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Weekly Drill

No. 21: Firefighter Tools & Equipment

Introduction

One thing that is guaranteed about fighting fires is that firefighters will use tools and equipment in one form or another. Hand tools can be classified into four different categories or functioning groups:

- pushing & pulling
- prying & spreading
- striking
- cutting

With winter in full swing, getting outside and conducting drills can be a challenge. That's not to say that we don't have to train! This is a good time of the year for inside training drills and even a better way for firefighters to get some extra knowledge on some of the most important tools and equipment of the trade.

Nothing is more frustrating for a company officer than when he instructs a firefighter to get a piece of equipment or a tool from the fire truck and then hears compartment doors start shutting, one right after the other. It is important that all your firefighters know where each tool is stored on the apparatus and how to use it both properly and safely.

The Drill

To prepare members for this training drill, have them assemble at the back of the apparatus. Then, one at a time, instruct a firefighter to get a predetermined piece of equipment or a tool from the apparatus. Allow them to go through as many compartments as needed to locate the item. Once located instruct the firefighter to:

1. Name the piece of equipment or tool
2. Explain its function
3. Give an example where they would use it
4. Discuss the safety issues of that equipment
5. Cover the care and maintenance associated with it

Some officers like to have the firefighters carry a piece of paper along with them to diagram the compartments and the equipment located there in. This is perfectly acceptable.

Functions

It is important to remember that all companies carry a number of different types of tools and equipment. As



previously mentioned, these tools will fall into one of the four functioning groups:

- **Pulling & pushing** – These tools extend the firefighter's reach and increases the power that can be exerted on and object. An example of this tool would be a pike pole.
- **Prying & spreading** – These tools can be some of the simplest or most complex. They are constructed to take on the challenges, as most if not all are fabricated out of steel. There are a wide range of these tools used in the fire service. One of the most popular is the Halligan tool, which was designed and named after a member of the FDNY.
- **Striking tools** – These tools are designed to apply an impact force to an object. Many are used in conjunction with a prying or spreading tool. A maul or sledgehammer is an example of this type of tool.
- **Cutting tool** – Cutting tools are equipped with sharp edges that come in several forms and are used to cut a variety of materials. Cutting tools can be hand operated or power driven. One such tool carried by firefighters is the seatbelt cutter.

Care & Maintenance

As should be the case in the fire service all members should know how to take care of the tools. Additionally, every firefighter needs to know about all of the safety rules that apply to each piece of equipment and tool carried on the apparatus. Be sure to follow the manufacturers' care and maintenance procedures as well. I can associate my days in the U.S. Marine Corps with the following message: "A clean tool is a happy tool," you take care of them and when you need them they will take care of you!

-Prepared by Russell Merrick/Firehouse.com