

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #78: 13-POINT SIZE-UP

Introduction

Upon arrival at an incident, the chief officer or Incident Commander (IC) starts putting together a thorough 13-point size-up. This size-up, which helps us remember what critical information needs to be obtained, can be remembered using a mnemonic. There are a few different mnemonics used for this size-up, but for this lesson we are going to look at WALLACE WAS HOT.

W = Water. The water supply will help determine whether a fire can be controlled quickly or if there is going to be a time delay in getting a supply established. In most cases, hydrants will be the main supply source, but there are areas that will require tenders to bring water to the scene.

A = Area. The building size and layout are going to have to be determined. This information can also be used to determine water requirements and resources needed to mitigate the incident.

L = Life Hazards. Keep in mind that life safety is our top incident priority. Firefighters are not to be left out on this, and should be our first priority. Victims are going to use exits familiar to them, even if it places them in harm's way.

L = Location & Extent. Where is the fire located in the structure and how intense is it? Is it traveling and, if so, what is in its path?

A = Apparatus & Personnel. Without the right apparatus and amount of firefighters on scene, control and containment will be minimal at best. In some instances, specialty equipment and personnel may have to be called.

C = Construction & Collapses. Knowing what effect the different construction types have on a fire will help determine the strategies and tactics that will be used. It also will help in determining what the potential might be for structural collapses.

E = Exposures. Another incident priority is that of property conservation. When looking at exposures, remember they can be interior or exterior and both have to be addressed immediately.

W = Weather. This speaks pretty much for itself; temperature, wind, humidity, the type of precipitation. Keep in



mind that winter weather contributes to icing and slippery surfaces, slowing response times and causing fall injuries.

A = Auxiliary Appliances. These are built-in fire systems such as standpipes and foaming systems at bulk storage facilities.

S = Special Matters. There are a great number of items that can fall into this category. Topography tops the list, along with obstacles deterring access, wildland urban interface, EMS requirements and more.

H = Height. This is a consideration at all incidents where buildings are more than one-story tall, keeping in mind that some structures pose below-ground situations as well. I have also heard that in this category the "H" can stand for Hazardous Materials.

O = Occupancy. What is the occupancy classification and what are some of the contents within the structures?

T = Time. The time of day, week and year also plays a role.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick