

# Rapid Intervention: Emergency Air Supply

VOLUME IV • ISSUE 2



## Session Overview

While performing a search of an occupied structure you begin to experience difficulty breathing with your SCBA. You remember the breathing sensation from past training exercises — it feels like you're running out of air. *Are you and your partner proficient at using a buddy breathing hose to secure a problem air supply and exit the building?*

While performing a search during a RIT deployment you encounter a downed firefighter. The low air alarm on the firefighter's SCBA is going off and it appears to be fading out (almost out of air). *Is your RIT team, and department, prepared to secure the firefighter's air supply and remove him from the building?*

**Emergency air supply on the fireground is an area that must be addressed.** This session will review the importance of emergency air supply skills during fireground and RIT operations. The hands-on sessions will reinforce the importance of emergency air supply and allow students to practice buddy breathing connections during interior operations as well as *RIT air pack* operations during a RIT deployment.

## Goals & Objectives

1. Review the importance of emergency air supply on the fireground.
2. Review the importance of buddy breathing during interior fireground operations.
3. Review the importance of air supply *and a RIT air pack* during RIT operations.
4. Review basic steps involved in buddy breathing connections and retreat from the structure.
5. Review basic steps involved in securing a downed firefighters air supply using a RIT air pack.
6. Secure adequate and realistic training facilities to conduct Emergency Air Supply training evolutions.
7. Provide well thought out and prepared training sessions aimed at developing proficiency at securing an emergency air supply during dynamic fireground operations.
8. Provide firefighters with realistic challenges during all training sessions.

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## Training Resources

### ■ Training room/Apparatus floor

As with all training sessions, a short review of the material should provide the catalyst for a successful hands-on event. *Running out of air is a true fireground emergency — having a game plan before it happens is essential.*

### ■ Department tools & equipment

Full PPE is a given. This session will involve full-blown fireground scenarios. All tools and equipment used during a normal response should be available.

SCBA from area departments, that might be encountered during normal fire-ground operations, should be available and reviewed during the initial portion of the training session.

### ■ Training site(s)

Train as you fight! The best sites will be found throughout the response district — the ones that you'll actually respond to during the *real thing!* Consider using abandoned or vacant structures. Consider talking to local contractors and gaining access to partially completed structures. Training should involve both single and multi-story dwellings. **If all else fails - improvise!**

### ■ Training Props

If all else fails, construct a basic floorplan layout that can be used to perform fire-ground scenarios. If multiple companies are available during the sessions allow them to stretch and advance lines, ladder the building, etc. *It's not enough to simply practice the skills without incorporating them into real-life scenarios!*

## References

1. IFSTA Essentials
2. Past training sessions
3. Past experiences (good and bad)

## Trainer Challenge

What would you do if your partner ran out of air during interior operations? What would he do if you ran out of air? What would you do if you found a downed firefighter, as part of a RIT, who was out of air? **Air supply is critical inside the fire environment – all companies must be proficient at providing emergency air.** With everything found in today's buildings – finding enough clean air to get out is usually not an option. **Prepare for air supply problems NOW not during your next critique.**

# Rapid Intervention: Emergency Air Supply – 3 of 5



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## I. Emergency Air Supply

### A. Normal Fireground Operations

1. You may run out of air
  - a. during normal operations equipment problems may deplete air supply
  - b. failure to respond to low air warning may result in low/no air supply
2. Partner may run out of air
  - a. during normal operations equipment problems may deplete air supply
  - b. failure to respond to low air warning may result in low/no air supply
3. Equipment failure
  - a. air pressure gauge may not be working
  - b. low air alarm may not work
4. Solve Problem — Get Out
  - a. notify partner
  - b. attach buddy breathing hose (if applicable)
  - c. notify command
  - d. get out – most efficient means

### B. Rapid Intervention Teams

1. RIT members may find a downed firefighter out of air.
2. RIT members may find a downed firefighter experiencing SCBA equipment problems.

## II. Remove From Environment

- A. An adequate air supply may be possible by removing the firefighter from the environment.
- B. Depends on distance to exit.
- C. Depends on time involved in getting to exit.
- D. May or may not be a viable option.

