

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #131: INCIDENT ACCELERATION

Introduction

Every incident the fire department responds to is unique in and of themselves, but all incidents have one thing in common...they all have incident acceleration. Before we look at the incident acceleration, let's look at the three phases of an incident.

1. **Crisis Phase** – the crisis phase is characterized by confusion, panic and a rush to the scene. Attempting to resolve the incident without taking actions to limit the growth of an incident may contribute to the incident acceleration. Panic and confusion may cause initial tunnel vision; responders must insure that initial efforts are not focused on incident resolution, but rather on limiting its growth, thereby containing the fire and or controlling the event.

2. **Management Phase** –the management phase is characterized by the arrival of additional resources, the gathering of crowds and even the media showing up in force at the incident. The goal of this phase is incident resolution. This is achieved through a team of decision makers. This team is responsible for bringing the event to a safe and successful conclusion using the incident command system (ICS).

3. **Termination Phase** – during this phase, agencies involved in the incident:

- Plan a return to normal operations
- Complete an after-action report
- Participate in incident debriefings
- Members are evaluated to see if any form of stress management is needed, and if so, make sure it's provided.

Overview

So let's look at the incident acceleration. One nice way of looking at this phenomenon would be to think of it as a bell curve. Every incident starts out as a normal or routine day and ends the same way, but what happens between these two normals is anything but normal.

Normal routine

This will depend on whether you are a career firefighter or volunteer. As a career firefighter, you will be performing your daily tasks around the fire station. As a volunteer, it will encompass whatever activity you are

Firehouse

INCIDENT ACCELERATION

Incident Time Line



The rate at which an incident escalates from a small problem into a situation that will require more staffing of Command Personnel and Resources

doing when the alarm comes in. It is basically doing what you would be doing if you were not on an alarm.

Incident

Something goes wrong and requires an emergency response. This is when the alarm is transmitted.

Stabilization

Implementing the Incident Action Plan (IAP) and putting in place the operations that will bring the incident under control.

De-escalation

Returning resources that are no longer needed. Packing up and going back into service.

Normal routine

Getting back to whatever you were doing before the alarm or the things that you would normally be doing when not on an alarm.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick