

Winter/Cold Weather Operations



Discussion

Winter brings many special issues to firefighters faced with this climate. Ice and snow can slow responses, add weight to roofs, slow hose lead outs, provide access problems for ventilation just to mention a few.

Residents attempting to heat homes with auxiliary heating devices may not ventilate properly causing carbon monoxide problems or perhaps cause fires to start by placing kerosene heaters too close to combustibles.

Rescue calls for victims in/through the ice or other hypothermia related incidents are now also possible. EMS protocols for these types of patients exist, we should be prepared for the specialized treatments.

Our operations must also be adjusted to adapt to these conditions. Anticipate changes in the types of response we may go on and prepare your equipment. Some equipment needs to be winterized, other parts of the apparatus need to be drained, or kept ready to quick engagement to prevent freezing. Rehab concerns include re-warming as well as re-hydration. Review/answer the following questions relating to winter operations.

Equipment Considerations

1. What winterizing needs to take place for your water based extinguishers?
2. Are there additional pieces of equipment that need to be added to the apparatus for winter operations?
3. How are your pumps kept during winter conditions; wet or dry?
4. What can you do to unthaw a frozen hose coupling?
5. How is ice rescue equipment cared for after use?
6. What should be done with charges lines and nozzles when not operating?



Operational Considerations

1. What is the impact on snow loading on a roof in relation to ventilation? What should you do prior to opening a snow covered roof? Do these operations change on a peaked roof compared to a flat roof?
2. What service related calls can you expect during winter months that you wouldn't typically see in other months?
3. What is the procedure if a hydrant is found frozen or inaccessible during a fire-fighting operation?
4. What driving sog's exist for operations in winter conditions?
5. Describe the procedure for a person in the ice response.
6. Are there any staffing issues changed when anticipating heavy snowfall or extreme cold? Explain those procedures.
7. Review EMS system procedures for hypothermia, frostbite and cold water immersion.