

THINK LIKE AN INCIDENT COMMANDER

**Deputy Chief Thomas Dunne
New York City Fire Department**

www.chieftomdunne.com





**THINK LIKE AN INCIDENT COMMANDER
DEPUTY CHIEF THOMAS DUNNE
NEW YORK CITY FIRE DEPT**

One of the prime challenges for thinking like an incident commander lies in developing the ability to see the “big picture” at a fire or emergency operation. This involves being able to perceive the overall plan or strategy and understand how individual tactics fit into that plan.

This view is certainly essential for chief officers but it is also important that every firefighter working at the scene can maintain it. In short, a firefighter must be able to see beyond the tip of his nozzle or the end of his tool. Is that hose line being applied at the right place and the right time? Is it being coordinated with ventilation efforts? What other activities are going on at the same time on the floor above or other exposures that may be affected by your individual tactical efforts? Most of our individual activities at a fire will affect the safety of other firefighters and the ultimate success of the operation.

The ability to think “big” at an emergency operation is a skill that can be developed through constant exercise. As you critique your own fires in the future review the tactical successes or errors but also try to evaluate how well the overall strategy and coordination was accomplished.

“Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”

Sun Tzu

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS? VISIT MY WEBSITE:

www.chieftomdunne.com

Fire Engineering®

‘Whaddya Got?’ The Art of Relieving Command on the Fireground

By Thomas Dunne

1.1.2024

FE Volume 177 Issue 1

By THOMAS DUNNE

So much was happening all at once. Fire was blowing out of upper-floor windows, residents were streaming out of the tenement, and the engine officer was screaming on the radio to charge his hoseline. Several units were standing right next to me, anxious to go to work, and asking me what I wanted them to do. A message came in from the dispatcher indicating that people were trapped on the floors above the fire.

An experienced chief would have been challenged by the situation—and I wasn’t even a chief at that time. I held the rank of captain, a company officer. My job normally consisted of functioning inside a burning building and supervising a unit of four or five firefighters. I was well experienced and very comfortable with this role. Today, however, for this particular tour, I was filling the role of acting battalion chief (or, as it was often called, ABC), a job established for instances when the department just didn’t have enough actual chiefs available to fill the 50-plus battalions across New York City.

I had done many past tours as an ABC, but those tours turned out to be somewhat routine and unchallenging. Now, for the first time, I was being required to perform as a first-due incident commander (IC). I was expected to address all the vital tactical and strategic decisions that came with the position. As I struggled to establish a starting point and make my initial assignments, I was relieved and grateful to see the deputy chief arrive on scene. He would assume command of the fire.

The gray hair poking out from his well-beaten helmet indicated that he was a very experienced senior chief. He projected a calm, confident grace as he walked toward me,

an unlit cigar butt clinging to the edge of his mouth, looking very much like this was just another fire in his long career. I struggled to remember what assignments I had already made and wondered what other information he might possibly ask of me. He glanced up at the building; turned to me; and, with a heavy New York City accent, casually inquired, “Whaddya got?”

First Impressions

When you **assume command** of a fire, you must evaluate three initial elements: the fire situation, the strategy that has been set in place, and the person who established that strategy. These elements are interrelated. Each one will affect the overall safety and success of the operation. As the person taking command, you can choose to keep the initial strategy in place; refine that strategy; or, based on an individual size-up, initiate an entirely different plan of action. No matter what, you must be capable of maintaining a broad perspective of the fire and evaluating how well several key elements have been addressed. These include the following:

- Accepting the responsibility.
- Getting the big picture.
- Getting the specifics.
- Organizing.
- Calming the situation down.

Important Questions

In a sense, you must size up the initial IC just as he **sizes up the fire**. It’s important for you to understand how effectively the initial IC has managed the operation to that point. The answers to the following questions will help with this assessment:

- Has the initial IC clearly and comfortably established himself as the person running the operation and accepted the responsibility that comes with that role?
- Does it look like the IC has been struggling with the challenge?
- Have possible avenues of **fire extension**, [staffing needs](#), and **water supply** issues been properly addressed?
- Has the initial IC’s perspective of the fire been too myopic?
- Is the initial IC organized enough to know the location and function of all the specific units that are on scene?
- Has the initial IC projected a sense of calm control toward the firefighters or do you sense anxiety?
- Has the initial IC added to the chaos of the operation?

