

ABBET RIT

Allegheny • Beaver • Butler Emergency Team

In God we trust, in RIT we depend. If you can't come out, we're coming in.

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In March of this year, Tino Yaccich, a member of our Board of Directors was asked to become a contributing writer for Firehouse.com. He is writing an article every other month about accountability. The following is a copy of his first article.

Accountability System Teamwork

Tino A. Yaccich



Accountability is rapidly becoming an important part of every scene. More and more people are realizing the usefulness and importance of accountability at the incident. I am talking about having TRUE accountability of ALL personnel at the incident, not just those operating in the "hot zone". Accountability is not only the responsibility of the Incident Commander, but every member of the agency. Yes it is the responsibility of those in charge to set the policies, and the responsibility of our officers to see that these policies are implemented. But it is up to each

and every one of us to ensure that these policies are followed every time. It is not very difficult to convince a Chief that he should be using accountability; it is a different story to convince every member of the department. It should be as simple as leadership saying "This is the way we are going to do it." Put it into the SOG and that should be the end of it. Unfortunately we all know that is not the case. All too often I hear the excuse that we are just volunteers. My answer to that is, yes, you are a volunteer, you volunteered to walk through the door to join. If you want to be a member of this organization, you must abide by the rules and procedures set forth by this organization, end of story.

In my experience with accountability, I have seen it do many things for the agencies. First of all everything is done in teams. When you are put on a team, you are part of that team for the entire incident. No more freelancing! It is a proven fact that freelancing kills firefighters. If one member of the team needs air, the whole team goes for air, not just that person. I feel that this is a common sense issue. We tell our children at a very young age that they are not to go swimming without a partner. So why in the world would we even think about entering one of the most dangerous environments alone? A team can consist of as little as two members



and we suggest that it not exceed six members, because of control issues. In my experience I believe that teams of two or three work best. If you need a larger team, it is a lot easier to combine two smaller teams than to make one large one. Remember once you are part of a team you should not split that team, unless command determines the need. There are situations when teams will be split. If a member must leave the scene or if

someone gets hurt. This must be done through command and accountability. If you make a team of six, you have a team of six for the entire incident. If you combine two teams of three, once you complete your assignment, you still have two three man teams. These teams are made up to suit the job that they will be performing. Don't forget that the team members must be qualified to do the job. In the ABBET-RIT organization, we have adopted a set of "qualification stickers" that are placed in a predetermined location on the helmet to assist in this. These stickers are issued by the chief only after the firefighter receives the proper training, and proves that they can do the job.

Unfortunately, we all know that in some instances we can attend a class, sit in the back row and sleep, and when you leave you get a certificate for attendance.

This in no way qualifies you to do the job. That is why we recommend that you prove you can do the job. You would not want to put your biggest person on the roof of a burning structure to do ventilation, nor do you want all inexperienced people on the same team. A little discretion should be used when assembling teams. Every team needs someone in charge of them. The "team leader" is responsible for keeping the team together. That means, if a team member starts to go off on their own the team leader needs to get them back immediately to maintain team integrity. Also, the team leader should ensure that the team's assignment is carried out per command's instructions, as well as reporting any change of location. It is also the team leader's responsibility to collect the team members' accountability tags to give them to the Accountability Officer or AO. He will give the team leader a team number tag. Now the accountability officer knows who is on that team. We also recommend that the



accountability tag contain the member's name, department, and some basic medical information such as medications, allergies, and emergency contact. How many EMT's wish they had this basic information for every patient? If something should happen, this tag is given to the medical personnel to assist them. These tags are exchanged at command where the IC and Accountability will be. While the team leader is getting his team tag from the AO and receiving information on the team's assignment, the rest of the team is getting the tools they will need to complete the assignment. For example, if the team will be on attack, they will get hand tools and the hose ready, or if they will be ventilating, the team will be getting a ladder, saw, pike pole, etc. We have all taken classes and trained in-house to do this. We should not be standing around; things should be ready to go when the team leader gets there. We use a two tag system, the second tag or team tag also goes to the team leader who will clip them to the numbered tag given to him by the AO, and clip them on his self. Now he has a record of his team members and his team number. The AO can now call Personnel Accountability Report or PAR, at timed intervals, to check on the teams, with the team leader, eg. "Team one, do you have PAR?" The team leader will now do a visual head count on his team, and report back whether he has PAR. We are now accounting for groups of individuals through the use of teams. Par checks should be performed in 15 - 30 minute intervals, depending on the situation. (Continued on page 2)



