



In-Station Training

TM 26-24a Residential Fire



Author

Chief Ed Hartin

Purpose

Quick and effective water on the fire and close coordination between fire control, ventilation, and search are essential elements of an offensive strategy.

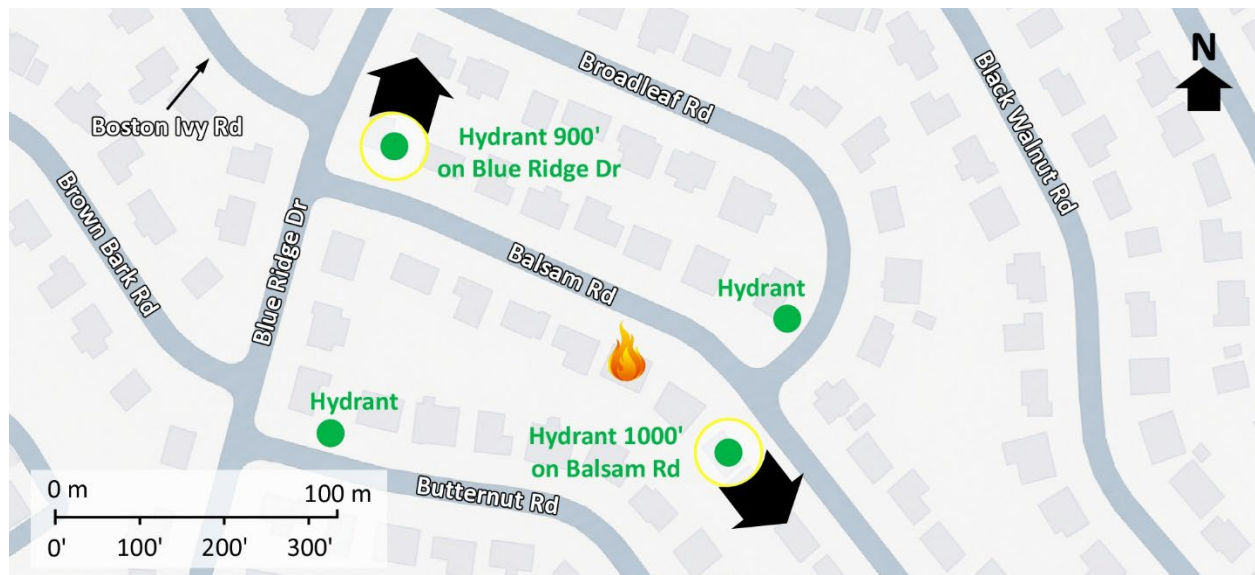
Learning Outcomes

Incident commanders demonstrate command presence, perform an effective size-up, select an appropriate strategy, and implement tactics based on the strategic decision-making model.

Conducting the Drill

This incident involved a residential fire at 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, Pennsylvania on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 16:19 (Roberts, 2026; Solfield, 2026a & 2026b; & Lower Bucks Source - Bucks Digital Media, LLC, 2026). 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. (2026a). [Map, 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. Map data ©2026 Google.
<https://bit.ly/4x4I2A6>.

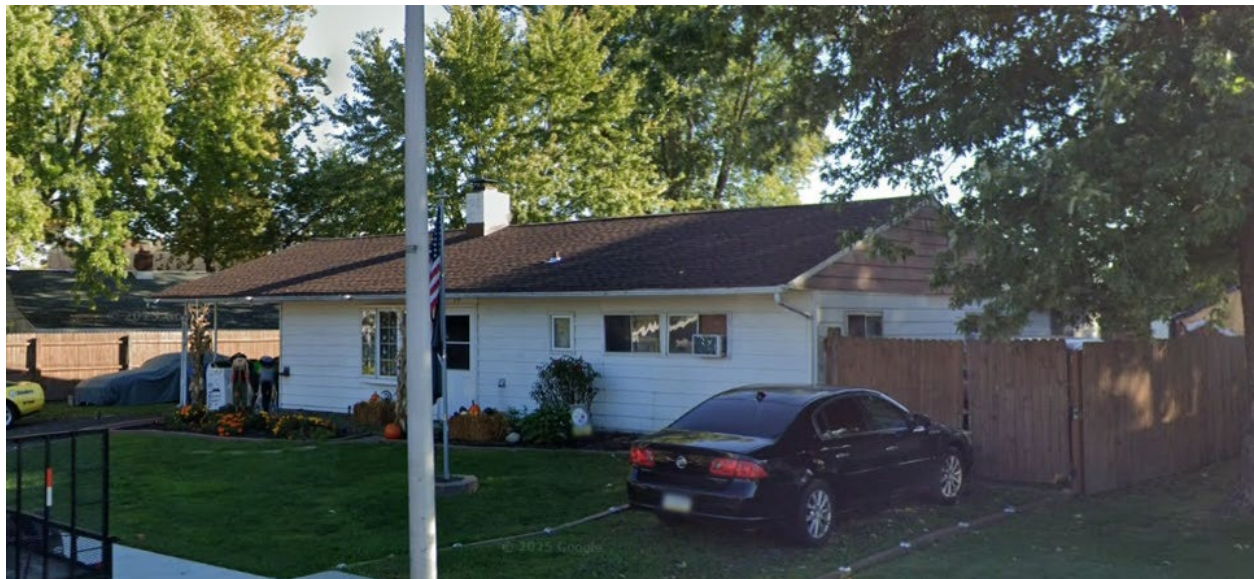
The closest hydrant is on Broadleaf Road at Balsam Road and there are other hydrants in the area as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2. Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/4uQk75T>.

