

**Anatomy of a House Fire**

01/25/09 705 W, 1 I - + 10 - 12

Here's a panoramic photo of this morning's house fire on Kennington Road. As an educational experiment, let's narrate the thing. Readers, please correct and append as needed. Click once or more to enlarge:



Left to right:

**Car 20** - This white truck is the fire investigator's vehicle. They're dispatched to all working fires. Reported structure fires are designated working fires, based on the conditions observed by the first arriving unit. The investigator can also be special-called as needed.

**Engine 11** - The fourth engine company dispatched to the fire. Reported structure fires receive a dispatch of 3 engines, 1 ladder, 1 rescue, 1 Battalion Chief, and 1 EMS unit. For working fires, a fourth engine is dispatched among other units. The fourth engine is a safety company, and functions in the role of safety officer. Once on scene, the driver-operator of the fourth engine assumes the role of Accountability Officer from the driver-operator of the second-arriving engine.

**Hydrant** - The first-arriving engine to a structure fire typically does not connect to the hydrant. Instead, they use water they carry, 500 gallons. The second-arriving engine "lays the line" from the nearest hydrant to the pumping engine. When the hoses are connected and the pumping engine operator is ready, the hydrant is opened. The black bag is the "hydrant bag," which contains a wrench to remove the hydrant caps and open the hydrant, and other tools.

**Building (background)** - The two-story structure is the location of the fire, which has been controlled by the time of this photograph.

**Police** - Law enforcement officers are dispatched to all working fires. They assist with traffic control, scene control, and any matters relating to criminal activity or law enforcement needs.

**Apparatus (front to rear)**

- **Engine 12** - The second-arriving engine. They laid the line to the pumping engine, Engine 7. Their personnel first assisted with fire attack.
- **Engine 7** - The first-arriving engine. The engine company officer declared a working fire on arrival, and assumed the role of incident commander. Their personnel "pulled a line" from the engine and attacked the fire by going inside the structure.
- **Ladder 11** - The ladder company assigned to the fire. The truck carries ladders, forcible entry tools, ventilation fans, and many other types of equipment. Their personnel first performed ventilation, to reduce the density of smoke inside the structure.
- **Rescue 7 (not visible)** - The rescue company assigned to the fire. The truck carries specialized rescue equipment. Their personnel typically assist with searching a structure for occupants, upon first arriving at a working fire.
- **Air 8** - This special unit is dispatched to all working fires. It carries bottles of breathing air, and is also equipped with a compressor for refilling bottles.

**White Cars (left to right, background to foreground)**

- **Car 5** - Division Chief, also called a Shift Commander. The DC is dispatched all working fire, and assists the Incident Commander as needed. The DC may also assume the role of Incident Commander.
- **District 1** - EMS District Chief, also dispatched to all working fires. The EMS DC assumes command of emergency medical operations.
- **Battalion 2** - Battalion Chief, who assumed the role of incident commander upon arrival. The BC parked in the yard of the house across the street from the fire building. The vehicle's rear hatch is raised. In the rear is a white board and other tools used during incident management.

**EMS 7** - The paramedic ambulance assigned to the fire. The two paramedics are treating the occupant of the structure who suffered smoke inhalation, and broke his arm and collarbone after jumping from a second-story window. The fire investigator is also present, to talk to the

patient. A second ambulance will soon arrive, to transport the patient to the hospital. EMS 7 will remain on scene, to provide medical assistance as needed to both personnel or other victims.

Engine 3 - The third of the three engines dispatched to the reported house fire. They've staged their apparatus at a distance from the scene, to prevent their engine from blocking incoming or outgoing units. The third engine at a working fire serves as the Rapid Intervention Team. This team stages outside the structure, and is prepared to rescue firefighters if they become trapped inside the fire building.

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Just for information purposes the 3rd engine on a dispatch of a structure fire is the RIT engine. Once confirmed a working fire the 4th engine dispatched to the call is a SAFETY company. Their role is safety officer, but using the crew instead of just one person! Once on the scene the driver operator of this engine takes over the role of accountability officer from the second arriving Lt. or driver operator!

**Jason Lane** - 01/25/09 - 14:13

Thanks Jason, updated above.

**Legeros** - 01/25/09 - 14:17

A question to educate myself on RFD ops a little more, with the 3rd & 4th due engines assuming special roles outside, not actively involved in suppression, is the work force limited to 2 engines, 1 ladder & rescue? Do the other engines get put to work if there is heavy fire or several rescues to be made?

My department gets 4 E's, 1 L, 1 R & 2 BC's. There are no pre-assigned "special duties". We do follow the typical 1st engine attacks fire, 2nd engine is water supply, ladder does search & vent, others used as necessary.

**Rides An Engine** - 01/25/09 - 14:34

It looks like it works for Raleigh, that's what is important. It is a structured procedure that is taught and practiced department wide. Anyone can play musical trucks with a scene but that can turn into Monday morning quarterbacking and I won't start that.

**Kurt** - 01/25/09 - 19:18

Not trying to MMQB. I was just curious to how their operation went, and just stating what I am used to as that is how my department operates. No harm, no foul.

**Rides An Engine** - 01/26/09 - 00:38

Do the Investigators work 24hr shifts or 12s?

Informative topic, Mike.

**Luke** - 01/26/09 - 00:55

RFD investigators work 24 shifts, the same schedule as line personnel. Their office is at Station 9.

**Legeros** - 01/26/09 - 08:36

News coverage. <http://www.newsobserver.com/674/story/13..>

**Legeros** - 01/26/09 - 08:49

Any takers to my above question?

**Rides An Engine** - 01/29/09 - 16:59

Engine rider, what is your question exactly?

**firedriver** - 01/30/09 - 19:04

"A question to educate myself on RFD ops a little more, with the 3rd & 4th due engines assuming special roles outside, not actively involved in suppression (RIT & Safety), is the work force limited to 2 engines, 1 ladder & rescue? Do the other engines get put to work if there is heavy fire or several rescues to be made?"

**Rides An Engine** - 01/31/09 - 18:32

Yes, initial companies "working" on scene would be 2 engines, 1 ladder, and 1 rescue. It is up to the C.O., if he thinks he needs more help on

his arrival he can code the call as a major working fire. MWF will get him another alarm (same as the first alarm). He can also special call another engine, ladder, etc. as he wishes.

The third and fourth arriving engines have specific jobs that they are not to be called off of, particularly the RIT engine.

**firedriver** - 01/31/09 - 20:44

Thanks Driver!!

**Rides An Engine** - 02/01/09 - 09:05

Name: (real name  
preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No

Comment:

/ [Textile](#)

Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

**What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?**

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

**Small print:** All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.