In-Station Training

TM 26-47 Outside Fire

Author

Chief Ed Hartin

Purpose

Information provided in the dispatch provides a starting point for developing a working story of what is likely to be found on arrival. However, initial information is often incomplete or ambiguous.

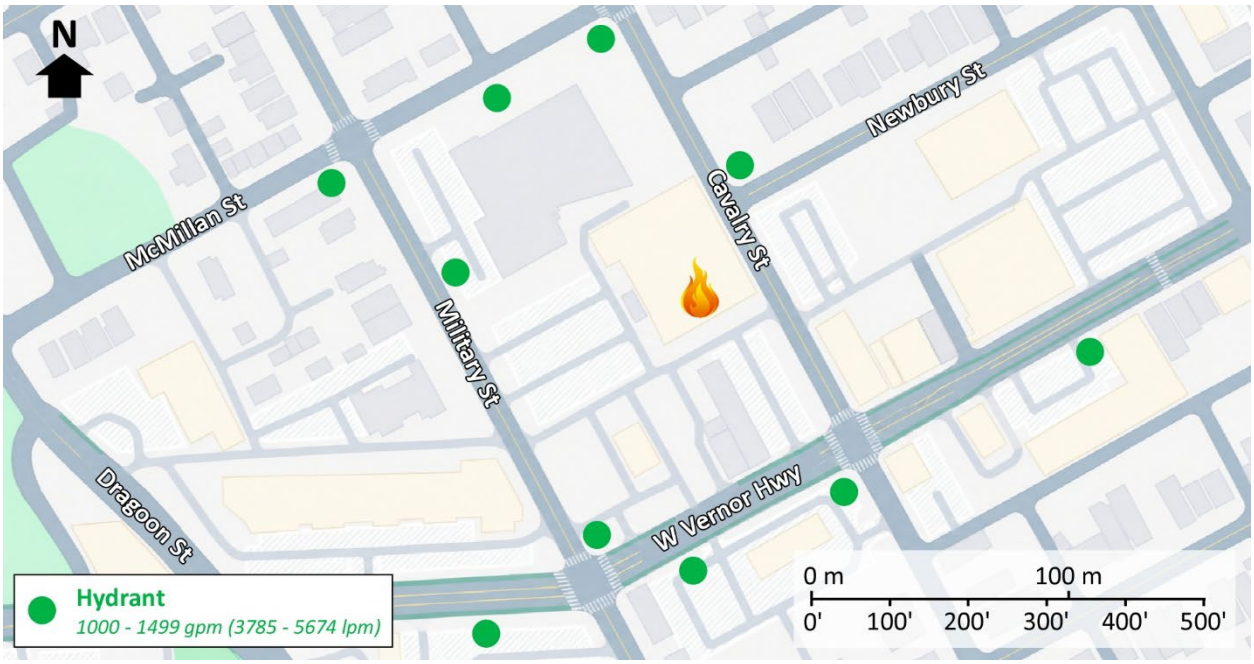
Learning Outcomes

Initial incident commanders perform an effective size-up, select an appropriate strategy, and implement tactics based on the strategic decision-making model.

Conducting the Drill

This incident involved an outside fire reported to be near E & L Supermercado located at 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, Michigan on May 11, 2026, at 07:45 (Broadcastify, 2026a, 2026b; Salas, 2026; WXYZ-TV Detroit | Channel 7, 2026). Review the map and photos (Figures 1-6) to gain an understanding of the building and area involved.

Figure 1. Map of the Incident Area



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026a). [Map, 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. Map data ©2026 Google. https://bit.ly/3Wt2vAZ.

The closest hydrant is on Cavalry Street at Newbury Street and there are other hydrants in the area as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 2. Aerial/Preplan View



Note: Adapted from Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. https://bit.ly/3ViSaHq.

Figure 3. Alpha/Delta Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2020a). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. https://bit.ly/4iBtByr.

Figure 4. Alpha/Bravo Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2015a). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. https://bit.ly/4iN5ewC.

Figure 5. Side Bravo



Note: Adapted from Google. (2015b). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. https://bit.ly/4BXp291.

Figure 6. Charlie/Delta Corner



Note: Adapted from Google. (2020b). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. https://bit.ly/4exkcp5.

The incident is in a densely developed mixed commercial and residential area. The immediate area includes supermarkets, restaurants, small businesses, and other neighborhood-serving commercial occupancies, with closely spaced residential blocks extending north and south of the corridor. Much of the surrounding development dates from the early 20th century, with a mix of older single-family and multifamily housing. The area has a large Latino population, and Spanish is widely spoken. (OpenAI, 2026). Fire and EMS call volume in this area is high and typical of other areas of the urban community.

