



In-Station Training

TM 23-26a Residential Fire-Vacant



Author

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Purpose

There is often debate related to firefighting operations in vacant buildings. Some advocate a policy of defensive operations only due to the risk to firefighters with limited (or no) benefit to offensive operations. Others point to the potential for vacant buildings occupied by houseless people. As with most things in the fire service, this is not a simple, binary choice. It depends on context and circumstances.

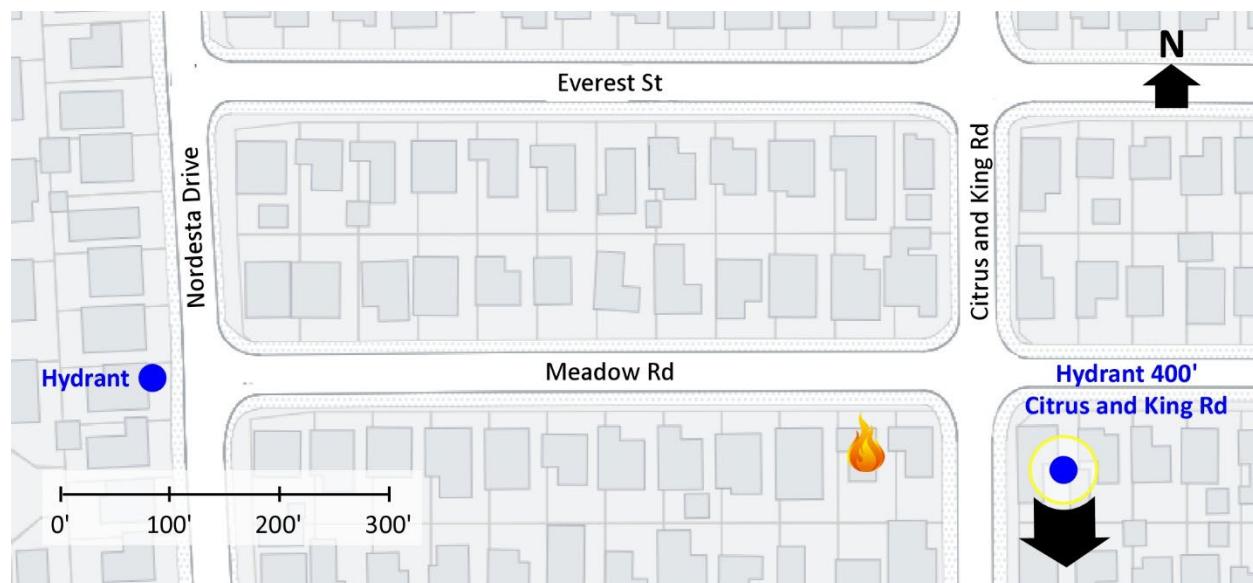
Learning Outcomes

Command officers perform effective ongoing size-up; select an appropriate strategy, and implement tactics based on the strategic decision-making model.

Conducting the Drill

This incident involved a fire in a vacant house at 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, California on February 6, 2022, at 09:23 (FB1 Response Videos, 2022). Review the map and photos (Figures 1-5) to gain an understanding of the area and building involved.

Figure 1. Map of the Incident Area



Note: Adapted from Google. (2023a). [map, 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, CA]. <https://bit.ly/43Q22rd>.

The closest hydrant to the south of the incident on Citrus and King Road with a second hydrant in the direction of travel at the intersection of Nordesta Drive and Meadow Road as illustrated in Figure 1.

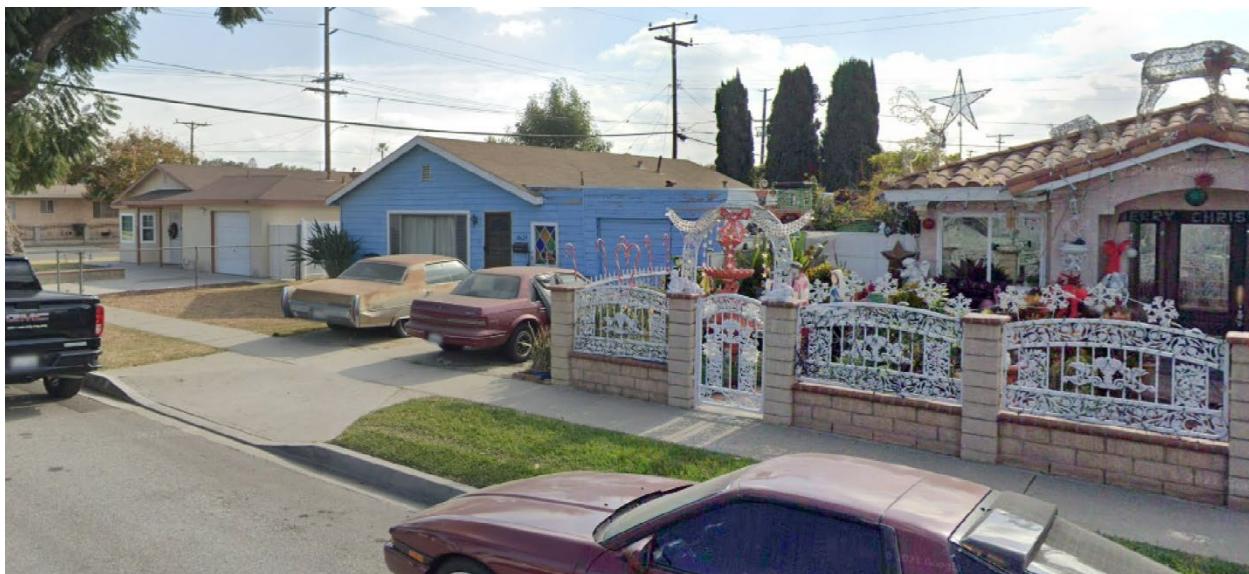
Figure 2. Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2023b). [aerial view 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, CA].

