



In-Station Training

TM 26-35 Residential Fire



Author

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Purpose

When responding to a structure fire, fire officers and firefighters are presented with a puzzle consisting of dynamic, ambiguous and incomplete information with which to develop a pre-arrival working story of what they think is happening. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1700 Guide for Structural Firefighting emphasizes the importance of pre-arrival factors in the process of size-up.

Learning Outcomes

Initial incident commanders 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 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, Pennsylvania on Saturday, August 8, 2026, at 21:38 (Newsworking, 2026 & NVP: Media Services - Nester Video Production, 2026). Review the map and photos (Figures 1-5) to gain an understanding of the building and area involved.

Figure 1. Map of the Incident Area



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026a). [Map, 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, PA]. Map data ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/45HMIj6>.

There are no hydrants in the immediate area. The closest water tender fill point is a hydrant at Independence Drive and Levans Road to the west of the incident location as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2. Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/4grd4ea>.

Figure 3. Alpha/Bravo Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025a). [Street view 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, PA]. ©2025 Google. <https://bit.ly/4imlRQW>.

Figure 4. Side Alpha



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025b). [Street view 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, PA]. ©2025 Google. <https://bit.ly/3Sk8ITy>.

Figure 5. Alpha/Delta Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2025c). [Street view 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, PA]. ©2025 Google. <https://bit.ly/3Sm9LwO>.

The incident is in a rural residential area. The surrounding area includes larger residential parcels, agricultural land, and scattered single-family homes. Housing near Coplay Creek Road includes older and mid-20th-century single-family homes, along with later rural residential development. Residential properties are predominantly owner-occupied. English is the predominant language, with a Spanish-speaking population.

The temperature is currently 69° F (21° C) with wind from the west southwest at 9 mph (14 kph) (Weather Underground, 2026). It is Saturday, August 8th, at 21:38 and you are dispatched to a residential fire at 3954 Coplay Creek Road along with two other engines, two water tenders, a ladder company, medic unit and command officer. The engines and ladder company have four-person staffing¹, but the two engines are cross staffed with the water tenders are cross staffed (three personnel on the engine and one on the water tender). **You are the officer of the first due engine company, and your engine is staffed with four personnel.**

This tactical decision game incorporates a simulation (dispatch through arrival) and actual incident video (showing conditions after you arrive). The simulation on YouTube provides a link at the end of the video to access the incident video. This 10-Minute Training also includes links and QR codes to both the simulation and incident video.

This [simulation video](#) (Hartin, 2026) provides prompts to pause the simulation and answer related questions. Each question has a brief prompt that appears in the simulation (e.g., the text “Critical Factors” is a prompt for question one. Click the link above or scan the QR code to access the incident simulation video.



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

1. What critical factors would you consider when dispatched and during response? What conversations would you have with your crew during response?

¹ If your staffing and deployment are different, use your own resource assignment and staffing.

2. Based on the dispatch information and what you know about this occupancy and response area, what do you anticipate finding on arrival?



Important! Answer questions three through nine in the form of communication you would have with your crew, dispatch, other companies, and the first arriving command officer. State the communications exactly as you would say them face-to-face or over the radio. Save explanation or discussion until after you have completed these questions.

3. State your initial radio report (IRR) exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.
4. What specific actions would you take (as the company officer) immediately upon arrival and exiting the apparatus and what task orders would you give your crew?

Watch the [incident video](#) (Newsworking, 2026) from the start to 00:35 illustrating conditions in the garage located on Side Charlie of the house. Note that the dispatch audio track in the video is not synchronized with the video.



5. Would you change the action you are taking or modify the assignments given to your crew? If so, what task orders would you provide?
6. State your follow up report exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.
7. Ladder 1 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on Levans at Coplay Creek Road. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.
8. Engine 2 and Tender 2 arrive and report that they are Level 1 on Levans at Coplay Creek Road. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

9. Based on anticipated effectiveness of your tactical operations, state your conditions, actions, and needs (CAN) report that you would provide to the first arriving command officer as part of command transfer to IC #2.



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

10. What information most influenced your expectations?
11. Did anything in the incident post-arrival challenge your initial expectations?
12. What was the actual problem once you arrived?
13. What were your tactical priorities and what was getting in the way of achieving them?
14. During initial operations, was there an immediate threat of serious injury or death to you, your crew, or other companies?
15. Was it reasonable to believe that the building was occupied?
16. Was there searchable space?
17. If you believed there was searchable space and that it was reasonable that the building was occupied, what could you do about it?

