a viable search technique on any fireground.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

Simply put, VES is an approach to searching an area on the fireground where

there's a pretty good chance that there's a victim in that area. In other words, either somebody on scene has told you that there's a victim in there or you strongly suspect (based on a solid scene size-up) that there's a victim inside. Remember our previous discussion on high-probability search areas and having a search plan?

In other past articles, we've touched on the roles of the first-due truck company and the second-due truck company. Regardless of whether you have a truck, the skills required by those companies will eventually have to be performed on your fireground. We've also talked about the basics of forcible entry, ground ladders and



Look at it this way:

If your children were inside that room and the window was the quickest way to get to them, what would you want the fire department to do?

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Although VES is not a skill that will be performed on every fireground, it is certainly a viable search technique under certain conditions—conditions that can be found on ANY fireground in ANY department! .

developing a search plan. When it comes down to the actual skills performed on the fireground, it really doesn't matter if you show up with five people or 50; proficiency determines performance, and performance determines success.

THE ACTUAL TECHNIQUE

When it comes to the actual technique of VES, let's do a quick review of the basic skills involved; it helps make the too dangerous operation more of a basic operation! VES involves a minimum of three basic firefighting skills (maybe more, depending on the situation). The three basic skills are Venting a window, Entering a window and Searching a room. For more involved operations (a second-floor window), you have to add the basic skill of throwing a ground ladder. If the VES operation is positive (you find a victim), the additional skill of rescue will have to be added to the list. Let's now use a bread-and-butter fireground scenario—the single-family residence—to illustrate the VES technique.

VES SCENARIO

You arrive (day or night) with heavy smoke showing from an occupied single-story ranch residence with an attached garage. One of the homeowners meets you as you're exiting the apparatus and frantically tells you that both of their children are in the bedroom ("right over there"). Flames begin to appear amid the smoke from the open front door, and the amount of smoke is starting to increase around the edges of the garage overhead door. Just in case you didn't get it, the homeowner tugs your arm and again frantically points to the last window on the front of the house (opposite the garage) and screams that the kids are in THAT room. An additional company arrives on scene, and the first line is being flaked from the engine (you have a 1,000-gallon booster tank and/or a hydrant in the front yard, or both).

This is one of those times that you need to perform BOTH engine and truck work simultaneously. That's right, the fire needs to be knocked down and contained (and eventually extinguished), and the bedroom needs to

be searched—IMMEDIATELY! There are a couple routes to the bedroom:

1. The front door is the obvious route when there's no fire, but it's currently full of smoke and flame.
2. There may be a door on the back side of the house, but you don't know if the smoke and flame are venting out that door as well or whether you'll be able to get in behind the smoke and flame and make it to the bedroom. (And if you are, what about getting out?)
3. You can go in through the window. Going in through the window is the quickest and most direct route to determine if the kids are actually in there. If they are, then passing them out the window is the quickest way to get them to safety. Sure, you could knock the fire down and then do the search afterward, but is that what you'd want the department to do if those were your kids in that room?

VENT THE WINDOW

As you approach the first-floor window that was identified as the children's location, take a quick look in to see if you can see anyone. Is the room filled with smoke? Do you see any fire? Is the bedroom door open or closed? Can you see the beds? Is there a closet? Are there curtains on the window? Basically, try to evaluate the room before you go inside.



Make sure your mask is on and you're ready to go so that when the window is vented, you're ready to get inside. Vent the window and clean it out. Make sure that all the glass is out and the sash is removed. If there are curtains inside, make



sure to pull them down so you don't get hung up in them on the way in or out.

ENTER THE Room

Get inside the window and get oriented! There's really not a lot to say about entering through the window except this:

- Make sure you can get in from the ground (if you need a ladder, bring it with you when you approach the window).
- Make sure the floor is solid on the way in.
- Orient yourself as soon as you're inside.



