



Puyallup Extrication Team

You're First In - Now What

We have all been through tactic classes and training where we have heard that when arriving the scene of structure fire your actions, communications, rig positioning and initial tactical decisions in the first five minutes can dictate the next 5 hours...well the same holds true for auto accidents when extrication is needed.

Whatever your department policies are involving motor vehicle accidents (MVA's) where extrication is eminent, the goal should be to respond with enough personnel to get the job done. The responding personnel should have their roles established before they ever step off their rigs. I will cover these rolls in the next article.

The next goal should be first responder safety which includes every one responding to the scene to take an active role in. How many times have you been on the scene of an MVA and witnessed the inattentive drivers (aka long-neckers) totally disregarding the many warning devices we place and in some cases actually driving through the scene? For me, as a company officer, I view MVA's as one of the biggest threats to firefighter safety.

We can take steps in reducing the likelihood that one of our brothers or sisters will not become part of the problem by taking both an offensive and defensive posture at MVA's.

By having your first in medic unit drive past the accident scene taking a windshield survey and positioning them in a defensive manner and protecting the patient loading area works well. The next in units; engines and trucks need to start the defensive blocking, remember save the "Sweet Spot" for the rigs that have the tools that will be needed, in most departments this would be the trucks or rescue rigs. Many state DOT agencies have recommended safe working zones that outline distances, road flares and cone spacing as well as blocking defensively.

A few winters ago we actually posted a lookout "upstream" on the corner of a freeway that was like an ice rink and one where we had multiple cars scattered along a mile stretch. To make matters worse we were working on a decline following the corner and it was at night. Without having the lookout warning oncoming, unsuspecting drivers of the upcoming hazard as well as notifying us of vehicles approaching, we would have not been able to mitigate the situation as rapidly or as safely as we did.

Once the scene is secured to work steps must be taken to execute plans to remove the trapped victim within minutes. The Transportation Emergency Rescue Committee, (aka TERC) and the World Rescue Organization (aka WRO) recognize the 20 minute extrication timelines for BLS trapped victims and 10 minutes for ALS “Rapid” extrication patients. These goals should be easily obtainable depending on tool knowledge, training, extrication plans, and communications between crews as well as the degree of entrapment.

We have all been on MVA’s that have gone well as well as those where we get back in the rig and say, “If I had that one to do over I would have.....” Here is just one tool in the extrication tool box that will help you meet the recommended time lines for extrication and keep your personnel safer.

As much as I dislike acronyms I feel this one has its place, it is the SHADE acronym, let’s review.

- S** - Size up and Survey
Inner & outer circle for-
 1. Hazards & Patients
 2. Stabilization & Fire control
 3. Triage / Med-Ops needed?

- H** - Hazard location / Hose Line placement
Hybrid / Alternative Fuel Badging?

- A** - Access Patients
Immediate Aid and Airway

- D** - Disconnect batteries / Disentanglement

- E** - Extrication

Of course there are many more things we can associate with the corresponding letters but I feel these are the critical benchmarks. The SHADE acronym has worked well for our department, it is a tool that is commonly used and assists us with making the first 5 minutes count!

Extrication; The art of making space

Jeff Pugh is a Lieutenant with Central Pierce Fire & Rescue in Pierce County. He is the president as well as one of the lead instructors of the Puyallup Extrication Team (PXT) www.ThePXTTeam.org . Jeff has 18 years on the job as a professional firefighter, 4 years as a volunteer and has been part of PXT since its inception (12 years). He has a strong background in technical rescue covering 15 years on his department’s special operations team and serves as a Rescue Squad Leader for WA-TF-1. The Puyallup Extrication team offers “hands on” extrication classes and is a mobile, DPSST certified, non profit company.

