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MANAGING THE FIREGROUND



General Patton said "Lead Follow, or Get Out of the Way"

- The fire service likens our work of firefighting to that of military combat.
- We typically have a command structure at incidents.
- We use military rank structure, Captain and Lieutenant within our own departments.
- Strict orders are followed without hesitation.
- We follow SOP's like well laid out battle plans.
- What often looks like mass confusion is usually a well thought out Incident Action Plan.

AFTER THE FIRE TROUBLE SEEMS LIKE IT IS ALWAYS LURKING

- WHY ARE WE CONSTANTLY FINDING OURSELVES IN SOME CONFLICT
- EGOS..... SOMETIMES, BUT THAT IS PART OF WHO WE ARE AS FIREFIGHTERS, BIG EGOS, TYPE "A" PERSONALITIES
- WE OFTEN FIND OURSELVES IN CONFLICT BECAUSE WE DON'T UNDERSTAND OUR ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES
- THESE ARE DIFFERENT FOR FIREFIGHTERS, OFFICERS AND CHIEFS

ROLE OF THE FIREFIGHTER

- FIREFIGHTER (THE MOST TASK ORIENTED)
 - MUST BE PROFICIENT AT THE FOLLOWING
 - DRESSING THE HYDRANT/WATER SUPPLY
 - THROWING LADDERS
 - STRETCHING HOSE
 - SEARCHING, FORCING ENTRY, STARTING IV'S, CPR AND HAZ-MAT
- TODAY'S FIREFIGHTER (VOLUNTEER OR CAREER) MUST MAINTAIN MASTERY IN ALL SKILLS

ROLE OF THE OFFICER

- HAS SOME COMMON GROUND WITH THE FIREFIGHTER IN THAT THEY MUST KNOW ALL THE FIREFIGHTER KNOWS
 - HOWEVER THE OFFICER HAS TO BE AN EFFECTIVE SUPERVISOR
 - MUST BE KNOWLEDGEABLE, EXPERIENCED AND CONFIDENT
 - MUST HAVE DEEP CONCERN FOR THE FIREFIGHTERS WELL BEING
 - PHYSICAL CONDITION, MENTAL HEALTH, NOURISHMENT, HYDRATION, REST, ADEQUATE RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT
 - MUST UNDERSTAND SOP'S, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND INTEGRATE THEM INTO DECISION MAKING PROCESS
 - MUST BE THE PRIMARY TRAINER FOR THOSE UNDER THEIR COMMAND

ROLE OF THE CHIEF OFFICER

- PRIMARY ROLE IS TO COMMAND INCIDENTS AND DEVELOP IAP'S
 - KEEP FIREFIGHTERS SAFE WHEN OPERATING AT AN EMERGENCY
 - COMPANY OFFICERS EXPECT CHIEFS TO EXHIBIT KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE
 - CHIEF OFFICERS ARE THE LINK BETWEEN THE LINE OFFICERS AND THE ADMINISTRATION

RESPONSIBILITIES

- EVERY MEMBER...FIREFIGHTERS, OFFICERS AND CHIEFS HAVE THE SAME BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES
 - REPORT TO DUTY ON TIME, CLEAN AND READY TO WORK
 - TREAT FELLOW FIREFIGHTERS WITH RESPECT
 - ENSURE ALL EQUIPMENT IS OPERATIONAL AND COMBAT READY
 - INTERACT WITH THE PUBLIC IN A RESPECTFUL, PROFESSIONAL MANNER
 - AVOID RECKLESS BEHAVIOR THAT COULD CAUSE HARM TO OTHERS OR THE DEPARTMENT
 - TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FIREFIGHTER RESPONSIBILITIES

- MASTER THE SKILLS OF THE FIREFIGHTER
- KEEP THE FIREHOUSE CLEAN AND ORDERLY
- TAKE TURNS COOKING AND CLEANING
- ADDRESS SENIOR OFFICERS BY RANK
- PROVIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION

OFFICER AND CHIEF RESPONSIBILITIES

- BE ENGAGED
- PROVIDE EXCELLENT TRAINING
- INSURING EFFICIENCY
- MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE
- MAINTAIN HIGH MORALE
- KEEP EVERYONE SAFE
- THE FIRE OFFICER ALSO HAS AN EXTENDED RESPONSIBILITY TO THE FAMILIES OF THE FIREFIGHTER TO ENSURE THEY RETURN HOME SAFELY
- OTHER MUNDANE RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE ENSURING THE CARE OF THE STATION, APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT ARE PROPERLY AND ADEQUATELY MET.