<https://bit.ly/3PluNrk>.

Figure 3. Alpha/Delta Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2020a). [street view 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, CA].

<https://bit.ly/42Qe4j0>.

Figure 4. Side Alpha



Note: Adapted from Google. (2020b). [street view 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, CA].
<https://bit.ly/3pb95f4>.

Figure 5. Alpha/Bravo Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2020c). [street view 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, CA].
<https://bit.ly/42Jzezq>.

You were dispatched to 10524 Meadow Road for a residential fire at 09:23. You are responding to this incident as the first arriving command officer. Temperature is 59° F with wind from the east at 5 mph (Weather Underground, 2022). While responding you hear four engines, an advanced life support (ALS) ambulance, and a second command officer go enroute. The engines have staffing typical of your agency.

Note: If your agency has response of a truck company on residential fires, the third engine can be replaced by a truck for this 10-Minute Training.

While enroute, dispatch provides an update that multiple callers are reporting flames and smoke from a vacant building at 10524 Meadow Road. The first engine will arrive from the east on Meadow Drive. The second engine and ALS ambulance will arrive from the west on Meadow Drive approximately six minutes after the first. The third company (engine or truck) will arrive from the north on Citrus and King Road 12 minutes after the first arriving engine. Make a note of your resource and staffing assumptions prior to continuing with this 10-Minute Training. **You will arrive from the east on Meadow Road after the third company.** Any additional resources that have been dispatched (based on your response plan) will arrive later in the incident.

1. What critical factors would you consider when dispatched and during response?

As you were responding Engine 1 provided the following initial radio report:

On-scene of a small one story, house with a working fire, stretching an attack line on Side Alpha for fire control, in the offensive strategy, initiating Meadow Command, continue the alarm.

A short time later, Meadow Command provides the following update.

360 complete, but limited access on Sides Bravo and Delta due to concrete walls on the property line, one story all sides, no basement, continuing offensive, and continue the alarm.

Engine 2 arrives and advises Meadow Command they are Level 1. Meadow Command provides the following orders to Engine 2.

Forward lay to Engine 1 from the hydrant at Nordesta Drive and Meadow Road, stretch an attack line off Engine 1, go on-deck Side Alpha, we are through Side Alpha for fire control and primary search.

Engine 3 (or Truck 1) arrives and advises Meadow Command they are Level 1. Meadow Command provides the following orders to the third arriving company.

Park out of the way, access the roof from Side Alpha, vertical vent of the pitched roof.

Watch the first 00:45 of the [incident video](#) (FB1 Response Videos, 2022) and examine Figure 6 illustrating conditions on your arrival.

Figure 6. Conditions on Arrival of Chief 1



Note: Adapted from FB1 Response Videos. (2022). Vacant House Fire: LACo.FD Station 20 (Norwalk).
<https://bit.ly/43KW0YK>.

2. What actions will you take prior to contacting IC #1 (Engine 1) to begin command transfer?

3. State your command transfer communication after IC #1 acknowledges your radio contact (exactly as you would transmit it).

Following your confirmation of the location and assignment of Engines 1, 2, and Engine 3 (or Truck 1) and request for a conditions, actions, and needs (CAN) report, IC #1 provides the following CAN:

*That is correct. Large volume of fire towards Side Charlie applying water with limited effect.
Need a company to assist with fire control on Side Charlie.*

4. State the communication you would have with IC #1 and dispatch to complete the command transfer (exactly as you would transmit it).

5. What action would you take based on the CAN from Engine 1 (IC #1). State the communications you would have with the operating companies exactly as you would transmit them.

Watch the [incident video](#) (FB1 Response Videos, 2022) from 00:46 to 03:33 before answering the next several questions.

6. Did you continue with the tactical approach initiated by IC #1, or did you revise the incident action plan (IAP)? Why? If you modified the IAP, what changes did you make related to fire control, primary search, and ventilation?
7. Engine 4 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 at the hydrant on Citrus and King Road south of the incident location. State the tactical order you would provide Engine 4 exactly as you would transmit it.
8. Chief 2 arrives and reports that they are Level 1. State the tactical assignment you will give them exactly as you would transmit it.
9. Based on your observation of incident operations, what are some of the key issues you would discuss as part of the tailboard after action review (AAR) before demobilizing companies. What issues would you not include in the AAR, but would address with individual company officers?

Additional Learning: There are differing perspectives on the most effective ventilation tactics. Some agencies do not generally perform vertical ventilation on private dwellings and others use vertical ventilation as a near-default ventilation tactic. At 00:45 in the [incident video](#) (FB1 Response Videos, 2022) firefighters access the roof for ventilation. Watch the video from 00:45 to 01:15 and give some thought to sounding when accessing and traveling on the roof, the number of personnel on the roof, and duration of roof operations.

Read [*Fire Studies: Vacant Building Fires*](#) (Smith, 2022). Engage your companies in discussion of fireground operations at vacant and abandoned buildings. Build a common understanding of strategic and tactical decision-making related to firefighting operations in vacant buildings.

Get out into your response area with your companies and identify vacant and abandoned buildings and the hazards they present.

References

FB1 Response Videos. (2022). Vacant House Fire: LACo.FD Station 20 (Norwalk). Retrieved June 18, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/43KWOYK>.

Google. (2020a). [street view 10524 Meadow Road, Norwalk, CA]. Retrieved June 18, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/42Qe4j0>.

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Smith, J. (2022). Fire studies: vacant building fires. Retrieved June 18, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/3NcJvOD>.

Weather Underground (2022). *Burbank, CA weather history* [historical weather February 6, 2022]. Retrieved June 18, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/42UrH0Q>.