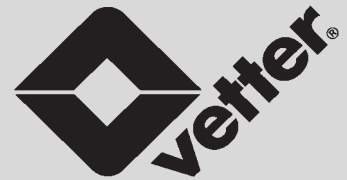


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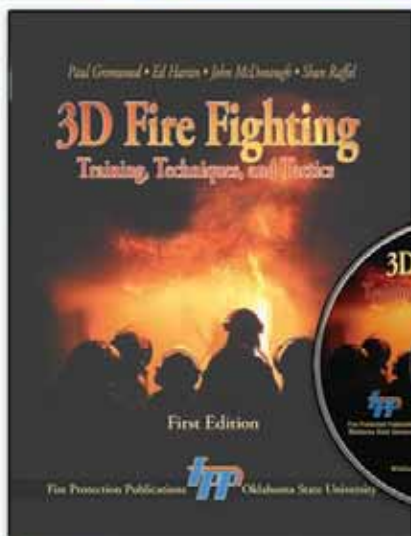


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Life savers in a class of their own

Fire & Rescue is searching for the best fire instructors of the world – do you know one? We kick off this new series with Chief Jim Powell of The University of Nevada, Reno Fire Science Academy (FSA).

Would you like to nominate a top instructor to appear in Fire & Rescue magazine? Just let us know their name, where they work, and why they should be considered – and we'll do the rest! Email Jose Sanchez on j.sanchez@hgluk.com, or call on +44 (0)1935 816030.

Chief Jim Powell has nearly 30 years of fire fighting experience and he brings his experience and first-hand knowledge to the classroom. The students love him and appreciate his candour, his seriousness and his sense of humour. He currently resides in Carson City, Nevada.

What is your instructor background?

Due to some injuries (knees and others), I became a Fire Service Instructor in the late eighties and I was hooked. It became a consuming passion with the mission being to share my experience and knowledge with others.

In 1996, I started All Clear Fire Training and Consulting, providing specialised fire training and consulting services. I worked two years (1998-2000) for ERT Consulting, delivering Industrial Fire Service Training (ICS & Strategy and Tactics), performance audits and emergency response plans, as well as writing SARA Title Three, Emergency Management Plans for cities and counties.

In 2001, I became a Letter of Appointment (LOA) Adjunct Instructor at the University of Nevada-Carlin Fire Science Academy World Wide (Industrial). I am currently teaching Incident Command Emergency Response courses. Overhauled and rewrote the Industrial-Incident Command curriculum as well as making it NIMS compliant in 2006.

Part-Time Instructor and Past Chief (2003) of the Northern Nevada Fire and Rescue Academy administered through Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno. In addition, taught Strategy and Tactics (NFA-MCTO-STICO) in the fire science

degree program at TMCC for five years.

Currently, I am serving as an Adjunct Instructor for the Nevada State Fire Marshall's office. I teach Response and Management to Terrorism Incidents, Incident Command and Strategy and Tactics. In February of 2002, I became the first "Master Fire Service Instructor" in the State of Nevada.

Appointed by former Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn to the Nevada State Board of Fire Services Standards and Training Committee from 2002-2004.

What is your specialist/favourite training subject(s)?

Whether it is in the industrial, municipal or the wildland setting, my two favourite classes to deliver are: Incident Command, and Strategy and Tactics.

Describe your approach to training firefighters, in less than 50 words

It's all about performing safely under dangerous, high-stress conditions. Decision-makers cannot use first responders as "consumables!" When firefighters are taught to understand their own capabilities (resources and training) versus the encountered risks, and react accordingly (offensive-defensive or transitional) then I truly believe we will have less firefighter fatalities!

What is the most common mistake/misunderstanding made by pupils?

I see several students coming into Incident Command classes that have performed well at the level they attained before taking this class. In my

THE FSA TRAINING CENTRE AND ITS COURSES

For three decades, the FSA's training programs and facilities have served the emergency-response training needs of private-sector industries including petrochemical, aviation, mining, technology, transportation and hospitality as well as municipal, county, state, federal and international agencies and governments.

The FSA has trained firefighters from all 50 states and nearly 40 countries, receiving worldwide recognition for its industrial curriculum, training props, use of liquid petroleum fuels and its safety and hands-on approach to instruction. During FSA field exercises, students can experience the intensity of live fire, the urgency of containing hazardous material spills, the challenge of working in confined spaces, the excitement of a high-angle rescue and much more.

