

How Well do you Know Your Attack Package?



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I have always felt fortunate that over the duration of my career I never lost the drive to learn more about the job or to perform better on a call, be it a medical or fire-related incident. I have seen co-workers lose that drive and thought, I don't ever want to experience that myself.

I have also been fortunate to attend training classes in eight states other than Wisconsin. This has given me (I believe) a pretty broad-based learning platform. Those who know me well know that, if anything, what I have an affection for in the fire service is pumping and setting up the engine for what I refer to as being Battle Ready — being set up for whatever fire situation you may have to respond to.

I was having a discussion with my boss recently about upcoming topics for future training. (My department trains all three shifts every week on a different skill or topic with the idea that we try to repeat

the schedule every two years). I stated to him that I think we need more focus on our hose lines and water delivery. After that meeting, I sat down and started to ponder everything I know that is related to strictly the hose and the “Attack Package.” The “Attack Package” is your engine, pump, hose, nozzles and how you go about using it all in unison to make your attack on a fire. Your knowledge on your own department’s “Attack Package” helps you determine how “Battle Ready” you and your department really are. It really shouldn't matter if you have one fire a year or a hundred fires a year. The goal for every fire department and every firefighter is to deliver the best service as possible to our customers.

Attack package includes:

1. Nozzle Reaction
2. Nozzle Whip
3. Kinks
4. Pints/second vs. Gallons/minute
5. Stream Reach
6. Friction Loss
7. Hose Loads
8. Control Valves
9. Hose Construction
10. “True Hose” Diameter
11. Forward Lay
12. Reverse Lay
13. First-Due Water
14. Bumper Line
15. Cross Lay

16. Pre-connect
17. Deck Gun
18. R.A.M.
19. Standpipes
20. Foam
21. Transitional Attack
22. Positive Pressure Attack
23. Relay Pumping
24. Positive Pressure Ventilation
25. Aerial Ladder Operations
26. Drafting
27. Extended Lines
28. Special Nozzles
29. Response Matrix
30. Communications
31. Second Due
32. Water Mapping
33. Sprinkler Systems
34. Smooth bore vs. Combination Nozzles
35. Ultra-High-Pressure Systems

I have said this before in previous articles over the years, how surprising it is to me that departments in general do not have a good understanding of their “Attack Package(s).” I use this analogy to make a comparison of the importance of being “Battle Ready.”

As a deer hunter, there is much preparatory work to be ready for opening day (the fire). We have pre-season scouting, prepping our stands, packing, and of course we need to sight in our gun to make sure it is hitting the bullseye. Shouldn't we be this accurate when it comes to our “Attack Package?”



Photo courtesy of Aaron Fields from Nozzle Forward

Aaron Fields demonstrates proper technique

In the above photo, Aaron Fields is demonstrating the proper technique for making the push to the fire-

- 1). Nozzle out in front
- 2). Pattern set on straight stream
- 3). Right leg down
- 4). Hose clamped to hip
- 5). Backup man supporting the hose, taking the pressure off the nozzleman.

Obviously with a list as long as the one above is, I cannot give justice to such a broad topic in an article, maybe a dozen, perhaps. What I can cover is the overall main points to knowing your Attack Package. Here we go:

1. Unless you're using an ultra-high-pressure system, your attack line should be flowing 150 gallons per minute minimum.
2. Your pump operator should know what the proper pump pressure for the line(s) are. If they don't know, get the pump tested and have an accurate pump chart!
3. Understand your hose characteristics. If it kinks easily, replace

- it. Every kink substantially reduces your flow.
4. If you have a class A foam system on board, use it on every fire!
5. Set up the rear hose beds to offer several options. Not just a bed of hose flat loaded with a nozzle put on the end of the hose.

6. Train your crews on the Underwriters Laboratories studies (www.ulfirefightersafety.org) and understand Transitional Attack and the capabilities of your tank water.

7. Place more emphasis at your trainings on the Attack Package: Flow water through your hose lines and dial in your pump pressures, to help perfect the nozzleman position.

There are actually more topics to add to the list regarding the Attack Package: the art of reading smoke, building construction, manpower/staffing, education/training, maintenance of your engine and its equipment, physical fitness, and there is probably more that can be added to the list.



Photo courtesy of KME

This new engine is set up to have different attack lines work off the rear of the rig.

Don't settle for mediocre performance. Train like the next response may be for your own house that's burning. The quicker and the more efficiently you can get your Attack Package to the door, the better it is for everyone, especially the customer. Stay Safe!

Eric

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