

Con Ed Transformer Fire

Brooklyn NY

June 15, 1988

(Capt. Jack Fanning / FF John Culley / FF Dave Murolo

FF Mike Kaner / FF Tom Merkel / FF John Hopkins

FF John Hack / Greg Papa Eng 275

Hazardous Materials Co. 1 was called on the initial alarm for a fire at the Con Ed facility in Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn, they were one of the first units to arrive. Haz/ Mat #1 was met with the following conditions on arrival:

A large transformer was fully involved in fire. This transformer shared the dike beneath it with two other large transformers. This dike was likewise fully involved with fire and was directly exposing the other transformers. The flames from the fire extended over three stories in height. The radiant heat was melting construction equipment at ground level across the street. Directly exposed to this radiant heat were pallets of recently delivered acetylene cylinders on the sidewalk in front of the transformers. Vapor was coming off these cylinders due to the intense radiant heat.

On this date the facility was experiencing the second highest demand day in Con Ed history and hundreds of thousands of Brooklyn and Queens consumers were threatened with power loss because of this fire.

Captain Fanning and FF's Culley and Murolo, The Haz/Mat Entry Team, immediately entered the street in front of the burning transformers and, under the intense heat conditions, removed the exposed cylinders out of the immediate fire area. Of particular help in this action, and throughout the operations, were the Nomex hoods worn by Haz/Mat members.

As the Entry Team was accomplishing this removal the Safety Team, FF's Kaner and Merkel, were responding immediately into the street in front of the fire with Haz/Mat #1's complement of foam equipment - nozzles, pick-up tubes, fluoroprotein foam, etc.

This immediate attention to a foam operation did much to accomplish the timely control of this fire.

Haz/Mat #1's large foam nozzle was placed on a Stang and operated immediately on the fire. As the Safety Team accomplished this the Decontamination Team, FF's Hopkins and Papa, was stretching a 1 3/4" handline to the fire. Haz/Mat #1's second foam nozzle was placed on this line and Captain Fanning and the Entry Team advanced it into the maze of generating equipment to attack the base of the fire in the diked area as the Safety Team supplied them with foam.

Despite the volume and intensity of the fire and a fire-weakened brick curtain wall standing four stories high over the burning transformers, the Haz/Mat teams advanced on the fire building a foam blanket in the process. In an attempt to make headway on the raging fire FF Merkel injected dry chemical extinguishers into the foam stream. All of these factors and a determined effort on the part of the Haz/Mat members resulted in controlling and ultimately extinguishing the rapidly extending fire.

Adding to the intensity of the fire was the debilitating effects of a 97° day. With one Haz/Mat member (FF Culley) removed to the hospital suffering from heat exhaustion, FF's Merkel and Kaner, despite their exhaustion, suited up in vinyl chemical protective gear to take samples of the dielectric fluid from the transformers involved after the fire was extinguished.

All the members of Hazardous Materials Co. 1 teamed up on a very difficult fire under severe conditions. For their determined and successful efforts at this operation.