



# Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit

April 2024

## Critical Incident/Emergency Management Unit

This is the monthly newsletter for the Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit. **If you have events that you would like posted in this newsletter please email them to the Fire Coordinator's office.**



## Truck Company Ops class at East Berne

### *In this issue*

Truck Company Ops class at East Berne  
Retention and Recruitment  
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\*\*Last months newsletter had a photo of the Cohoes Fire recruit class but not the names of the recruits . They are Zach Coldwell, Paul Thouin Jr. Mitchel McCormack, and Briana Bowen

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**Truck Company Ops class at  
East Berne**



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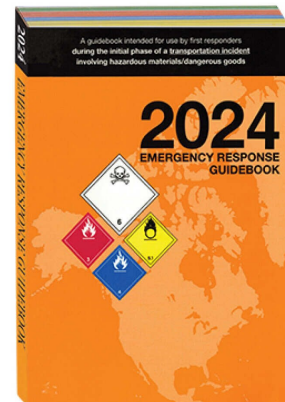


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## Hazmat Corner

April, 2024



### Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) 2024 edition

We expect to receive the shipment of the 2024 Edition of the Emergency Response Guidebook soon. When we receive them, we will distribute them to the fire, police, EMS and public works agencies in the county. We previously solicited orders from each of these agencies.

In the meantime, the 2024 ERG app is now available. Android device users can download it from the Google Play Store. Apple iPhone and iPad users can download it from the Apple App Store. Search for "2024 ERG."

The latest information on the ERG can be found at <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/training/hazmat/erg/emergency-response-guidebook-erg>

### Annual Hazmat Exercise

The annual Hazmat exercise, sponsored by the Capital Region Hazmat Group will be held in September, 2024 at the Watervliet Arsenal. This exercise is usually held in April of each year but has been delayed this year due to a delay in grant funding from NYS DHSES.

The Capital Region Hazmat Group consists of the hazmat teams from Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady Counties. The group is funded by grants from NYS DHSES which are usually a little over \$170,000.00 per year. This money funds salary expenses for training and exercises as well as equipment purchases and maintenance. As you know, hazmat teams require specialized PPE and sophisticated equipment. Even the air paks are slightly different from those used for interior structural firefighting. The teams need to maintain a supply of Level A and Level B hazmat suits. These are used once and disposed of. Even the disposal requires special handling. Equipment to identify unknown substances costs in excess of \$50,000.00.



# Albany County Sheriff's Office

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### Fireground Operations

## How to survive: Disorientation on the fireground

Establish side alpha, stay disciplined in your direction, pay attention to sights and sounds, and use “breadcrumbs” to establish a route

April 07, 2024 10:57 PM •

Vincent Bettinazzi

*Photo/Vince Bettinazzi*

“What wall are you on?” “Are you right hand or left hand?” “Do you know where you are?”

These questions were repeatedly asked by my instructors, echoed by the two of them in unison like training parrots, locked in a cage, squawking to get a cracker.

I say “asked” but they were screamed in stereo only a few inches from my ear. But I couldn’t know for sure, my vision obscured by my black flash hood pulled over the front of my SCBA mask. To be honest, the only thing I could hear clearly was the sounds of my breathing – the deep inhalations as I pulled the air supplied to my face through the attached regulator.

I was tasked with leading the assigned search team in this evolution focused on disorientation – the condition of having lost one’s sense of direction. Another recruit firefighter was depending on me to move him quickly through the training maze. We’ve been in here at least half a dozen times before. Again, we were looking for a simulated victim – a rock, the size of a deck of cards that they picked up on the training ground about an hour before our drill began. This was a larger “victim” compared to the quarter that was unfortunately trapped in a simulated fire event yesterday that was missed by three separate two-member search teams; finally, a fourth team was able to locate it.

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“What wall? What hand? Where are you? Move, move, move, the victim doesn't have much time!” Poor rock.

