

The Motorized "360"

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Wal-Mart, Target, Home Depot, Toys R Us, or various other chain and brand name stores. No matter the name they go under they all have one thing in common. THEY ARE HUGE! They also provide a very difficult fire problem for even the largest and best staffed fire departments in the fire service. In these instances we must abandon our traditional "residential" tactics and deploy more logical approaches to dealing with these large structures. One of the most crucial things we must adjust is our initial on scene 360 survey.

In our ordinary residential setting the first due company officer performs a 360 scene survey on foot, noting building construction, fire conditions, presenting victims, hazards, etc. However in the commercial occupancy environment the 360 is just as important but a more daunting task. Simply put there is no way we can cover the needed ground, noting the important characteristics, fire conditions, and hazards while staying on foot. In a larger department with more resources simply assigning a company to side C could accomplish this task. However in departments that are resource challenged this is not always feasible.

THE MOTORIZED "360"

The Motorized "360" is simply stated utilizing the apparatus to perform the 360 scene survey. When arriving on scene to a large commercial occupancy stay in the apparatus, and if possible drive around the entire building. While doing this perform your survey as you would any other time noting fire conditions, building construction, hazards, egress points,

victims, water supply, etc. Once this is completed you can develop your action plan and assign units accordingly.

The benefits of this are:

1. Faster scene survey
2. More accurate size up of fire and smoke conditions.
3. More eyes on the structure (Even if only staffed with 2, four eyes looking at the structure is better than just two, more staffing equals more eyes looking and reduction of the chance that something critical will be missed)
4. Location of deployment point options (The front door in these occupancies may not be the best option, a side or rear door may put you closer to the fire limiting your exposure to a dangerous floor plan and fire conditions)
5. Location of on scene hazards in the rear and sides of the structure
6. More accurate victim information. (Not everyone evacuates via the front entrance, especially employees in the storage areas of these occupancies. This will give you a more comprehensive assessment of how many possible victims you are dealing with, their locations, and access points to them)
7. More accurate size up of building construction and current building conditions.

While the 360 scene survey is always important the fact that these occupancy types are daunting alone when not on fire even add more emphasis. As previously stated we must abandon our residential tactic mentality and utilize a methodical approach. Taking the time to do an accurate size up will enable first in company officers to gather critical, lifesaving information for victims and all firefighters on scene.