If you are relieving an inexperienced chief or a **company officer** who has been temporarily placed into the role, it is entirely possible that he has maintained his ingrained tactical view of the firefight rather than adopting the broad strategic perspective that is called for in this situation. A lot of individual tactical work may well be underway but there may be no overall strategy in place.

Setting the Tone

Depending on the scenario and the experience level of the initial IC, you may perceive a confused, somewhat overwhelmed “deer in the headlights” look from the person you are relieving. If that happens, it’s important to establish a sense of control.

Often the first and quickest action to take is to simply lead the initial IC to a spot that’s a short distance from the fire building. This immediately removes both of you from all the noise and distraction of the ongoing firefight. It also allows for better communication and an easier transfer of information about the building and the deployment of personnel.

This is not the time to pound the initial IC with a lot of questions. The goal is to create calm—not to create even more stress. A full list of size-up considerations may well consist of 13 or more individual factors. But here’s the reality: Humans are not mentally capable of rapidly handling that level of complexity, particularly when we are functioning in a demanding situation. It is better to start with the basics and further refine the size-up process as the operation evolves.

The Three Ws ... and the Fourth W

At any firefight, three pieces of information must be established as quickly as possible, as they are vitally important, easy to remember, and form the basis of a **safe operation**. They include the following:

- **Who** have you got?
- **Where** are they located?
- Was a **water** supply established?

It is relatively easy to establish the three “Ws” in the exchange of information that occurs between the initial and relieving **IC**. Knowing who you have on scene, where they are located, and whether a reliable water supply is in place will establish a solid starting position.

Once those facts are determined, the fourth “**W**” should be a priority. That “**W**” stands for a “**way** out” of the building for the operating personnel. This could be an interior **stairway**, **ladder**, **fire escape**, or any means of safely removing firefighters from the building in the event a sudden change of strategy is needed.

Gathering this information from the initial IC will help keep everything simple, allow for focus, and put the initial IC much more at ease. Once the relieving IC assumes command of the fire, the initial IC can be assigned to a specific task or **sector of the operation**.

If the initial IC was a company officer and was uncomfortable with the command role he had suddenly been thrust into, he will no doubt feel a sense of relief once he is detailed to a more familiar, **tactical** job or a smaller segment of the operation.

Gut Reactions

After exchanging basic information with the initial IC and assigning him to a specific job, you, as the officer assuming command, can identify any challenges that seem likely to arise. Every operation has its own peculiarities, and often a **gut reaction based on your previous fire experience** will serve as a guide on what to expect.

You should consider the **initial strategy** that was established and proactively evaluate just how effective it will likely be. Questions to consider include the following:

- How will the firefight go over the next five minutes?
- Are there any anticipated issues if the fire is not contained as soon as expected and, if so, will additional resources be required?
- Are the initial IC's decisions adequate for addressing any potential problems, or is it time to reevaluate?



(1) (Photos by Bill Tompkins)

(2)



The fire in photo 2 would easily overwhelm the initial response of even a large urban fire department. In the past, there have been entire city blocks lost to such an incident. The wood-frame construction produces a virtual lumberyard in the cockloft areas of the numerous attached exposures. Given the likelihood of inadequate fire-stopping between the buildings, it is likely that there will be rapid horizontal fire extension. Numerous hoselines will have to be positioned to cut off the fire and, given the life hazard, an extensive area will need to be searched.

This creates a situation that will require far more work to be done than the initial units are capable of accomplishing. The initial IC will need to have the discipline to *skip* some of the exposures to get ahead of the fire. It is not an easy task to quickly define just how far the fire may have extended. And it is certainly not an easy call to initially ignore a building that is obviously on fire. However, given the limited staffing available from the first-arriving units, the initial IC will have to deploy available resources in a manner that effectively flanks and contains the fire. On assuming command of this incident, your priority will be to ensure that such a strategy has been set in place.

In photo 3, a great deal of activity is occurring on the roof of the commercial building. As the officer assuming command of this fire, you would quickly need to determine if the fourth “W” has been addressed. In addition to the two visible tower ladders, have a sufficient number of portable ladders been positioned to allow the firefighters a quick means off of the roof if conditions rapidly deteriorate? Clearly established lines of communication will also have to be established. Tactics are underway on the roof, in the structure below, and by the personnel in the tower ladder buckets. All are capable of affecting each other positively or negatively, and their work will have to be carefully coordinated.

