



The 20 Structural Watch Out Situations

The idea behind establishing the structural watch out situations is to aid the firefighter in recognizing a present or developing hazardous situation that may endanger themselves or others. When these situations start appearing (one may not be a problem, but five or ten sure are) on the incident a change of strategy, tactics, or simply re-evaluating risk versus gain will become obvious, the idea is to recognize them early on.

It is impractical to think that the average firefighter or incident commander is going to reference these 20 situations in the heat of battle, therefore the preferred way of integrating this information is to “pre-load” it. Two easy areas to pre-load the watch outs are in routine trainings and by simply posting them in the day room for discussion. Also think about incorporating these into the after incident review so as to start reinforcing their use.

These are taken from a workshop designed to manage risk created by Quinn MacLeod titled “Managing Fireground Risk”. Any comments would be appreciated. Reference www.integrated-firesolutions.com

1. 360 view of fire and size up not performed.
2. Uninformed on strategy, tactics, fire conditions, and hazards.
3. Instructions and assignments not clear.
4. The incident is progressing poorly.
5. Transitioning from offensive to defensive or visa versa.
6. The structure has been evacuated by the public and is confirmed.
7. Water supply is unreliable.
8. Searching without a hose line or tag line.
9. Working above or below the fire.
10. Attempting to attack the fire from a ground ladder.
11. Interior building configuration makes escape to safe areas difficult.
12. Upon entering the structure you encounter heavy smoke conditions and / or high heat.
13. Unable to quickly locate the seat of the fire.
14. Unfamiliar with the building and / or its contents.
15. The building has had numerous alterations.
16. Operating on the roof with only one means of egress.
17. 15 minutes have elapsed & the interior fire fight continues.
18. Environmental conditions are extreme.
19. The incident scene is dark.
20. Mentally and / or physically tired.

NOTE: Numerous versions of these structural watch outs exist, therefore these are not all-inclusive.