

ORANGE PEEL

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Truck 6

THE INSIDE TEAM: Private Dwelling Fires

For the purpose of this article I will discuss the functions of the Inside Team on a four-person truck company. The Truck Company can be split into two teams of two: The Inside and Outside Team.

The Inside Team members should include the Officer and the Tools Firefighter. Each team member has a specific list of responsibilities or duties to complete and certain equipment to carry with them. Discipline must be maintained to ensure that specific jobs or tasks get completed. You have been assigned a small list of task to complete, and the rest of the company is counting on you to complete your task. **DO NOT FREELANCE!**

Before the fire call comes in, you need to make sure your assigned tools and equipment are in good working condition. The backdoor of a well-involved structure is no place to find that your saw is out of fuel or not working properly. That should have been discovered at the station during your morning checks. The recommended tools and equipment to be carried by each team member are: (turn outs , SCBA and a flashlight are a given).

Officer

Radio (on proper Tach channel)
Axe-pickhead
Circular saw (if appropriate)
Can (if appropriate)
Personal service line
Thermal imager (if available)

Tools FF

Radio (on proper tach channel)
Axe-pickhead
Irons-married together (8lb flat head axe or 8lb sledge hammer, Halligan, bolt cutters)
6' hook
Personal service line

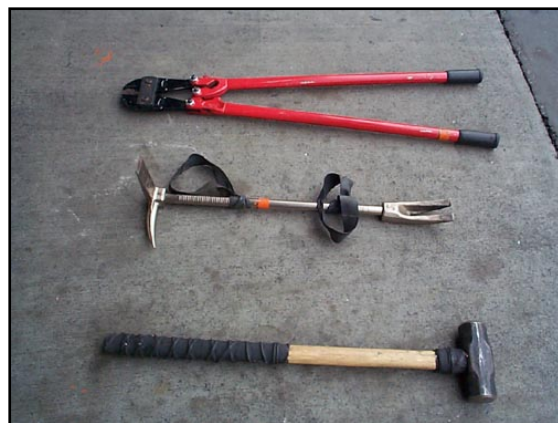


Photo 1: The iron package. Bolt cutters, halligan bar and sledge hammer.

The responsibilities for the inside team includes:

1. Forcible entry
2. Primary search of residence (VES)
3. Assist attack team with inside operations (pull ceiling, walls, etc)
4. Salvage
5. Overhaul

On arrival at the fire building, and after your size up, the Inside Team should proceed to the rear of the structure together. Their number one priority is searching for victims. They should take the easiest path to the rear. This may be the driveway, or side yard. As you proceed to the rear look for the fire room and read the fire conditions on the inside. If you come across the fire and the fire has not yet vented, break the windows of the fire room out. This will help channel the heat and smoke away from where the attack team is advancing, and “buy” some time for any victims inside, and make your search easier.

Once at the rear the Tools FF can prepare to force entry by breaking down the irons. While this is going on, the Officer should take a peak down the other side of the building to see if there is another or easier way in, to get a “feel” for the floor plan and to see what the conditions are. This move should take only a few seconds. The Officer now has seen all sides of the building and can adjust the plan if needed.

Once the Tools FF is ready they are prepared to force entry and begin their search. Slowly open the door and “let it blow”, making sure that you control the door in the event you need to shut it. Entering through the rear puts the Inside Team “behind” the fire, so remember as the attack team is pushing in they will be pushing or driving the heat toward your location. Letting it “blow” before entry, will make your entrance easier. Don’t forget to wedge or prop that door open prior to entering the building.

If your entry point is a sliding glass door, use caution. That large opening will permit a rush of air for the fire, which may cause the fire to “blow up” and may cause injury to the people inside. If entry through the rear is not possible due to the delay of the advancing engine company or fire conditions prevent your entry, then immediately return to the front and move in rapidly behind the advancing engine company.

Your search begins the second you enter the building. A rapid, thorough search of the fire area is your main priority, with the areas immediately adjacent to the fire area second. A good search does not include sticking the Thermal Camera in the front door and looking around. A good search consists of getting in there and searching on your hands and knees. This is where the victims will most likely be located. This is where the visibility may be better, and this is where it will be cooler. A good search is looking on top and under beds, in closets, in bathrooms and behind doors. A Thermal Camera cannot see behind a door from the end of the hallway.

Once your search is complete, and no victims are found, notify the IC that you have an “All Clear”. Now it’s time to meet up with the attack team and assist with their needs, whether that means pulling ceiling, pulling walls or finding the scuttle hole to check the attic for extension. After the fire has been knocked down and a thorough search of the structure has been conducted, salvage must be completed. Use of salvage covers and hall runners will help to prevent further property damage.

Fires in multi-story private dwellings present some additional problems for the Inside Team. A good rule of thumb is to start your operations on the fire floor first. Once you have completed the search on that floor, then proceed to the floor above the fire and continue your search.

In most two-story dwellings the sleeping areas are located upstairs. A fire on the bottom (1st) floor means that the Inside Team must complete a search all areas of the bottom floor and get up stairs as soon as possible and continue the search. If possible, close the door of the fire room prior to going up stairs.

As you ascend the stairs, the last three steps before the landing will be the hottest. Once you make the landing, you should notice a reduction in the heat. While upstairs you may need to remove glass to get some relief from the heat and smoke. Continue with your search until all areas have been checked, and return to assist the attack team.

For fires on the upper floor of a multi-story dwelling the Inside Team will need to advance upstairs rapidly to complete a search. Once inside, if the lower level is clear of smoke, locate and ascend the interior stairs and perform your search. If smoke is found on the 1st floor, a rapid search is required to ensure that the fire did not start on this floor. If you encounter fire on the 1st floor, this information needs to be passed onto the attack team so they can place their lines in the proper position.

Once you have advanced to the top of the stairs and you encounter fire at the top of the stairs, in the hallway or in the room closest to the top of the stairs, you may have to wait until the attack team gets to your position to control the fire, prior to continuing with the search.

The Inside Team has a very important set of goals that must be accomplished each and every time regardless of the circumstances. The Inside Team must have the proper attitude and discipline if you are to be successful in reaching your goals. Ensuring your tools are in good working condition, reading the building on arrival, rapid forcible entry and systematic search of the fire floor are all indicators of an Inside Team that has a plan, takes pride in their job and has practiced these skills before they need them.