

Snapshot Size-Up #111



Offensive - to - Defensive

There are various reasons why an operation should be changed from an Offensive to a Defensive strategy. Threat of collapse, rapid fire growth, truss roof involvement and explosive contents within a structure are just a few. All revolve around conditions becoming worse and resources not being sufficient enough to get the job done. Any time a decision is made to change from an Offensive to a Defensive operation, the following steps must be taken:

1. Announce a move to Defensive Operation via Radio.
2. Sound the Evacuation Tones / air horn.
3. Request Additional Alarm(s).
4. Conduct a Personnel Accountability Roll-Call (PAR).
5. Readjust your IMS to reflect the new Defensive scene management.
6. Establish Collapse Zones.
7. Monitor for signs of collapse.
8. Set up Master Streams (ground monitors, deluge guns, large-diameter hose lines, etc).
9. Secure an additional Water supply from another source or water main.
10. Protect Exposures.
11. Depending upon the buildings contents, height and construction, assign a Brand patrol.
12. Rotate Personnel frequently and allow time for rehabilitation.

For additional details on switching tactics from Offensive to Defensive, refer to the book
Fireground Operational Guides.



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.