

Short Staffed Operations

How Can I Accomplish What Needs To Be Done?

This presentation will identify how the modern fireground tactical decisions and accepted practices cannot fight the majority of the American fire service. Almost 90 percent of the firefighters and fire departments in the United States are in small communities of 10,000 people or less and are all or predominantly volunteer agencies. Fireground tactics and acceptable standards indicate that a minimum of 16 firefighters should be the minimum number of firefighters on the fire ground of a standard residential dwelling fire; how does the agency with only three or four members initially start fire suppression activities? Then the addition of catch phrases such as Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT), Incident Command System (ICS) positions or mandates by Federal Laws such as the OSHA two-in, two-out IDLH ruling all affect the fire ground commander's decisions as it pertains to fire suppression. Firefighter and civilian safety is paramount to any fire ground operations, but lacking personnel can increase risks, but departments can also provide superior fire suppression actions while waiting for additional personnel to arrive on scene and be proactive in their approach to dealing with emergency situations prior to the actual dispatch. Ventilation, fire attack, search and rescue, water supply, hose-line advancement, forcible entry, rapid intervention, command, operations, and safety are all considerations and tactical steps that a fire ground commander must address and utilize to stop the spread of fire. Throw in fancy terms such as SLICE-RS, RECEO-VS, Nozzle Forward, Kill the Flashover, Flow Path, and numerous other terms that evolve every day provides very little comfort in trying to determine the appropriate tactics to utilize, let alone face a fire with a few other firefighters. This class takes a different approach into addressing and identifying the whole incident through a thorough scene size-up. Applying a risk model to address the benefit/gain for fire ground actions, then prioritizing the situational tasks until additional fire suppression personnel are on scene to provide sufficient hands to accomplish all tasks. Minimum water flows, unconventional approaches to water delivery, controlling ventilation points to place a fire in an oxygen deprived state are discussed as students formulate tactical plans for fire suppression activities. It is the responsibility of current leaders, chiefs, and fire officers to accomplish the mission assigned to the agency by the community. Undeniably there are numerous benefits of complete staffing of every fire department in the United States, but this is a rarity today. The best organizational accomplishments often occur due to the efforts of all being on the same sheet and the ability to develop others will lead to successful results.

Instructor – Tim Whitham

Tim Whitham has over 28 years of firefighting experience encompassing volunteer and career firefighting. During this time, he has spent over 15 years in supervisory roles and eight years as Chief / Emergency Manager in combination departments and smaller communities that are representative of the vast majority of the American Fire Service. This experience has afforded him the opportunity to utilize and practice numerous different strategies and tactics in various parts of the country, while utilizing the NIMS Incident Command System since its implementation on many local emergencies ranging from structure fires, hazardous materials releases and large public gathering venues such as parades and community events. He has taught strategies and tactics utilized on the emergency incident site to company officers and firefighters since 1994. Lead and managed departments in small and medium sized communities and have variety of experience in career, combination, federal and career fire departments. Over his career, during many exercises and actual events, he has utilized Unified Command operations when dealing with large scale community flooding, responses to severe weather events, and planning for community parades and events.