Deputy Chief 22 arrived first and established Coplay Command. Engine/Tender² 22 which is equipped with a 2,500 gallon (9,463 L) water tank and 2,000 gpm (7570 Lpm) pump, stretched a large attack line for fire control. Chief 16 self-assigned himself to water supply. Water Tender 16 with a 5,000 gallon (18,927 L) water tank was the first tender to arrive after Engine/Tender 22. Water Tender 12 with a 3,000 gallon (11,356 L) water tank was the next tender on the first alarm assignment. Attack 12 (1500 gpm engine with 500 gallon water tank) established a water tender fill site was established at the hydrant on Spring Hill Drive.

Watch the [second incident video](#) which includes drone video and incident radio communications (NVP: Media Services - Nester Video Production, 2026). Click the link or scan the QR code to access the video.



18. Did the report of multiple, full propane tanks influence your initial decision making? Was your assumption that these were typical 20 lb (9 kg) propane cylinders such as those used with a gas fired grill? What is the recommended standoff distance for this size propane cylinder when subjected to flame impingement (Hint, see pages 358 and 359 in the [Emergency Response Guidebook](#) (US DOT, 2024),
19. Was your initial action plan similar or different than that implemented by Deputy Chief 22 (large handline for fire control)? What factors influenced your choice of attack position and method of water application?
20. What water supply requirements (think flow and duration) did you anticipate for this incident? How did you lay the foundation for water supply operations with Engine 2 and Water Tender 2? How would you anticipate IC #2 building on that foundation to provide adequate water supply?

Additional Learning

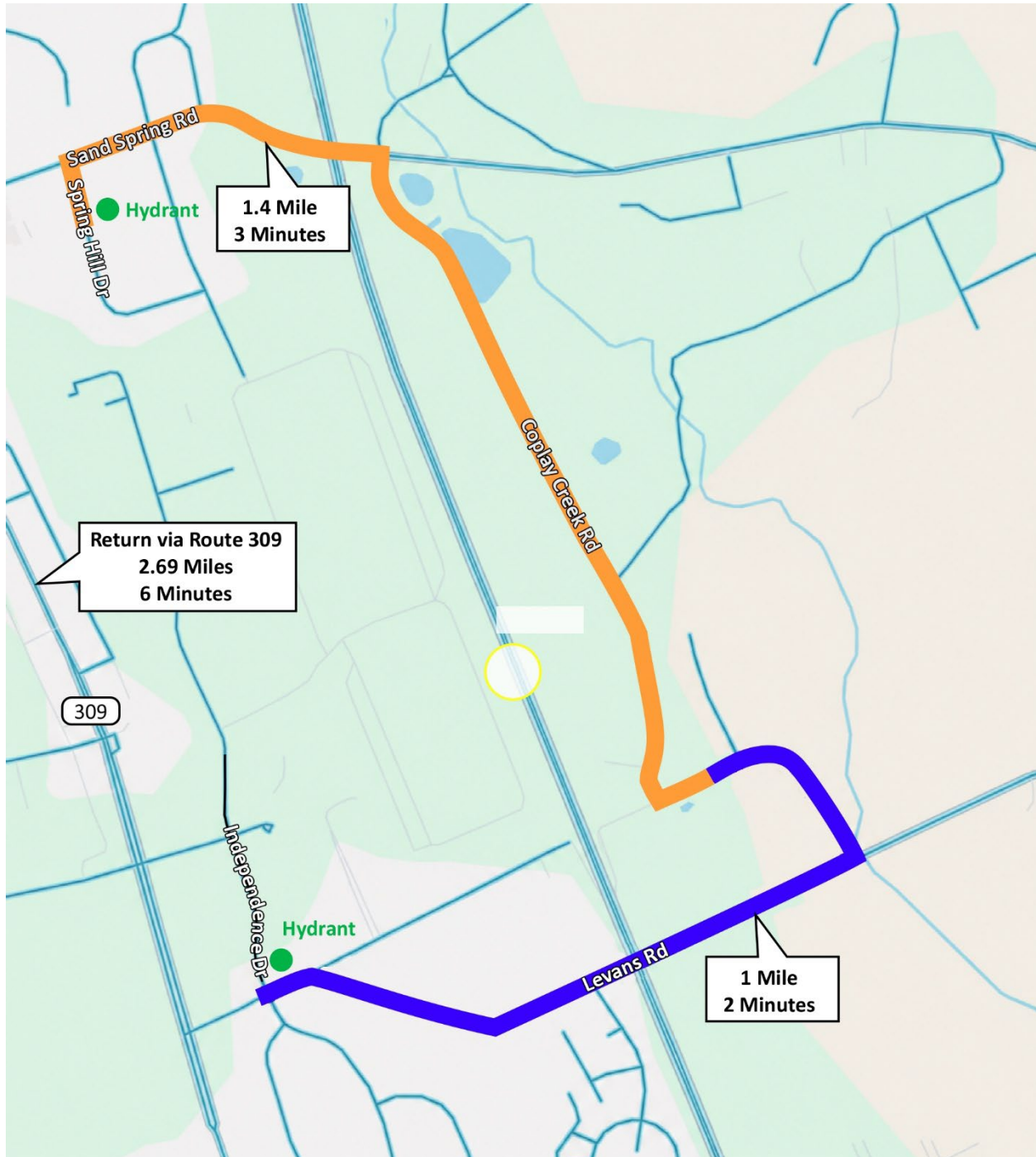
This incident provides an opportunity for additional learning about rural water supply and effective communications.

