



In-Station Training

TM 26-37 Vehicle Fire



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Purpose

Sometimes passenger vehicle fires are straightforward and are easily handled by a single company response. In other cases, a vehicle fire can present more complex problems including the hazards presented when dealing with alternative fuel or electric vehicles or when the fire extends to exposures.

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 vehicle fire with extension to an apartment building at 27 Cass Court in Malta, New York on Wednesday, August 26, 2026, at 19:33 (Hot Shots fire Videos, 2026, Darmanjian, 2026, Broadcastify 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, 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY]. Map data ©2026 Google.
<https://bit.ly/4i9vsKY>.

There are two hydrants located on Cass Court as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2. Aerial View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. <https://bit.ly/4gSemiA>.

Figure 3. Alpha/Delta Corner of the Delta 1 Exposure



Note: Adapted from Google. (2023a). [Street view 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY]. ©2025 Google. <https://bit.ly/4zP0oqa>.

Figure 4. Side Alpha of the Delta 1 Exposure



Note: Adapted from Google. (2023b). [Street view 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY]. ©2025 Google.
<https://bit.ly/4qZ1zQ3>.

Figure 5. Alpha/Bravo Corner of the Delta 1 Exposure



Note: Adapted from Google. (2023c). [Street view 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY]. ©2025.
<https://bit.ly/4xESfDc>.

The incident is in a suburban apartment complex comprised of four unit buildings. This part of the community is in a growing suburban corridor outside of a larger city. English is the predominant language in the community, with a relatively small proportion of households speaking languages other than English at home. (OpenAI, 2026). Fire and EMS call volume in this area is typical of other areas of the community.

The temperature is currently 75° F (24° C) with wind from the west at 9 mph (14 kph) (Weather Underground, 2026). It is Wednesday, August 26, at 19:00 and you are dispatched along with another engine company for a vehicle fire at 27 Cass Court. Engine and ladder companies have four-person staffing¹. **You are the officer of the first arriving engine company.**



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?

Dispatch provides the following update “we are getting conflicting reports, either one or two vehicles on fire in front of the garage”

2. Based on the dispatch information and what you know about this occupancy and response area, what do you anticipate finding on arrival?
3. Based on the updates from dispatch, would you change the resource determination prior to arrival? What critical factors influenced your decision?

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



Important! Answer questions four 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.

You arrive from the northwest on Cass Court. You anticipate the second engine company will arrive shortly after you. Watch the [incident video](#) from 02:00 to 02:15 (Hot Shot Fire Videos, 2026). Click the link or scan the QR code to access the video.

Figure 6. Conditions on Arrival



Note: Adapted from Hot Shots fire Videos. (2026). Vehicle Fire - 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY [video].
<https://bit.ly/4zYZQ13>

4. State your initial radio report (IRR) exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.

5. 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?

The occupants report that everyone is out of the apartment building. The fire involves a single car and there is thermal damage to the apartment building as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Close View of the Vehicle Fire and Thermal Damage to the Building



Hot Shots fire Videos. (2026). Vehicle Fire - 27 Cass Court, Malta, NY [video]. <https://bit.ly/4zYZQ13>. [Video image edited to remove initial fireground operations with ChatGPT 5.5, DALL·E] Open Ai, (2025). The subsequent image was manually edited.

6. Would you change the action you are taking or modify the assignments given to your crew? If so, what task orders would you provide?

7. State your follow up report exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.

8. Engine 2 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on a hydrant to the east on Cass Court. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

If you upgraded the resource determination to a first alarm (or special call including a command officer), answer question nine.

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 exposed apartment 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?

The first arriving engine stretched a 1 ¾" preconnected attack line to attack the car fire. Watch the [incident video](#) (Hot Shots Fire Video, 2026) from 02:20 to 05:15. Click the link or scan the QR code to access the video.



18. What was your expectation related to fire extension into the apartment building and what cues influenced this expectation>
19. What action did (or would you) take to ensure that there was either no extension or if the fire had extended into the apartment building that it was confined and extinguished>?

Additional Learning

What goes through your mind when dispatched to a car fire? Key considerations may include type of vehicle (automobile versus large commercial vehicle), occupants in or out of the vehicle, location, proximity to exposures (e.g., other vehicles, buildings, vegetation), gasoline or diesel powered versus alternative fuels or electric power. Some of this information will be available when you are dispatched, more may become available if dispatch provides an update, and the remainder may become available once you arrive at the incident.

Earlier this year I interviewed a captain who was dispatched as a single engine to a vehicle fire in the early morning hours. He visualized a vehicle on the street or in a driveway, but not threatening exposures (as dispatch did not mention proximity to a building or other types of exposures). Shortly before arrival, dispatch advised that the fire had extended to the house. On arrival, he found that the fire involved two cars and had extended to the garage and attic of the house. Decades ago, I had a similar experience, responding to a reported car fire and arriving to find that the car was on fire inside an attached garage with significant extension into the house. Incidents like these raise your index of suspicion that a car fire is not “just a car fire”.

Anticipation and developing a working story of what you think you will find on arrival is extremely useful, but it is important to not hold too tightly to the story and anticipate that conditions may be different, necessitating revision or creating a new working story as you gain additional information.

Think about how your working story and anticipated plan of action would have changed if dispatch reported (significant) extension to the apartment building prior to your arrival in this incident. Discuss car fire tactics with the members of your crew and how these would change when presented with a significant structural exposure.

References

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