If you’re relieving an inexperienced IC, the roof area might be an appropriate location to assign to him. (This is assuming that any required sectors have already been staffed.) The number of firefighters working on the roof would warrant designating a direct supervisor. In addition, the task would give the initial IC an opportunity to gain some valuable experience. It could serve as a confidence builder for future IC experiences.



(3)



(4)



(5)

Assessing Safety Concerns

The initial IC may have determined that an outside attack on a fire in a commercial building is the best initial strategy, given the volume of fire and the construction of the building (photo 4).

This will require deploying, staffing, and supplying water to several exterior streams. It will also involve directing, coordinating, and communicating with many firefighters. On arrival at the operation, you would have to quickly ensure that all that activity did not distract them from addressing some basic safety concerns.

Structural collapse is a definite possibility in this scenario, particularly a collapse of the parapet. There is an inherent “ticking clock” involved; the longer the fire burns, the greater the danger. When you assume command, it’s critical that you evaluate what important tasks have not yet been accomplished. Establishing and enforcing a collapse zone would be vital in this operation; as the chief assuming command, you would have to assign a safety officer to address these concerns.

Maintaining a Broad Perspective

It’s easy for the first-on-scene commander’s perspective to be too myopic given all the immediate demands that exist in the early stages of a fire operation. One of the goals for

the person who steps in needs to be maintaining—or establishing—a *broad* view of the incident.

The strip mall fire operation in photo 5 shows the importance of managing numerous personnel who are operating several exterior streams. At the same time, the collapse zone must be established and enforced. That's a lot for one person to control and supervise.

However, you must look beyond the initial strategy and consider the possible repercussions of the fire. Photo 5 demonstrates a scenario where a good initial strategy has been implemented and the chief taking control is adding to the initial decisions.

One of the adjoining buildings in this scenario is an occupied apartment house that's being exposed to a heavy smoke condition. There is a possibility of smoke and carbon monoxide building up inside that structure, which would create a hazard to the occupants. And there is always the danger of fire extending to that building. You may have to consider transmitting additional alarms to address those concerns.

The considerations above will require time, resources, and personnel. They are based on the information that is exchanged between the ICs at their meeting in front of the fire building. Their preliminary conversation holds great importance, as it forms the basis of all subsequent fireground decisions. The success of the operation will often hinge on how well they communicate with each other.

Relieving Command, Again

The process of relieving command may occur several times over the course of a prolonged and complex incident. Properly conducted, it can supplement the size-up process, create a safer work environment, and prove to be a training opportunity for the initial IC. It is important to note that it is not a *test* of the initial IC's abilities but a means of offering support and gathering vital information. Any deficiencies or areas for improvement noted should be addressed individually after the incident is concluded.

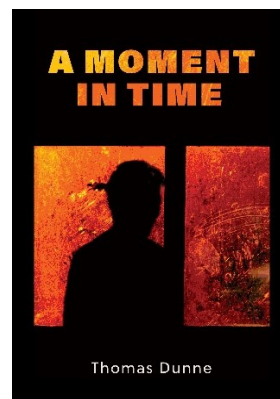
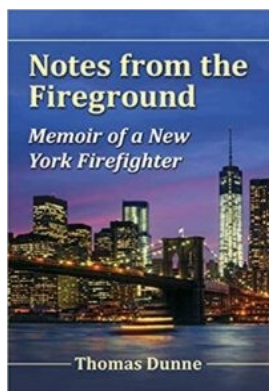
A True Learning Experience

My first effort at functioning as a new and untested IC turned out well, thanks to the excellent work performed by my firefighters and the help I received from an experienced chief. As I progressed in my career, I ultimately found myself in the role of senior deputy chief. I became the one who relieved other chiefs at a fire. I became the person asking, "Whaddya got?"

In firefighting, as in life, it seems that the student often becomes the teacher. It helped to recall how it felt to be on the other side of that working relationship and just how challenging the role of initial IC of a fire operation can be. The art of supporting and guiding someone who is placed in that position can be an important supplement to the tactics and strategy of the firefight.

