

No. 2: Water Supply

Introduction

The most basic function in the fire service is that of getting a water supply.

For many departments this can be as easy as looking 500 feet in any direction of the fire scene and locating a fire hydrant. However, for other departments getting water may not be as easy. They might have to get their water from a stream, pond, or even a swimming pool.

For the purpose of this drill, we will be looking at the fire hydrant as our source of water. The objective is to review fire department procedures for laying supply hose lines.

The two lays we are going to look at are: the forward lay and the reverse lay.

The Forward or Straight Lay

The forward, or straight lay, is a simple process of laying hose away from the water supply (hydrant) to the scene of the fire. Keep in mind that the hydrant we are going to use needs to be a good supply source. Should a fire hydrant be out of service for any reason it needs to be clearly tagged as such. This is sometimes done by securing a red disc marker behind the steamer connection cap.

Advantages obtained from a forward lay are:

1. places the engine company at the fire scene
2. allows a second engine company to augment the pressure by pumping into the supply lines

On another note, this particular operation requires a strong discipline on the behalf of the driver to stop at the hydrant on the way into the scene.

The firefighter assigned to the hydrant needs to follow some key criteria:

- Remember the hydrant wrench
- Wrap the hose around the hydrant properly
- Signal the driver when it is safe to proceed to the scene
- Connect hoses and charge them in accordance with your department's SOP/SOG



Photo by Peter Matthews/Firehouse.com

The Reverse or Backwards Lay

The reverse lay, or backwards lay, is used in the event that a water supply was not obtained upon approaching the fire scene or should the incident dictate additional water needs.

Advantages obtained from the reverse lay are:

1. It limits the amount of apparatus at the fire scene
2. It increases the water pressure to the engine on scene, by pumping back to it from the water source.

For this operation to be accomplished correctly the engine company that will be responsible for getting water using the reverse lay needs to:

- Back down or negotiate around vehicles already on scene
- Place supply hose lines at the wheel of the on-scene engine, furthest from the source of water. This allows the pump operator enough hose to make his connections.
- Lay out (slowly) to the hydrant of choice and make the hydrant following your department's SOP/SOG

Several key safety notes to follow are:

1. The firefighter making the hydrant for the forward lay should be sure an avoiding getting caught between the hose and the hydrant when the apparatus proceeds to pull away towards the fire scene.
2. Anytime apparatus is being backed up on the fire scene will require one or two firefighters as spotter for the driver. As noted early, this is a slow process due to all the activity on the fire scene. The last thing we want to have happen is have a firefighter or civilian get run over by one of our vehicles.

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