



# Primary Search Operations

1. Conduct a Primary Search Survey (Size-up) for several different types of structures.
  - a. Residential
  - b. Commercial
  - c. Restaurant
  - d. Hotel/Motel/Nursing Home
2. Conduct a Classroom Briefing of key points to follow in a Primary Search.
  - a. Occupancy
  - b. Time of day
  - c. Type of structure
  - d. Likely location of victims
  - e. Best access
  - f. Primary/Secondary means of escape
  - g. Hose line/rope selection
3. Conduct a Blind Search of a structure.
  - a. Use vision reducing/eliminating devices if actual smoke cannot be used. (Opaque shower caps over face pieces work well, or reverse protective hoods)
  - b. Use ICS/RIT operations as necessary.
4. Record all radio communications.
5. Conduct IC and Officer Situational Awareness Check. Periodically query Company Officers and IC as to:
  - a. Location of firefighter(s)
  - b. Number of firefighter(s) in a location
  - c. Total number of firefighter(s) inside building (IC)
  - d. Elapsed time target units have been inside structures
6. Conduct IC Strategy Check
  - a. Periodically ask what the Primary Search strategy is:
    - i. Currently
    - ii. Next 5 minutes
    - iii. Next 20 minutes
  - b. Note changes mentioned.

### **Preparation:**

- Search drills can be conducted in any available structure or training tower.
- Be sure that the proper permissions have been obtained.
- Structures should be inspected to ensure the safety of participants.
- Trainers should be the first ones to go through the training to ensure that lesson objectives can be achieved.
- Monitor and record officers and ICs as they issue verbal and radio orders. Use these recordings during the critique.
- Start all drills with a simple objective and work towards more complex drills.

### **Materials:**

Buildings to search

Normal Engine/Truck company tools/ladders/hoses.

Artificial lights/noise/smoke (Theatrical smoke is readily available).

Recorders for taping radio communications.

### **Procedure:**

1. Break into crews or individually to complete Building Survey of outside.
  - a. Note:
    - i. Entrance/exits
    - ii. Stairway location (up/down)
    - iii. Direction of upstairs hallway
    - iv. Plumbing stacks
    - v. Number of 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor bedrooms
    - vi. Likely kitchen area
2. Conduct Classroom Briefing of search techniques.
  - a. Likely victim locations
  - b. Identification of room furnishings as clues
  - c. Other items from the Near Miss Lesson on *Primary Search Operations*
3. Conduct Quick Primary Drill.
  - a. Pairs enter into area, drill tower or building to do small room search.
    - i. Limit time (3 – 5 minutes)
    - ii. Left or Right Pattern
    - iii. When complete ask each firefighter individually to:
      1. Draw floor plan of room(s) searched complete with:

- a. Dimensions
    - b. Furniture
    - c. Obstructions
  2. Discuss search operations with their officer.
  3. Finally allow firefighter(s) to reenter the search area, with their maps for comparison.
    - b. Note accountability and air consumption times.
  4. Conduct Blind Drills. (Same as Quick Primary Drill only blind)
  5. Follow Radio/Voice Communications procedures.
    - a. Consider using Continuous Accountability. Units:
      - i. Identify (Who)
      - ii. State operating location or destination (Where)
      - iii. Work Task or assignment (What)
      - iv. Quantity of firefighters in unit (How many)
    - b. Ensure all communications SOPs are followed.
- Example – *Engine 6, advancing line to basement, with 4!*
6. Conduct an IC and Officer Awareness check
    - a. Periodically query officers on quantity/location/task of their firefighters.
    - b. Confirm status of RIT operations.
    - c. Query IC on location/air times/total firefighters in building.
  7. Conduct an Emergency Evacuation during the Primary Search.
    - a. Use alternate exits/egress.
    - b. Confirm accountability and air consumption times.
  8. Other procedures as recommended in Near Miss Lesson on *Primary Search Operations*.

**Options:**

- Primary Search Drills – Avoid the temptation to make things too complex as a variation. Simple variables, repeated, will do the most good for your firefighters.
- Require good *Situational Awareness*. This is achieved by having firefighter(s) draw the search area immediately after they exit. Then, allow them to enter and compare their drawings with the actual area.
- Search Team Briefing – Require initial search team to brief a second search team, and then have the second team describe their objective to instructors. (Record this briefing.)
- Crew Update Drill - Assuming crews are inside already doing a Primary Search, ask the Incident Commander to radio a change in the location of victims. Monitor to see if they successfully navigate to the new location.

- Riddle Drill – Place four (4) traffic cones inside a room with one word of a riddle written on each cone. After specifying the search pattern, have ff(s) do a quick search of the room. If pattern is correct firefighters should exit with the correct phrase. (Example, *Firefighters – Always – Save – Victims*)
- Order Giving Drill – In isolation give a specific scenario to the company officer. Next, while the officer's crew dons their SCBA, the officer briefs the crew. Isolate and query each ff about the clarity of their instructions. Check for slow, clear, concise orders.
- Search [www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com) for additional information on *Primary Search Operations* and develop a similar scenario.

### ***Discussion/Review:***

- Conduct Debrief of your incident using the document *Team Learning Checklist.doc*.
- Use the Discussion Questions found in the Near Miss Lesson on *Primary Search Operations*.
- Debrief your drill using the CRM Discussion Points in your Near Miss Lesson on *Primary Search Procedures*.
- Critique in terms of team play as well as task effectiveness.
- Play back audio tapes of incident.
- Develop or Modify your Standard Operating Procedure on *Primary/Secondary Search*.

### ***References:***

- [Near Miss Report Number: 06-0000218](#)
- *Team Learning Checklist.doc*
- [Making Decisions Under Stress](#), edited by Janis A. Cannon-Bowers and Eduardo Salas
- [Street Smart Firefighting](#), by Robert C. Bingham
- [Firefighter Rescue And Survival](#), by Richard Kolomay and Robert Hoff
- [Collapse of Burning Buildings, Vincent Dunn](#)
- [Fire Officer's Handbook of Tactics, John Norman](#)
- [Truck Company Fireground Operations, Harold Richman](#)