FIREHOUSE® Weekly Drill

Drill #141: Hose Lays

Introduction

As any firefighter worth their weight knows, you cannot put a fire out without having an adequate supply of water. With all the modern apparatus infiltrating the fire service these days, none are successful in bringing the right amount of water and that's why we establish relays.

The "blitz attack" on fires has been around for several years now. This is where the first-in engine company will forgo stopping a hydrant on their way into the fire scene, saving some time and applying water on the fire sooner. The thought behind the blitz attack is that of being able to catch a fire in its early stages of development.

Although using the blitz attack may have its advantages, what we are really doing is relying on the next-due engine to get us water. But what happens should this next engine be delayed by a train or become involved in an accident? Once you run out of tank water, you are all but finished attacking the fire. Many in the fire service are still under the belief that it is the first-due engine's responsibility to obtain a water supply.

If you are first-due, the main lay you are going to use for this water supply is the forward lay. How this works is the engine will stop at the closest hydrant to the fire in most cases (I say in most cases because sometimes this will not be possible as the hydrant may be out of service or it was not visible to the driver upon approach). All drivers should practice this maneuver as it works best when the rear step of the engine has just cleared the hydrant; making it easier for the hydrant firefighter to pull hose to the hydrant. In general, the hydrant man will gather all the necessary hardware (gates, hydrant wrench and hose) to perform the task of making the hydrant.

Once the hydrant firefighter has pulled off enough hose to reach the hydrant and has a few feet of slack to work with he will wrap the hose around the base of the hydrant and signal the driver to "go." The driver then drives slowly to the fire laying hose in the street, and the hydrant firefighter stays back and makes up the hydrant.

Using the blitz attack, the next-due engine will need to obtain the water supply. This is usually done using the reverse lay. Using the reverse lay means we are going to be laying supply lines from the attack engine, on scene, out to the hydrant. The driver of the second engine may be coming from the opposite direction or he may need to back down to the first-arriving engine. Once in the correct position, the hydrant firefighter will stretch sufficient hose to the tires of the attack engine that are furthest from the source of water. Another way of remembering this is to proceed with the hose past the pump panel. In doing this, we allow the pump operator a sufficient amount of hose to make his connection on the pump panel, without falling short.

The manpower from this second engine remains at the scene and obtains orders from the incident commander, while the driver lays out to the nearest hydrant slowly, dropping supply hose in the street. Once at the hydrant, he will position his apparatus and prepare to make the hydrant.

Depending on local fire department policy, some departments may give the first engine the hydrant only. Others will have the second engine hook up to the hydrant and pump back to the first engine. Know your department's policy.

–Prepared by Russell Merrick