



In-Station Training

TM 25-48a Church Fire



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Purpose

The design and configuration of many churches present significant tactical challenges. The IC must maintain an awareness of and anticipate the impact of fire progression and the impact of the fire on structural stability.

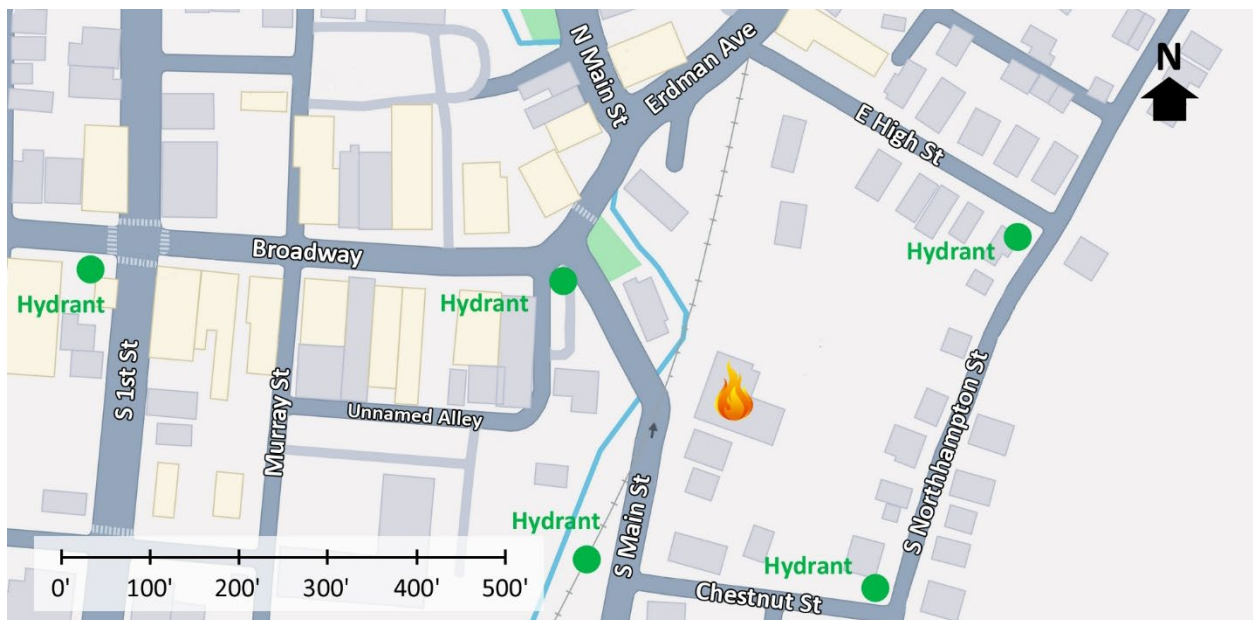
Learning Outcomes

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 commercial fire at Lighthouse Ministries Church, 125 S Main Street in Bangor, Pennsylvania on Wednesday November 5, 2025, at 06:30 (Broadcastify, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d; Northeast Bravest, 2025; Brandt, Sylves, & Holden, 2025; CBS Philadelphia, 2025; & Lynch, 2025). Review the map and photos (Figures 1-6) to gain an understanding of the building and area involved.

Figure 1. Map of the Incident Area



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025a). [Map, 125 S Main Street, Bangor, PA]. Map data ©2025 Google. <https://bit.ly/4qWdjIG>.

There are two nearby fire hydrants at the intersections of South Main Street and Chestnut Street and South Main Street and Broadway. Additional hydrants are in the area as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2. Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025b). [Aerial view 125 S Main Street, Bangor, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2025. <https://bit.ly/48btHXa>.

Figure 3. Alpha/Delta Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2022a). [Street view 125 S Main Street, Bangor, PA]. ©2025 Google. <https://bit.ly/4ib1Zhz>.

Figure 4. Side Alpha



Note: Adapted from Google. (2022b). [Street view 125 S Main Street, Bangor, PA]. ©2025 Google <https://bit.ly/4iaa9Xy>.

Figure 5. Bravo/Charlie Corner 3D Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025c). [3d aerial view 125 S Main Street, Bangor, PA]. ©2025 Google <https://bit.ly/4pmi9Hc>.

Figure 6. Alpha/Delta Corner 3D Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025d). [3d aerial 125 S Main Street, Bangor, PA]. Map data ©2025 Google <https://bit.ly/3Kc1tDz>.

The **temperature is currently 38° F with no appreciable wind from the north** (Weather Underground, 2025). It is Wednesday, November 5th and you are dispatched to a commercial fire at the Lighthouse Ministries Church at 125 S Main Street along with five engine companies, two ladder companies, a medic unit, and a second command officer. **You are the first due command officer** and hear all first alarm companies go enroute. The engine and ladder companies have four-person staffing¹

You are familiar with this target hazard. The rear section of the church was built in the 1800s and the stone sanctuary was constructed in the late 1920s (Brandt, Sylves, & Holden, 2025).



Time starts now! Answer the first 11 questions within the next 10 minutes. Decide and put your answers in the form of communication you would have with the responding companies, the second command officer, and dispatch. Save discussion for after answering the first 11 questions.

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

¹ If your first alarm deployment is different, use your own resource assignment and staffing.

Engine 1 arrives and provides the following initial radio report.

On-scene medium one story church with a walkout basement on Side Alpha, working fire with smoke from Side Charlie and the roof, forward lay from the hydrant at Broadway and South Main, stretching an attack line on Side Charlie for fire control, offensive strategy, give me a second alarm with Level 2 Staging at Broadway and 2nd Street, Engine 1 is Lighthouse Command.

