

RESCUE POINTS TO PONDER

By Ray Downey

The rescue operations in these photographs offer a number of points to ponder. We'll give you a few, in no particular order of importance. Write to us with your own operational considerations of the scenarios depicted, and we'll publish them in a future issue.



Ridgefield Park, New Jersey: A commuter bus crashed into a truck on snow-covered Interstate 80 during morning rush hour.

(Photos by Tony Greco)

- Is there fuel (diesel or gas) spilled and possibly creating a potential fire problem? Rescue tools might spark ignition of the leaking fuel, so perform rescue operations with a charged handline standing by.

- Are there separate emergency windows, doors, or openings from which the nonambulatory victims can be removed? Note the rescuers accessing the bus from a side window via a ground ladder.

- Is there a need for special tools and equipment that are not at the scene already? If so, who has them? Have a resource list on the scene of available mutual-aid companies and the tools and equipment they can provide.



RAY DOWNEY, a captain and 31-year veteran of the City of New York (NY) Fire Department, has commanded the operations of its Resc Co. 2 for the past 13 years. He has an associate's degree in fire science and is a New York State-certified instructor. He conducts seminars and gives lectures on rescue-related tactics throughout the United States. Downey is a member of FEMA's US&R working group for equipment and Technical Review Panel. He is the author of *The Rescue Company*, published by Fire Engineering Books, and is an editorial board member of *Fire Engineering*.



New York, New York: A gas explosion in an occupied 12-story building in the Harlem section of New York City caused heavy damage to the upper floors. (Photos by Richard Symon.)

- Can access for the firefighters and egress for the occupants be safely accomplished, or did the force of the explosion prevent access/egress, thus causing a delay in reaching the victims and the fire?

- What is the structural stability of the building after the blast?

- How can you get specialized equipment to the upper floors? Use the bucket of a tower ladder to bring tools to the highest floor the bucket can reach, and personnel can walk the tools up to higher floors.

- Is it a gas explosion (in which case you must shut off the gas to the building) or a bomb explosion (in which case you must consider the possibility of other bombs)?

- Shore up floors and walls before search and debris removal.

- Victim accountability—how many are unaccounted for and where were they last seen?

- Provide sufficient lighting for rescue operations—use portable lighting when necessary.

- What are you going to do with debris that has been moved or that has shifted? You may have to preserve some debris as evidence.

Jersey City, New Jersey: A female pedestrian was struck by and pinned under a garbage truck. (Photos by Ron Jeffers.)

- Is the truck chocked sufficiently? Ensure it is before you begin. Will lifting the truck shift the load or move the vehicle, thus endangering the victim or rescuers?

- Is medical treatment necessary prior to releasing the victim from entrapment, or can it be administered afterward?





Deer Park, New York: A mutual-aid disaster drill involved the simulation of a Long Island Railroad collision. (Photos by Ed Heavey.)

- The benefits of having a working mutual-aid agreement with other departments will be evident at large-scale disasters such as this.

- Interagency cooperation and coordination are key to successful rescue operations.

- Have railroad personnel explain the emergency braking, lighting, and communications systems as well as the locations of emergency exits and windows either prior to or as part of the drill.

- Such a drill enables you to practice victim removal techniques from higher elevations.

- As a safety precaution, always act as if the third rail is energized and the power is on.

- The need for extreme safety during these drills is evident. This includes having a safety officer for the duration of the incident.



If you would like to submit photos for Rescue or EMS Points to Ponder, send them with a short description of the incident to:
Points to Ponder, Fire Engineering, Park 80 West, Plaza II, 7th Floor, Saddle Brook, NJ 07662.