



PPE

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Knowledge Series
13-004

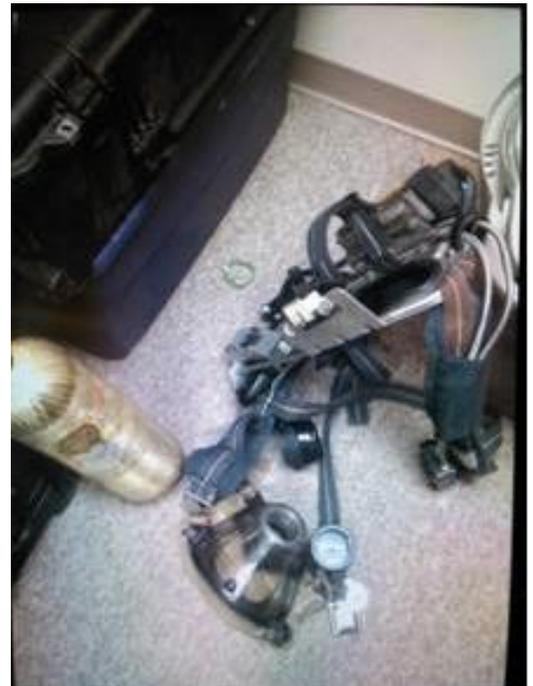
SCBA Quick Confidence Drill

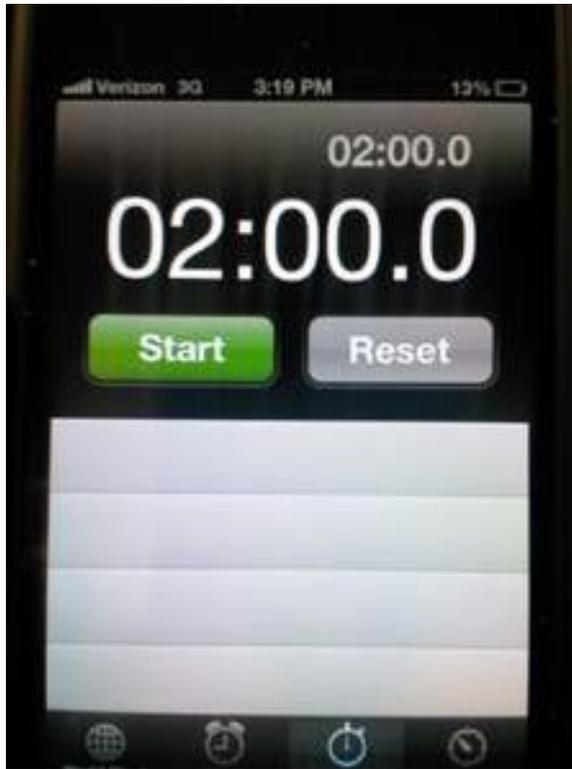
Lt. David Schreiber
Holtsville Fire Department
Long Island, NY

Objective: To have Firefighters become confident working with the SCBA in a dark and smoke filled environment so as to avoid having them become mentally unstable and ripping the pack off in a harmful situation risking hospitalization or even death.

Items Needed: Full Turnout Gear, SCBA Pack, Stopwatch

Task: This is an SCBA drill for pack familiarization, troubleshooting and mask confidence. To begin take the pack apart (i.e. bottle off and tightened some, if not, all the straps). Everything else stayed intact. The pack and the bottle along with that person's mask went into a dark room piled up on each other. The firefighter would first go in without gloves and without turnout gear and get familiar with what the parts





felt like and what it should feel like when put together. Once the pack was put together, they would then turn it on, put their mask on and go on air and come out of the dark room making sure everything was put back together properly. After that familiarization round, they would do it over with gloves

on, still without turnout gear and do the same thing; coming out with everything donned correctly. Then once completed full turnout gear was added making the room feel even smaller and increasing the intensity and exertion of what they were doing. Room size shouldn't be bigger than that of a small closet. Finally, depending on the size of the crowd, we made it competitive. We timed each person. Fastest time won. We counted only times that were two minutes or less. Object is to not get frustrated and stay calm. My guys, if it would start to get challenging, would get frustrated and after each round we would critique it and discuss possible ways for them to troubleshoot their problem and improve their performance. After a few times and different applications as to how they could improve, each person's time was under the two minute mark which showed me as an officer that these guys want to learn and figure out, either with a

group or on their own, ways to free themselves up in a troubled situation. A cluttered building makes it easy to get hung up on things and possibly pull parts of the pack off or become entangled. In a dark, smoke filled structure, visibility can be reduced hence doing this drill in the dark. If they start getting “cocky” have them challenged by either having the officer running the drill take part or start giving them obstacles that get in the way like spreading out the pack and moving the bottle or mask further away making them feel out for it as if they kicked it away from them. We all had fun doing this drill. Actually, a normal two hour drill at my firehouse went about 3 ½ hours. Each person challenged themselves by trying to beat their time each time they went as well as their competitors.



Completion: At the completion of the evolution, we look to see that the PPE has been donned properly. We are also looking to see that the bottle is securely fastened and that the waste strap gets properly positioned in the center of the body for Rapid Intervention Purposes. The firefighter should be on air in full PPE by the time they get used to putting the pack together. All of this should be done in 2 minutes or less.

Why I recommend this drill:

We have come a long way in improving fire safety to firefighters inside burning buildings. As any tool goes, the SCBA is one of the most important because it allows us to do the work we have trained for to get the

job done and go home. People tend to get claustrophobic when put in situations involving tight spaces or even just putting the mask on. It gives them a sense of entrapment and they may pull the mask off in a toxic smoke filled environment. The people that I did this drill with became so comfortable with working with the SCBA that, not only can they not wait to do it again but keep themselves thinking that anything can happen and to think worst case scenario so that, God forbid, when the time comes, they stay cool, calm and collective and free themselves without incident. In the past, I have seen incidents where members become uncomfortable with the equipment they wear, more specifically the SCBA because as the low air alarm goes off, peoples adrenalin start to increase and they have the thought process of "Oh my god, I'm not going to make it out and I have to take this off" now exposing themselves to toxic smoke. The low air alarm is not the end of the world. It is the stay calm, it is time to start heading out warning. That is forgotten a lot in my opinion. I see firefighters risking their own lives by simply ripping the face piece off which makes me think "What were they thinking" or "What happened that made them pull it off". Remember, we wear all of this gear because it helps us and it's not there to harm us. Train, train and train. Practice makes perfect and there is never an end to training. Be safe and let's all go home.