

## **HOUSE FIRE GUIDELINES FOR COMPANY OFFICERS**

**By Bill Gustin, Captain, Miami-Dade Fire Department**

1. Who is your second engine? What is their ETA? How long will it take them to augment your water supply?
2. Watch out for wires, particularly electric service connected to poles across the street from the fire.
3. If you can, pull slightly past the house to get a view of three sides of the structure.
4. Can you reach the fire through the front door or is the house divided into separate living units?
5. Is fire overhead in the attic? If slightest suspicion, pull ceiling immediately where you enter.
6. Flake out at least 50 feet of hose outside the entrance door before charging the line.
7. Don't push the nozzleman; advance the hoseline carefully while monitoring conditions.
8. Don't crowd the nozzle, rather space out firefighters along the hose line to move it around corners and obstacles.
9. Your "doorman" is a critical member of your crew. Designate him at the beginning of the shift or riding position based on his/her experience and ability. Make sure he knows what is expected of him.
10. The further you advance a hose line into a structure, the more you need a back-up line. Don't hesitate to ask for one!
11. Don't feel pressured to cancel responding companies before conducting a thorough assessment of conditions.
12. Fire on the stove: Always check for exhaust ductwork. Always check the attic.
13. Electrical fire and lightning strikes: suspect more than one fire. Thoroughly check entire house and attic.
14. Fire in wall without an outside ignition source and no wires inside the wall: suspect an open neutral/ or improper ground.
15. Beware of fire below you: check basement and first floor before advancing upstairs. Smoke from chimney at any time of the year may indicate a basement fire. A fire on any floor of **balloon frame** construction may have started in the basement.
16. Will PPV spread fire through the attic? Will PPV blow heat and smoke towards trapped occupants?

## BASEMENT, BALL FR. KNEE WALLS

17. Two story house in new development: pull ceiling at entrance to check for presence of lightweight floor trusses or 'I' beams.
18. Vaulted ceilings: use T.I.C. to check conditions high above your head. You will need 8-10 ft pike poles to pull the ceiling.
19. Check attic for cellulose insulation; hidden pockets of smoldering fire can cause a rekindle several hours later.
20. Constantly evaluate risk versus benefit: putting yourself and your crew in high heat and zero visibility conditions is seldom worth the risk.
21. Always be aware of the location and distance to your emergency escape.
22. Heavy smoke and high heat in half story: suspect fire behind knee walls a; **very dangerous condition** Consider use of piercing nozzle and/or pulling ceiling below where slope of roof converges with exterior walls.
23. Basement fire: Avoid **“through the door-through the floor”** suspect early collapse of first floor supported by unprotected lightweight “I” joists or trusses. Consider attacking fire from outside through windows or outside entrances.
24. Be aware that an attic fire could be raging over your head and the house could be completely clear of smoke. When you suspect an attic fire **do not** pull ceiling without a charged hose line in position and all PPE in use.
25. Fire involving large wood deck and /or combustible siding: consider **first** hose line to the rear to attack fire from exterior and keep fire from extending to house and attic via doors, windows and over-hanging eaves.
26. Fire in attached garage: if no smoke in house, consider first hose line directly to garage. Let the barrier between the house and garage that is apparently working to keep fire out of the house do its job; don't open the door between the house and garage.
27. Constantly assess the effectiveness of your tactics. Don't keep doing something that isn't working. Have an alternate plan of action.

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