

## Training notes

As a training officer in my fire department, I am always looking for different perspective to consider my craft and how to better pass down the information. There are a few outlying things that set the table for a great training experience for the student as well as the instructors.

The first hang up I will address is foul language. I see the pendulum of acceptance slowly starting to swing the other way towards pragmatism and reality. The reality is that words matter. Some words that have emphatic meaning and grab your attention have a place in the fire service. To imply that foul language has no place in our job does a disservice to the real life and death workplace we work, and for some of us, thrive in. We are human beings and like it or not the first part of the decision making process starts as an emotional response, especially in a risky environment. This is the place that colorful language comes from. There is of course a line for being decent in society but on the other side of that line is the way to communicate to someone's basic response mechanism. We do this to start a chain reaction from someone feeling an emotion to physically acting upon that stimulus. That action may be as simple as remembering what has been said, too dropping whatever they are doing and changing course. When humans are pushed to a stressful response you will hear profanity. Since this is a fact in real life it is permissible in reality based fire training/practice. Personal attacks are unacceptable but when describing for example the thermal barrier in your coat as it loses its capabilities, your tone and words will elicit a type of response from the listener. In short, if you have a deep personal conflict with the "seven deadly words", may I suggest you begin to desensitize yourself so you may be a more effective listener on the fire ground, and less distracted in a training session by focusing on the language instead of the lessons. You may not like to hear profanity, but you won't be able to stop it from being used on the scene of human distress. Don't let the message get lost in the verbiage, it is your job to stay calm and act with purpose regardless of the circumstances. In short... "Hey Asshole, Get over it and get to work."

Secondly, I would like to propose we as instructors and mentors draw distinctive line between a training session and practice evolutions. Skills are introduced and learned in a training session but it isn't until a practice scenario that the decision to use that skill is tested. The practice scenario must be as realistic, and organized as possible so as to offer a couple different endgames to the drill. This way the decision that the participants make will affect their given scenario. After a series of ladder and victim removal training sessions, give a practice scenario. Have a

couple of index cards describing a simulated condition that would demand different actions. For example; hand a search officer a card that reads “2 kids on the second floor” If the officer doesn’t order at least 2 ladders to the window(s) hand him another card that says “each of the kids are 16 years old” If he doesn’t radio for more help, hand another card to him that says “the interior door has failed and flash over is imminent”. This type of evolving drill will begin the stressed response, and emotions will cloud judgment if not kept in check.

Paul Sharp from Sharp Defense and combative training has a great illustration for training. He calls it a cognizant triangle. Picture the 3 sides of a triangle with each one representing 1 of the needs for mastering a skill set. The First is Movement (the hands on part). The second is Resistance (realistic requirements). The third is Timing (knowing when and where to use the skill). We as trainers can spend more time on each as needs dictate. The basic skill, the decision process, or the requirements needed for the desired outcome can each be a training session on one single skill. In my opinion we as a service far too often are teaching a skill without giving the background information surrounding the question of “why are we doing this?” An example would be showing cadets how to bail out of window before they can point out the warning signs of flashover. Furthermore; that particular skill is in the category of “unconscious competence” which means a split second decision based on not only training but practice with a stress element.

I would consider advanced fire training anything that you are spending your own time and money on to better your chances at the scene of a fire. If you have not done that, then you are still a cadet that has not yet met your potential. Don’t be the 20 year / first year guy. We don’t need more first timers on the fire ground. We need a few calculated risk takers which have the heads up, balls to the walls bravado and intellect to get the work done.

Lastly, I wanted to touch on a bullet point list of things that have helped me in many training session and beyond. Maybe you already use or know these things but it is worth noting that the training session is only part of the process. You have to retain the knowledge and learn when to use those skills.

- Plan on 100% effort/attention = well rested, sober, prepared
- Back up gear, fluids and food in a cooler
- Small note pad for your gear pocket, and a voice recorder to get quick thoughts down or record an instructor

- Cheap camera, not a phone
- Volunteer for as many reps as possible
- Develop contacts and follow up ... social media
- Make a summary document and share with the instructor, feedback is much appreciated