² Fire departments in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania refer to water tenders as “tankers”. This 10-Minute Training uses the NIMS designation of water tender. Within NIMS resource typing, “tankers” are wildland firefighting aircraft).

Rural Water Supply

Examine Figure 6, illustrating two alternative water tender fill points and routes of travel for this incident.

Figure 6. Water Tender Shuttle Route Map



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026c). [Map, 3954 Coplay Creek Rd, Schnecksville, PA]. Map data ©2026 Google. <https://bit.ly/3U45Wgi>.

In this incident, water tenders arrived at the incident from Levans Road. Chief 16, the Water Supply Group Supervisor had Attack 12 establish a fill site at the hydrant on Spring Hill Drive, while the hydrant on Independence Drive was 0.4 miles closer with a much shorter round trip travel time. Why might this have been the case (see Figure 7)?

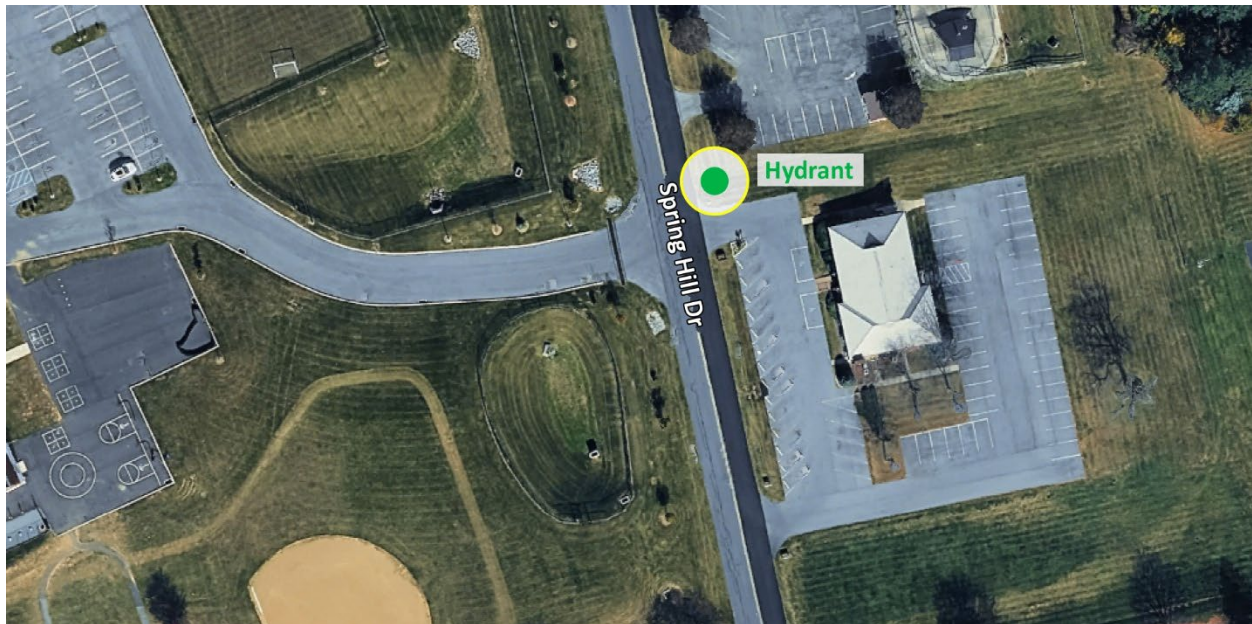
Figure 7. NEFFs Volunteer Fire Company Water Tender 16



Note: Adapted from Neffs Volunteer Fire Company. (2026). *Apparatus*. Retrieved August 23, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/3SvJw79>.