Dispatch, notify the railroad to shut down rail traffic crossing South Main Street, our supply line crosses the track.

Lighthouse Command provides the following follow-up report:

No 360 due to size, the fire involves the basement at the rear of the church, Exposure Delta 1 is a small, one-story house connected to the church by an underground tunnel.

Dispatch advises Engine 1 that the railroad has been notified and has shut down rail traffic in the area.

You hear Lighthouse Command task one of their firefighters with deploying a portable ladder to Side Charlie for below grade access to the basement windows.

Ladder 1 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on Broadway at South First Street (this allows Ladder 1 to access the church from the north or south on South Main Street). Lighthouse Command provides the following tactical assignment:

Position on Side Alpha for access to the roof or elevated master stream operation.

Engine 2 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on Erdman Avenue and East High Street (this allows Engine 2 to access the church from the north or south on South Main Street). Lighthouse Command provides the following tactical assignment.

Park out of the way and stretch a second attack line off Engine 1, through Side Alpha for fire control and primary search in the basement.

You approach this incident from the west on Broadway. Watch the first 00:45 of the [incident simulation video](#) (Hartin, 2025) and examine Figure 7 illustrating conditions on arrival.

Figure 7. Conditions on Arrival



Note: Adapted from Hartin, E. (2025). *10-minute training 25-48a incident simulation* [Fire Studio 7 video]. <https://bit.ly/48cJEwd>.

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 Engine 1, Engine 2, and Ladder 1 and request for a conditions, actions, and needs (CAN) report, IC #1 provides the following CAN:

The fire involves the basement under the rear section of the church applying water from the exterior with good effect. Air status 75%, need to get companies with attack lines into Floor 1 to cut off extension into the sanctuary.

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.

6. Engine 3 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant on South Main Street, at East Chestnut Street. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

7. Chief 2 arrives and advises that she is Level 1. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

Watch the [incident simulation video](#) (Hartin, 2025) from 00:45 to 02:00 and examine Figure 8 illustrating changing conditions.

Figure 8. Changing Conditions



Note: Adapted from Hartin, E. (2025) *10-minute training 25-48a incident simulation* [Fire Studio 7 video]. <https://bit.ly/48cJEwd>.

Engine 2 provides the following priority traffic radio communication.

Having difficulty accessing the fire, zero visibility, temperature increasing. Need a company with a second attack line to assist with locating the fire and fire control in the basement.

8. What action would you take based on these changing conditions? State the radio communications that you would have with companies operating in the hazard zone and dispatch exactly as you would transmit them.

9. Engine 4 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant on Broadway at South 1st Street. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

10. Ladder 4 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on Broadway at South 1st Street. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

11. Engine 5 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on North Main Street and Erdman Avenue. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.



Reflect on your strategic decision-making and responses to questions one through 11 before answering the next six questions. Think about what differences from conditions that you would anticipate (cues, patterns, or anomalies) inform your answers.

12. What was the problem?
13. What was getting in the way of achieving your tactical priorities?
14. Was there anything in this incident that could have hurt or killed you (right now)?
15. Was it reasonable to believe that the church was occupied?
16. Was there searchable space?
17. If you believed it was reasonable that the church was occupied and there was searchable space, what could you do about it?

The next several questions extend this 10-Minute Training beyond assignment of the first alarm companies

18. What assignment did you give Chief 2 and what critical factors influenced your decision?
19. Given the layout and configuration of the church and the location of the fire, what attack positions did you establish and what additional attack positions would you have added as additional resources became available? What critical factors influenced your selection of attack positions and the sequence in which you implemented (or would implement) them?

20. Did you implement a strategic shift to defense? What critical factors influenced your decision to shift to a defensive strategy or remain offensive?

21. How did you address the potential for extension to the Delta 1 exposure, either through the basement tunnel or from radiant heat from the fire should conditions deteriorate further?

Additional Learning: The fire progression in this simulation was like that occurring in the actual incident (but occurred more quickly in the simulation). Watch the [incident video](#) (Northeast Bravest, 2025) It is important to note that the video does not show operations on Side Alpha early in the incident.

Discuss the following with your crew.

- Challenging access to the basement from the exterior that was encountered by the companies operating on Side Charlie. Was the offensive exterior attack from Side Charlie a reasonable tactical approach? Why or why not?
- What inferences did you make regarding the location and extent of the fire, its stage(s) of development (growth, fully developed or decay), and burning regime (fuel or ventilation limited) as this incident progressed?
- The IC in this incident did not declare the incident strategy (offensive or defense). Why is it important to declare the strategy as part of the initial radio report, follow up, and when making a strategic shift?
- Approximately 30 minutes into incident operations, the IC advised dispatch that “all companies are exterior” (Broadcastify, 2025c). What is the difference between companies operating on the exterior in offensive positions versus operating in defensive positions.
- Neither the companies nor the IC were initially aware of the tunnel between the church and the Delta 1 Exposure prior to arrival. The IC was provided with this information by dispatch approximately 40 minutes into the incident. How might this have impacted tactical assignments and fireground operations?
- Investigation in the Delta 1 identified a smoke condition, but no extension of fire. What tactics could be used to minimize the extension of smoke and fire into the exposure?

There was structural collapse in the rear of the structure involving failure of the roof and first floor as well as structural damage to the roof of the sanctuary. Read the [NBC 10 news article](#) (Lynch, 2025) and examine the post fire aerial photos illustrating the extent of structural damage.

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