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Snapshot Size-Up #134

Community Relations

The staff at FireOpsOnline.com are huge advocates of exceeding expectations when it comes to customer service. The fire department is a service oriented organization. Yes, we risk our lives to protect life and property, but is that enough these days? Consider the fact that there is no emergency the majority of the time interact with the public. We can use those times to engage and connect with the community in a way that positively reflects upon our department.

Remember, your customers are taxpayers, and in most cases those taxpayers fund your fire department.



Below are a few suggested ways to make a positive and professional impression and *alter* your image within your community. To remember these points, use the acronym **ALTER**.

- **A**ct appropriately. Be polite, professional, and courteous. Avoid using vulgar or inappropriate language.
- **L**ook presentable. Wear your uniform whenever you are out in the public's eye. Make sure that your "presentation" is neat, orderly, and squared away.
- Take **T**ime to interact with children. Show them the rig, your fire gear, the lights, etc. Firefighters are always a big hit with the children, and today's society could use positive role models.
- **E**ngage and connect with people. When at the site of an event, display your equipment, speak with attendees, shake hands, and pass out fire safety literature.
- **R**egard everyone you come in contact with as a customer. Remember, they fund your organization.

When participating at a community event like the one in the photo, keep the safety of both members and civilians in mind. Park all apparatus so they can leave the scene and respond to an emergency in a quick and safe manner. The opportunity to interact with people at a public event, a school, or anywhere else is the perfect time to show the public why the fire department is worth every tax dollar they pay. Take the time to connect and make an impression. Have pride in your community, your fire department, and yourself.

Thanks for reading and stay safe.

For more on Customer Service, check out our Officer Development section of FireOpsOnline.com



Chief Donald Colarusso is a twenty-five year fire service veteran. He is also the President of All Hands Fire Equipment and a Level-II Fire Instructor in New Jersey. Don has been a fire instructor for more than 15-years and is one of only a few instructors in the United States who is authorized to teach on all of the leading Firefighter Escape Systems. For additional information or to contact Chief Colarusso, please visit www.AllHandsFire.com