

# **ORANGE PEEL**

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## **2<sup>ND</sup> DUE**

Open up any professional publication, click on any fire web site, talk to any firefighter, and you will find plenty of articles, stories or information about being 1<sup>st</sup> due. A lot of time and energy is spent on this subject, because everybody wants to be 1<sup>st</sup> due and get 1<sup>st</sup> water on the fire. But the actions, or lack of actions, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> due company can have a great bearing on the success or failure of the fire. Being 2<sup>nd</sup> due is just as important as being 1<sup>st</sup> due.

So what if you are 2<sup>nd</sup> due? What will you and your company do? Do you know your priorities and what tasks need to be completed? Will you rush in without any thought to the needs of the 1<sup>st</sup> due company? Most companies train as if they were going to be 1<sup>st</sup> due. But how many companies spend time training being 2<sup>nd</sup> due? There is no doubt that your priorities will change based on your arrival order.

It takes an experienced crew to demonstrate good judgment and discipline when 2<sup>nd</sup> due. Being the 2<sup>nd</sup> due company, you have many more responsibilities than the 1<sup>st</sup> due company. Here are the responsibilities of the 2<sup>nd</sup> due company:

- \* Water supply- for 1<sup>st</sup> due engine and possibly your engine.
- \* Ensuring the 1<sup>st</sup> due attack line is in operation and advancing effectively
- \* Command
- \* Back up line
- \* Fire attack
- \* Exposures
- \* Extension
- \* Secondary search

Flexibility is the key to being 2<sup>nd</sup> due. The ability to read the situation based on the initial dispatch and size-up by the 1<sup>st</sup> due engine, then support the operation with little or no direction is paramount. Many times the exact location of the fire is not known. The 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine should be prepared to take the rear or possibly search a street over based on the information from 1<sup>st</sup> due company.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine should to avoid following the 1<sup>st</sup> engine blindly down the same street. Try to locate one hydrant on each end of the incident and anticipate the 1<sup>st</sup> engines direction of travel. Learn the tendencies of the companies you respond with. Do they usually lay a supply line? Is it wet or dry? What kind of lays do they use? (Forward, Reverse, Split). What line do they usually stretch initially?

It's human nature that crews have a tendency to use what has worked in the past, therefore it can be expected that their approach to apparatus positioning, water supply and initial attack line choice and placement will remain consistent. Use this to your advantage in being prepared. Don't act like you've never been there before or have no idea of what they are doing just because of an incomplete radio report.

We all have worked with those companies that consistently stop right in front of the fire and in the middle of the street. If this is the case then don't drive in behind them and perpetuate the same problem. The chances of being able to drive past this engine and lead out to the nearest hydrant are not good. Try approaching from the direction of the closest hydrant and backing in. Anticipating this saves time and energy.

## **WATER SUPPLY**

Water supply is a very challenging task for the 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine, based on their ability to complete this quickly. The lack of a timely supply line may have a major impact on the success of the fire. The 1<sup>st</sup> engine to arrive should include in their initial report whether they have 1) Led in wet or dry, or 2) No supply line led. If no supply line has been lead assume that this responsibility has been assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine. It is imperative for the 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine to announce arrival, location, and intention to supply the 1<sup>st</sup> arriving engine so that any other responding companies can address other tasks and not interfere with the water supply evolution by blocking the street or hydrant. Announce this at least a block or two from the scene to give the other responding companies a chance to adjust.

The most common ways to supply the 1<sup>st</sup> engine are:

- \* Hand lead a feeder
- \* Lay a supply line in (Hydrant to engine)
- \* Lay a supply line out (Engine to hydrant)

A tactical consideration should be the placement at the scene of the 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine. If we put the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine at the hydrant, then the front of the fire is open for better truck company access. This doesn't mean that the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine has to hook up and pump to the first engine, but it is now out of the way and ready to lead in or out if needed.

If possible use the Engineer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine to handle the water supply to the 1<sup>st</sup> engine. Simple hand leads and leading out to the hydrant work well. Don't commit the Nozzle or Back-up firefighter unless absolutely necessary.

