



FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION

For and About the Employees of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department

The Tallest Order: High-Rise Response

Inoperable elevators. Stairwells clogged with evacuees. The challenge of climbing multiple flights of stairs vs. a dwindling air supply. Water pressure problems.

In his book about high-rise fires, Matt Stuckey, a retired battalion chief from Houston, Texas, paints an ominous picture of response.



Rapid ventilation of a burning structure has always been a priority. The reason is to replace the toxic atmosphere with fresh air, says SOG 407. The SOG also directs ladder companies to stockpile their cordless/110 volt fans at the front of the structure for use as an incident progresses.

Those issues, and the danger of limited bailout options past the first few floors, were on Keith Powers' mind long before he was JFRD's Operations Chief and before he knew about Stuckey, the author of "Firefighters and Highrises. Bridging the Gap." Powers wanted our department to be ready for the demands of a high-rise fire, and his research connected him to Stuckey. In September 2016, Stuckey came to Jacksonville at Powers' request and presented how firefighters can prepare for the unique challenges of high-rises. Stuckey shared what he learned about high-rise response while on the job in Houston and in his current role as a consultant for Massey Enterprises, a disaster planning company.

Fast forward to today. Fire 5's Battalion Chief Don Blanton is leading a committee that has been revising our high-rise SOG since Stuckey's presentation. SOG 407 has doubled in size, and some of the committee's updates involve valuable input gleaned from Stuckey and contact with more than a dozen major metropolitan departments, including FDNY, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The committee also contacted vendors who specialize in hose, fans, nozzles, radios, and other equipment designed for high-rise situations. And lessons learned from JFRD's response last December to a fire in the 10-story Jacksonville Townhouse Apartments on Philips Highway also influenced SOG 407's revisions.

Chief's Corner

When you report to the station at the beginning of your shift, you probably don't consider the inherent danger of your profession and how the next 24 hours may unfold. You might be focused on an apparatus check, some training you promised your crew, or an upcoming vacation.

It's doubtful that you are considering your own mortality.

Just writing this column is eerie because it reminds me of the reality of my guaranteed death and that no one is promised tomorrow. Perhaps the only comfort in this reality is that I believe I will be in a better place once it happens.

Police Officer Lance Whitaker didn't know that May 15, 2018 was his last day on Earth. Whitaker was responding to an MVA around 4:30 a.m. when he was involved in a single-vehicle crash. Suddenly, his life and 17-year career ended. He was 48 years old. Later that day, JSO Sheriff Mike Williams stated that "Officer Whitaker's oath was to serve and protect those in his community, and he died in pursuit of that mission."

The stark reality of an oath to serve and protect is front and center under these circumstances. When a police officer or firefighter dies in the line of duty, our bond seems to strengthen automatically. Same thing happens when somebody gets seriously hurt. We slow down and consider what truly matters. We tend to demonstrate a greater level of caring for each other. We want to accelerate the healing, we are compelled to express our emotions, and we strive to do all we can for the immediate family.

I believe that interaction is healthy because it opens up lines of communication, especially encouragement. Do you suppose we could try to communicate and demonstrate that higher level of caring more often? As a very large family that is committed to serving and protecting, we don't need a tragedy to take more of an interest in one another.

Kurt Wilson
Chief of Department

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LifeScan Benefits and Procedure

By District Chief Jeff Braswell (Rescue 107)

More and more, our profession is reacting to the health hazards that we face in the line of duty.

Trade magazines publish studies, we hear about the issues and intervention at conferences, and JFRD's administration keeps us informed, too. For more than a decade, Chief of Department Kurt Wilson has advocated for our health by raising awareness about cancer in the fire service and its direct connection to exposure on the fire ground. JFRD also has an active Firefighters Attacking the Cancer Epidemic (FACE) committee.



Rescue 107's District Chief Jeff Braswell coordinates LifeScan appointments for JFRD.

LifeScan is another proactive health care measure, and you have complete control over taking advantage of this employee benefit. LifeScan is a comprehensive physical exam that has a proven track record of identifying health issues before they become life threatening. It also offers a thorough assessment of your health. LifeScan's physician and nurse practitioner analyze blood work drawn prior to the LifeScan visit as well as information acquired during the physical itself to identify concerns that you would want to share with your primary care physician or a specialist. LifeScan's exercise physiologist assesses your overall fitness, and their ultrasound technologist assesses your organs and vascular integrity in the thoracic, abdominal and neck area. LifeScan has revealed a variety of issues, including thyroid cancer, aortic aneurysms, coronary blockages, kidney cancer, hypertension, prostate cancer, testicular cancer, carotid artery narrowing/blockages and ovarian cysts.

