



Fire Training Toolbox "Free Training for Firefighters"

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Engine Company Ops:

Alternative Hose Line Stretches

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As we all know getting the first line in place for fire extinguishment is usually the thing that makes or breaks the incident. Normally our stretches are quite simple and straight forward; however some occupancies can make it quite difficult on us to get that first line in service. In these cases having some additional tools in the tool box to overcome these difficulties is paramount. As usual aggressive district knowledge, preplan program, and training program at the station level are needed in order to identify when these "alternatives" need to be put in play.



Exterior Stretches: There are times when we could have to stretch our hand lines via the exterior walls. We can use windows, and balconies as our retrieval points for these stretches, by passing the interior stair. One must be cognizant however that when we bypass the interior stair we could create a building integrity issue and leave possible routes of escape unprotected. It is usually recommended in these types of stretches that you stretch to the floor below the fire then utilize the interior stair to ascend to the fire floor. Some occupancies however do not afford this option. Exterior stretches do however have several pros the biggest of which is the use of less hose to complete the stretch. These exterior stretches can be accomplished in several ways the most

popular are the rope stretch and the pike pole stretch.

Rope Stretch: The rope stretch is actually quite simple. A firefighter ascends to the desired floor with rope, and lowers the rope to the firefighter on the ground. The firefighter on the ground then secures the rope to the hose line. Once the hose is secured the firefighter on the desired floor hoists the hose onto the balcony or in the window in which they are standing. This type of stretch can be done with a charged or uncharged hose line. It usually helps to pre tie a knot and attach a carabiner, or snap hook to the rope. This will increase the ease and speed of the stretch. Also





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lowering the rope down is the preferred way to get the rope to the ground firefighter. While this may take a little longer it is safer, and less likely to get caught on obstructions such as awnings, window sills, and window AC units.



Pike Pole Stretch: The pike pole stretch is again quite simple but more man power intensive than the rope stretch. For this maneuver a firefighter must be positioned on every level between the ground and your desired floor. The ground firefighter simply uses the hook of the pike pole and passes it to the firefighter above them. This action is repeated until the target floor is reached.



Interior Stretches: Sometimes when we encounter obstacles within the interior of a structure we can utilize alternative methods to reach our goal.





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Well Hole Stretch: This is one of the most popular of the alternative interior stretches. Typically utilized with a U return stair well configuration, and using the space in between the banisters to stretch our hose lines. This can be done via rope, pike pole, or hand stretching. The rule of thumb to ensure you have a properly sized well hole for this operation is to make a fist with a gloved firefighting hand and place it in the well hole space. If the hand fits then you have enough room to stretch one line via the well hole. If you have more space then a second line may be stretched. Take note that stretching a second line via the well hole must be done with care in order to avoid wrapping the second line around the first one and creating a 180 g.p.m. barber pole. The pros of this stretch are keeping the stair well open, and using less hose to complete the stretch. Some cons are the weight of the water in the hose may stress some banister assemblies to the point of failure, and the stretch itself takes extreme coordination, simply put this is not something to try on a whim without a proper dress rehearsal.



Final Thoughts: Whenever these tactics are employed communication not just with your crew but responding units is a must. This will prepare the responding units for possible unforeseen circumstances, and allow them to act accordingly. Also whenever utilizing a stretch where hose lines will be unsupported remember to tie off the line to a substantial object. Failure to do this could result in catastrophic failure of the operation. Don't be scared to think outside the box, in the 1 Meridian Plaza fire in Philadelphia when the stand pipe PRV's didn't allow adequate flow five inch line was hand stretched up the stairwell in order to make a fire attack. Ideal? Absolutely not, but an alternative that could have to be utilized in a last resort, do you have a plan for last resort operations? Lastly get out in your district and talk about how you're going to stretch these lines, and a plan B, and C for when those may fail.

Don't Let Your Fire Ground Slow You Down!