



Saturday (One day)

20. It Happened to Us, the Anatomy of a Near Miss

Instructor: Tim Whitham

NEW for 2026

Firefighters are often reluctant to share events that went wrong or had a negative outcome for fear of being viewed by their peers or stakeholders as unprepared or poor performers. These incidents are often hidden in the corners of fire station or swept under the rug. They are even treated as personal failures of leadership, but rarely are they treated as a learning opportunity. One such event left our department asking questions and examining how we as an organization handle near misses and what we can do to improve performance and procedures. While we had two firefighters bail out of a window due to a sudden and drastic change in interior conditions, the journey our department took to learn from situations like this many and others in order to make cultural changes was profound. This fire, which appeared to be out by all indications of visual and thermal imaging changed in a matter of seconds with temperatures rapidly increasing forced firefighters to choose between ignoring their department MAYDAY policy and immediately bailing out of a window. This class examines how we view, plan for, and experience near misses as well as what you and your agency can do to create a culture of progress.

About the Instructor:

Timothy F. Whitham; MS, EFO, a 28-year veteran of fire and emergency services, serving as a career and volunteer firefighter in career, combination and volunteer agencies at the local, federal and contract level. He is currently the Fire Chief with the Edwardsville Fire Department, in the Kansas City Kansas metro area. Tim holds a Master's Degree in Leadership with the Emphasis in Disaster Planning and Executive Fire Leadership and is a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program through the National Fire Academy. He is accredited through the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress as a Fire Officer III, Instructor III, Inspector II, Hazardous Materials Technician and Incident Commander, as well numerous other certifications. Tim is an Adjunct Professor with Columbia Southern University, College of Safety & Emergency Services as well as an Adjunct Instructor and Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Applied Research Project (ARP) evaluator with the National Fire Academy. He currently is a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, where he serves on the IAFC's Affordable Care Act Task Force, and the National Fire Protection Association. Tim is an Army veteran of Airborne Infantry regiments in the active duty and National Guard components