

## Fear and Firefighting

Within the wide context that the fire service discusses strategies and tactics, I would like to add a little back ground to where I think some starting points differ from man to man. I have been using a catchy phrase lately and forgive me if I stole it from you but I think it hits the mark. "Fighting fire with emotional fear could lead to disaster." I'm not calling you a coward for making poor decisions on the fire ground, I'm just telling you that you should have a better understanding of what "fear" is really for.

Fear is an instinctual emotion that quickly translates to function. A good thing most of the time. Emotion is the very first building block to making any decision if you think about it, and that's what I want firefighters to do. Think about it. Think about fear as a recognition of something that is important, a positive example could be that person across the room you're interested in, and a bad one is that fire extending to the occupied floor. You can't look away from these terrible scenes because your instincts are telling you to pay attention! Instinctual focus on a situation that may quickly include you. Now, before you go to a check list of options, or worse yet a predetermined tactic, take a step closer to the situation and size up the scene.

Time for a plan. Now that you are in a thinking mode, plug in your variables against your exposure and experience and get to it. Bolster this plan with positive reasons for the plan. Reason #1 is survival for the trapped occupant. An example can be: stretch an attack line through the front door and have the next 2 available VES the bedroom window. A "fear based" decision example could be: put some water through a window and have the next 2 guys establish a water supply. Both of these plans have merit and a place depending on a myriad of variables, but only one is about the best positive outcome for anyone on the second floor without a SCBA. When you run into difficulties (dangerous conditions), stay committed to the plan instead of falling to emotions. Provide for more tools/resources to get your goal accomplished!

Review the plan often and keep taking action. Action is the anecdote for emotional fear. The first steps towards something that is important, are the hardest. Keep moving (thinking) through the incident and account for everything by the end of it. Step out of the flowerbeds and into the fight. Lead with calm clarity by "taking a pause for the cause".