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## III. Buddy Breathing

- A. As an Escape Option
  - 1. during interior fireground operations when team members are equipped with buddy breathing hoses and the skills to use them.
  - 2. Usually from members of your own crew or downed firefighters encountered during normal interior fireground operations.
- B. During Firefighter Rescue / RIT
  - 1. Not really a viable option.
  - 2. Using too much air finding firefighter — air supply is already reduced due to work load.

## III. RIT Air Pack

- A. A Complete SCBA
  - 1. Must include facepiece.
  - 2. Straps / harness may get hung up during search.
  - 3. Not switching entire pack during operation.
  - 4. Better than nothing!
- B. A Streamlined SCBA
  - 1. Must include facepiece.
  - 2. No straps / harness to get hung up during search.
  - 3. Need attachment point to attach to downed firefighter.
  - 4. Lighter weight / less bulk / easier to carry than complete SCBA
- C. Consider Number of Downed Firefighters
  - 1. Need air supply for each downed firefighter.
  - 2. Consider numbers if searching for a missing crew.

## IV. Mutual Aid / Other Departments

- A. SCBA familiarity is a must for all department members.
- B. All members must be knowledgeable with the straps / buckles / facepieces of different SCBA that may be encountered.

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## I. TRAINING

- A. Nearest Exit
  - 1. The simplest and quickest option may be leaving the environment via the nearest exit.
  - 2. Train firefighters to constantly be aware of surroundings and nearest exit!
- B. Buddy Breathing
  - 1. May be a viable option during interior operations.
  - 2. Will only work on similar brand SCBA set up to use buddy breathing.
  - 3. **Won't work if firefighters aren't proficient at performing the hook up!**
- C. RIT Air Pack
  - 1. An alternate emergency air supply is usually the best method.
  - 2. Train firefighters in securing the air supply with same brand SCBA.
  - 3. Train firefighters in securing the air supply with different brand SCBA.
    - a. exchanging the facepiece in an efficient and timely manner is the most important step — PRACTICE!
- D. **Failure to train results in failure to perform when needed — don't be caught having to use that excuse!**
- E. In this day of reduced staffing don't handicap the staff you have by not providing them with all the possible tools available to accomplish their mission — **TRAIN AS YOU FIGHT!**

## ***TRAIN NOW – SUCCEED LATER***

# Activity Worksheet

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## 1. Buddy Breathing – Remove Partner to Safety

You and your partner are performing a search of an occupied structure. The structure is heavily charged with smoke and visibility is minimal to non-existent. During the search your partner experiences problems with his air supply. Breathing is getting difficult and it feels like he's running out of air.

Connect a buddy breathing hose to your partner, notify Command of your situation and retreat from the building.

**OBJECTIVE:** Become proficient, in no visibility conditions, with connecting a buddy breathing hose and exiting the building.

## 2. RIT Air Pack – Connect and Remove to Safety

You've been deployed as a RIT to find a downed firefighter (another member of your department). During the search you find the firefighter in the basement of the structure. The low air alarm is going off on the firefighter and it is starting to fade out.

Working together, the RIT must secure the air supply of the downed firefighter and remove him from the structure.

**OBJECTIVE:** Locate a downed firefighter (using same style SCBA), secure air supply by connecting the RIT air pack and remove to safety.

## 3. RIT Air Pack — Exchange Mask and Remove to Safety

You've been deployed as a RIT to find a downed firefighter. The firefighter is from the neighboring community and was part of a mutual aid company (SCBA's are different than what your department uses). During the search you find the firefighter in the basement of the structure. The low air alarm is going off on the firefighter and it is starting to fade out.

Working together, the RIT must secure the air supply of the downed firefighter and remove him from the structure.

**OBJECTIVE:** Locate a downed firefighter (using a different style SCBA), secure air supply by replacing downed firefighters air supply (including facepiece) with the RIT air pack and remove to safety.

**NOTE:** Become familiar with regulator connections and buddy breathing connections as well as the SCBA's of other departments before performing the actual scenarios. Once familiar, conduct the scenarios in limited to no-visibility conditions.

## Training Announcement

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# EMERGENCY AIR SUPPLY

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trainer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Student Handout – 1 of 2



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## Student Handout – 2 of 2



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