

Fire Department
Issue: 02

RISK ANALYSIS

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Safety BULLETIN

RISK ANALYSIS

Fire fighters know the importance of being aggressive; they are trained to respond, size up, and combat a fire. When the alarm sounds, they immediately respond to the scene. They size up or evaluate the situation and then combat the fire. Often, an equally important factor in this scenario is overlooked. That factor is RISK ANALYSIS.

When we (city managers, fire chiefs, etc.) send fire fighters into burning buildings we put them at risk. Every fire fighter knows that RISK is part of the job. But when is this Risk justified?

We don't send fire fighters into a fire if we are **not really sure we can bring them back out**. So, we have to ask ourselves in each situation; "Will the outcome equal the risk involved"?

In an interior attack, we should ask:

1. Is the building vacant?
2. Are people trapped inside and **CAN** they be **SAVED**?
3. Are we fighting this fire to protect **LIVES** and property or to protect **Property Alone**?

If the building is occupied, we need to know if we can reasonably expect to save lives. By the time the fire fighters arrive on the scene, there is a good chance that the occupants have already died either by the **fire itself**, the intense heat, or by **smoke inhalation**. **Do we risk our firefighters lives simply for body retrieval?** This analysis must be made prior to entry!

If rescue is not a factor, then the mission is one of preserving property. Are we preserving contents or the building? If we arrive on the scene and the fire is totally involved and the contents have been destroyed,

what is the reason to send fire fighters inside? There is no *reason to* put our fire fighters at RISK under these circumstances.

We must distinguish between aggressiveness and recklessness. We used to judge a good fire fighter as one who was aggressive enough to lunge into a fire without the aid of breathing apparatus.

Now we recognize the importance of breathing apparatus in Successful fire fighting tactics. It is considered RECKLESS to enter a smoked filled burning building without the aid of such Personal Protective Equipment.

While aggressive acts are important to saving lives and property, RISK ANALYSIS is important in saving fire fighters' lives and equipment. RISK ANALYSIS must become a **Routine** part of the fire fighters' plan of action.

The ideals held by fire fighters: "That personal safety is irrelevant and they will go to any lengths to fight a fire even when there is nothing to save", MUST be changed. Their perspective should be: "We will fight hard - - Do our best; But we will do it SAFELY."