The temperature is currently 44° F (7° C) with wind from the north at 9 mph (14 kph) (Weather Underground, 2026). It is Monday, May 11 at 07:45, and you are dispatched as a single company to investigate a fire outside the market at West Vernor Highway and Cavalry Street. **You are the officer of the first arriving engine company,** and your engine has four-person staffing[1]. You will arrive from the south on Military Street.

[1] All engine and ladder companies in this tactical decision game have four-person staffing. If your staffing and deployment are different, use your own resource assignment and staffing.

This simulation video[2] (Hartin, 2026) provides prompts to pause the simulation and answer related questions (e.g., the text "Critical Factors" is a prompt for Question 1) When prompted, pause the simulation, answer the question, and then resume the simulation. Click the link above or scan the QR code to access the incident simulation video.



Time starts now! Answer the first nine questions within the next ten minutes. Save discussion until after you have answered these questions.

1. What critical factors would you consider when dispatched and during response? What conversations would you have with your crew during response?

2. Based on the dispatch information and what you know about this occupancy and response area, what do you anticipate finding on arrival?



Important! Answer questions three through nine in the form of communication you would have with your crew, dispatch, other companies, and the first arriving command officer. State the communications exactly as you would say them face-to-face or over the radio. Save explanation or discussion until after you have completed these questions.

3. State your initial radio report (IRR) exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.

4. What specific actions would you take (as the company officer) immediately upon arrival and after exiting the apparatus, and what task orders would you give your crew?

The remainder of this tactical decision game is based on upgrading to a standard commercial fire resource determination adding four additional engines, two ladder companies, a medic unit, and two command officers. Radio communications for the upgraded assignment are moved to a tactical talk group.

[2] Images in the incident simulation video were edited with ChatGPT Images 2.5 (OpenAI, 2026b) to remove vehicles in the foreground of incident street view images and to provide consistent lighting and clarity.

5. Would you change the action you are taking or modify the assignments given to your crew? If so, what task orders would you provide?

6. State your follow-up report exactly as you would transmit it to dispatch.

7. Ladder 1 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 at West Vernor and Cavalry. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

8. Engine 2 arrives and reports that they are Level 1 on the hydrant on West Vernor and Military. State the tactical assignment you would give them exactly as you would transmit it.

9. Based on anticipated effectiveness of your tactical operations, state your conditions, actions, and needs (CAN) report that you would provide to the first arriving command officer as part of command transfer to IC #2.



Reflect on your strategic decision-making and responses to questions one through nine before answering the next eight questions. Think about what cues, patterns, or anomalies (differences from conditions that you would anticipate) informed your answers.

10. What information most influenced your expectations?

11. Did anything you encountered after arrival challenge your initial expectations?

12. What was the actual problem once you arrived?

13. What were your tactical priorities and what was getting in the way of achieving them?

14. During initial operations, was there an immediate threat of serious injury or death to you, your crew, or other companies?

15. Was it reasonable to believe that the Main Fire Occupancy, lower floor exposures, or Delta 1 Exposure were occupied?

16. Was there searchable space?

17. If you believed there was searchable space and that it was reasonable that the building was occupied, what could you do about it?

The Detroit Fire Department is a busy urban fire and emergency medical services agency with over 1,000 career personnel staffing 28 engine companies, 13 ladder companies, 6 squad companies each with four-person staffing. In addition, the department operates 2 fire boats and a hazardous materials team. The department's response area is divided into eight battalions.

In this incident, a single company, Engine 27, was dispatched to investigate an outside fire. On arrival, they requested a first alarm and stretched an attack line for fire control. The first arriving battalion chief, Battalion 7, requested a second alarm. Watch the pre-arrival incident video (Salas, 2026) before answering the next several questions. Click the link or scan the QR code to access the videos.

18. The normal operating hours of the market are from 08:30 to 19:00 and the manager reported that all employees had evacuated and that there were no customers in the store. Did you consider this to be credible information? Did this report influence your incident action plan? If so, how?

19. An arsonist ignited a tarp and shopping carts located under the overhang on Side Alpha. Given the initial location of the fire, what avenues of fire spread and extension into the store and structural voids did you consider?

20. The wind was out of the north at 9 mph (blowing from Charlie/Delta to Alpha/Bravo). How would a wind from the southeast (blowing directly on Alpha) have potentially impacted fire behavior and extension?

Additional Learning

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1700 Guide for Structural Firefighting identifies three phases of size-up: pre-arrival, arrival, and ongoing. While these are important, pre-incident size-up is equally important. This includes both formal and informal pre-planning, tactical walkarounds (of both typical and target hazards), along with integration of prior experience. Information provided at dispatch may be accurate, but it is often incomplete and ambiguous and is based on the caller's perception of the problem. In making sense of the incident and the problems that it presents, it is important to develop a working story of what you anticipate finding, and continually update that story during response, on arrival, and throughout the incident.

