

**The Great Blog Experiment**

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Well, we're nine months in the Great Blog Experiment and here's some of what we've learned so far... Both buffs and personnel enjoy reading and discussing assorted aspects of local firefighting. Operational issues seem particularly welcome. We often hear that a blog discussion here has led to a group discussion there. However, operational issues are also the most prickly and have the greatest potential to devolve into either gripe-fests or pick/defend cycles. And, like their physical selves, firefighters are ready to poke fun at each other and/or try to get someone's goat. .

That this particular blog technology allows anonymous comments makes the latter a particular challenge. We've had to perform increasing amounts of babysitting, and this probably correlates to the increasing readership of the blog. At present, anonymous or non-fully named comments are more likely to be edited than those posted by someone who can be identified. All comments, however, are subject to editing, even our own. We'll even delete our own postings after second thought.

As the blog lives on the Internet, we always remember that its contents can live forever. Thus, while more incendiary or provocative conversations are certainly typical of what one might hear around the firehouse, we choose not to broadcast them on the blog for anyone to read, or find via a Google search in later days/weeks/months/years. And, of course, we presume anyone and everyone is reading, from the biggest chief to the youngest future firefighter.

Ultimately, we want everyone to play nice, including ourselves. Personal attacks are not welcome, nor are attacks on particular groups or agencies. e.g., slamming, say, the CAD system is fine, versus those that operate same. Broader criticism is fine, though, frankly, we're still evaluating cause and effect. As it's our pleasure and privilege to serve the fire service through our talents and interest, we must balance what we're doing with the effects of what we do. And if the blog ultimately has too much of a negative effect, it will be discontinued. Or commenting will be switched off.

Based on the enthusiasm and interest in commenting, particularly regarding operational issues, it seems as if either a moderated or wide-open discussion board would be well-used in this area. We have no plans to add one, and folks can certain tool on over to [firenews.net](http://firenews.net) or [firehouse.com](http://firehouse.com). Maybe someone will start a site like ours and for the expressed purpose of engaging the local fire service community. The blog, alas, is ultimately a platform for Mike and Lee to express and share the stuff that particularly interests them. Maybe we'll split the thing some time. News/trucks/stations/history over here, fires/incidents/operational issues over there. Who knows.

Now if we could just add a spell-checker to this thing...

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Later we'll give an update on the Great Photo Site Experiment. We've learned the in's and out's of posting incident photos (and maintaining a site therein) and we'll share those thoughts some time.

**Legeros** - 09/06/06 - 06:56

Another discussion board out there that many around here may not know about is <http://www.thewatchdesk.com>. It also has a local discussion board for the Triangle area.

**Wayne** - 09/06/06 - 10:49

Name: (real name preferred)  
E-mail: (optional)  
Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No