To quote *The Art of War*, “Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.” Some things never change, even after 2,000 years.

Thomas Dunne is a retired Deputy Chief and a 33 year veteran of the New York City Fire Department with extensive experience working in Mid-Manhattan and the Bronx. He has been the incident commander at hundreds of fires in residential, commercial, and high rise buildings. Chief Dunne has written numerous articles for *Fire Engineering* magazine and lectures throughout the country on a variety of fire service topics. He has also published *Notes From the Fireground*, a memoir of his experiences in the FDNY and a novel, *A Moment in Time*. His web site is: www.chieftomdunne.com



Fire Engineering®

Thinking Like an Incident Commander

By Thomas Dunne

Issue 10 and Volume 170.
10.1.17

The chief or incident commander (IC) is expected to devise a strategy, assign the necessary tactics, and monitor that strategy until the incident has been successfully concluded. Since most fire personnel are primarily involved in hands-on tactical work, it can be tempting to leave the big strategic decisions to the “person in charge.” In a typical career path, firefighters will master increasingly difficult technical skills as they perform physical tasks over and over at various fire operations. This “hands-on” perspective is reinforced by the fact that most firefighter recruit school training involves the development of physical skills rather than encouraging the ability to view a fire from a strategic point of view.

However, there will be occasions when individuals will have to exercise skills that are “above their pay scale.” Big decisions often involve big risks. They also call for an ability to make strategic as well as tactical commitments. Consider the following scenarios:

Scenario 1

A senior firefighter in a small volunteer department has arrived at a fire on the first floor of a two-story wood-frame dwelling. One engine and four firefighters are on scene and are operating a hoseline inside the building. The chief is not present, and his arrival is likely to be quite delayed because of a severe ice storm. From his position in front of the structure, the firefighter notices that fire is venting out of a window and threatening to extend to an adjoining private dwelling on the exposure D side. Moments

later, personnel operating inside the original fire building notify him that they have lost water in the hoseline, fire conditions are rapidly expanding, and they are having difficulty making their way back to the main entrance.

Scenario 2

An emergency medical services (EMS) unit arrives at a multicar accident on a hilly section of the interstate highway. There are no police or fire units on scene, as the weather conditions have created an exceptionally high demand for emergency responses. There are multiple injuries, and fuel is leaking into the sewers. Traffic is backed up on both sides of the highway, blocking access to the area for any additional responding units. As the emergency medical technician (EMT) walks on the side of the road, several motorists inform him that there is a heavy odor of gasoline throughout the area.

Scenario 3

The principal of a public school is dealing with a heavy smoke condition near the electrical panels in the basement. Smoke is starting to spread to the upper floors, alarms are sounding throughout the building, and a number of students and teachers have already gone outside. No one seems quite sure of the number or identities of the people who have already left the premises. There are disabled students in classrooms located throughout the school; and, in the background, the phones are ringing constantly as concerned parents are calling to check on the welfare of their children.

Thinking as an IC

The individuals in the above scenarios have been suddenly thrust into situations that are far more complex than those they normally experience. The firefighter, the EMT, and the principal all face extremely demanding challenges that will necessitate that they assume a role and maintain a perspective with which they are not likely to be comfortable. They are experiencing many of the issues a fire chief must contend with when supervising a difficult fire or emergency operation. Overwhelming demands, insufficient resources, time restraints, and high stakes are all involved.

Thinking strategically is a great skill for a firefighter even when performing usual tasks on the fireground. The window he breaks, the nozzle he opens, and the way he communicates affect the safety of the people around him as well as the successful outcome of the operation. In short, all firefighters can and should develop the ability to think like an IC.

Thinking like an IC encompasses five essential factors: a willingness to accept responsibility, an ability to envision the big picture, a capacity for obtaining detailed information, an ability to organize, and a knack for calming down a stressful situation.

Willingness to Accept Responsibility

If you are suddenly thrust into a leadership position, you must accept the fact that you are no longer functioning just as a firefighter, an EMT, a school principal, or whatever your job normally is. Even if you are not placed in a command position, you must accept the ramifications of your tactical duties and ensure that what you are about to do will not adversely affect someone else – for example, prior to opening a heavy-caliber outside stream into a building, notify the people around you to avoid causing injuries.

