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'We were not mentally ready for game day': One department's LODD experience

If you think rapid intervention is just a box to check, think again

December 18, 2023 02:27 PM



FIRE RESCUE 1 WEBINAR WHAT FIREFIGHTERS WANT 2024 REGISTER NOW



"With everything we know about the power of this team, why do so many firefighters, officers, chiefs and incident commanders (ICs) still overlook the RIT?" Cory writes.

Photo/Brandon Cory

By Brandon Cory

"Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!" A phrase we all know to mean that one of our own is in trouble.

Are you, your fellow brothers and sisters, and department ready to respond to one of our own in trouble?

In some areas, rapid intervention teams are still considered a "new" addition to the team. What's more, some consider it just another box to check on the fireground to-do list – not a priority. But with everything we know about the power of this team, why do so many firefighters, officers, chiefs and incident commanders (ICs) still overlook the RIT?

We need to replace this mindset. We must prioritize getting RIT in place right away with first-due engines and trucks. We must have enough units on scene to designate one as a RIT crew. That could mean setting up mutual aid with surrounding departments where their unit serves as the designated RIT crew – that is their role, and everyone knows it.

I come from a full-time department where, when dispatched for a structure fire, we only have six to eight of our own members on scene. We have just enough with our crews to set up to fight the fire, but not enough to set up RIT. We rely on our neighboring volunteer department to set that up for us. They are dispatched to our fires strictly as RIT, so we know we have back up if needed.

And in March 2020, we needed rapid intervention. That was the time I was involved in a mayday incident that ended up being a line-of-duty death (LODD) for one of our members.

Losing a brother

I was assigned to RIT as a mutual-aid unit coming to the fire.

Upon arriving on scene, our unit was set up right at the door as units were going into the structure.



Despite multiple attempts to retrieve a firefighter who had fallen through the floor at a structure fire, he ultimately died in the line of duty.

Photos/Brandon Cory

As we were starting to do our 360, a mayday was called. Another crewmember and I went into the building and found the down firefighter within minutes.

The firefighter had fallen through the floor. We tried multiple times to pull our brother up from the hole, but he was stuck so tight in the hole that this tactic was unsuccessful. As we tried to create

better access to our down brother, I felt him go limp. It was then decided to push him down through the hole to the basement, to other members. As a team, we were able to extricate our brother from the basement, out of the structure and to an awaiting EMS crew. Despite all our efforts, our brother had perished doing what he loved.

RIT training



As individuals, we must look into the mirror and ask if we would want ourselves on the RIT if WE were that down firefighter.

Photo/Brandon Cory

Even with our crew being assigned as RIT right away, we were not fully ready mentally for game day. We did not have the game-ready mindset to always expect the worse. We did not think anyone would be inside, as we were given the update of a fully involved structure fire with flames out the roof and windows and everyone out of the building. Even with odds not in our favor, my crew still performed to the best of our ability when it came to getting the job done.

Our department has always trained on RIT operations multiple times per year, especially with the basics. This gave my crew and myself the basic tools needed to perform the rescue. We were able to don our gear and get to the down firefighter within minutes to start the rescue. It enabled us to

extricate our brother within 8-9 minutes – in a situation none of us had experienced before. Our training and preparation gave us the ability to give our brother the best chance of survival. Even with all our training and preparation, we still came up short.

Critical questions

I have seen this problem across the country – that we are not ready for rapid intervention. It starts with us saving us. We need to consider RIT to be just as important as fire suppression and search. It needs to be one of the primary pillars of a successful fire scene. If we can have suppression, search, ventilation, and RIT set up on every structure fire, we are giving ourselves the best chance to win. We need to take a better approach to being ready to save our own.

For the department, we must consider key questions:

- Is it standard to have RIT set up at every structure fire right away?
- Do you have preassigned units or departments on your first alarm that know they are assigned RIT right when they show up?

If not, you need to get there – now.

