

Miller, Diane M. (CDC/NIOSH/EID)

From: James.H.Bonner@phila.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 05, 2009 3:28 PM
To: NIOSH Docket Office (CDC)
Cc: Chen, Jihong (Jane) (CDC/NIOSH/EID) (CTR)
Subject: 141 - FFUS Comments

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Comments

Dear NIOSH,

Thank you for this opportunity for input into your NIOSH Alert titled "Preventing Deaths and Injuries of Fire Fighters When Fighting Fires in Unoccupied Structures." Twice in the document it is mentioned that an interior attack should not take place in unoccupied structures. In Philadelphia, as in other northeastern United States cities, is the prevalence of row construction. In Philadelphia and south the construction of buildings and houses are primarily (though lessening) ordinary. North of us are more wood frame structures. In row construction, a fire in one or two rooms, with constant monitoring and communication of fire progression, is commonly controled with an interior attack. This tactic is critical. The consequence of not entering to extinguish the fire is the loss of (and I have on occasion) half the block, if not the entire block. This can destroy (and has) as many as 40 to 50 homes. Personally, I have entered a house with a hand line two doors down from the vacant house where the fire originated. Porch fronts allowed rapid spread of the fire. I crawled over three bodies after outside neighbors assured us that the houses had self evacuated. Accountability of the occupancy of those homes is impossible in the onset of this type of structure fires. I feel your blanket statement lends itself to removal of the decision that an educated incident commander should be able to control without worry that a phrase in this document is a catch-all for no interior lines when all occupants are reported evacuated. The emphasis needs to be on educating/certifying chiefs and company officers on building construction, based on fire effects and failure rates of the various types of construction.

Also, the term 'aggressive attack' is and has been synonymous with 'interior attack.' Hopefully starting with this document, the fire service can gravitate toward the use of 'calculated interior attack.' As is taught in our officer developement course, that the interior handline should be advanced in a calculated fashion. Each slide/crawl forward with the fire fighter and officer at the nozzle necessitates data collected as to floor stability, smoke pressure, flame location, ventilation effects and communication from the exterior.

Sincerely,
Jim Bonner
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