If leading out stop 25 feet past (in front of) the 1<sup>st</sup> engine and have the nozzle firefighter stretch the supply line to the engineer of the 1<sup>st</sup> engine while the Officer and Back-up firefighter exit the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine with the needed tools.

Although water supply tasks are more commonly assigned to the back-up firefighter, time is saved by using the nozzle firefighter in this scenario because their hands are free and the goal is to get the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine moving to the hydrant as quickly as possible. The engineer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine leads out to the hydrant and completes the hook-up while the crew of the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine goes to work at the fire.

If you choose to lead in you will lose your Back-up firefighter at the hydrant indefinitely until the lead is complete and more likely than not leave your engine at the front of the house. I know there are times when this technique needs to be used, but don't let it be the only way you supply the first engine. Another method to try is having the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine stop at the hydrant and hand lead the line into the 1<sup>st</sup> engine. This keeps the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine at the hydrant away from the scene and brings the supply line to the fire while leaving the engineer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> due at the hydrant to hook-up and flow the hydrant. The 2<sup>nd</sup> engine crew is now at the fire together ready to go to work.

One critical situation that needs to be pre-planned is if the first engine on scene attacks the fire with a 2 1/2" line off tank water. While this tactic is not recommended by most, there is a time when the reward will outweigh the risk and this aggressive approach becomes a viable option. As the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine arrives, the supply line to the 1<sup>st</sup> engine must be accomplished in the absolute quickest way. Less regard should be given to the placement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine. Lay in wet and sacrifice your back-up firefighter at the plug. This is the time when the only priority is to supply the 1<sup>st</sup> engine and the entire crew of the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine is committed to this until completed. The next priority now becomes making the initial 2 1/2" line more mobile and effective by committing the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine crew to assisting with advancement. Six firefighters on this line can make a huge difference and the extinguishing capability is much greater than multiple 1 3/4" lines. Don't be in a hurry to put a second line in operation immediately without a size up, and don't abandon the bigger line just because it is more difficult, you should downsize only if the conditions of the fire dictate it.

## LINE PLACEMENT

When you ask the question, what does the 2<sup>nd</sup> due company do after water supply has been addressed? Most of the answers will refer to pulling the back up line. This is a basic tactic taught at the entry level, but is it the right tactic? No, not initially. After addressing water supply, the next priority of the 2<sup>nd</sup> due company is to ensure the 1<sup>st</sup> due company has their attack line in place and is advancing smoothly and effectively. It is the responsibility of the 2<sup>nd</sup> due Engine Company to make sure that 1<sup>st</sup> line is moving. If it is bogged down because of hose problems, kinks, corners, long stretches, or stairs, the 2<sup>nd</sup> due Engine Company must assist with the completion of the stretch and advancement of the line first. If the attack line is delayed all the back up lines in the world will not help.

Listen to the size-up! A fire above the first floor is a great indicator of a difficult stretch and the need for additional firefighters to assist in advancing that 1<sup>st</sup> line. Fires in Victorian houses with balloon construction require the second line to check for extension above the fire immediately.

Fire in a multi-story residence presents many problems for that 1<sup>st</sup> due engine. The 2<sup>nd</sup> line down may not necessarily be used as a back up line. Realize that this goes against the “2 in 2 out” rule that many sidewalk officers live by. Firefighting has never been and will never be an exact science with simple right and wrong answers to every situation. The key to making our actions safer on the fire ground is dedication to communicating what we are doing when we deviate from S.O.G’s. Learn to assess each situation and put the crew to work where they will accomplish the most good. If safety is a main objective then 2<sup>nd</sup> line placement must properly address this. Depending on the location of the fire, the 1<sup>st</sup> due engine must be committed to extinguishing a lower floor fire and protecting the interior stairs, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> line advances up the stairs to assist in protecting the search above the fire floor and stopping any vertical fire spread. In this case, the 3<sup>rd</sup> line down ends up functioning as the back up line. How about exposures? The 2<sup>nd</sup> line down may be needed for exposure protection. Get out of the routine that the 2<sup>nd</sup> line down is always the back up line, it may not be.

