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MRFD Training Division News

"Interior Fire Condition Considerations"



"THREE STRIKES AND YOU'D BETTER BE OUT"

In reading a recent article in "The Firemen's Grapevine" I came across an interesting article called "Three Strikes and you'd better be out". This was the final of 19 articles written by John Mittendorf for their monthly newsletter/magazine on the "Art of Reading Smoke".

I will attempt to summarize the article and provide you with some important points to consider the next time you find yourself inside a working structure fire.

When you are operating at a working fire several initial considerations must always be in the forefront:

- How much air do you have in your SCBA?
- How long will it last under stressful conditions?
- What are the observable conditions from the outside of the structure?

Another thing to always remember is that our PPE has evolved into something that protects us so much better than the past that we may not even realize the conditions we are in. New technology has provided us with much better protection.

Now back to "Three Strikes and You'd Better Be Out".

- Strike One – Smoke with Heat.
 - Smoke with heat has a higher chance of flashing and burning than cool smoke. Do not underestimate the cooler smoke though because it will also flash and burn.
- Strike Two – Less than acceptable visibility.
 - What is less than acceptable visibility? You have to ask yourself, will I be able to find my way out of here in a timely manner and can I see what is occurring around me. If so, it is probably acceptable visibility.
- Strike Three – The environment is not improving.
 - You have made a mental note about conditions you are involved in, 10 minutes have now passed, have the conditions improved or are the worse?

Consider this scenario:

You arrive with your crew and find a one family dwelling with smoke showing from side B window and from the eaves. Command assigns your crew to interior fire attack/primary search. Your crew assembles and enters the front door with all required equipment and a 1 ¾" hose line. Progressing through performing your assigned tasks you find the smoke is increasing and it is getting somewhat hotter than before. (Strike One) Your "uCANa" report back to Command is something like this, "Interior crew has increasing smoke with more heat, we are continuing our search and have not found the fire, we need ventilation on the B side or rear bedroom, and we are at ½ air." Crew visibility is decreasing (Strike Two) and conditions are not getting any better (Strike Three).

Your crew had better start considering leaving the environment before things get worse. With these conditions inside of the area could anyone still alive? What are you going to save? These are all tough decisions that have to be made so we always need to consider the following below:

**Risk a lot to save a lot,
Risk a little to save a little, and
Risk nothing to save nothing.**