These drills are designed to keep us oriented, provide a learned sense of direction, and keep us progressing inside a dark unknown environment. But are there other factors that can assist us in maintaining orientation on the fireground in similar circumstances?

### **Disorientation on the fireground**

When it comes to preventing disorientation on the fireground, we learn in our training that all search techniques derive from a form of orientation. A right- or left-hand search is the basic foundation when this chapter of firefighter training begins. A starting point, that is as true and reliable as due North on a trusty compass. This technique allows firefighters to establish a planned pattern for search and drives them in a direction. Two choices, right or left, and go.

Ironically, I felt lost a lot. I also moved slow, obsessed with maintaining contact with the wall of my choice. I never wanted not to lose orientation within the structure. I know I was searching for life and fire, but I needed to always know where I was in case the team and I needed to get out.

The obsession with maintaining contact with the wall for orientation resulted in poor search techniques. Now add the stress of maintaining contact with another team member or two, and the effectiveness of our search depreciated.

### **Establishing side alpha**

How many times have you been to a structure that doesn't really fit the “address side is alpha” algorithm. Maybe the first-in engine hits a rear alley off a one-way street or there is a guest house off the rear of the main home. In any event, there are circumstances where side alpha may need to be designated and repeatedly communicated on the incident scene. There is not time to debate. The IC needs to get the chess board established and be loud about the location of side alpha. Are there attached exposures? We'll establish those as well. When working inside high-rise buildings, get those stairwells identified for the responding crews too. My recommendation is to stay away from the cardinal directions for naming staircases



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and sides. If there is a big number 4 painted inside the stairwell, use this identifier and relate it to your established Alpha designation. Make the designation sensible to the structure and friendly to the working companies when dealing with abnormal structures. Use a visible marker, like a specific fire apparatus or command post to assist with establishing side alpha. Remember, if there is no parameter for orientation on the incident, then disorientation is more likely to occur.

You can never really predict what you will find in structures. We do our best to prepare, especially with a good 360 or size-up completed prior to entry. Think of right hand and left hand as establishing a search direction. Yes, the wall is intended to be the orientation point on a right-hand or left-hand search, but I would argue that the effectiveness of our searches increase by using other means of orientation. After all, it's called a wall, not a railing. Go look at your kid's bedroom. How much "wall" would you really touch if you had to search it? For me, I have approximately 3 feet under their window. Otherwise, I would be pushed out into the center of the room by their dressers, a dollhouse, a heap of dirty clothes in the laundry basket, and beds. And isn't that where we'd expect to find our potential victims anyway?

With this in mind, follow these tips:

Stay disciplined in the direction.

Be systematic and use the size-up to guide your decisions for movement through the structure.

Announce this direction to the other members of your team, assisting companies and the incident commander. This gives everyone some expectations that can guide additional decisions based upon supporting these initial actions of the search team.

### **Breadcrumbs establish a route**

We can also use "breadcrumbs" to prevent disorientation.

**Thermal imagers** are a powerful example. tried to deploy a search rope in a residential building? Consider ropes for searches in large homes, apartment buildings and high-rise buildings, in addition to the schools, These tools have evolved so much in comparison to the first versions of the 1990s. Use the camera to

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scan your surroundings and assist with your decision-making to search, as they cut through the smoke to display details like furniture and doorways inside the structure.

We often think of using **search ropes** in large structures, but they can be deployed in many more circumstances. Have you ever Walmarts and libraries in your area.

Finally, **hand tools** are great breadcrumbs too. This may spark debate, but I would argue you search better without swinging a tool. Your hands can provide more feedback via the sense of touch than a 30-inch metal Halligan bar ever will. We know that our vision is often obscured, but a gloved hand can do wonders in making sense of objects inside a building. So, train using your tool as an orientation object. As you enter a bedroom, place the tool on the side of the door in the direction you start your search. As you eventually circle back to your starting point, the tool will serve as the breadcrumb marking your starting point. Grab it, exit and go to your next place to search.

