21. Fireground Operations with Limited Staffing

Instructor: Tim Whitham

This presentation will identify how modern fire ground tactical decisions and best practices don't always align with today's fire service. Almost 90 percent of the fire departments in the United States are in small communities with a population of 10,000 people or less and are all, or predominantly volunteer agencies. Fire ground tactics and acceptable standards indicate that a minimum of 16 firefighters should be the minimum number of firefighters on the fireground however, how does the agency with only three or four members on scene start fire suppression activities? Then to try and add Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT), Incident Command System (ICS), and the OSHA two-in, two-out rule all influence the fireground commander's decisions as it pertains to fire suppression. In this class, students will learn how to provide superior fire suppression while waiting for additional personnel to arrive on scene and be proactive in their approach to dealing with emergency situations prior to the actual dispatch.

Ventilation, fire attack, search and rescue, water supply, hose-line advancement, forcible entry, rapid intervention, command, operations, and safety are all considerations and tactical objectives that a fire ground commander must address and utilize to stop the spread of fire.

This class takes a different approach in addressing and identifying the whole incident through scene size-up, applying a risk model to examine risk vs benefit for fire ground actions, then prioritizing the situational tasks until additional fire suppression personnel are on scene. Minimum GPM flows, unconventional approaches to water delivery, controlling ventilation points to place a fire in a ventilation limited state are discussed as students formulate evidence-based tactical decisions. The best organizational accomplishments often occur due to the efforts of everyone being on the same page and the ability to develop others who will lead to successful results.

About the Instructor:

Tim Whitham has served as the Fire Chief for the City of Edwardsville, Kansas since 2015. He has over three decades of fire service experience and has served in all capacities from firefighter, company officer to fire chief. Tim is a graduate of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program and has designations as a Chief Fire Officer and Fire Marshal from the Commission on Professional Credentialing. He holds a bachelor's degree in Fire and Emergency Response Management from the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh and a master's degree in leadership from Grand Canyon University.

Chief Whitham is a regular presenter at fire departments as well as at fire and emergency services events and conferences across the country including presenting at Fire Rescue International on multiple occasions, he has authored articles for fire service and EMS publications. Chief Whitham has addressed state legislative bodies and committees on concerns facing the fire and emergency services agencies. Tim serves in various capacities on numerous boards and committees, including having served as the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section representative to the Program Planning Committee for IAFC Fire-Rescue International.

Chief Whitham is the Fire Science Program Director for Johnson County Community College, prior to this appointment he served many years as an instructor. He is also an instructor for the National Fire Academy, and is an instructor, evaluator and site coordinator for the Kansas University Fire Service Training Program. Chief Whitham has numerous IFSAC certifications including Fire Officer III and Instructor III. Tim also holds numerous NWCG qualifications and has deployed with the Johnson County Wildland Task Force. He is an Army veteran having served in airborne infantry regiments with the US Army and then transitioned to the National Guard.