The firefighter in scenario 1 is responsible for the safety of the personnel operating the hoseline inside the fire building. Perhaps they can continue an interior attack, or they may have to be withdrawn as quickly as possible. In either event, the firefighter present is the only person there to make that call. It is his responsibility.

The EMT in scenario 2 is the only one available to make command decisions on the logistics of getting other units to the scene of the accident, addressing a hazardous-materials situation, and establishing site safety.

In scenario 3, pending the arrival of emergency responders, the school principal is responsible for the safety and accountability of his students.

Envisioning the Big Picture

All three players in the scenarios must battle myopia and force themselves to see the big picture when managing their individual operations. The firefighter in the first example is functioning as an IC. As an IC, he must manage the personnel operating the hoseline inside the fire building and at the same time consider the possibility of a rapidly expanding operation if the fire extends to other buildings. He must also consider the weather conditions and the immediate lack of additional resources as he develops his strategy.

The EMT in scenario 2 has been tasked with a lot more than the first aid work he normally faces. The injuries are certainly a concern; but if traffic control, access routes, and the leaking fuel are not addressed, the situation will get much worse.

The school principal may have even a harder time visualizing the big picture. He is not an emergency responder and is being asked to perform in a role that is radically different from his normal day-to-day work. He has more than personnel accountability issues to deal with. Prior to the arrival of emergency personnel, he must initiate search activities, address any possibility of controlling the spread of the smoke, and maybe even function as a public information officer to address the parents' concerns.

Obtaining Detailed Information

Obtaining all of the necessary information is seldom possible at the very beginning of an operation. Often, there is just too much initial activity and confusion. However, our three scenario role players will have to gather the details as soon as possible. Does the firefighter know for certain the number and identities of the personnel working inside the fire building? What are their exact locations in relation to their means of egress? With how many rooms of fire are they dealing?

The EMT must establish the number and location of the accident victims involved and the level of care they will require. He must determine where the sewer grates are and ascertain which are emitting the strongest gasoline fumes.

The school principal must verify attendance sheets, check on locations of disabled students, and get a handle on identifying which students have already left the building.

Set Up an Organization

To help them to obtain the detailed information they will need, the “ICs” in these three scenarios must establish some semblance of an organization. There will be no complex incident command system in place, but the firefighter in scenario 1 can choose to withdraw his personnel, assign two firefighters to reestablish a water supply, and assign the two other firefighters to search and evaluate the condition of the building exposure on the D side.

In scenario 2, the EMT initially has no other individuals to organize. However, he can establish the basis of a functioning organization by identifying the most hazardous work areas and recommending locations for a staging area and a command post.

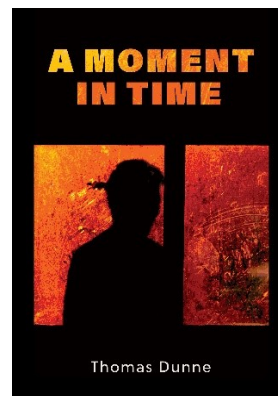
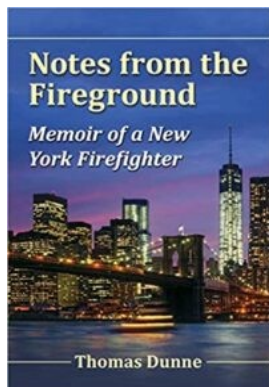
The school principal in scenario 3 has some staff to work with and can make use of the two most basic organizational tools: delegating tasks and dividing his incident into manageable sectors.

Destressing the Situation

All of the scenario “ICs” can positively affect the management of their incidents by acting as a calming influence. Even if they can take responsibility, maintain an overall perspective, organize, and obtain the needed information, they will still have difficulty if they come across as indecisive, erratic, or confused. Clear and confident communication is the most effective tool in calming down a situation. The firefighter, EMT, and principal must force themselves to project a controlled, optimistic tone as they speak, even if the stress and chaos keep them from feeling confident. A little “acting” may be called for. Each may have to slow down and speak in positive, relaxed tones when communicating plans or issuing orders.

