

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #123: STANDARDS/REGULATIONS

Introduction

There is one thing we all know and that is the fire service is inundated with standards and regulations. But do we know where these standards and regulations come from? Several are set at the federal level of our government, while others come from state and local governments. The main intent with any of these standards and regulations focuses on the safety of our firefighters.

Protection Agencies

There are several protection agencies that look out for the safety of firefighters. One such agency is the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The dominant standard that affects firefighter safety here is the NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health. The intent of this standard has been to reduce the number of accidents and injuries to our members. If nothing else, it has increased our awareness levels when it comes to firefighter safety. Just look at the changes we have seen over the past 20 plus years that this standard has been around. Personal safety equipment used on the fire scene has changed along with the process we use for accountability of our firefighters.

Keep in mind that the NFPA standards are the minimum requirements for our agencies and should provide us with enough information to expound upon them.

Another agency that has an effect on our operations is the Department of Transportation (DOT). It doesn't seem that the DOT would have any bearing on the fire department's operation, but it sure does. At every incident, our firefighters are jumping off the apparatus with a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) on their back. Did you know that cylinder is regulated by the DOT? Additionally, all hazardous materials being transported fall within the DOT guidance and regulations. In some states, the DOT establishes requirements for truck drivers (which includes fire trucks) and requires operators to have a commercial driver's license.

Another federal agency that has an impact on the fire service is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We hardly think about this agency, but each time we respond to a hazardous material incident, the EPA has had a hand in the way we respond. The Superfund



Reauthorization Act got the EPA involved in how firefighter department personnel are trained and plan for hazardous material responses. Each year, firefighters should receive annual training on "Right-to-Know," which is an EPA requirement. In addition, the EPA mirrors the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) dealing with hazardous materials responses for those states that are not OSHA states.

OSHA is another federal agency that has regulatory bearing on the fire service for those states that are OSHA states. In general, the goal of OSHA deals with the reduction of work place injuries. It focuses on workplace hazards and implements workplace health and safety programs.

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is an agency in the Department of Health and Human Services. The main function of NIOSH falls in the research of varying safety and health problems and provides technical assistance to OSHA. It also makes recommendations and establishes exposure limits to chemicals and other workplace hazards.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick