

BY: KEVIN TROST

Sacramento Fire Department
Truck 7

R.E.C.E.O. Re-visited: The Big-E

The last time I “held court” I talked about the difference between strategic priorities and tactical priorities in reference to the “R” in RECEO. This month I will try to dispel the myths and misconceptions regarding the big and first “E” of RECEO, Exposures. Does the first line go on the exposure or the fire? Additionally, I will explain why the same tactical priorities are applied to both “rescue” and “exposures” when addressing the strategic priority RECEO. As I stated last time; Put water on the fire, and things get better!

For those of you that have a short attention span, the first line goes on the fire! Follow along, and you will see.

When we hear the word “exposure”, we tend to envision pulling up to a house well-involved, and seeing flames coming from a window threatening the house next store. Our immediate reaction is to pull a line, and protect the exposure. Based on the spacing of the buildings, we at times will commit additional resources to protect the exposure and/or exposures. Once those lines are in-place, then we will address the **real problem**, the fire itself. With these thoughts in mind, we need to take a deeper look what constitutes an exposure.

There are several thoughts on what constitutes an exposure. The obvious exposure is the building that is being threatened by fire from another building. However, an exposure could be the hallway threatened from a bedroom fire, or the kitchen from a garage fire. How about the living room from 2 bedrooms and the hallway? Another example of an exposure is the living room threatening the hallway and bedrooms. One exposure we often don’t think about is the attic! In fact, that is why some departments from the East Coast don’t like the aggressive vertical ventilation we do here on the West Coast. They believe that if the attic is clear we are drawing the fire through the attic creating an exposure problem. Another article!!!!

There are two things that we need to understand on this issue of does the first line go on the exposure or the fire. First, we need to understand the basics of the “time/temperature curve”. Second, we need to understand the value of attacking the seat of the fire. The “time/temperature curve” is very simple. I’m not sure the propeller heads will like my explanation, but most of you should. As more time passes, the temperature goes up, and more stuff burns. When all the stuff burns, the temperature goes down. So here’s the thought, if you put the first line on the exposure, more time passes, the temperature goes up, and more stuff burns; thus, creating a “bigger” exposure problem.

Remember, you have the interior exposures as well as the exterior exposures. It's that simple! As far as attacking the seat of the fire goes; when you put water on the seat of the fire, the direct application of the water on the fire, and the conversion of the water to steam through the thermal column, the fire goes out. Thus, it eliminates the exposure. It's just that simple!

So, with all this in mind, let's look at how we fight fire. I don't think any of us are taught that if we have a living room fire threatening the hallway and bedrooms we put a line on the hallway and bedrooms first. Then, we attack the fire. We are taught that we use a straight-stream, and attack the fire head-on. We put the fire out to protect the hallway and bedrooms which are the exposures. As a side-bar, the whole issue of un-burned and burned side of attack has changed because of the use of straight-stream fire attack. Another article!!!! Additionally, we don't put the first line in the attic on a bedroom fire when the attic is the exposure. We are taught that we attack the fire, and check for extension. The same is true whether you have an interior or exterior exposure. Aggressively attack and ventilate the fire, and everything gets better. The exposure problem goes away!

Obviously there are some exceptions! However, there is a very simple way to address these issues. We use the "time/temperature" curve. If whatever is burning causing the exposure problem has reached the peak of the "time/temperature" curve, then your first lines can go on the exposures. Additionally, if you have containment do to the construction type of the building such as the Goodwill Industries warehouse fire we just had, your first lines can go on the exposures. Plus, the same is true when you have access problems where you can't access the seat of the fire. This was also true with the Goodwill Industries warehouse fire. I'm sure there are some other examples, but the basics still hold true. Aggressively attack and ventilate the fire, and things get better. The exposure problem will be diminished and/or eliminated.

A question I always get is in regards to the first line at the 8th and F Street fire is the placement of that line. Remember, or if you don't know, we were dispatched to an address on 8th which was the C-side of the fire building. The front of the building was on F Street. Additionally, this was an exterior fire that extended into the building and the attic. So, the c-side of the fire was an exterior fire threatening an exterior exposure and interior exposures. Based on where we were dispatched, and the fire, the first line was placed on the B/C corner of the building. Water was applied to the exterior of the building, not interior, knocking down the fire. Thus, it eliminated the exterior exposure problem. The next lines were moved to the A-side for interior and attic fire attack which were the interior exposures. So, in actuality, the first line was put on the fire, not the exposures on this fire.

As you can see, regardless of the strategic priorities of Rescue and Exposure that make-up RECEO, the tactical priorities are the same. Fire attack and ventilation! This is the essence of what makes a great Fire Department. We need to understand that although Exposure is the second strategic priority on the fireground, fire attack and ventilation are the first tactical priority to accomplish that strategic priority of Exposure.

Next time, we will look at CE. However, you can probably guess where that's going!