Project Mayday data shows that most maydays happen 15-30 minutes from arriving on scene, with over half being experienced by the first-arriving crews. If you are sending your firefighters to do their job right away with either suppression or search to put their life at risk, why are you not putting in place the method to save them as quick as possible? Our job is dangerous – and the best one there is – but if we are not looking out for ourselves, we are not doing our job. We are here to serve and protect the community and put our lives on the line for them. I am not saying we don't do that to our highest ability, but if we do not put people in place to save us in those times, there will be no one left to protect the community. We must take care of our family so we can take care of the community to the best of our ability.

As individuals, we must look into the mirror and ask if we would want ourselves on the RIT if WE were that down firefighter:

- Are you up to date with your training and knowledge of the tactics?

- Are you up to date with fire dynamics and fire behavior?
- Do you know the building construction of the buildings in your area?
- Are you fit enough to do the job?
- Are you mentally capable of doing the job?
- Are you the best firefighter you can be to give your brother or sister the best chance to survive or are you just doing enough to get by?

We must break ourselves down a little to identify our weaknesses and get better at them. We are not perfect or the best at everything, but are we seeing that and doing what we can to get better every day? We will never be perfect at every aspect of this job alone, but if we train and better ourselves every day, then we can create a perfect team on the fireground and be ready for when game day comes. Are you ready to perform to the top level during the most stressful situation we can be in as firefighters? Do you want you rescuing you?

Proactive, not reactive

We **MUST** be proactive instead of reactive when it comes to RIT. I'm not saying we wait to go and do our jobs with suppression and search until a RIT team is on scene, but we need to put RIT teams in place as soon as possible. If we simply react to a mayday, then we are already putting our brothers and sisters in greater danger.

The research and data show that most maydays are taken care of by the firefighter calling the mayday, members of the crew (or crews) working close to the mayday. So, to be proactive, we must find a way to provide our members the critical survival skills, RIT team skills, and critical-thinking skills to best manage high-stress.

About the author

Brandon Cory is a firefighter with the Marquette City (Michigan) Fire Department. He previously served as a firefighter and lieutenant with his hometown department in Negaunee where he was also a part of the county sheriff's special rescue team. Cory has presented at Firehouse Expo and other fire service conferences around the Midwest.

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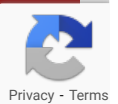
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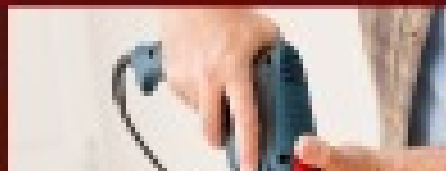
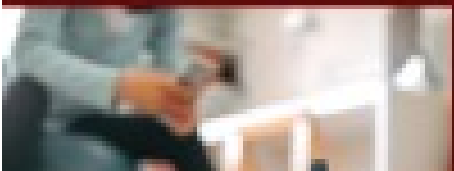
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National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

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Firefighting History

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 이식!

탈모고민 한 방에 해결!



탈모고민 한 방에 해결!

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Colo. fire chief placed on administrative leave after staff complaints

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곧 죽어도 안 빠지던 뱃살 내장지방 몰라보게 짝 빠져

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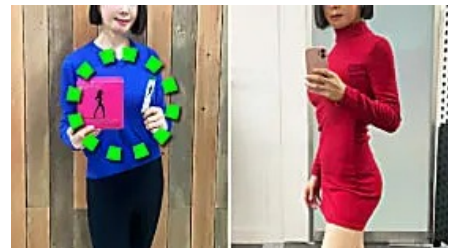
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다이어트하려고 하는데 몸무게가 잘 안 빠지는 분을 찾습니다

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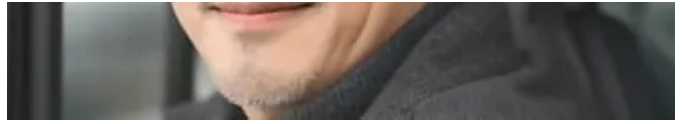


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Fallen. Pa. chief's gear displayed at Republican convention; name intentionally misspelled

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