Fire Instructors Taunted Recruits in Memphis ‘Hell Night’
Fire recruit James Coleman remains in critical condition from October drill

SHERRI DRAKE
Courtesy of The Commercial Appeal

Firefighter recruit James Coleman picked up his legs with his hands in order to keep walking, as other fatigued recruits dropped. Instructors mocked the weary recruits over a loudspeaker, urging them to give up and ring a bell to signal defeat.

A quicker -- according to some instructors -- was worse than being a dead man on Hell Night.

Coleman, 41, wouldn’t quit and it landed him in a coma.

“They’d have to drag me off of there dead before I rang that bell,” one instructor yelled at a wracking recruit. “I’d be dead or unconscious before I rang that bell.”

Six Memphis fire training officials -- three lieutenants, one driver, and chief Dan Rutledge and Andy Cotlin -- were transferred out of the 5th division after an investigation into the Oct. 12 session.

Seven recruits were taken to hospitals that night.

After several requests for results of that investigation, city officials released a summary Nov. 19 saying -- in essence -- the drill was over.

Preventing Deaths and Injuries to Fire Fighters during Live-Fire Training in Acquired Structures

Summary
Fire fighters are subjected to many hazards while participating in live-fire training. Training facilities with acquired structures should be used for live-fire training whenever possible. However, when acquired structures are not available, firefighters should use live-fire training.

Descriptive Exposure
Live-fire training exercises are a crucial element in the structural fire-fighting curriculum. Fire fighters are subjected to many hazards while participating in live-fire training exercises at acquired structures.

Case Studies
Case 1
A volunteer fire fighter (the victim) died and two other fire fighters were injured during a live-fire training exercise in a two-story duplex. The victim and another...
Physical Demands of Firefighting

- Cardiac Failure
- Thermal Stress
- Inhalation of Contaminants
- Disorientation and Panic
2009 Firefighter Fatalities by Type of Duty

- Operating at the Fire Ground: 35%
- Response to or Returning from Alarm: 24%
- Training: 13%
- Non-fire Emergencies: 12%
- Other On-duty: 16%

Source: NFPA 2010
Fire Training Fatalities

Source: NFPA 2010
Leading Types of Training Activities Associated with Fatalities
1996 - 2005

Source: NFPA 2006
## 2008 Training Injuries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>BURNS</th>
<th>SMOKE INHALATION</th>
<th>OTHER RESPIRATORY</th>
<th>BURNS &amp; SMOKE INHALATION</th>
<th>WOUND, CUT, BLEEDING, BRUISE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>320</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>135</td>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>THERMAL STRESS</th>
<th>STRAIN, SPRAIN</th>
<th>HEART ATTACK OR STROKE</th>
<th>DISLOCATION, FRACTURE</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
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<tr>
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<td>4,710</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>950</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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</table>

Source: NFPA 2009
Firefighter Training Cause of Fatal Injury 1996-2005

- Struck by or contact with object: 38%
- Fell/jumped: 15%
- Caught or trapped: 1%
- Stress/overexertion: 32%
- Exposure to heat: 6%
- Other: 8%

Source: NFPA 2006
Firefighter Training Death Rates for Training - Related Fatalities per 100,000 Career and Volunteer Firefighters 1996-2005

Source: NFPA 2000
Firefighter Health Status

The NFPA reports that over the past 25 years, post mortem information on the deceased firefighter’s medical histories have been available for 713 of the 1,177 sudden cardiac death victims.

Of those 713 victims, 603 (or 84.6 percent) had suffered prior heart attacks, severe arteriosclerotic heart disease, undergone bypass surgery or angioplasty / stent placement, or were diabetic.
Heart Healthy Firefighter Program

At fire service trade shows around the country, the program has screened over 5,000 firefighters, both career and volunteer, for blood pressure, cholesterol, and body fat.

RESULTS:

2,000 firefighters tested for body fat distribution / blood pressure
- Considered to the obese (>25%) 44.7%
- Had stage 2 hypertension 6.8%
- Had stage 1 hypertension 31.5%
- Were pre-hypertensive 46.4%
- Had normal blood pressure 15.2%

5,411 firefighter tested for cholesterol
- High or borderline high 38.4%
Cardiac Death by Occupation

% of On-Duty Deaths

- Firefighter 45%
- Police 22%
- Overall* 15%
- Construction 11.5%
- EMS 11%

*Average % of all occupational fatalities for all industries

Source: Kales, et al, 2007
September 16, 2010

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH and SAFETY Research Summit