

Snapshot Size-Up #106



Electrical Facility Fire

The first rule at electrical facility fires is NEVER enter a substation or approach electrical facilities until a local utility company representative indicates it is safe to do so. Substations carry hazardous materials such as asbestos and PCB's and have electric equipment that may contain large quantities of oil or natural gas. A large quantity of oil in failing electrical equipment can cause a BLEVE. Treat a fire in a substation as a delayed bomb. Explosions can be powerful enough to project steel and other equipment at great distances.

The Local Utility personnel will respond and make the facility safe for the fire department to use conventional fire fighting techniques. Until then, it's best that fire personnel stand by, secure the area and wait. Attempting to rush in and extinguish fires involving electrical facilities can be deadly.

In the book **Fireground Operational Guides**, we provide a complete list of actions to take at Electrical Facility fires, as well as other electrical emergencies including Downed Power Lines, Downed Lines on Occupied Vehicles, Underground Manhole Fires, Pole Mounted Transformer Emergencies, Basic Electrical Emergencies and more.



Deputy Chief Frank Viscuso is a twenty-year veteran of the fire service. He is a regular contributor to Fire Engineering Magazine & FireOpsOnline.com. He is also co-author of the book *Fireground Operational Guides* (PennWell 2011). The book features universal tactical worksheets and operational guides for more than 70 incidents that range from water, gas and electrical emergencies to multiple-alarm structure fires.