These individuals were required to think like ICs. They had to step up and accept the taxing and solitary position of making difficult decisions under stressful circumstances. The art of thinking like an IC involves developing an appreciation of the strategy as much as recognizing the necessary tactics. If we fail to envision an overall plan, we are likely to end up with a series of uncoordinated individual tasks rather than a successful outcome – or, as the ancient Chinese general and philosopher Sun Tzu put it, “Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

Thomas Dunne is a retired Deputy Chief and a 33 year veteran of the New York City Fire Department with extensive experience working in Mid-Manhattan and the Bronx. He has been the incident commander at hundreds of fires in residential, commercial, and high rise buildings. Chief Dunne has written numerous articles for *Fire Engineering* magazine and lectures throughout the country on a variety of fire service topics. He has also published *Notes From the Fireground*, a memoir of his experiences in the FDNY and the novel, *A Moment in Time*. His web site is: www.chieftomdunne.com





Scenario A

You have responded to a fire on the top floor of a five story multiple dwelling at 0700 hours on a humid 80 degree morning. On arrival you are informed that there is a heavy body of fire in a kitchen and there are two charged hand lines in position ready to initiate an interior attack on the fire.

The fire is located in the center “B” wing of an apartment building that consists of three attached “A”, “B”, and “C” wings. The building is made of ordinary (brick and solid wood joist) construction.

There are four engines, two ladders, and two battalion chiefs at the scene, half of which are from your department. The other units are from a mutual aid department responding from a nearby town.

A veteran engine officer from your own department informs you that he is knocking down fire with the first hose line, and a ventilation hole has been cut in the roof with no evidence of fire extension into the cockloft. Moments later a newly promoted company officer from the mutual aid department excitedly transmits an urgent radio message stating that he sees a lot of heavy black smoke coming from the cockloft area and he feels that the fire may be extending.

Scenario ‘A’ Questions:

1. What are some of your initial concerns in this scenario?
2. What is your overall strategy for handling the incident?
3. What proactive steps should you be considering?
4. How much credence should you give to the radio transmission from the mutual aid officer?



Scenario B

You arrive at a fire on the 12th floor of an 18 story fire resistive high rise apartment building. The time is 1830 hours, it is 65 degrees, and there are very light wind conditions.

There are four engines, two ladders, and a battalion chief already at the scene. When you enter the lobby of the building the battalion chief informs you that there are already two engines and a ladder on the fire floor and the units are in the process of hooking up a hose line to the standpipe.

The next radio report you receive is from an engine officer in the street who is trying to supply water to the standpipe. He indicates that the system is damaged and cannot be charged. Urgent radio messages from the fire floor tell you that heavy smoke and heat are pushing out from the fire apartment door and they need water in their line immediately.

Scenario 'B' Questions:

1. In prioritizing your tasks what is the first action that must be taken?
2. Other than the standpipe system what building features require special attention?
3. Where would you initially concentrate your search activity?
4. Where would you place your rapid intervention team

Scenario A and B Discussion Points

Scenario A:

Question # 1:

The life hazard in this situation calls for an aggressive interior fire attack and rapid top floor search. There are two concerns that must be immediately addressed.

First, while the initial location of the fire has been discovered it remains to be seen just how far this top floor fire has extended. Is there fire in the cockloft? Less obvious but equally important is the question of whether fire, heat, smoke, or carbon monoxide are threatening the other wings of the building. At many apartment building fires the carbon monoxide levels will much higher at the ends of hallways located *away* from the fire location.

A second immediate concern is having sufficient resources at the scene. On a hot, humid day even a routine top floor fire will quickly exhaust personnel.

Question # 2:

Assuming that you are not using positive pressure ventilation tactics, this fire calls for immediately cutting a ventilation hole directly over the fire location along with horizontal ventilation coordinated with the start of the engine attack.

The roof vent hole is the key to keeping fire out of the cockloft. However, even if the firefight is initially going well you should be planning a few steps ahead to prepare for a worst case scenario. If fire extends to the cockloft where could you consider cutting trenches to protect the other wings? If the fire overwhelms an interior attack do you have aerial or tower ladders positioned to remove firefighters from the roof? Do you have an apparatus positioned to apply an exterior master stream if you go to an outside attack?

