

KILLER IN THE ATTIC (KITA)

BACKGROUND

Many firefighter injuries and deaths have occurred in structures with half-story top floors (attics with hip or knee walls) that permit use of part of the attic for living space and are commonly referred to as Victorian, Half-Story, Dutch Colonial, and Salt Box architecture.

A St. Louis Chief Officer observed that more than half of the serious injuries occur during interior attack operations at half-story fires. Two well documented multiple-firefighter death fires, in Syracuse, NY and Biloxi, MS, occurred in half-story structures. In both cases full PPE with SCBA was being worn, firefighters were in teams, and additional firefighters were on the fire ground. *The Syracuse firefighters were in a sprinklered hallway.*

AUDIENCE, RELEVANCE, AND APPLICATION

KITA is an *across-the-board* presentation - valuable to the firefighter making the interior attack and to the IC who must successfully direct a low risk extinguishment effort based on a planned outcome.

KITA is a highly focused program that teaches how the interconnected concealed spaces, limited window area, multi-faced interior walls, hidden fire travel paths, high risk collapse zones, difficult ventilation and extinguishment procedures increase risk to firefighters. The non-matching floors lines and roof lines of half story buildings that compound the hazards of concealed space fires and significantly increase the risk to firefighters while substantially reducing firefighting effectiveness are reviewed in detail. Attack and ventilation options that have proved successful for this style of construction are presented .

KITA, developed for Missouri's first Winter Fire School in 1982, has been presented to 4,300 firefighters at Missouri University Fire and Rescue Training Institute's Regional and Winter Fire Schools and at FDIC CENTRAL in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007, FDIC - EAST IN 2005 and South Carolina Fire-Rescue 2006/7.

PROGRAM GOAL

Lower firefighter risk and reduce injuries and deaths while operating at half-story structures through focused study of fire behavior and travel coupled with detailed knowledge of construction features, attack methods, and ventilation options specific to half-story construction. Increase firefighting effectiveness and reduce fire losses associated with concealed spaces in half-story buildings.

PRESENTATION: Lecture/Discussion with Classmember Text and electronic slides. LENGTH: 6 contact hours.

Instructor Bio

John Sachen is an Industrial Training Coordinator with the University of Missouri - Fire and Rescue Training Institute, is the Hazmat Officer/Fire Instructor for the Delta Missouri Fire Protection District and serves on the advisory board for FDIC. His certified teaching career began in 1956 in the U.S. Air Force in the field of communications and electronics.

Sachen has served in both career and non-career public and industrial fire departments with responsibilities for structural firefighting, training, hazmat, confined space, and management. His industrial career includes product development and marketing with General Dynamics during three different employment periods.

John has developed a number of courses and procedures for the University of Missouri, including the "Ignitable Liquids and Class B Foam," "Killer-in-the-Attic (half-story fires)," "Meth-amphetamine Awareness and Operations" which were released nationally under a federal grant and "Rapid Intervention Teams". In addition he developed and produced the Fire Technology Ltd. video training program "Firefighting: It's A Risky Business".

Throughout his career, Sachen has focused on the science of fire behavior and effective low risk attack methods and tactics for structural and ignitable liquid fires. Development of effective practices for half-story attic fires, started for Missouri's first Winter Fire School, is now in it's 27th year.

Sachen retired from Mallinckrodt Chemical as Chief of Fire Protection and Chemical Response with national responsibility for Chemtrec Responses.