SEARCH THE Room

Once you're inside, try to shut the bedroom door as quickly as possible. This will buy you time and, hopefully, stop the draw of the interior environment into the bedroom and out the window you just came in. If you can see at all when you enter, try to quickly scan the room for the victim(s) and the door. If you can't see, then getting the door shut may be enough to allow the smoke to lift and give you a bit of visibility. Remember the basics when it comes to searching: After shutting the door, try to find the bed and search it (over and under). Remember that some children will try to hide, so after searching the bed, make your way to the



closet, checking the floor area along the way. Furniture should be obvious, but soft material (bedding, clothing, etc.) can easily mask a young child, so be diligent when moving throughout the room. Use all of your senses to clear the room: sight, hearing, touch. Don't forget to have a good flashlight, and don't puncture anybody with your tool!

WHAT'S NEXT?

What comes next depends on what you find in the room. If you find a victim, then notify your partner at the window, and if you don't hear him notify command over the radio, then do it yourself. It's much easier to have your partner make the transmission while you're working.

Get the victim to the window. Moving the victim depends entirely on their size. You should be able to move a child or infant, but you may need help moving an adult. If you need help, then tell your partner and have them enter and help. Don't forget to call for additional help to the window.

Get the victim out the window and then either continue the search or exit the room. There may be times when you want to return and open the bedroom door, but it will depend on the situation. Example: When the room is on the second floor and the attack line is trying to push up the stairs to knock down a second-floor fire, opening the door will help vent the smoke and heat banking down the stairs onto the advancing engine company.

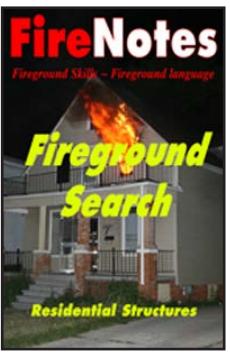
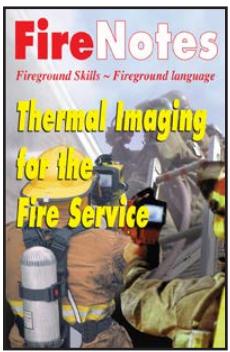
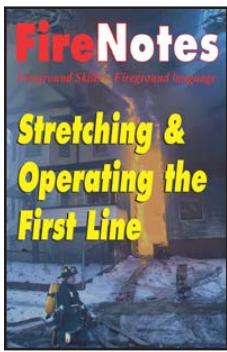
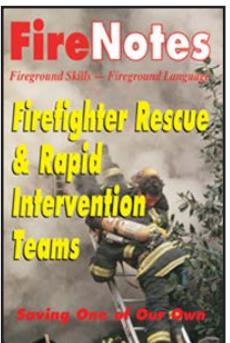
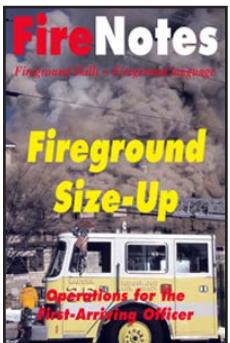
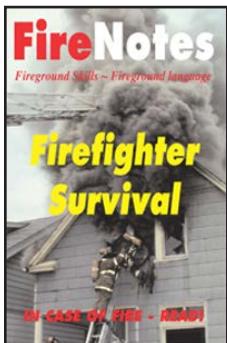
THE VALUE OF VES

Although VES is not a skill that will be performed on every fireground, it is certainly a viable search technique under certain conditions—conditions that can be found on ANY fireground in ANY department! *Look at it this way: If your children were inside that room and the window was the quickest way to get to them, what would you want the fire department to do?*



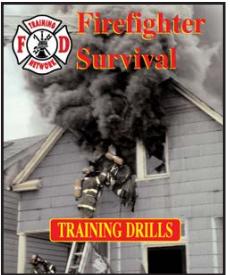
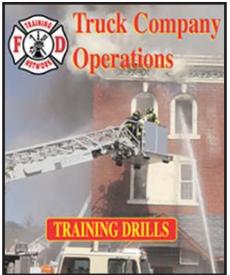
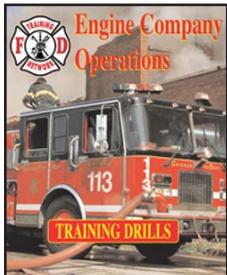
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