

TALKING POINTS FOR AFFILIATES



These talking points are intended to hit the most important findings in the research. You know your community best and you understand best how this new study applies to your situation, so use these talking points in the manner that suits you and in the context that works most effectively for you.

This study is a wake up call for decision makers... that responding with more fire fighters per fire apparatus makes a critical difference in the time it takes to put out a fire and save potential victims trapped in a high-rise building.

When discussing budget and staffing issues... if you have high-rise buildings in your jurisdiction — whether they are office buildings, hotels, apartment buildings or health care facilities — and you are responding with four, three or fewer fire fighters on a rig, you are deciding that the cost of adding a fire fighter to each engine or ladder truck in the stations that respond to those areas is greater than the cost of the lives and property that will likely be lost in the event of a high-rise fire with victims trapped. And if you are in a jurisdiction with a high density of high-rise structures, and you have less than five on a rig, you are playing the odds and putting lives in needless danger.

Simply put, the scientific evidence shows... more fire fighters on each fire engine and truck matters when it comes to saving lives and putting out fires in high-rise and residential fires. You CANNOT make up the difference by simply saying, “We’ll send more trucks to get more fire fighters to the scene.” Doing so results in lost time, and now NIST has shown that in both high-rise and residential fire scenarios, that type of decision-making will likely cost lives and increase property damage.

Examples that illustrate the facts

1. With 5- and 6-person crews, while one fire fighter stays in the lobby to ventilate the stairwells for evacuating occupants, the remaining crew ascending to begin the search on the fire floor can split into two search teams of at least two fire fighters each to cover more area quickly. Smaller crews of three or four fire fighters cannot use the same search strategy. It’s easy math.
2. A fire department rescue operation is a race against time. It’s a race between destruction and death and the rescue and suppression activities of the fire fighters. If you don’t have enough fire fighters on the scene to engage EARLY during the window of opportunity that exists before the fire gets out of control, then the race will likely be lost. It is difficult, if not impossible, to ‘catch up’ after the window closes. And we lose more property and, many times, more lives.