

Apparatus Positioning Basics

Your aerial ladder or tower is a finite size. It can only reach so high and so far. If not placed in the optimal position, it may not be able to reach a victim, or the roof, or the window or a trapped firefighter. Barring a few special instances, the ladder truck should usually get to choose its position in front of the building. If there is only room for one piece of apparatus in front, and there may be need for the trucks ladder, the truck should get that position. Let's see why.

The intentional or accidental blocking of the truck from this prime position can result in death or injury to firefighters and civilians. Since our goal is first to save life. Improper positioning can thwart that goal.

Ok so what about the engine? If you encounter a hydrant before the fire, on a narrow block, stopping at that hydrant may block out the truck. Instead, stop just past the fire building and drop enough hose to reach the fire. Maybe even drop two stretches of hose. Then continue to drive, stretching the hose to the next nearest hydrant, hook up, and supply water as needed. This allows the truck following you into the block to get a good position. If the street is wide enough, stop at the hydrant before the fire, if advantageous, but get close enough to the curb to allow the truck to pass by the pumper.

Conditions on the scene may necessitate that the engine take a hydrant before the fire or that it stops in front of the fire, or that street conditions preclude the truck reaching the building. If so, the truck, instead of following the engine into the block, can go around the block and enter from the opposite direction. This may give the truck access to the building front. Another option is notifying the second due truck, or special calling an additional truck to enter the block via the opposite end of the street. This will result in a delay, but can result in a truck at the proper position.

There are other considerations.

- The height of the building, if not above two stories can negate the need for the truck to get the front position. Portable ladders will usually, not always, do the job.
- The fire conditions may negate anyone positioning in front of the building.
- Distance to the next hydrant or a known out of service hydrant may necessitate a change of plans.
- A known delay in the truck's response may require that the engine set up at the first hydrant encountered to provide fast water. If this blocks out the truck, notify the truck to enter from the opposite end of the block when it arrives.

Everyone on the fireground should understand proper apparatus positioning. The fireground is an unpredictable place and both engine and truck officers and firefighters should know their options. We must always be flexible in ensuring that the positioning needs presented at each fire are provided for as much as is possible.

You will notice that I leave out supply tanker scenarios. It is not something that I am familiar with.