Southwest Supermarket Fire

On March 14, 2001, the Phoenix (Arizona) Fire Department dispatched a single engine for an outside fire at a grocery store. This incident resulted in the death of Firefighter Bret Tarver and a total of 13 maydays and eventually progressed to a fifth alarm. This incident had a profound impact on the Phoenix Fire Department and the lessons learned have extended throughout the fire service in the United States.

In this incident, the fire started in a dumpster on the exterior and extended to the interior through openings in the loading dock area of the building. The Southwest Supermarket was constructed in 1956 and was approximately 20,132 square feet (PFD, 2002). As a comparison, the E & L Supermercado was constructed in 1999 and was approximately 28,000 square feet (E & L Supermercado, 2021). The E & L Supermercado had masonry unit walls with open web steel truss roof support system and a metal deck roof (E & L Supermercado, 2021) while the Southwest Supermarket had masonry unit walls with open web steel truss roof support system and a wood panelized roof system with purlins and plywood decking (PFD, 2002). Both had high ceilings, typical of a grocery store.

Think about the similarities and differences between these two occupancies. Would you have a preplan for a building like this? How else might you have gained familiarity with the building prior to an incident?

Think about your pre-arrival anticipation during this 10-Minute Training. Be honest with yourself. What would be your initial thoughts when receiving a dispatch report of "a shopping cart on fire in the area of the supermarket". How did this change when you observed the column of smoke on approach and conditions on arrival.

Read the *National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) F2001-13 Death in the line of duty…* (2002) and the *Phoenix Fire Department Final Report Southwest Supermarket Fire 35th Avenue and McDowell Road, March 14, 2001, Incident #01-045301* (links and QR codes provided below). This is a fire that all firefighters and fire officers should know and give thought to the lessons learned. As you read these two reports, think about the similarities and differences to the beginning of the Southwest Supermarket Fire and the fire at E & L Supermercado. Reflect on the lessons learned from the Southwest Supermarket Fire and how these lessons can inform your work as a firefighter or fire officer.

NIOSH F2001-13 Death in the line of duty… Supermarket Fire Claims the Life of One Career Fire Fighter and Critically Injures Another Career Fire Fighter – Arizona (2002)

Phoenix Fire Department Final Report Southwest Supermarket Fire 35th Avenue and McDowell Road, March 14, 2001, Incident #01-045301 (2002)

B Shifter Podcast: Remembering The Bret Tarver Incident

Listen to the B Shifter Podcast discussing Southwest Supermarket Fire and the line of duty death of Firefighter Bret Tarver. This podcast includes reflection by Nick Brunacini, Terry Garrison, and Chris Stewart, all of whom served as chief officers in the Phoenix Fire Department along with a recording of the late Chief Alan Brunacini discussing this incident and its impact.

References

B Shifter. (2024). *Remembering the Bret Tarver incident.* Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4iKopsb.

Broadcastify. (2026a). *Detroit Fire — 05/11/2026 07:19 AM - 07:49 AM EST.* Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4iE7YgX.

Broadcastify. (2026b). *Detroit Fire — 05/11/2026 07:49 AM - 08:19 AM EST.* Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/3Vp0o0L.

E & L Supermercado. (2021). *History – Fienman family.* Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/492fb4x.

Google. (2015a). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4iN5ewC.

Google. (2015b). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4BXp291.

Google. (2020a). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4iBtByr.

Google. (2020b). [Street view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. ©2026 Google. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4exkcp5.

Google. (2026a). [Map, 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. Map data ©2026 Google. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/3Wt2vAZ.

Google. (2026b). [Aerial view 6000 W Vernor Highway, Detroit, MI]. Imagery © Google, Imagery © Airbus Maxar Technologies, Map Data © 2026. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/3ViSaHq.

Hartin. (2026). *10-minute training 26-47 outside fire* [video of a Fire Studio 7 simulation]. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4kjSjVk,

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). (2002). *F2001-13 Death in the line of duty… supermarket fire claims the life of one career fire fighter and critically injures another career fire fighter – Arizona.* Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4iTDC8X.

OpenAI. (2026a). *ChatGPT 5.5* [Large language model]. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://chat.openai.com.

OpenAI. (2026b). *ChatGPT Images 2.5*. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://chat.openai.com/chat.

Phoenix Fire Department. (2002). *Final report southwest supermarket fire 35th Avenue and McDowell Road, March 14, 2001, Incident #01-045301.* Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4taFrmQ.

Salas, N. (2026). [Instagram post, E & L Supermercado incident video]. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/3WwoM0O.

Weather Underground. (2026). *Detroit, MI weather history* [historical weather May 11, 2026]. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4AxasUb.

WXYZ-TV Detroit | Channel 7. (2026). *Man arrested after fire at E&L Supermercado in Southwest Detroit*. Retrieved November 16, 2026, from https://bit.ly/4C3FZ1F.

Build command competence through weekly practice.

Receive a link to each new 10-Minute Training tactical decision game by email.

Click here or scan the QR code to subscribe.