Question # 3:

All of the following would be steps to consider:

- Multiple alarm/mutual aid requests.
- Placing a sector commander immediately on the roof.
- Cutting small inspection holes in the roof to check for fire extension.
- Locating possible locations for cutting roof trenches.
- Insuring that you have more than one reliable hydrant or water source.

Question # 4:

As an incident commander you will often receive confusing or conflicting information at a fire. The heavy black smoke indicates that *something* in the roof area is burning. The veteran from your department may be a very experienced and competent engine officer but he is probably accustomed to viewing a fire from the perspective of a *company* officer. As the incident commander you must force yourself to take a much broader view of an operation. Be receptive to all information you receive. Accept the possibility of bad news and be prepared to act on it. Assume the worst possibilities until proven otherwise.

Scenario B:

Question # 1:

Fire and smoke are pushing from the open door of the fire apartment. This is creating a life hazard in the public hallway as well as the stairways if the stairway doors have been opened.

Closing the door to the fire apartment is absolutely your first consideration. As part of your size up you should observe that fire is venting *out* of the apartment window. This would indicate that you have a realistic chance of getting down the hallway and controlling the open apartment door.

A much more difficult scenario would be one in which high winds are pushing fire back *into* the apartment. This would make it very difficult or impossible to get anywhere near the apartment door. In that case it would be necessary to temporarily shield your personnel in the stairways. The use of high capacity fans or an indirect fire attack from the floor below or through the breached wall of an adjoining apartment might be alternate strategies to consider.

Any high rise incident will call for sectoring up the building to simplify communication and control. Additional chiefs should be called to the scene for this purpose.

Question # 2:

There will be at least two stairways in this type of building. It is important to designate as early as possible which stairway will be the attack stairway (i.e. the stairway from which the hose line will be stretched) and which stairway will be the evacuation stair. As soon as the hose line goes through the doorway of the attack stairway smoke and heat from the fire floor will vent up that stair making it impossible to safely evacuate residents. They will have to be directed to a smoke free stair that is used exclusively for evacuation.

In addition, any high rise presents serious logistical problems. The elevators must be controlled right away to resolve this issue. This particular building does not have a central air handling system but if one is present building managers will have to be consulted to address HVAC possibilities.

Finally, check if there any communications systems present in the building. They can be used as a means of contacting residents or provide a back up to our own radios.

Question # 3:

The search would begin in the fire apartment if it can be safely entered while waiting for water. This is, however, a very precarious situation to put personnel in and must be carefully evaluated. If the level of heat seriously endangers firefighters you may

have to make the difficult decision to hold off on the apartment search and concentrate on other areas. You are weighing the safety of your personnel versus the possibility of residents still being in the apartment.

If the decision is made to close the door and not enter the apartment the public hallway should be the next area to be searched followed by the stairways above the fire floor. The apartment above will have to be checked for smoke. In a fireproof building fire extension to the apartment above is possible via auto extension from the window below. However in most high rise fires this is unlikely. Smoke spread is the prime concern and danger to building occupants.

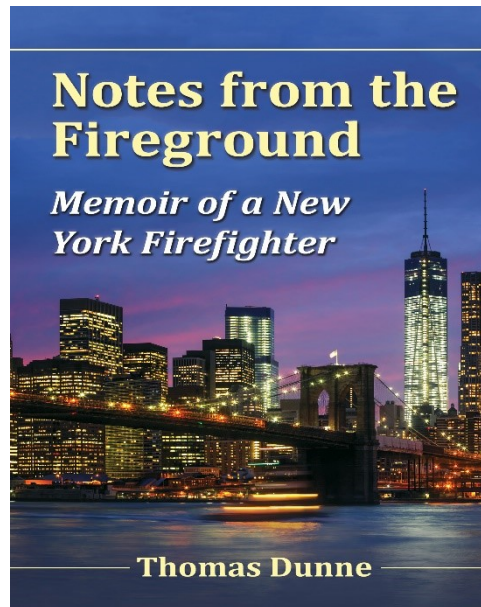
Question # 4:

The floor below the fire would be the ideal place to initially position your rapid intervention team unless that floor is already contaminated by smoke. You want them near the fire operation but unaffected by it. Again, control of the elevators is crucial to allow them access to the upper floors.

