

Rescue Points to Ponder

BY RAY DOWNEY



FIRE AND COLLAPSE

BRICK EXTERIOR CONSTRUCTION and volume of fire are only two of the many factors to consider when fighting a dwelling fire. When does the fire incident reach collapse potential? If we knew the answer to that question, there would be a significant reduction in firefighter deaths.

- In our 13-point size-up, do we address "burn time"?
- When do we remove our members from the building and go to an outside operation?
- What type of accountability system is in place should a "Mayday" occur?
- What immediate actions do you take on receipt of a "Mayday"?
- Do you have a rapid intervention team (RIT) in place?
- When do you establish a collapse zone?
- How big should the collapse zone be?
- What additional resources are required as a result of the collapse?
- What about secondary collapses? ■

■ **RAY DOWNEY** is a battalion chief, chief of rescue operations, and a 37-year veteran of the Fire Department of New York. The former captain of Rescue Company 2, he is the USAR task force leaders representative to FEMA for all 26 teams and is a member of FEMA's Advisory Committee. Downey is also the author of the book *The Rescue Company*, the video *Rescue Operational Planning: Factors for Success*, and the video series *Collapse Rescue for the Fire Service*, published by Fire Engineering.



Photos by Kathy Menegat.

VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS are an everyday occurrence in the fire service. The availability of powerful spreading, lifting, and cutting equipment has been of great benefit for members having to deal with modern day vehicles involved in accidents.

- Is it more likely that there would be a fuel spill if the car were passenger-side down in photo 1? (The fuel fill is at the top right of photo.)
- Would it have been easier to try and upright the car—would that be a safe practice?
- Is entry through the rear window a viable option?
- Should a charged handline always be in position during such operations?
- Is there a need for the victim to be properly protected?
- What is the victim's condition in photo 2—is medical treatment being administered? If the victim is deceased, is the body going to be removed? Should the body be covered? (Prevent scenes such as this.)
- Does an investigation require that the victim not be removed?
- What is the "Golden Hour," and how



Photo by Martin Grube.



Photo by Marty Bicek.

does it apply to vehicle accidents?

- Besides possible fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluid spills, what other safety precautions must be taken?
- Have you considered establishing a "safety zone" in and around the accident

scene to protect the victims and rescuers?

- What precautions must you take to prevent additional accidents such as a pile-up?
- How much and what type of stabilization is needed for both incidents? ■



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RESCUE

THE RESULTS OF AN EARTHQUAKE in New York City? Not really. Actually this is the collapse of the ceiling of an underground garage that was attached to a multiple dwelling. Approximately three feet of earth covered the garage. It was used as a playground for children during the day. The garage had 450 parking spaces, and approximately 50 cars were crushed and underneath the collapse rubble. The collapse occurred at 11:00 p.m.

Preliminary investigation indicated that frozen ground had absorbed rain and snow and their runoff water and that the additional weight caused the collapse. Further investigation was being done on the original construction and other structures that the contractor had erected. The garage was 39 years old.

- Were there any occupants in the cars?
- Were there any surveillance cameras in the garage area? (They would help in identifying any cars that had occupants or were in the process of parking or leaving.)
- What types of records were available to identify owners and verify that no one was missing?
- How large was the collapse area, and what was the condition of the remaining

ceiling structure? Was there a potential for secondary collapse?

- What was the condition of the multiple dwelling? Did the collapse affect its structural stability? (It was evacuated.)
- Did the collapse affect the utilities—gas, electric, water, and so on?

• What equipment will be needed to remove the rubble? Does the rubble have to be kept for investigation or testing for a possible criminal investigation?

• Who makes the decisions as to when and what buildings/structures are safe to reoccupy? ■



Photo by Pete Connolly, FDNY Photo Unit.

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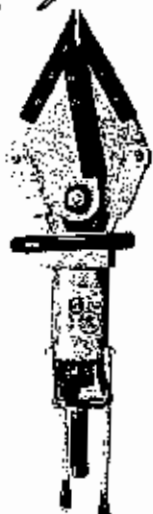


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TERRORISM

PRISONERS OF WAR? NO. JUST members of the Fire Department of New York and the United States Marine Corps Chemical and Biological Incident Response Force being decooned during a training exercise at the Fire Department Training Academy in New York City. Preparing for responses to

weapons of mass destruction (WMD) incidents is a major effort being undertaken by most fire departments around the country.

- What level of preparedness is required for your department?
- Has your city, town, village, or district ever done a threat and vulnerability assessment?
- Does your Emergency Response Plan address responses to WMD incidents?

• What types of training have your members had regarding WMD?

• Do you have any type of partnership with law enforcement regarding intelligence about WMD?

• Do you have mutual-aid agreements for WMD incidents?

• What kind of help can you expect from the government and the military? ■



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