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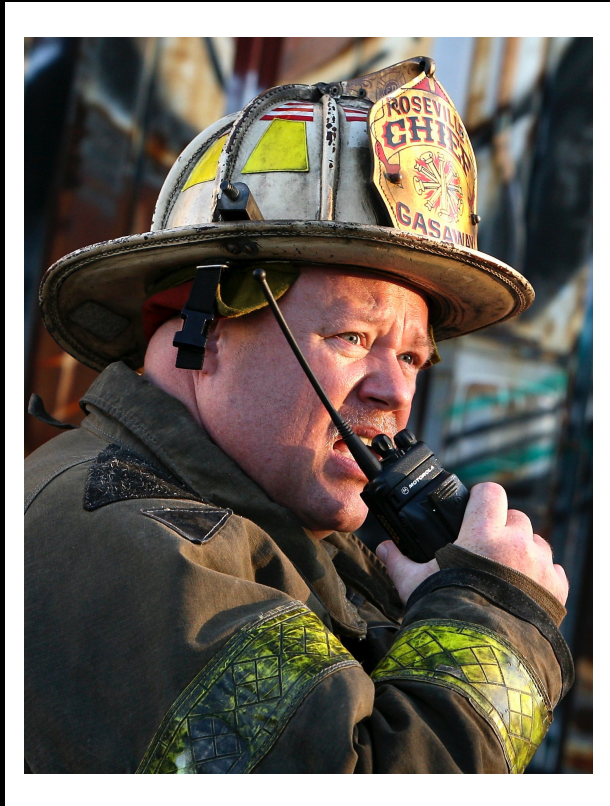
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# Firefighter Safety: Mistakes and Best Practices

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A green road sign with the word "Mistakes" written in white, set against a blue sky with white clouds. The sign is mounted on two wooden posts and has a white border with reflective dots. The word "Mistakes" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, slanted slightly to the right.

**Mistakes**

# Mistakes

1. Performing high-risk activities without proper staffing and equipment.

When firefighters died...

It often happened within 12 minutes of arrival and there were less than eight members on the scene.



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1. Performing high-risk activities without proper staffing and equipment.

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# Mistakes

2. The person in-charge performing hands-on activities.

When firefighters died...

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





# Mistakes

## 3. No one was in-charge.

When firefighters died...

Oftentimes there was no one person in-charge coordinating all of the activities.



# Mistakes

## 4. Failing to conduct a 360-degree size-up.

When firefighters died...

The first-arriving crew often failed to completely walk around the structure and they missed seeing critical clues.



# Mistakes

## 5. Failing to know when to be defensive.

When firefighters died...

Firefighters were often engaged in offensive operations when the strategy should have been defensive operations.



# Mistakes

6. Trying to fight a large fire without enough water.

When firefighters died...

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



# Mistakes

## 7. Missed communications or misunderstood communications.

When firefighters died...

Often times their updates and maydays were not heard the first time communicated or their communications were misunderstood.



# Mistakes

8. No Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) or Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs).

When firefighters died...

Many times the department did not have a common set of procedures to guide operations. They had no play book. They were flying by the seats of their pants.



# Mistakes

## 9. Short cuts in training

When firefighters died...

It was often attributed to inadequate training or the department officers had taken shortcuts when leading training sessions.



# Mistakes

10. Failing to learn from near-misses and injury events (error creep).

When firefighters died...

The catastrophe was linked to persistent mistakes the department had been making for a long period of time (and were getting away with it).





# Best Practice

Straight Ahead



# Best Practice

1. Ensure you have the proper amount of help responding immediately to the call.

Implement an automatic aid program – ensuring you have 15-20 firefighters responding to structure fires (immediately), 24-hours-a-day.



# Best Practice

2. The person in-charge should remain far enough back from the action to maintain a big-picture view of the incident.

Command from a vehicle or from a location remote enough to see the big picture scene.



# Best Practice

3. Conduct a complete size-up to ensure an understanding of what is happening.

Walk all the way around the building and look for cues and clues that tell you what is happening.



# Best Practice

4. Match the strategy and tactics based on the size of the enemy. Overwhelm the fire.

Big fires require large hose lines and lots of water. Don't fight big fires like you fight the small fires.



# Best Practice

5. Train firefighters to conduct a risk-benefit assessment.

Not every fire is an offensive (interior attack) fire. Sometimes victims are not savable.

Discuss and practice (in advance) what a “No Go!” situation is.



# Best Practice

6. Have a clearly defined commander.

The person in-charge must have command presence, set the strategy, make decisions, and coordinate the fireground activities.



# Best Practice

7. Develop and use common radio terminology and radio discipline.

Communications must be clear, concise, commonly understood, controlled... and practiced!

Full communications loop!





# Best Practice

8. Conduct your training based on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and your Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs).

Training is learning and practice based on a game plan.

Train with your mutual aid partners.



# Best Practice

9. Conduct training that is realistic and repetitive.

Training should be as real as safely possible and repetitive to build brain and muscle memory.



# Best Practice

10. Perform pre-incident and post-incident evaluations.

Correcting flaws before they turn into catastrophes.

Even when things go well (no injuries), there are opportunities to learn from minor mistakes.





*Situational Awareness Matters!*

Helping you see the bad things coming...  
in time to change the outcome.

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