CHAPLAINS

- I KNOW YOU ARE WONDERING WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIREFIGHTERS, OFFICERS AND CHIEFS
 - FIREFIGHTERS WILL GET FRUSTRATED, BURNED OUT AND DISCOURAGED FROM PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STRESS AND IT ISN'T UNUSUAL FOR THEM TO DIRECT THESE FEELINGS TOWARD OTHER FIREFIGHTERS, OFFICERS OR CHIEFS. _____ WHEN THEY TALK TO YOU "YOUR JOB IS TO SUPPORT THE OVERALL MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT AND TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLES OF EVERYONE. _____"
 - OFFICERS WILL GET FRUSTRATED AND DISCOURAGED. _____ LONG HOURS, TRAUMA OF CALLS, BALANCING THE FIREHOUSE BETWEEN THE CREWS AND THE CHIEFS. _____ YOUR JOB IS TO SUPPORT THE OVERALL MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT
 - CHIEFS WILL CONFIDE IN THE CHAPLAIN AND LOOK FOR SUPPORT AND REAFFIRM WHAT THEY ARE DOING IS RIGHT FOR THE MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT. _____ YOUR JOB IS TO UNDERSTAND THE MISSION SO YOU CAN PROVIDE REAL SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CHIEF

BOUNDARIES HAVE CHANGED

- MANY DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE MAKE UP OUR RANKS
- WE DON'T ALL LOOK ALIKE OR THINK ALIKE OR BELIEVE ALIKE
- AS THE FIRE SERVICE CHANGES, WE MUST TAKE A MORE RESPECTFUL AND UNDERSTANDING APPROACH TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
- OLD BEHAVIORAL LIMITS HAVE BEEN SCRUTINIZED AND WHAT WAS ACCEPTABLE, ISN'T ACCEPTABLE (NEVER SHOULD HAVE BEEN ACCEPTABLE) AND CROSSING BEHAVIORAL LIMITS WILL OFTEN END UP IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION OR WORSE.
- SOME EXAMPLES OF CROSSING BOUNDARIES YOU SHOULD STAY AWARE HELP YOUR DEPARTMENT AVOID INCLUDE:
 - OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE, NOT TREATING OTHERS WITH RESPECT (BULLYING/HAZING), NOT ALLOWING EVERY FIREFIGHTER THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES, MAKING DISPARAGING REMARKS ABOUT INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, INTENTIONALLY DISREGARDING SOP'S, EXPOSING FIREFIGHTERS TO UNNECESSARY DANGER (RECKLESS BEHAVIOR), ENGAGING IN RACIAL, ETHNIC OR GENDER DISCRIMINATION.

DISCIPLINE AND COHESION

- AS GENERAL PATTON SAID "LEAD, FOLLOW OR GET OUT OF THE WAY" THIS STILL HOLDS TRUE!
 - REGARDLESS OF VOLUNTEER, CAREER OR COMBINATION WE MUST TEACH SELF DISCIPLINE AND RESPECT SO WE DON'T HAVE TO ISSUE DISCIPLINE AND ADDRESS POOR BEHAVIOR AND DISRESPECT
 - SUPPORT YOUR OFFICERS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO TEACH FIREFIGHTERS TO BE DISCIPLINED AND RESPECTFUL
 - SUPPORT FIREFIGHTERS AND BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO THEM THE WHY BEHIND THE DEMANDS OF OFFICERS
 - COHESION WILL MAKE THE DEPARTMENT STRONGER
 - CHAPLAINS ARE TRUSTED, LOVED AND RESPECTED, YOU ARE KEY TO THE DEPARTMENTS COHESION
 - "NO PRESSURE"
