

Snapshot Size-Up #115



Aerial Ladder Training

A professional golfer doesn't just show up on the PGA tour one day, pick up a driver, and say, "I'm ready. Now how do I hold this thing?" He became a professional golfer because he had hit hundreds of thousands of golf balls with every club available and in every situation imaginable. So, why would a firefighter think he or she could become a professional aerial ladder operator even though they've only raised the aerial three times in their career?

Training is everything! Take 10-15 minutes every day you're on duty to raise and operate your aerial. Find buildings that present challenges, use a spotter, and practice, practice, practice! The day you arrive on scene to find 7 people leaning out of a handful of fourth floor windows, and a maze of power lines in between you and them is not the day you want to test your ability to properly position an aerial.

Do you know any firefighter who has practiced spotting an aerial ladder more than 80 times? Look at how simple becoming efficient can be... If you work eighty days this year and practice spotting and operating your aerial ladder every shift, by the end of the year you will have 80 exercises under your belt, and as a result you'll be in the top 1% of efficient ladder operators in the world.

It's easy to do! But it's also easy not to do... which by the way, is the truth about success in any area. Train well and be safe.



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.