Search Operations

Search is considered a fundamental operation in the fire service, searching for potential occupants of a structure requires coordination and lots of practice in order to make sure it’s safe and effective. Many search methods exist for various fire conditions and situations. The officer must decide which method is appropriate for each operation and coordinate the search often while completing other fireground tasks such as suppression. A search operational plan must be agreed upon prior to entry and must include a primary and secondary search.

Review procedures for conducting search and rescue operations.

- What factors are considered when determining the location(s) of a primary search?
- What areas of a building are searched first?
- What incident factors may help you determine a direction or location to begin your search?
- What methods does your department use when conducting a primary search in order to keep your crews oriented and together?

Primary Search: Quick attempt to locate and remove those who are in danger.

- Time is critical.
- Check all areas where victims might be.
- Rely on sight, sound, and touch.
- Use hand tools to extend your reach.
- Check probable areas that are tenable and safe for you to search quickly

Secondary Search: Thorough search conducted after the situation is under control.

- Locates victims not discovered in primary search
- Completed when conditions improve but may still present hazards; IDLH?
- Slow and methodical covering all areas
- Use several teams of firefighters
- Include all areas of the building

Discuss the use of Thermal Imaging Cameras during primary and secondary search operations.