

Getting Ready for a New World

We are living in a new world. What happened to this nation and this Department on September 11 was incomprehensible and has changed our lives forever. While we all hope never to see an incident of this magnitude again, it is incumbent upon us to do everything necessary to train our uniformed members with these new concerns in mind. Our nation is engaged in a war that President George W. Bush has explained will be a lengthy one. We must step up our own levels of training and preparedness, to ensure that we are ready to meet new threats that we, as a Department, may face in the line of duty.

There was a pre-9-11 Fire Department and now there is a post-9-11 Fire Department. We already have taken initial steps toward rebuilding the Department, from filling the ranks with new Probationary Firefighters, to replenishing the Special Operations Command, our most highly trained members in the Squad, Rescue and other units.

SOC was particularly hard hit, with 95 members killed in the attack on the World Trade Center, including six Chief Officers, 19 Company Officers and 70 Firefighters. Right now, we are in the

third training session for SOC. Following this session, SOC will have trained 60 members for deployment in specialized units. Members have come off the line for 45 hours of haz-mat training and two weeks of rescue training (both technical level). After the training, Firefighters then are deployed to a SOC Squad, where they receive additional in-unit training.

Proby School currently has a class of more than 300 newly hired recruits and the Department plans to hire several hundred more Firefighters in several classes in 2002. This is a huge number of people to teach in such a short period of time, but it is absolutely necessary in order to continue to rebuild this Department and prepare for the future. We also know that we can rely on every Firefighter in this Department to welcome and mentor the new recruits assigned to their firehouse. Now, more than ever, we must all be ready to train, to drill and to expand our knowledge of the tasks expected of us.

As a reflection of the new Department, the Proby curriculum now includes a terrorism training course, "Emergency Response to Terrorism," which also is being given to all Firefighters and EMS personnel. Based on a Department of Justice course, this

training session has been adapted to meet the specific needs of the FDNY. It is designed around four modules: Understanding and Recognizing Terrorism, Implementing Self-Protective Measures, Scene Control and Tactical Considerations. The course also trains personnel on understanding the Department's haz-mat tiered response and inter-agency response mechanisms. To date, approximately 2800 Firefighters and 200 EMS personnel have been trained.

Additionally, we have resumed our daily Firefighter training programs, including tactical training where two complete fire units participate in fire scenario training; chauffeur training, a nine-day course dedicated to operating and maintaining engines and ladder trucks; and Chemical Protective Clothing (CPC) training--beginner and refresher level--on how to wear and operate in protective clothing. All of these initiatives are designed to protect the safety of Firefighters in this Department.

Recently, I was looking through the 4th/2000 issue of WNYF when I came across an article written by Battalion Chief Raymond M.

Downey. He was writing about an FDNY response to an incident on State Street in Brooklyn. At the end of the article, he reviews the lessons reinforced by his column. The final two points he makes are, *Pro-act rather than react* and *Expect the unexpected*. With 342 other members of this Department, Deputy Chief Downey made the Supreme Sacrifice on September 11, but his message, just like his memory, live on with us. We must expect the unexpected. And we must all be ready to face a new era in our Department. The only way to achieve this is through increased training so that you are always prepared and always ready to be proactive to the dangerous and difficult work you may encounter every day.

The worst year we have ever faced is drawing to a close. I want to thank you all for your dedication and courage and wish you and your families all the best for what will certainly be a difficult holiday season. I have never been so proud of the men and women of this Department. God bless you all.