If you become involved in a prolonged operation remember to periodically replace the rapid intervention team with a fresh unit. Over time it can be fatiguing just to stand by while wearing bunker gear. In addition it may be hard for this unit to maintain the readiness and alertness that may suddenly be called for.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS? VISIT MY WEBSITE:

www.chieftomdunne.com



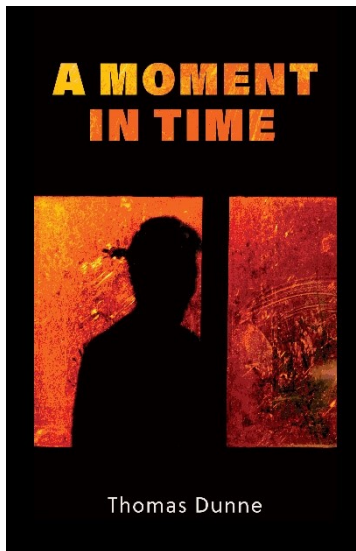
Deputy Chief Thomas Dunne New York City Fire Department

Can be ordered on Amazon, or from McFarland Publishing, or directly from my web site:

www.chieftomdunne.com

Reviews:

- “This book should be required reading for anyone who maintains a desire to learn about firefighting, or to put on the fireman’s uniform. Tom Dunne rose through the ranks of Fireman, Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief and Deputy Chief. In *Notes from the Fireground* you learn what to expect from each. He not only knows how to talk the talk, but he shares the walks with you. You can trust him. He merges the intellectual with the street-smart to convince the reader of the fearlessness and the satisfactions that are found in the firefighter’s heart, and in the love of the job. It will become a classic.”—Dennis Smith, author of *Report From Engine Company 82*
- “The stories Tom presents from his years in the FDNY can be applied to many current fireground operations. More importantly, he reminds us what the true spirit of what being ‘on the job’ is all about—helping the citizens whenever needed.”—Peter Matthews, Editor-in-Chief of *Firehouse Magazine*
- “Tom had an exemplary career in the FDNY and is able to tell a story of interest to all. FDNY members as well as non-members will be at times enlightened, amused and touched as he recounts, from his vast personal experience, life within the world’s greatest fire department. Our Department has been blessed throughout our history to have attracted men and women like Tom Dunne. I thank him for telling our story in such a personal way.”—Dan Nigro, Fire Commissioner, New York City Fire Department



Jim is a New York City firefighter wrestling with the challenges of urban living and the stresses of a dangerous occupation. But he is also battling demons within himself. Is something from the past actually lurking deep inside him or are the vague memories of indistinct people and intense flashbacks of unfamiliar objects mere illusions? Can he share such thoughts with the woman in his life, whose affluent background contrasts sharply with his working-class roots? In *A Moment in Time* you will crawl down burning hallways and experience the hidden side of New York City. It explores the underbelly of urban existence and portrays an intimate view of the world of firefighting. But it also examines what it means to share and to love and addresses a broader existential question. Is it possible that our current lives are merely extensions of previous

incarnations?

Reviews:

"Dunne's character work is the highlight of this novel; Jim and Karl both feel realistic, three-dimensional, and intriguingly flawed...the writing is clear and concise throughout, and Dunne's descriptive imagery is often compelling..."

-Kirkus Reviews

"A thrilling, heart-pounding ride--climb aboard Ladder 57 and feel what it's like racing through Manhattan and the rush of responding to an "all-hands" fire. Dunne has done it again, this time taking you outside the firehouse and into the pressure-packed world of the FDNY as only a 33-year veteran can share."

-Lucas Tomlinson

Fox News correspondent

"Tom has now shown, once again his "way with words" in this wonderful story full of relatable characters...A fascinating read that I just could not put down."

-Dan Nigro

Former Fire Commissioner, New York City Fire Department

"*A Moment in Time* explores the personal and professional issues in the life of an FDNY firefighter as he struggles to come to terms with his impending marriage and a career which doesn't seem to be going anywhere fast. Dunne has created characters who are instantly believable, wholly realistic and the firefighters could have been picked straight from just about any firehouse. It had me gripped right to the very last page and the door has been left open for the story to continue - I want more!"

-Duncan J. White, Group Editor-MDM Publishing, Retired UK Fire Officer

Deputy Chief Thomas Dunne New York City Fire Department

A Moment in Time is available on Amazon