### Sights and sounds help

The fireground is loud. This can actually help you maintain orientation inside the structure. We may be able to hear the hustle-bustle of engine, trucks, fans, sirens and other tools at work. As you move toward a certain side of the structure, these noises might become more muted – a signal of your location. I vividly remember hearing the rapid “beep, beep, beep, beep” of our ladder truck’s outriggers extending as I entered the front bedroom of a house to search. No doubt I was near the alpha side then. You may also catch the reflection of flashing lights through front/side windows of structures, serving as another indicator where you are located.

Working smoke alarms are imperative in quickly alerting occupants of a fire. But they can also provide intelligence to firefighters inside the structure. Typically placed inside bedrooms or near the common hallways, the devices’ steady beeping can lead search crews in the best direction to locate these rooms. Pay attention to whether the beeping from the devices suddenly stop, serving as an indicator of fire growth or increased intensity. Rising temperatures at the ceiling level will eventually damage the alarms. This can give you an early warning that actions need to be taken to control the fire.

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## Additional tips

Some other tips to prevent disorientation:

**Thresholds and flooring:** Flooring types can change throughout a structure. This might indicate a new area or room, especially if a threshold/doorway is passed. Unfortunately, the trend for the same flooring, like vinyl or hardwood throughout the home, will impact this indicator.

**Door swings:** Doors that lead to bedrooms and bathrooms will typically swing inward, while outward-swinging doors may indicate closets, pantries, basements and even residential elevators. The front door of a residential home often swings toward the cluster of bedrooms, especially in single-story homes.

**Smoke draw:** The lowest level of smoke will draw toward the direction of the fire as fresh air is pulled below the upper layer of hot smoke in a bidirectional flow path. This may help you decide where to begin your searches or to stretch your

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## Public Safety , wellness, fitness and rehab awareness class at Midway Fire Department



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## Retention and Recruitment

We now have 2 R&R cars available, the Charger and our newest addition the Explorer pictured below. If you would like to book one of these vehicles to be at an event contact Bob Stevens at 518-857-2259 or via email at [robert.stevens@albanycountyny.gov](mailto:robert.stevens@albanycountyny.gov).



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## **FIRE & LIFE SAFETY EDUCATORS' TRAINING SERIES**

For over 40 years, NYSAFC has partnered with the New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control to co-host the Fire & Life Safety Educators' Conference at the New York State Academy of Fire Science. Featuring workshops and networking activities, this weekend event has brought together public educators in the emergency services field from throughout the Northeast and Canada to learn how they can enhance their programs.

Due to infrastructure updates that will be taking place in 2024 at the fire academy, in lieu of the annual conference, we're taking the show on the road, conducting three one-day conferences across New York state! Join us at the Fire & Life Safety Educators' Training Series in Albany, Erie, and Onondaga Counties.

**2024 Dates and Locations:**  
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. at all locations.

**Albany County – April 27, 2024**  
Fuller Road Fire Department • 1342 Central Avenue • Albany, NY 12205

Be sure to visit the NYS DHSES OFPC [website](#) for additional public education resources!

## **ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #9-2024 is attached.**

There is now a link on our website with instructions on how to get an LMS sign-on ID. We recommend that all new members should register as soon as they join so they have access to training opportunities.

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# ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #9 2024

**Pre-Registration Required: Students may register by clicking on the Learning Management System link on the NYS OPFC Home Page ([NYS Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services - OPFC](#) )**

Registration opens 45 days before the first class

COURSE	LOCATION	DATE	INSTRUCTOR	PREREQUISITES
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**Please Note that a training authorization letter is now required for all courses offered by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control**

