

# Firehouse.com WEEKLY DRILL

## DRILL # 39: DECK GUN OPERATIONS

### Introduction

One of the modes of operation in firefighting is that of the defensive attack. In general, when an incident commander makes the determination to go defensively, he does so because the fire is of such volume and intensity that approaching with handlines could be dangerous to firefighters. In such situations, it would be appropriate to go directly to master streams.

One appliance we could use is the deck gun. This appliance is sometimes called by different names such as: a monitor gun, a pre-pipe, a turret pipe, or a deluge set. Whichever terminology is used by your department, this appliance is either permanently mounted to the apparatus or is of the portable type. The portable ones come with a stand of some type, which is used to stabilize the unit.

There are several incidents where the strategy for using the deck gun comes into play. The rule of thumb is that gpm (gallons per minute) puts out fire! This can only be accomplished using master streams. Therefore, when might we use the deck gun? For fires that are so intense that defensive operations are needed to be effective. Those situations include when:

- the amount of water needed to absorb the heat of the fire is greater than that which can be applied by handlines
- building involvement and or collapse potential outweighs safety for interior attacks
- thermal column or radiant heat prevents handlines from reaching the seat of the fire
- high-angle ladder-pipe application would likely push the fire down or back into the structure, and a low-angle stream from a deck gun is more in order
- hazardous situations or explosive potential warrant the set up of unattended, high-volume streams, such as a fire in a propane truck or railroad tank car
- exposure protection from a well-involved adjacent structure is needed.

Keep in mind that this type of operation is not without some limitations. The one with the most impact is that of having the required amount of water needed to maintain the operations. So, water supply will be a crucial element. Another limitation is the effective reach of



the stream. Generally, the deck gun can reach heights of about 3-4 stories above the level of the appliance. Finally, master streams are never to be used in an occupied situation. If there are people trapped or an interior operation has been started, then a defensive operation should be suppressed until all occupants have safely been removed. Command is responsible for making sure the structure is unoccupied before ordering master streams into operation.

In most instances these master stream appliances will produce anywhere from 400 to 800 gpm. Should a heavy amount of water be running out of the structure, this could be an indication that the stream is not reaching the seat of the fire and thereby becoming ineffective. If this situation is noticed, then a quick repositioning of the stream is in order.

Notes of caution: When master streams are being used we need to be concerned with the buildings integrity. As fire has weakened the structure and we are pouring large amounts of water into them as well, signs of collapse should be a major concern. Establish a collapse zone and keep firefighters and equipment out of this zone.

One point that needs to be brought to our attention is if we are going to use the deck gun for our defensive operation. We are going to need to understand that using the water in the tank is not sufficient for a "Blitz Attack." Be sure to obtain a water supply before attempting to place a master stream appliance into operation. Until such time as a water supply has been secured, use water conservatively, you may need it for a more serious situation.

*—Prepared by Russell Merrick*