

ORANGE PEEL

September 19, 2002

BY: DAVID BALDWIN
Sacramento Fire Department
Truck 6

TAKE THE REAR!

Take the Rear! This statement tends to be misunderstood. It does not mean get to the back or rear of the structure. Take the rear means getting to the back or behind the fire and searching for victims.

The area behind the fire is potentially the most volatile area, and requires rapid entry and search in order to rescue those lives that are in the most peril. Heat and smoke will be pushed to the rear as the engine company advances to the seat of the fire. You must time your entry, search, and exit with the advancement of the engine to avoid enduring the brunt of the advancing hoseline.

Gaining entry to the rear may involve entering the structure by non-conventional means, such as a window. Searching will usually be without the benefit of a handline and exiting will be out the way you entered. This technique, called Vent-Enter-Search (VES), entails venting of the immediate area by removing glass or forcing a door. You allow the room to vent then enter thru that opening. The first priority after entering the room is to find the door and close it. Closing the door will “buy” you some extra time to complete the search and rescue any trapped victims. Once the door is closed proceed with the search.

After you complete the search of the room, you must make a decision, leave or continue. If you choose to continue, return to the door, carefully check it before opening. If the door is too hot don't open it. Exit thru your entry point and VES the next room.

If the conditions allow, open the door slowly and survey the surroundings. If tenable proceed to the next room. Be sure to close the door as you leave. This is your exit! Protect it! Make the next room and search. Remove glass if needed to improve visibility. After you complete the search of the 2nd room, return to your original entry point and exit the structure.

Far too many times the 1st due truck will enter the front door, without regard for the rear. Usually what ends up happening is the advancing hoseline bogs down the truck guys. You can only squeeze so many people through a 36” doorway.

What happens when there is a front room fire? Now what are the truck guys, who always go for the front door, going to do? Since they do not practice getting to the rear, this tactic will be unfamiliar and in turn add precious time to the decision making process to get to the rear and begin your search.

Getting to the rear is a frame of mind. Getting to the rear is an attitude. You have to get away from the traditional thought process that you always go through the front. There are many benefits to taking the rear. One, you find a second way in (or out) to the structure. Two, you see more sides of the building thus revealing hidden dangers not seen from the front. Three, you put yourself in a better position to find and rescue a victim not otherwise found until after the engine knocks down the fire.

Good communication amongst your crew and having a good plan make getting the rear possible. This plan needs to be talked about and practiced prior to the alarm and used when the alarm hits. It's OK to be predictable. The time to decide what you are going to do is not when the air brake is set.