The LifeScan Process

Your first step is a blood draw in advance of being scheduled for the LifeScan physical. Employees with less than two years on the job will not go through the process, since they had a medical clearance during the hiring process.

Before the blood draw, you must print and complete the blood work order form, which is available in the "file center" of Target Solutions. Just enter "LifeScan" in the search bar. Once you complete the order form, please advise Rescue 107's Chief Jeff Braswell. Fire communications will then coordinate crews by rotating through pre-selected fire stations for the blood draw.

For accurate blood work, you should be fasting in advance. Once the blood work is drawn, Braswell will schedule crews for the

LifeScan physical. After the blood work and before your physical, you should complete a LifeScan patient packet, which is available in Target Solutions in the LifeScan folder. You must bring the completed packet to your LifeScan appointment.

LifeScan is capable of evaluating three or four people during a three-hour time slot. The time slots are 0830-1130, 1130-1430 and 1430-1730. It is important to be on time. If you are late, you will affect the remainder of the schedule.

If you have a morning appointment, you should fast to optimize the results of your ultrasound. If you have an 1130 or 1430 appointment, you can have a light breakfast but should avoid carbonated beverages. This enhances the results of the ultrasound. A large or heavy meal causes the gallbladder to contract making it difficult to evaluate. You should also drink 20 ounces of water 45 minutes prior to your appointment. This improves the ultrasound's ability to "see" and render your bladder for evaluation.

The LifeScan appointment is divided into three segments: a physical fitness evaluation, which includes a stress test; an ultrasound; and the physical exam administered by the nurse practitioner or physician. There is no particular order to the three segments. Since the evaluation has a fitness segment, you should wear athletic clothes and shoes.

Once you receive your results, please follow up with your physician about any concerns that the staff at LifeScan share. Also if the physical reveals any issues that would be covered under the fire fighter heart and lung bill, please contact Capt. Tracy Hooten, JFRD's Health and Safety Officer. Captain Hooten can be reached at 718-HURT (4878). She will complete the paperwork to submit a claim through Risk Management.

Eight Earn Red Helmets

These members of JFRD's HazMat Team recently earned their red helmets, which are unique to the team. Qualifying can take more than a year and begins with the 160-hour HazMat course. Candidates then demonstrate mastery of all assets and operations detailed in the JFRD HazMat Task Book. Candidates earn the helmet after passing an extensive evaluation by experienced team members.

Eng. Joe Gresser

Eng. David Marti II

Firefighter Tabari Clayton

Firefighter Kristen Kent

Firefighter Brent Lamprecht

Firefighter Dion Peralta

Firefighter Jacob Tomlinson

Firefighter David West

Submitted by Capt. Gene Klingbeil (Training Academy)

Return of 'The Rock'

After a comprehensive renovation that began last summer, "The Rock" is officially back in service. The 31-year-old facility's list of improvements is lengthy, and the crews assigned there did all they could to expedite their return to Fire Station 1, all the while working out of stations miles away, including 35 and 50.

Station 1 Capt. Jeremy Cooke and all assigned also kept the exterior looking sharp while they were away, tending to the lawn every Saturday as well as the Firefighter Memorial Wall. In fact, during last October's Fallen Firefighter Memorial, you wouldn't have really noticed the renovations unless you peeked inside the windows.

"That's what I love about being at 1. All the people here are invested in the station," Cooke said.

That investment included "emptying the entire station," Cooke said, so the contractors could install new flooring, three

new refrigerators, as well as the stainless steel counters and sinks in the kitchen. Much of the temporarily relocated furniture, tables, chairs, and the collection of portraits of each five-bugle JFRD Chief will return in some indoors configuration. And thanks to a new HVAC system, the

crews gained a bit of extra floor space that they repurposed into a closet for staples and extra locker space. The Chief's room is larger, and so is

the kitchen area. In both cases, contractors removed walls. The kitchen is now L-shaped and also has an "island" food prep table on wheels.

Another labor-intensive task involved scrubbing the four-bay area floor and walls to prepare them for painting. Also, everyone's bunker gear is now stored in a contained area, on the opposite side of the bay from the living quarters, that once served as a hose-drying rack. Crews also painted the station interior.



(Photo L to R) Ladder 1's Eng. Bobby Dopson and Eng. Jeff Feltman as well as Ladder 1 and Station 1 Capt. Jeremy Cooke tend to some of the finishing touches before moving back into their station.