Figure 3. Alpha/Delta Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2022a). [Street view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/3RWRLZe>.

Figure 4. Side Alpha



Note: Adapted from Google. (2022b). [Street view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/49L0cwU>.

Figure 5. Alpha/Bravo Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2022c). [Street view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. ©2026 Google. 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA. <https://bit.ly/4dUOqT1>.

Figure 6, Side Charlie 3D



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026c). [3d aerial view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/43TNM2g>.

The incident is in a suburban residential neighborhood. The area consists primarily of closely spaced single-family homes in a planned postwar subdivision pattern. Many of the homes in this area were constructed in the 1950s. Residential properties in this neighborhood are predominantly owner-occupied. The predominant language in this area is English, with a relatively small proportion of residents speaking other languages at home. (Open AI, 2026). Fire and emergency medical call volume in this area is typical of other suburban areas of the community.

The temperature is currently 79° F (26° C) with wind from the north at 9 mph (14 kph). (Weather Underground, 2026). It is Wednesday, May 27th and you are dispatched to a **residential fire** at 59 Balsam Road along with three engines, a ladder company, and a medic unit at 16:19. The engines and ladder have four-person staffing¹. **You are the command officer.**



Time starts now! Answer the first seven questions within the next 10 minutes. Save discussion until after you have answered these questions.

While responding, dispatch provides an update that **callers report lots of smoke and flames from the back of the house**. You hear the engines, ladder, and medic unit, go enroute.

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

1. What critical factors would you consider when dispatched and during response?
2. Based on the dispatch information and what you know about the response area, what do you anticipate finding on arrival?

You anticipate that you will arrive after the first two engines and ladder company. The remainder of the first alarm companies will arrive after you.

Engine 1 arrives and provides the following initial radio report.

On-scene, small one story house, working fire on the Charlie/Delta Corner, stretching an attack line through Side Alpha for fire control and primary search, offensive strategy, Engine 1 is Balsam Command.

Ladder 1 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 at Balsam and Broadleaf, Balsam Command provides the following tactical assignment:

Position on Alpha, Ladder 1 in for primary search, Ladder 1B ladder the roof for vertical ventilation.

Patten Command provides the following follow-up report:

360 complete, no basement, one story all sides, fire from two windows on the Charlie/Delta Corner, continuing offensive, Engine 1 will be accountability on Side Alpha

Engine 2 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant at Balsam and Broadleaf, Balsam Command provides the following tactical assignment.

Park out of the way, pull a second attack line off Engine 1, stretch through Side Alpha, backup Engine 1.

You approach the incident location from the southeast on Balsam Road.

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



Important! Answer questions four through seven in the form of communication you would have with dispatch and the companies operating at this incident. State the communications exactly as you would say them over the radio. Save explanation or discussion until after you have completed these questions.

Watch the [incident video](#) (Roberts, 2026) from 00:48 to 01:08 and examine Figure 7 illustrating conditions on arrival. Click the link above or scan the QR code to access the video.

Figure 7. Conditions on Arrival



Note: Adapted from Roberts, R. (2026). *Balsam Road Dwelling Fire 5/27/26 Levittown, PA.*

<https://bit.ly/4xeBPBG>

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

After contacting IC #1 for a command transfer and confirming the position and function of Engine 1, Ladder 1, and Engine 2 and requesting a CAN, Engine 1 provides the following report:

Engine 1 is working on getting water on the fire, and making slow progress, hot and smoke to the floor, need additional ventilation, air status 75%.

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

As you complete the command transfer, the apparatus operator of Engine 1 transmits the following priority traffic radio message.

I have a patient next to Engine 1's apparatus with difficulty breathing from smoke inhalation, I have them on O₂, need a medic unit to my location.

