



Fire Training Toolbox "Free Training for Firefighters"

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## Did You Say TACTICAL Ventilation? – Bryan Altman

Ventilation in today's fire service world is becoming a lost art; yes, that is right, ventilation is an "art". We have to remember that ventilation creates flow paths for the products of combustion to be removed from the fire building and make our "office" a safer place to operate. We should remember that flow paths created by the ventilation openings we create should either pull or push the products of combustion back to the area of origin. Ventilation is more than just taking a window, door, or opening the roof. Ventilation should be done in a "Tactical" manner. So many Firefighters today just break windows to break them and neglect to understand WHAT they are doing and WHY they are doing it. This can lead to injuries and deaths!

We need to ask ourselves when performing ventilation certain questions,

"If I open this area up will it cause negative or positive effect on the fire?"

"Will it cause injury/death to firefighters or victims?"

"Will it make the area of operation more tenable?"

"Will this help save the property?"



All these questions help play a roll in making sure the performance of ventilation is for tactical purposes. To ventilate tactically we must VENT FOR THE FIRE, VENT FOR LIFE, VENT FOR SAFETY, and VENT FOR THE PROPERTY. We will now discuss the four "Vents".

### Vent for fire:

Ventilate for fire means that we should try to confine/contain the fire to the room or area of origin. Simply taking the window or opening the roof will help in this manner. We should remember that these products of combustion take the path of least resistance. If we can make this path as short as possible for the fire and reduce the amount of travel then we will limit fire spread. This will make for a more effective interior operation.



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#### **Vent for life:**

This is an area that I feel is being neglected on the fire ground. VES (Vent, Enter, Search) or VEIS (Vent, Enter, Isolate, Search) has its place on the fire ground and should be used when met with high probability areas in a fire building. VES/VEIS allows for a quick venting of an area where known victims are located, removing the smoke and isolating an area to quickly locate and extract a victim(s) from that area. Do not waste time crawling through the first floor to locate the stairs to get to a victim(s) on the second floor. Use this technique to increase survivability.

#### **Vent for safety:**

Safety is the number one priority on the fire ground. We need to create openings that allow firefighters to operate effectively, not hinder the operation. One wrong move and the incident can become unstable and now a "MAYDAY" is transmitted over the radio! Most fires are in a Ventilation-controlled burning regime when we arrive and one wrong move with the axe or halligan and we can cause a ventilation-induced flashover, backdraft, or rapid fire spread. Assignment freelancing can injure or even kill firefighters. Do the job assigned to you. Do not make openings just because you can, remember to understand what you are doing and why you are doing it.

#### **Vent for the property:**

Property conservation is the low man on the pole but remember that almost all Fire Department Mission Statements start out with "To save lives and protect property". If life safety and incident stabilization are intact then property conservation becomes concern. Things that we do as firefighters when ventilating can burn that structure down or save it. Sometimes we may even have to "write off" a part of a building to save other important operational areas, as in office space of a warehouse.

So remember to think before you open! Ask yourself "Is what I'm doing when ventilating causing a positive outcome on the situation?" This is just another tool in your toolbox. Keep your tools sharp and ready so when the time comes, you will have the right and effective tools to get the job done!

Bryan Altman is a lieutenant with Worth County Fire Rescue in Georgia. He has also served as full-time Instructor teaching basic Firefighter skills in 2011. We are pleased to have Bryan writing for Fire Training Toolbox.