The Stuff On Our Backs: Tips and Takeaways

AIR

It is important to understand the nature of today’s fire growth and air requirements:  If the fire grows faster than ever, but we are “required” to exit the IDLH for a change with more air in the tank, the immediate result *could*mean more growth in the fire.  Something has to give.

As we decrease our allotted time to interact with the fire environment, we need to understand how to get the most out of that time.  Knowing our personal breathing limits, how much we get per bottle, and being exemplary at consumption are vital.

Do we understand that pneumatic alerts “waste” potable air?

In the event of an emergency, have we practiced bypassing the pneumatic alert to ensure we achieve more air? (Skip Breathing + Wheel Breathing)

Are we adept at locating and acquiring the “clean” air around us if we are ever in the situation that requires it?  Recall--- that environment could be made sustainable well before you are located.  Do not succumb in “clean” air.  Make both every effort to get out, but also to secure air along the way.  You are “surrounded” by air.

Does your SCBA “support” you?  Depending on manufacturer, extend the straps, hang it, and try a SCOTT-HOP.  It is an excellent last-ditch portable ladder for basement exits, attic hatches, access and egress.

        GEAR

Understand how to maximize your audible footprint in an emergency.  Send sound waves outward--not into the ground

Use your additional PASS.  We are bred to ignore the SCBA required PASS, but if we hear an additional audible, that should signify something.

Use any means necessary to send your alert outward--> tag line, toss, etc... Leave indicators.

Do not neglect to use echo-location of people coming to you.  They are mobile, you are not.  Can you hear their PASS?  Closer or further away?

Does your manufacturer’s DRD allow for a 3-pt connection to the waist harness?  If so, you have the easiest and most secure way to drag and even go vertical with a FF

“3 Pointing” decreases the cache we might carry to strap up a downed member, decreases fatigue in the drag, keeps the victim “tightly packaged,” and grabs the weight where is it intended.

Try waist clipping your SCBA for tight spaces.  Keep both arms available and keep your air secured to yourself.  You will likely be surprised.

Either pulling behind you, or on your back, keeping the SCBA clipped to your waist---especially when trying to navigate a debris field, tight space, or snag hazard could pay big dividends.

Is it possible to clip your SCBA to your DRD when you push it in front of you?  Hands remain available and the danger of losing it through a hole are alleviated.

If we work in teams, can our harnesses not work in tandem?  Recall the load sharing that can be achieved by virtue of securing harnesses to one another.  The “seat” that is created is excellent for everything from carries to preliminary cockloft checks.

Understand the proper loading of your two point harness.  It is there for you, but you are there for “them.”  Let the bigger muscles be loaded with that harness and be a more efficient mover.

        ROPE

Again, necessity and duress are requirements for pocket rope maneuvers.  Don't make a 3:1 if it is possible to put “3 on 1.”  (get three FFs on one rope before you start fiddling around with M:A)

Flipping a knot through a carabiner and pulling the bight towards yourself is the “fastest 3:1”

Can you send your M:A to a victim/hazard?  You may be able to push the attachment point to where it is needed.

Understand that your personal M:A is not married to you.  You can tool-bury it or otherwise secure it in an event where the load is significant enough that the hazard is such that you will be pulled towards it.

Recall the compounds for M:A  By making your haul line the “load” for an addition, we can achieve a 6:1 or even 9:1 if the situation ever calls for it.  *Every FF has this capability.  It is not difficult.*

Can we modify legacy moves from our pocket for a faster rescue?  (High Point Ladder?  Window Removal....)

We never want to leave a partial or full hole if a member goes down.  What can we do NOW to start getting to him?  (Send the bight?  Send a man?)  Remember, by simply clipping the end of your bail line to yourself, sending a bight through a members harness, and clipping it to a third, you can send a rescuer, affix to a victim, and haul upwards quite easily.

Understand depth limitations of these types of maneuvers

Though not included...can we achieve window or high point rescues out of pocket if needed?

**For further reading or complete explanations and revisits:**

**Fire Engineering Archives: Alexander Degnan**

“Last Ditch Top Side Rescue”

“Getting Past Your Last Breath”

“Modified Maneuvers From Your Pocket”

“Compounding Your Emergency Mechanical Advantage”

“Maximizing Your Own Harness”

It is my hope that you can one day see these extreme measures in a comprehensive volume encompassing all you have seen today and more, and that you can keep them to revisit, expound upon, and train with. I truly believe that being able to get every last bit out of what we are issued empowers us if we are ever called upon to do so.  Just as tough assignments can push us at a fire to point where we have to “extend” a little, situations where there is “nothing left” can push us to the limits of what we have.  Being able to push those limits should be mastered, and hopefully never called upon.