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Pump operators, and fire police are part of every PAR survey. They report via radio and are added to the board. How many of us check on these people? When would we find out something has happened to them? They will be part of every PAR check now. The team leader will report any change of location, be it moving to another floor, the air station, or rehab, etc. The tags

stay with accountability, and the teams stay together until the scene is cleared. I also keep track of types of air packs of the team members. When working with mutual aid, you could have different packs on the same team. Keep your information current; things move rapidly on a fire scene, a good Accountability Officer will keep up with this. There are times when I

call PAR, that I will also ask location, just to verify that my information is correct. Now if something happens, like a collapse, I can tell command what team was there, who was on that team, what type of air packs they are wearing, and approximately how much air they have left.

This is a wealth of information to give a rescue team. Also it can provide the medical crew with basic

medical information. The idea of working in teams is not only to make true accountability possible, but also help us take care of each other.

I have just touched on the issue of working in teams, this works for us. There are many other areas that I will touch on in the coming months. Stay tuned.....

Feature Company

New Bethlehem Fire Company #1 & Relief Association

425 Arch Street, New Bethlehem, PA 16242

Organized in 1879 under the name The Friendship Fire Association, the fire company was reorganized under the name New Bethlehem Fire Company #1 in 1904. It was again reorganized in 1932 under the name New Bethlehem Fire Company #1 and Relief Association.

It has served the borough of New Bethlehem and it's surrounding area for many years. Since its formation two other companies have formed within a five mile area of New Bethlehem.

The New Bethlehem Fire Company #1 covers the area of New Bethlehem Borough, Porter Township and parts of Redbank Township in Clarion County and South Bethlehem Borough in Armstrong County. It covers approximately 56.49 square miles and is still a completely volunteer department.

The changes in the New Bethlehem Fire Company #1 have been many over the years. Housed originally in the borough building, the fire department now has it's own building. It houses five pieces of equipment. The current site, which was purchased by and renovated over the years by volunteers, also provides a large hall and kitchen for community use, large meetings, banquets and weddings. It also has a small room for instructional purposes and the volunteers private meeting room. The fire hall is also the Emergency Operations Center in a time of disaster.

The company has owned various pieces of equipment over the

years. All have been paid for by various projects which include fund drives, raffles, Bingsos and other various activities.

The current fleet of vehicles include a 1874 International Mini Pumper/Brush Truck, a 1977 Dodge Brush Truck, a 1989 low profile Grumman custom Firecat diesel automatic with a 1500 GPM pump and a 1000 gallon tank, a 1996 Spartan Pumper/Rescue which contains rescue equipment including "Jaws of Life", and the newest vehicle, a 2003 Ford F550 Rescue/Brush Truck.

The company recently received a grant from the federal government in the amount of \$115,146. This will be used to purchase SCBA's, a new cascade compressor unit, and a new Thermal Imaging Camera.

The fire department is staffed by all volunteer members. They annually elect a Chief, Assistant Chief, Captain, 1st Lt. and 2nd Lt. who command the members when called upon. The business part of the company is comprised of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Doorman, and seven Trustees who oversee the use of the building and it's equipment.

In 2003, New Bethlehem Fire Company #1 responded to 144 calls. The calls were made up of 61 rescues (mostly MVA), 24 structure fires and various other incidents. We have mutual aid arrangements with both Hawthorn Area VFD and Distant Area VFD in providing the heavy rescue and support for all reported structure fires.



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