

Fire Ground Survival Training Saved My Life

General President Schaittberger:

Thank you for your commitment to keeping fire fighters safe and for the Fire Ground Survival (FGS) training program. I was fortunate a few years ago to attend the Train-the-Trainer course taught by IAFF master FGS instructors Stan Brawer (Los Angeles County Local 1014), Kevin Kalmus (Austin, TX Local 975), Coitt Kessler (Austin, TX Local 975), Melissa Kennedy (Seattle, WA Local 27), Geoff Boisseau (Toronto, ON Local 3888) and Andy Ruiz (Los Angeles, CA Local 112).

I was the officer in charge of Engine 19 when, shortly before 5:00 a.m. on February 23, we were dispatched to a house fire with reports of persons trapped. Dispatch notified units of banging noises coming from the basement.

We were assigned primary search upon arrival and proceeded to the main floor. I elected NOT to take a handline. Stairs to the basement were too tight for two lines (fire attack had a 1 3/4" line). We would have obstructed the stairs with two lines if we had to take victims out. We had light smoke on the main floor and

could see clearly through to the rear of the house. One of my fire fighters reported an SCBA problem, so I elected to leave him outside with my engine operator and enter with my other fire fighter, Brother Jonathon Senger, to begin searching, as we had reports of three trapped victims. This was a hoarder house and I noted tires and boxes of aerosol cans as we descended the stairs to the basement.

I notified command of moderate heat and difficulty finding the seat of the fire. I was handling the radio work for the fire attack as the officer was really busy. I was in verbal contact with him in the basement. I had trouble transmitting messages about the hoarder conditions and progress, so I switched to a different channel to inform command. We continued climbing over debris to search for victims and requested ventilation due to zero visibility.

We had half air in our SCBA and crews could not make progress, so we decided to withdraw. I fell and lost contact with the wall and hose line (we took fire attack line as they withdrew). I told my partner I was disoriented and we both tried to locate an exit. My SCBA low air alarm activated and I pressed my



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emergency alert button (EAB) to call a Mayday, providing my who-what-where to command. My partner found the line as I called the Mayday. He advised me he could get us out. He led us over the pile of debris that we had climbed over to make entry and we encountered another crew who led us up the stairs and directed us out.

Once we were clear of the structure, I radioed command that we had successfully exited the structure on the Charlie side and were uninjured. I drew a map of the basement for command, reported to rehab and was medically evaluated.

I am nearing retirement but still maintain my diligence. My wife, my

crew and Calgary Fire have all been very supportive, and I compiled the incident audio so others can learn from the event. We were risking a lot to save a lot and the FGS training saved my life.

On behalf of myself, Jen and my daughter, Ashlyn, I'd like to send my heartfelt thanks to you and to the FGS instructors who shared their skills and knowledge.

Sincerely,
Grant Rinas
Calgary, AB Local 255