The FSA is committed to providing the highest quality training in the fields of fire fighting, crisis management, rescue, hazardous materials and instructor training to its global clientele, allowing them to be leaders in the life-safety field.



High rise training at the University of Nevada FSA.
Photo by Jean Dixon.

opinion, the folks in the industrial setting are handicapped in some ways because they have a very high risk factor combined with a low frequency of events. When these students are challenged by filling the IC roles, they often revert back to their comfort zone (where they were the strongest) and fail or marginally “manage” the incident properly.

Many students become proficient at putting the wet stuff on the red stuff and seem to want to gravitate to that level when assuming Command and Control roles. In my opinion, the low frequency of events is a contributor to this phenomenon. For this reason, we have put at least two exercises a day into our ICS class to raise this awareness. Filling the Incident Command role is so much more than strategy and tactics.

What is your proudest moment as an instructor?

In 1999 I was contacted by a friend who is the Fire Chief in Elko, Nevada. He wanted to know if we could put on a Strategy and Tactics class for his personnel and the surrounding agencies. He asked that we put in some industrial as well as airport scenarios as his agency is charged with delivering airport protection as well as service to a large rail facility. At that time I was working for then ERT Consulting who had a large table sized 1/25 scale model of an industrial (refinery), city and airport facilities.

We taught a 32-hour class using the model to support exercises and stated benchmarks in the class. We put a lot of emphasis on what I call “island firefighting” where 2nd alarm assignments (engines/trucks and the like) may be hours away. This type of firefighting requires critical thinking as to commitment to offensive modes of operation. Use the “tools” in the toolbox; add “new tools” as you acquire them. “Stay within your perspective” which mode of operation fits best with the amount of resources on hand, etc.

Three weeks later the Chief called me and said he had someone in his office that wanted to talk to me. He put a firefighter that was in an acting Captain role on the phone. Apparently, they had some type of working nuisance fire in and around a salvage yard and this acting Captain had decided to make an offensive attack. According to the acting Captain while engaging the fire, the “light went off” and he ordered his personnel out of the area and decided on a defensive attack.

Approximately three minutes after they retreated there was a collapse of some material that would have cut off their escape route and perhaps would have killed the hose team. In a very emotional statement he said, “If I had not had your class my crew and I would probably be dead.”

Favourite piece of equipment, and why

I grew up in fire service with engines built by Crown Coach Corp out of Los Angeles, California. They were considered custom engines at the time and my agency had purchased several of them. Then, Engine Two was a type one engine, diesel powered with a 1500 GPM two-stage pump and a five-speed transmission. This engine with a manual transmission had a pump and roll capability and a 750-gallon booster tank.

Amongst great debate in those days was the colour of engines. Our agency had chosen chrome yellow, as the story goes, because you could see it better at night. Several agencies around us - such as state forestry division - used the colour green and yet others used the traditional red. There was always a lot of rhetoric among the members of the different agencies regarding the individual “ripeness” of certain engines. To this day I do like the chrome yellow engines.

Strangest/most embarrassing situation (operationally/on a course)

While on duty as a Battalion Chief and during a rather heavy snow event, 911 was ringing off the hook with reported auto accidents. With all my resources assigned on incidents I responded to the area in my command vehicle and started to triage the vehicles/patients, while attempting to locate the pregnant women.

The second vehicle I came to had two female occupants and the driver's side was into a large snow drift facing the wrong directions. I approached the passenger's side of the vehicle on foot and motioned the passenger to role her window down. She did so and I asked the normal questions. While both women denied injuries, the driver was a rather large woman so I ask her if she was pregnant and with a screech she replied “No!” and apparently the passenger was her sister and was so upset over my question that she slapped me!

MY FIREFIGHTING CAREER

I have responded to over 17,000 calls for service during my career.

- * 1968 - Joined Warren Engine Company as a Volunteer Firefighter (Carson City, Nevada).
- * July 1, 1969 - Hired as a firefighter by the Carson City Fire Department (CCFD) (Carson City, Nevada).
- * July 1, 1972 - Promoted to Pump Operator Driver (CCFD).
- * July 1, 1977 - Promoted to Line Captain (CCFD).
- * July 1, 1991 - Promoted to Operations Battalion Chief (CCFD).
- * August, 1997 - Retired from CCFD.



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