

# Firehouse.com WEEKLY DRILL

## DRILL # 46: EXPOSURE CONCERNS

### Introduction

As firefighters, our first priority is to focus on hazards that have a life-safety concern attached to them. One such area that we need to be coherent of is that of the fire exposures. Oftentimes, when we are listening to the radio we may hear a unit arrive on location with a structure fully involved. Right away a red flag should be waved to the other units coming that the possibility for an exposure condition may exist. It would be wise for the company officer calling in the report to the dispatcher that he also makes it known that there is in fact an exposure situation present.

### Six-Sided Solution

Once verification of the exposure is known, a determination as to the extent of the threat from the fire has to be addressed. This can only be accomplished by examining all sides of the burning structure. For many firefighters and officers this means conducting a 360° tour of the burning structure. But this is only partly correct. Yes, we want to see all four sides of the structure, but we also need to get an understanding as to what exposure may be above the fire and below the fire. This means that all *six* sides of the structure need to be examined.

One concern that should be addressed right away is whether the officer has the time to visually inspect all these different areas. In general, the answer is no. This is why it becomes so vitally important that all members have the knowledge and ability to make accurate determinations and communicate them back to their officer and command.

### Know Your A, B, C's

The basic knowledge that all firefighters have to have is that of understanding which exposure is being addressed. This can only be accomplished by understanding the terminology used in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS uses a system for identifying each side of the structure with a letter A through D. The front of the building would be the A division, followed by the B division, C division and D division in a clockwise direction around the building. Following this same pattern for identifying exposures in a strip mall, the exposure



to the left-hand side would be exposure B, then B1, B2 and so on. Those exposures to the right would be exposure D, then D1, D2 and so on.

### Tough Choices

One of the hardest things, for most people to do, is to make choices. This is no different for firefighters and company officers, because some of the choices they have to make may mean the difference between life and death for those immediately involved in the incident.

When we are confronted with which exposure we need to focus on, using the resources that are immediately available, we may be putting some people's lives in jeopardy. However, the choice must be to go with the exposure that is in greatest danger and has the greatest threat to life. Then, as additional resources arrive, they can be put to work on the remaining exposures.

Keep in mind that the best way to stop fire from spreading to exposures is to extinguish the fire. However, this may not always be that easy and, in such cases, a strong defensive attack must be placed into operation to stop the fire from spreading.

*—Prepared by Russell Merrick*