

Getting the

Most



From Your Training Tower

Are your firefighters ready to meet the challenge? Are you thinking of all the training exercises that you will be able to accomplish in your training tower? Training is the one and only time that you have complete control over the conditions and environment that you work in. For this reason each department should establish clear training goals, including a structural training course. This will ensure you are getting the most from your training tower. Incorporating numerous types of training exercises into your department's program will enable you to develop a team of well prepared firefighters.

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There are some common, although not universal, training exercises among fire departments. The majority of training towers incorporate features that allow for laddering, rappelling, live fire, ventilation, and search and rescue. It is critical that these exercises are integrated into each department's training goals.

Less obvious training exercises, which may be the department's most important, are thinking under pressure, developing and reinforcing positive reactions, and preparing for incident command. Honing firefighters' skills will eliminate dangerous and unwanted habits, and will reinforce positive reactions to different situations. In order to accomplish this, the scenarios developed need to emphasize good practices. Because each department's situation is unique, the different types of training exercises may vary for each department. Effective coordination is a key factor in ensuring successful responses to major incidents. Each firefighter needs to be exposed to different levels of pressure in different scenarios to effectively take command.

Being able to think under pressure and incident command go hand-in-hand. When people are in trouble or stressed, they rely on their instinct. Constant training will provide that instinct for firefighters. And a training

tower is a safe environment to practice. It allows the training officer to adjust the environment for different members of the team. Each department must have clear lines of authority along with a plan, to ensure that command positions are being filled with highly qualified individuals in the future. Training in a tower will help each department develop procedures to make this a reality.

Managing a major response is one of the most important challenges facing fire departments. The more training situations each department can run through, the better prepared each department will be.

When properly trained, firefighters will feel confident in making the right decisions in situations where there may not be a second chance to save one of their own. A carefully designed training facility will serve both physical task training as well as providing an environment to develop and enhance fire officers' skills. ■



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