



CHIEF'S FILE CABINET

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Carrying Contact Card on Incidents

Many fire departments have created a post card that asks some basic questions that is routinely mailed to the incident location for feedback. I know right now that some people would say that is not a good idea always because the outcomes are not always favorable. That may be true. But what I am talking about is the idea that if you go to someone's house to help them and you manage to do so in a very good way then you have some follow-up with them to let them know that you care about the outcome there is a remote possibility that their level of support for what we are doing is going to be a significantly improved relationship.

I also visited with a volunteer fire department once that had door hangers that they would have on their apparatus to distribute to people on either side of fire incidents. The door hanger did not condemn the property owner for having an incident but rather just advise the property owner's that an event had occurred in their neighborhood and that they should be doing whatever they could to be more cautious in the future.

As I was explaining these one on one kind of contacts, I can almost anticipate one of the reactions. There are those out there who will say they simply don't have the time to do all this "touchy, feely" kind of stuff. Well, if you don't have time to do it then do you have any expectation on what will happen when those same people do not vote to support our efforts in improving fire protection?

Loyalty is a two way street. By engaging in one on one contact with these people in a very short timeframe, we can often build relationships that will last a lifetime.

As you may have noticed here, I am not talking about the Fire Prevention Bureau. I am talking about the boys and girls over on the operational side. They are the ones that need to be carrying the message out there. that doesn't keep us from using fire prevention people and public educators to do one on contacts themselves but the main emphasis is on using the opportunities that are already present when people dial 911.

So, now I have said it. I am implying that we ought to get up from our computer desk once in a while and go out and talk to people. Face to face contact may not be as technologically sophisticated as pushing the enter key on your laptop but I believe it has a more meaningful and more relevant impact on how people perceive the contemporary fire service.

Maybe, just maybe, if people get the idea that we care about them, then they may care a lot more about us.