

**LINE OF DUTY
DEATH REPORT
REPORT SLIDES**



F2024-02

Career Engine Company Officer
Dies in Abandoned, Single-
Family Structure Fire – North
Carolina



Summary

- On March 29, 2024, a 53-year-old career firefighter with the rank of captain (E3 captain) died from injuries sustained in an abandoned, single-family, structure fire after becoming lost within the structure on March 26, 2024.
- E3 captain was the company officer of the first due engine company making an interior fire attack.
- The single-family residential structure was an approximately 1,400 square feet, one story, wood frame construction.



Side Alpha post fire event (Courtesy of: Fire Marshal Office)



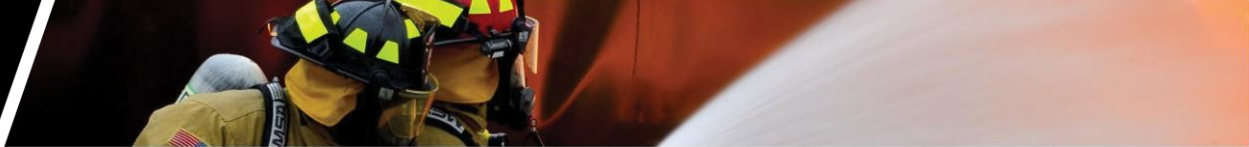
Summary

- The structure was deemed abandoned by the local housing office and was boarded up prior to the incident. At approximately 0000 hours, the local communications center received a 9-1-1 call reporting a fire in the structure from a bystander.
- At 0002 hours, the local communications center dispatched a box alarm assignment to the address for a reported structure fire. Engine 3 (E3), Battalion Chief 7 (BC7), Ladder 1 (L1), Engine 1 (E1), and Quint 2 (Q2) were dispatched.
- At 0005 hours, the communications center advised the responding fire companies that the local police department was on-scene advising the “backside of house is fully engulfed” and that it was “believed everyone is out of the house.”
- E3 arrived on-scene at 0006 hours and reported a working fire.



Summary

- The E3 firefighter stretched a 200' 1³/₄ - inch attack line to the front door on side Alpha to prepare for an interior fire attack.
- L1 arrived on-scene at 0007 hours and split their crew of four.
- The L1 captain and a firefighter reported to side Alpha to meet with the crew from E3 and forced open the front door.
- E3 captain and firefighter along with the L1 captain and firefighter made entry into the structure and observed moderate, lazy, and brown smoke with no significant heat.
- No immediate fire conditions were encountered as the crew from L1 proceeded to conduct a left-hand search while the E3 crew advanced into the structure.
- BC7 arrived on-scene and assumed incident command (IC).



Summary

- IC repositioned for a better view of the active fire on side Delta at the side Charlie corner.
- IC requested a water supply be established to E3 from E1 upon their arrival from a nearby hydrant, requested electrical utility services from the communications center, and requested on-scene fire companies switch to the tactical radio channel.
- The IC assigned Q2 as the rapid intervention crew (RIC) upon arrival and established an offensive strategy which was announced via the radio system on the tactical radio channel.

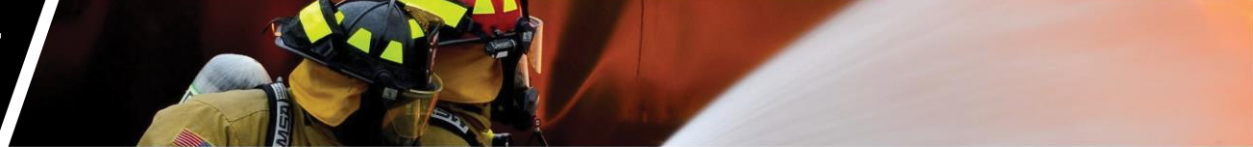


Aerial view of structure with sides of the structure labeled A (Alpha), B (Bravo), C (Charlie), and D (Delta) (Courtesy of: Google Earth)



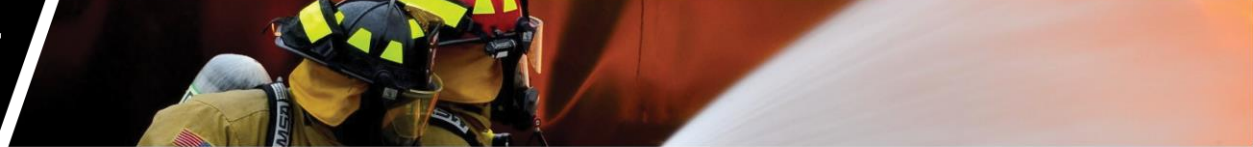
Summary

- At approximately 0009 hours, E1 was establishing a water supply and informed the IC that a 1¾-inch backup attack line had been stretched to side Alpha at the side Delta corner.
- The nozzle firefighter from E3 continued to advance into the structure approximately eight to ten feet before conditions began to change with zero visibility.
- L1 continued a left-hand search entering a bedroom while E3 captain reported he was going back to the entry door to “get more hose.”
- Both the L1 interior crew and E3 firefighter began to observe changing fire conditions in the interior with decreased visibility and increased temperatures.
- The firefighter from E3 began to flow water from the 1 ¾ - inch attack line towards side Charlie (rear) of the structure from the inside with no observed changes in fire conditions.



