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Preparing the RIT

Trevor Bertram

It is two in the morning; you are in a dead sleep in your bunk when you are awoken. Awoken by the tones, you can hear excitement in the dispatcher's voice. Now you are wide-awake. What goes through your mind next? Location, assignments, occupied, unoccupied. We could build a good list with this question. However, do you think about RIT? Do you have a dedicated RIT company?

All over the country, departments have to do more with less. Each one of us has probably seen this in our departments first hand. So, how does your department overcome these cuts when it comes to RIT?

When assigned to RIT on a working fire, do you and your company know what tools to grab, when to grab them, and what not to grab? Today we are going to take a few minutes to go over the basic things to grab when tasked with RIT on a fire scene. Keep in mind we will not be going into what you would need for high-rise or industrial fires. What we will be covering today is a residential fire.

Also keep in mind that these practices may not work for you or your department, take the time to research and train to find what works best for you.

When assigned to RIT the first thing I do on the fire scene is designate the RIT staging area. The first thing I take off the rescue is a tarp, how can we help if we have no organization of our tools? Once I have a designated staging area, the tools start filling the area up. What I personally get into the staging area first is a stokes basket. You may not be able to take this in with you every time, but if your staging area is far away it can be a life saver just getting your tools to the door. After the stokes basket has made it to staging, hand tools come next. The reason I prefer hand tools for RIT is because of the situation you are working in. Now there are examples where power tools and spreaders are needed to help in the execution of rescuing a downed firefighter.



Items I like to have in my staging area and why:

Axe – for obvious reasons, the axe is the most reliable chain saw we have on seen. In addition, it can be used for forcible entry in the case you need to force entry.



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New York Hook – there are many uses for the NY Hook on the fire scene. Pulling, prying, leverage. Just some of the things you may have to use it for during a RIT situation.

Bottle Jack – The bottle jack is a nice and simple tool that can be used to lift object off of a downed firefighter.

Cylinders – I like to keep enough spare cylinders in the staging area for each member of the team. My reasoning behind this is for one quick cylinder change for the RIT team in case it is needed.

RIT Pack – This should be self-explanatory.



Cribbing – This goes right along with the bottle jack. What is the point in lifting something if you cannot keep your purchase point?

Life safety rope – The life safety rope can be used to lower the down firefighter from a second floor (or higher) out to safety. Also can be used to conduct a below-grade rescue after a collapse.

Utility rope – The use of the utility rope is very import for a long-term operation. Whoever is the last member for the initial activation should have a utility rope with him that is secured to a point outside the structure. The reason behind having a rope follow you in is for easily finding your way out or for a second crew to easily find their way in.



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Bolt cutters – This tool may not be useful on every job, however when it is needed you will be glad you have it.

Pike poles – This can be used for pulling objects out your way.

Ladders – Used for climbing over object that has collapsed inside the structure, or can be used for a below-grade rescue, Denver drills, ECT.

Now that we have everything to the staging area I like to stock the stokes basket with my tools. The stokes basket may or may not go in with us, but it is useful in keeping everything organized and ready to deploy. Inside the stokes basket I like to keep the irons, bottle jack, one or two pieces of cribbing, NY Hook, RIT pack, life safety rope, and bolt cutters (depending on the job).

Depending on the length of the pike pole, I usually leave them outside, shorter pike poles can easily be managed inside the structure. Also, the ladder, extra cylinders, and extra cribbing remains outside in the staging area.

Now that our stokes basket is packed and ready to go, we will talk about why I use the stokes basket in this manner.

With everything together in this one area, we can carry all of our equipment to the entry point without leaving any of the initial tools needed. Also, the stokes basket can be used for firefighter packaging/removal from inside the structure.

Remember that the examples and reasons above are what I have found to work for myself and my company. Always research and train on any topic you want to improve on.