

Describe This Smoke

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Surrounded by scanners at home, at work, and in the car, Mr. Blogger listens to a *lot* of fires. Or at least as many workers as happen in Raleigh and Wake County. And with each working fire comes at least one description of smoke conditions. Might be arriving units. Might be command. The most popular adjectives are probably "heavy" and "thick." Below is a random smoke shot. How would you describe it? And how does your description differentiate from other types of smoke conditions? Share your vocabulary. Have a vowel movement.



I'd mark it a working fire with light smoke showing from the front of div.2.

RescueRanger - 12/20/09 - 20:07

Definitely a working fire, but wouldn't add on the "light smoke". Not trying to start a pissing contest "RR", just saying it's my opinion. My justification is because you've got smoke showing from multiple floors...

Silver - 12/20/09 - 20:44

Let me clarify my question. How would you describe the smoke coming from the front top floor? What words would you use?

No matter if arriving or already on scene.

Legeros - 12/20/09 - 20:47

Does that include commenting on what appears like positive pressure ventilation happening?

slayer - 12/20/09 - 21:26

Well, 'light' is the opposite of 'heavy'. And since there doesn't appear to be lots of smoke, and what there is is paler in colour than (I guess) it could be, I think RR is spot on.

But I also drive a desk for 12 hours a day, so what the hell do I know? :)

Paul - 12/20/09 - 21:29

In the vocabulary of Dave Dodson ("The art of smoke reading")...light, volume pushed, smoke...would I use that on the radio? No. Especially in this area. But that's definitely what it looks like. I could be very wrong though, seeing as how in a still shot you can't really judge its velocity and

other determining characteristics.

KOM - 12/20/09 - 22:20

Well...way back when it would be "10-23, CODE TWO, CONDITION RED!" (yelled into the radio). When I was in Maryland in the 90s it would have been "on location, smoke showing sector A, passing command". But I am like Paul, except that I start IVs and stuff 24-36 hours at the pop, so what do I know.

DJ ([Email](#)) ([Web Site](#)) - 12/20/09 - 22:26

I believe it isn't "heavy" smoke but there is a moderate amount to make it more than "light" I would keep the radio traffic detailed enough to pass along proper information, but brief enough as not to ramble...and in a professional, non-yelling manner.

rookie - 12/21/09 - 07:41

Well put Rook'...definitely not heavy, nor light. Sort of hard to determine the rate at which it's "pushing" from the 2nd floor by a picture. Closer to the window, it does still have a darker color which would tell us all that there's still a little somethin' goin' on! Looks like they had a fire on the first (look at A/B corner window) and maybe this is extension to the second or smoke venting from PPV.

Since we're just "havin' fun" with the pic, and we can learn something from EVERY job we take in; if the smoke was indeed a result of PPV, both windows on the upper should be open, preferably from the top. If not, open them both up from the bottom, as high as they'll go. Great job putting a ground ladder in place for egress. My opinion on ground ladder placement; if the job is big enough for us to be throwing ladders, I'm going to make an opening for those crews inside as well. If the "you know what" hits the fan, I'd prefer my Brothers and Sisters to be able to just bail out, versus having to tangle with taking out a window, and then bailing out. Glass is cheap, and that's why they have insurance. Our safety is paramount!

Silver - 12/21/09 - 11:27

Im also a fan of the above mentioned taking of the window. Sashes shouldnt get in the way of rapidly exiting firefighters. That being said. Bestfirefightervideo.com has a video of what appears to be an OVM attempt gone wrong. Im not sure why he takes the windows but theres arguments on both sides for keeping the glass and taking it.

Devilsadvocate - 12/21/09 - 13:42

Wow!!! Watched the video, thanks for sharing. Definitely a great example of where not to vent horizontally when no line is on the fire yet. The point is to draw the fire/heat/smoke/steam away from the advancing line, not to them!

Training is a priority versus just taking windows all over. If you had a knockdown, and a line or two on the fire, if your guys are getting steamed hard, let them take some from inside and/or communicate with your OVM on where to take them out. Taking those windows, he brought everything that was still burning right to him. And to think, the comments during the video said three guys were doing a primary!! Also, watch at around 7:28 on the video, it appears there's a line inside making a push due to the steamover you see. Then, guys come around FROM THE OUTSIDE and start flowing water. That's a "situation" they've got there....

Silver - 12/21/09 - 14:34

Coordinating vent with attack is something I feel we are all weak in. Jeff, will the upcoming RFD Ladder Ops guidelines/procedure address this deficiency? ...or take a stab at placing a greater emphasis on coordinating these efforts?

A.C. Rich - 12/21/09 - 17:59

Cap'.....while the new ladder ops procedures will definitely meet some resistance due to change, you'll see more communication in this area, no doubt. The new directives/training manual will help us to operate more efficiently on the fireground when it comes to truck ops, incorporating the rescues too. Members, especially those with experience, will definitely have to be on their "A-game", because they might have to make a few decisions on their own based on their training and knowledge when it comes to venting (O.V. position). But, communicating said moves to the interior will be "muy importante" as well, and members will be trained in their new expectations in due time.

Silver - 12/21/09 - 20:51

Thanks!! I am looking forward to the changes because we definitely need it. It is my hope that "function will follow function" in this case and the other departments in Wake Co. will hopefully model the same approach. This situation is one where a real positive change can be made in our fireground operations.

A.C. Rich - 12/21/09 - 21:01

I agree 100%.

Silver - 12/21/09 - 22:18