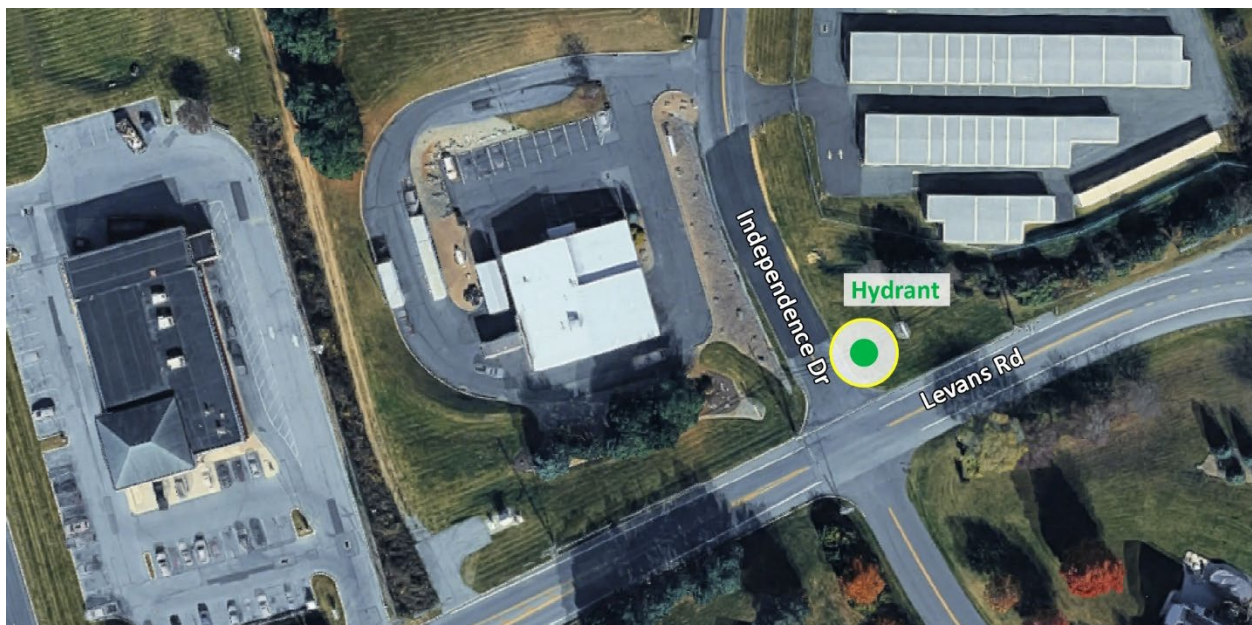
Examine Figures 2, 6, 8, and 9 illustrating the layout and configuration of the fireground, the two potential fill sites, and water tender routes of travel.

Figure 8. Spring Hill Drive Tender Fill Site



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026d). [Aerial view Spring Hill Drive, Schnecksville, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/46h6vpD>.

Figure 9. Independence Drive Tender Fill Site



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026e). [Aerial view Independence Drive, Schnecksville, PA]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/4ipyXgn>.

Discuss the following with the members of your crew:

- How water tender characteristics influence water supply tactics (consider size, pumping capacity, size of dump valves, portable tanks carried by the tender, etc.).
- Given the water tenders available in your response area, how would you have approached establishing and maintaining a continuous water supply in this incident?
- Given the layout and configuration of the fireground in this incident, how would you have set up the water supply operation (where would you position the apparatus and if you would use portable tanks, where you would place them.
- Which fill site would you use and how you would set up the fill site?

Effective Communications

If needed go back and listen to the incident radio communications in the [second incident video](#) (NVP: Media Services - Nester Video Production, 2026). Click the link or scan the QR code to access the video.



Discuss the following with the members of your crew:

- What aspects of radio communications in this incident were done well (possibly different than you would have communicated, but effective in the situation)?
- How could incident communications have been improved?

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