6. Engine 3 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant to the southwest on Balsam. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.
7. Medic 3 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 at Blue Ridge and Balsam. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.



Reflect on your strategic decision-making and responses to questions 1 through 7 before answering the next eight questions. Think about what cues, patterns, or anomalies (differences from conditions that you would anticipate) informed your answers.

8. What information most influenced your expectations?
9. Did anything in the incident post-arrival challenge your initial expectations?
10. What was the actual problem once you arrived?
11. What were your tactical priorities and what was getting in the way of achieving them?

12. During initial operations, was there an immediate threat of serious injury or death to the members of the companies operating at this incident?

13. Was it reasonable to believe that the Main Fire Occupancy was occupied?

14. Was there searchable space?

15. If you believed it was reasonable that there was searchable space, what could you do about it?

Watch the [incident video](#) from 01:08 to 04:08 (Roberts, 2026) to gain perspective on initial fire control and rescue operations during this incident before answering the remaining questions.



16. Based on your initial observation of building, environment, smoke, air track, heat, and flame (BE-SAHF) indicators, what extent of involvement and fire conditions would you anticipate that Engine 1 would encounter on the interior?

17. What action did you take based on Engine 1's request for additional ventilation in their transfer of command CAN report? Did you task a company to vent (horizontally or vertically)? Why or why not?

18. Between 01:47 and 02:23 you can hear glass breaking see Firefighter on Side Alpha begins to take the windows on Side Alpha. What changes in conditions occur after the firefighter takes the windows and what impact on fire behavior would be likely because of the location and extent of this additional ventilation?

19. What effect would deploying an attack line to Side Delta and application of exterior water (after Engine 1 had already made entry) have had? Would this be a viable option for improving conditions for Engine 1? Why or why not? What direction would you provide Engine 1 if you were to implement this tactic?

Additional Learning

Important! In some cases, videos and incident audio used in 10-Minute Trainings show less than ideal emergency operations. Remember that no firefighter or fire officer goes to an incident wanting to do a poor job. There are many factors that may influence incident operations and video or a still photograph seldom, if ever provide the entire story. Keep in mind that videos or photos of real incidents are used to provide a learning context.

Incident Video: Watch the [incident video](#) (Roberts, 2026) from 04:08 through the end. As you watch the video focus on what conversations you would have had with the companies operating at this fire during the on-scene hot wash. If you were IC #2 at this incident? What additional conversations would you have with the company officers after the incident?



As you reflect on your observations while watching this incident video think about the following:

- Accountability.
- Movement with purpose.
- Tactical choices and coordination.
- Situation awareness.

Reflect on the answer to these questions and consider how the lessons learned from this incident can inform your organization and your work as a command officer. Identify one area to focus on in your ongoing professional development and the effectiveness and efficiency of the companies you work with.

Discuss the following with the companies you work with:

- Effective use of exterior streams. Focus on the decision process for when you would use exterior water versus when you would stretch through Side Alpha (or some other location remote from the fire) and why.
- The impact of ventilation and changes in flow path, particularly when the fire is vent limited (as it generally will be) and there is no effective water on the fire.
- Why maintaining crew integrity and moving with purpose is important.
- Why personal alert safety systems (PASSs) sounding continuously on the fireground when there is not a firefighter down is a problem that can create complacency and a tendency to “tune out” this audible indicator.

References

Google. (2022a). [Street view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. ©2026 Google. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/3RWRLZe>.

Google. (2022b). [Street view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. ©2026 Google. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/49L0cwU>.

Google. (2022c). [Street view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. ©2026 Google. 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4dUOqT1>.

Google. (2026a). [Map, 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. Map data ©2026 Google. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4x4I2A6>.

Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4uQk75T>.

Google. (2026c). [3derial view 59 Balsam Road, Levittown, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/43TNM2g>.

Lower Bucks Source - Bucks Digital Media, LLC. (2026). *Developing : House Fire 59 Balsam Rd Levittown* [Facebook post]. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4ukW1PK>.

OpenAI. (2026). ChatGPT 5.5 [Large language model]. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

Roberts, R. (2026). *Balsam Road Dwelling Fire 5/27/26 Levittown, PA*. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4xeBPBG>.

Solfield, T. (2026a). *Heavy fire reported at Bristol Twp. home*. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4fwvprg>.

Solfield, T. (2026b). *Crews quickly control heavy fire at Levittown home*. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/43n5xXD>.

Weather Underground (2026). *Ewing, NJ weather history* [historical weather May 27, 2026]. Retrieved June 7, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4vEuObX>.

Build command competence through weekly practice.

Receive a link to each new 10-Minute Training tactical decision game by email.

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to subscribe.