Ladder 1 Eng. Teddy Blackwell has been assigned to Station 1 for more than 20 years. He said he believes this is the most comprehensive renovation that the station has ever seen. Like Cooke and the others, he's happy to do his part along with the contractors. "We're just helping out to get it done," Blackwell said.



(Photo L to R) Engine 9's Eng. Matt Owens, Ladder 9's Firefighter Mark Narcho and Engine 9's Firefighter Jamal Edwards cover a roof damaged by a tree felled by a storm in mid-May. The impact also disrupted the ceiling and some of the falling debris struck a child inside. Also assisting were Engine 9's Lt. Andre Rodall and Ladder 9's Capt. Orlando Heggs, Eng. Brian Southall and Firefighter Johnnie Kennedy.

Engine 9A, Ladder 9A Climb the Roof to go Above and Beyond

Submitted by Eng. Brian Southall (Ladder 9A)

During some of mid-May's turbulent storms, Engine 9 and Ladder 9 provided extra precautions following a call related to a fallen tree on a house.

The original dispatch was a pediatric traumatic injury call for Engine 9 and Rescue 15. When the tree struck the house, it pierced the roof and the force also knocked the ceiling inside loose and some of the debris struck the child. Fortunately, the child's injuries were minor, but the damage to the house was significant. Recognizing the forecast could cause leaking inside the house, Engine 9 called for Ladder 9. Together, they removed the tree from the roof and covered the affected area to protect the house from further damage until the owner could make repairs.

High-Rise Response

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Now it's your turn to learn the details and understand the complications by attending the ongoing high-rise training downtown at the old City Hall on East Bay Street. About 10 to 15 percent of the department has taken the scenario-based training which puts the revised SOG 407 into practice. Along with Blanton, Fire 4's Chief Robin Gainey and Fire 9's Chief Mike Lesniak are facilitating the training. Participants should become familiar with the latest revision of SOG 407 which Blanton e-mailed to the field on April 20.

The training begins with an overview of the SOG, there is also a discussion about ventilation, a description of the drill, and then questions and answers. The drill begins with a radio dispatch and establishment of incident command. Companies respond as directed and climb multiple flights of stairs with hose. As they approach the fire floor, they encounter low light and simulated smoke which effectively limit visibility. On the fire floor, they navigate numerous hallways and offices while trying to find the fire, which is a flashing beacon or a traffic cone. Firefighters must also rescue the 25-plus patients, which are numbered chairs.

"We're teaching you how to operate in a coordinated manner in horrible conditions," Blanton said.

Part of that coordination is achieving effective ventilation and conducting an orderly evacuation. That became a challenge during the Townhouse Apartments fire in the early hours of Dec. 18. Just one unit on the eighth floor was burning, but when the occupant evacuated the apartment, he left the

door open. Fire was showing when Lesniak arrived, and crews extinguished the burning apartment within the first 30 minutes, but the heat and smoke had already charged the fire floor and the above floors, which

prompted many occupants to attempt self-evacuation using stairwells.

The elevators were not operating because JEA had cut power to the building early during operations to prevent an electrocution hazard with the water accumulating in the building from the sprinkler system. Another complication was the approximate 20 residents on the fire floor who positioned themselves on the outside ledges of their apartments and were threatening to jump.

Per SOG 407, one stairwell was designated as the attack stairwell and another as the evacuation stairwell. But many of the residents from the uppermost floors used the attack stairwell because it was closer than the evacuation stairwell,

Lesniak said. During their egress, some residents moved ventilation fans out of their way which let smoke into the stairwells.

Because many of the 200-plus residents at the Townhouse had physical limitations, their evacuation required JFRD's assistance for about nine hours. Fortunately, there were no fatalities or serious injuries.

"We're teaching you how to operate in a coordinated manner in horrible conditions."

Battalion Chief Don Blanton

"It definitely was an eye opener," said Lesniak. "We need this training. I don't want to be the one who shows up unprepared."

As the training evolves, so does the SOG to reflect lessons learned, Blanton said, describing the old City Hall as a "giant laboratory." It's also possible the venue could change given the city's plans for the building. Either way, the training's objective will remain the same.

"We're trying to put people in a good place with clean air," Blanton said.



Fire 5 Battalion Chief Don Blanton is leading the committee responsible for revising JFRD's high-rise SOG. He also is coordinating the high-rise drills.



Fire 9 District Chief Mike Lesniak (far left) discusses the lead roles for the high-rise drill at 220 E. Bay St. on May 22 with (left to right) Fire 5 Battalion Chief Donald Powell, Fire 2 District Chief Kevin Dix, and Fire 1 Battalion Chief Darrell Holsenbeck.