

The “Occupied” Vacant: Fires with Entrapment in Vacant and Abandoned Buildings

Fires in vacant buildings are dangerous jobs that have resulted in the death and serious injuries of many firefighters across the country. Vacant buildings were always thought of as inner-city problem, but we are now seeing many vacant and abandoned residential and commercial properties in suburban and metropolitan areas. Many of these buildings are abandoned, derelict, dilapidated or the scene of prior burns with occupancy and interior conditions unknown. Fire spread, collapse indicators, perimeter dangers, and the damaging effects of thermal exposure and urban mining must be analyzed when reading the book. Some major concerns when arriving to a burning vacant structure are life hazards, exposures, collapse, and forcible entry of security barriers. There are many unknown interior dangers waiting inside for advancing firefighters such as holes in the floors, drug needles, hoarding conditions, biohazards, blocked egress routes, and vertical fire spread to name a few. Firefighters must be prepared and aware of the difficult challenges these buildings present.