

Proper Training— How Important Is It?

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Door entry—proper training is the most critical component of fire fighting.

As most of us know, more than half of all 911 calls responded to by the fire service involve a medical emergency; less than 10 percent involve actual fire. Over the last 10 years the numbers of fires and fire deaths have also gradually declined, thanks to the great work in fire prevention.

These statistics have had a real, lasting impact on today's fire service. Rigorous EMT/paramedic training has become a mainstay, but fewer fires means many fire fighters don't receive the same level of training on actual fire fighting. Although the decrease in fires and fire deaths is a true testament to the progress we've made, we still need hands-on training to learn proper fire fighting techniques and to keep ourselves as safe as possible on scene.

Some departments believe that when a recruit graduates from an accredited fire program, and they've met all the objectives of NFPA 1001: Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications, they've received all the

instruction on fire behavior, hose placement and methods of fire attack that they'll ever need. The fact is they've acquired only the basics.

In pursuit of attaining Fire Fighter I status, recruits must demonstrate their ability to extinguish a fire involving stacked or piled Class A materials that can be fought from the exterior of the structure. Not until advancing to Fire Fighter II status does the recruit coordinate an interior fire attack with all the necessary tools and personal protective equipment (PPE). For the very first time, they evaluate fire growth and development, conduct a primary search and communicate changing conditions to the incident commander (IC). All of these lessons and drills are conducted in the very beginning of their career. So what happens after that? When was the last time you did live fire training?

The same high standard of continuing education that we place on EMS training should be carried over to our fire