The placement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line does not stop with just getting it to the proper location. Remember that if you lay your back-up line over (on top of) the first line you have just stopped the 1<sup>st</sup> line from advancing. Separate the location of the lines. Advancing 2 ½" hose is difficult because of the weight. If used as the initial line, don’t allow it to get buried under a back up line. If it is a back up line don’t pin the initial attack line. Working with 2 1/2" is a discipline that the 2<sup>nd</sup> engine company must train on in order to be proficient at attacking large fires and possibly saving a life.

Does the Nozzle firefighter know to see what line was pulled off the by the 1<sup>st</sup> due, so they can choose the correct size and length of backup line? Or do they just pull the only tank line left in the bed? Does it matter? Yes, it matters! If the 1<sup>st</sup> due has pulled their 200' tankline (pre-connect) and the Nozzle FF off the 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine pulls the 150' for a back up line, he will come up short. The firefighter will need to extend that line (add hose) before they place it in service.

The other bad habit is pulling the 200' pre-connect as the back up line every time. Many fires in residential structures require only 100' of attack line to cover the entire dwelling. Pulling the 200' line halfway down the sidewalk and trying to bring it back to the front door is not efficient. Think about using a 100' 1 3/4" Metro Pack<sup>1</sup>, some other type of bundle load, or breaking the pre-connect short. The Sacramento Metro Pack works well because it is packaged in a coil and can be charged in a relatively small area and advanced easily with out flaking. Lastly, avoid bringing the line into the house until needed. Try to think of it as the line above the fire and be prepared to extinguish fire in the upper floors or attic.

## **TOOL ASSIGNMENTS**

The tools that the Back up firefighter brings from the engine will be different when 2<sup>nd</sup> due. A good place to start is bringing the folding ladder and hook. The attic should always be checked after the initial knock down is complete and there always seems to be a delay in accessing the attic while someone goes back to the engine to get the folding ladder. The 2<sup>nd</sup> due company can simplify this by bringing the attic ladder with them and setting it outside near the front door. Some may think this is truck work but I would rather have the trucks doing ventilation and search before checking for extension. The tool assignment should be simple and not interfere with the main task of stretching and advancing lines. Engine officers merely want to be able to quickly support operations on scene by 1) relying on past experience and 2) accessing information gathered en route.

The backup firefighter should also check to confirm the entry door is wedged open. Wedging is everyone's concern and should be stressed before pulling any more hose thru that opening.

## **COMMAND**

Typically, the 1<sup>st</sup> in engine officer will pass Command to the 2<sup>nd</sup> in engine officer. What happens to the 2<sup>nd</sup> due crew in this case? When the 2<sup>nd</sup> due Company Officer assumes the IC position, the crew should know that they are now working for the 1<sup>st</sup> in Engine Company Officer. This information is relayed on the radio to the 1<sup>st</sup> in officer along with an assignment and quick update. "Engine 2 on scene assuming T St Command, Engine 2's crew is assigned to Engine 1". If this process is not practiced by all, then those two firefighters of that 2<sup>nd</sup> due engine will end up freelancing because of the lack of supervision and direction. Stress to these firefighters the need to stay together, get an assignment and account for each other.

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1-*"The Metro Hose Pack"*, By John Davidson & Bob Williams, Fire Engineering, September 2000, Pg 59-61

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The job of being 2<sup>nd</sup> due may not be the glorious one, but it is just as important to the success of the operation as being 1<sup>st</sup> due. More time and training should be spent practicing being 2<sup>nd</sup> due. If the same amount of time was spent on being 2<sup>nd</sup> due, and companies members had the discipline to complete their task and not free-lance, then there would be a marked increase in the success and efficiency of the 1<sup>st</sup> due engine. The Officer sets the tone by remembering to utilize tactics that promote speed and efficiency while keeping the crew together to go to work at the fire as quickly as possible. The time to train being 2<sup>nd</sup> due is not after the alarm is received.