Summary

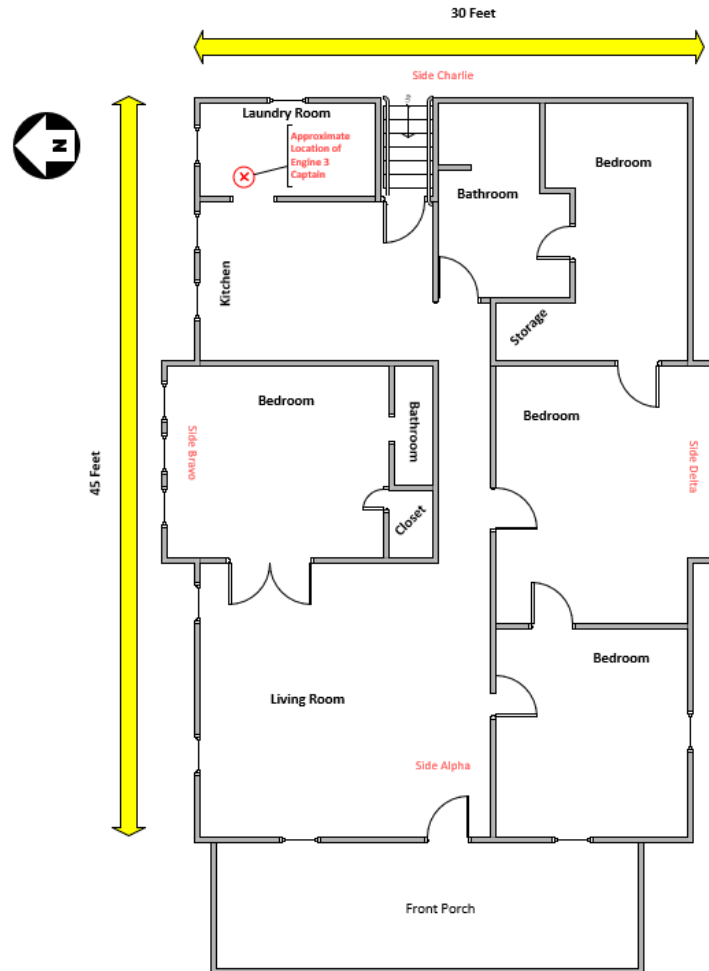
- At 0012 hours, the company officer from E1 informed IC that heavy fire was venting out the side Alpha door.
- IC acknowledged the radio message and observed a second room on side Delta flashover through the exterior windows of the structure.
- IC announced a change in strategy to a defensive mode and requested a personnel accountability report (PAR).
- IC was informed that L1 and E3 still had firefighters inside the structure when IC specifically requested that they withdraw from the structure.
- At 0014:57 hours, the apparatus operator from Q2 informed IC that crews were outside the structure but that E3 captain was unaccounted for.



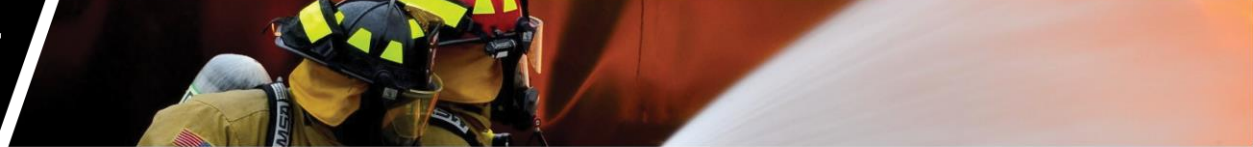
Summary

- RIC informed the IC that E3 captain was not located on the exterior of the structure and RIC was deployed to the interior at 0017:24 hours.
- Approximately two minutes after the RIC deployment to the interior, the RIC could hear an audible personal alert safety system (PASS) device towards the rear of the structure (side Charlie).
- RIC located the E3 captain in the rear of the kitchen on side Charlie at the Bravo corner at approximately 0021 hours.
- E3 captain was removed by being drug to the front door on side Alpha.
- E3 captain was awake and alert upon removal from the structure with personal protective equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) still intact.
- He was airlifted from the scene to a local burn center where he succumbed to his injuries three days later.

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First floor diagram and approximate location E3 captain was found.
Note: Diagram not to scale. (Courtesy of: NIOSH)



Contributing Factors

- Vacant and abandoned building marking system
- Crew integrity
- Two-way portable radio communications
- Thermal Imaging (TI) device usage
- Fire dynamics in relation to flow path
- Strategy and tactics for transitional fire attack
- Safety and survival training for self-rescue



Recommendations

- Consider working with local officials to develop a vacant/abandoned building management and marking system.
- Ensure that crew integrity is properly maintained by visual, direct, and/or verbal (voice or radio) contact when operating in an immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) atmosphere.
- Develop policies and ensure that all personnel are trained on the features and use of portable radio operations, particularly as they relate to building muscle memory in daily response habits.
- Ensure personnel understand the capabilities, use, and limitations of thermal imaging (TI) devices and utilize them during interior structural firefighting operations.



Recommendations

- Develop or revise policies, strategies, and tactics to include modern research of fire dynamics including the movement of air and fire within a structure.
- Develop policies, strategies, and tactics related to the exterior extinguishment or resetting of the seat of fire, slowing both vertical and/or horizontal fire spread prior to interior firefighting operations.
- Develop training initiatives that focus on the knowledge, skill, and ability of firefighter safety/survival self-rescue training to include emergency egress and low-profile clearance.

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