<b>Firefighter I</b>  (BEFO/SCBA Interior Firefighter Operations)	Colonie MTB	<b>December 21<sup>st</sup>: Orientation: 6:30 pm Chief Officer</b> <b>Must Attend with Student</b>  <i>BEFO (W/Hazardous Materials Operations)</i> January 2, 4, 9, 11, 20, 23, 25, 30, February 1, 6, 8, 13, March 2, 7, 14, 19, 21, 26, April 2, 4, 6  <i>SCBA/IFO: April 18, 20, 25, 30, May 2, 7, 18, 30, June 6, 11, 13, 18, 25</i>  Weeknights 1830-2130 Saturday 0800-1700  Instructor - Molesky	<b>At Orientation: Training Authorization Letter</b>	
<b>IN PROGRESS</b>  IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting 7th Edition Curriculum			<b>Start of SCBA/IFO: Medical Clearance to wear SCBA,</b>	
<b>IN PROGRESS</b> Truck Company Operations	East Berne	March 12, 25, April 1, 8, 24, May 1, 6, 8	Molesky	Firefighter I or Equivalent

FAST <b>IN PROGRESS</b>	Delmar FD	April 15 & 17: 1830-2130 April 20: 0800-1700	Kerr	Firefighter I, FFS-Self Rescue or equivalent
SCBA-Interior Firefighting Operations <b>IN PROGRESS</b>	Selkirk #2/Colonie MTB	<b>April 15: Orientation Selkirk #2 1830</b>  April 18, 22, 25, 29, May 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 30, June 3, 6, 10 1830-2130	Messenger	BEFO w/HMFRO or equivalent
Fire Police	Coeymans Hollow	May 9,14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23	Collins	None
Tactical Fire Ground Simulations	Westmere: There are 2 offerings at Westmere. Note the dates of the course you have selected.	April 22: 1830-2130 April 27: 0900-1700	Flensted	ICS 200
ATV/UTV Class	East Berne FD	April 27 0800-1600 Contact Chief Paul Miller (Albany County Sheriff's Office) to register: 518-720-8034 or 518-320-4213 to Register	Paris	Bring Fire Department Issued ATV/UTV for hands-on session.  Class size: 50 for classroom session only. 25 for classroom and hands-on.
Tactical Fire Ground Simulations	Westmere: There are 2 offerings at Westmere. Note the dates of the course you have selected.	April 29: 1830-2130 May 4: 0900-1700	Flensted	ICS 200
Apparatus Aerial Operator	Colonie MTB	May 1, 7, 14, 15, 22 1830-2130  May 21,29, June 4,11,12 1830-2230	Santabarbara	BEFO of Equivalent

Refresher Training (Rescue Technician Basic)	Slingerlands	May 11: 0800-1400	Kerr	Rescue Technician Basic
Apparatus Operator- Emergency Vehicles	Shaker Road Loudonville	May 15: 1830-2130 May 18 & 19: 0800-1700	DeGroff	Valid Driver's License
Engine Company Operations	Selkirk FD #1	May 22, 29, June 1, 5, 12, 15 Weeknights 1830-2130 Saturday 0830-1430	Clawson	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Incident Safety Officer	Coeymans Hollow	June 11, 18, 25, July 3, 9, 16  1830-2130	Clawson	None
Apparatus Operator- Pump	Midway	July 23, 25, 30, August 6, 22, 29, September 3, 5 1830-2130	Molesky	BEFO or Equivalent
Firefighter II  <b>NEW TO SCHEDULE</b>	Colonie MTB	September 17, 19, 24, 28, October 3, 5, 8, 10, 15, 17 Weeknights: 1830-2130 Saturdays: 0800-1400	DeGroff	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Fire Officer I Module Series: NYS Officer Development- Leadership and Supervision Course  <b>NEW TO SCHEDULE</b>	Altamont FD	November 13, 16, 19, 24 Weeknights: 1830-2130 Saturday: 0800-1400	DeGroff	BEFO or Equivalent

**Unless changed by instructor or noted above:  
All evening classes will be held from 19:00-22:00 hours.**

**All Saturday and Sunday classes will be held from 09:00-12:00  
hours and 13:00-16:00 hours**



**Fire Coordinator Gerald Paris**

