Intelligent Risk Taking

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Situational Awareness Matters!
This program is based on the highly acclaimed DVD Firefighter Safety: Mistakes & Best Practices

If you are interested in purchasing this DVD or any of our educational materials, please visit our website: SAMatters.com and click on the “Books & Videos” tab at the top of the home page.
If you are interested in hosting a safety or leadership program for your department, association or conference, please contact me:

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Two kinds of risk:
Assumed Risk
Created Risk
The gamble...

Performing high-risk activities without proper staffing and equipment.

When the firefighters died...

It often happened within 7-9 minutes of arrival and there were less than 8 members on the scene.
Where were the firefighters when they died?
What were they trying to accomplish?
What killed them?
Flashover
Collapse
Improving your odds:

- Situational awareness.
- Know how to read the smoke and fire.
- Know how to read buildings.
- Pay attention for the signs of flashover and collapse.
The gamble...

The person in-charge performs hands-on activities.

When the firefighters died...

The person who was supposed to be in-charge was performing firefighting duties instead.

This is a tough call for the first-arriving officer.
Improving your odds:

- Ensure someone watches the big picture.
- Ensure entry crews have experienced leadership.
- Consider how long you will be operating without an exterior commander.
The gamble...

No one on-scene is designated to serve as the incident commander.

When the firefighters died...

Oftentimes there was no one was designated as being in-charge, coordinating all of the activities.
Improving your odds:

- Ensure company officers have training, experience and confidence to serve as the initial commander.

- Be cautious about delegating command to an apparatus operator.

- Don’t assumed the next-in officer will take command.
The gamble...

A 360-degree size-up is not completed.

When the firefighters died...

The first arriving crew failed to complete a walk around the structure and missed critical indicators.
Improving your odds:

- Conduct a size-up prior to developing and implementing an action plan.

- Communicate your size-up to other responding companies.

- Pay attention to how fast your windows of opportunity are closing.
The gamble...

Offensive tactics used on defensive fires.

When the firefighters died...

They were often engaged in offensive operations when the strategy should have been defensive operations.
Improving your odds:

- Train on “no-go” tactics.

- Include decision making in training evolutions.

- Teach and discuss how to overcome fear-driven decisions & silent compliance.
The gamble...

Fighting large fires without enough water.

When the firefighters died...

They often did not have an adequate water supply or the size of their hose lines were too small to overwhelm the fire.
Improving your odds:

- Don’t bring small fire habits to large fires.

- Conserving water can cause problems.

- Teach and practice hose line selection and deployment.
The gamble...

Missed or misunderstand communications.

When the firefighters died...

Often times their updates and maydays were not heard or were not understood.
Improving your odds:

- Teach (and practice) how to communicate by radio.
- Understand the pitfalls of too much radio traffic.
- Practice full-loop communications.
The gamble...

Departments that do not have SOPs/SOGs for high-risk activities.

When the firefighters died...

Many times the department did not have a common set of procedures to guide operations. They had no playbook.
Improving your odds:

- Develop and train to a plan for high-risk high-consequence activities.
- Minimize freelance (Independent action)
- Ensure company activities are coordinated.
The gamble...

Taking shortcuts in training.

When the firefighters died...

It was often attributed to inadequate training or the training officer(s) took shortcuts when leading training sessions.
Improve your odds:

- Teach officers critical thinking and dynamic decision making skills.

- Conduct training under high-stress, realistic conditions.

- Conduct multiple company drills (and include commanders).
The gamble...

Failing to learn from near-miss, injury and fatality events.

When the firefighters died...

The catastrophe was linked to persistent mistakes the department had been making for a long period of time.
Improving your odds:

- Be a student of near-miss, injury and fatality reports.

- Do not celebrate inappropriate risk taking.

- Watch out for complacency and over-confidence.
Take SMART risks.
Size-up
Think
Decide
Predict
Act
You will also receive the SAMatters monthly newsletter.
Helping first responder see the bad things coming... in time to avoid bad outcomes.