



## Garage Fires

### Caution:

Garage fires present special challenges to firefighters. Any number of different combustible liquids, propane tanks, blowtorch canisters, air compressors, etc. can be stored in a garage. Garage storage utilizing open shelves or overhead rafter storage can cause additional problems such as falling objects and entrapment of the fire attack crew. Company Officers should consider these challenges during the scene size up process.



### Scene Size Up:

The initial size-up must be conducted to determine what is on fire and if there is any extension to the interior structure and/or attic space. The scene size up should consider the amount of fire, apparent fire spread and potential for fire spread, and the location of interior entrances into the garage. These factors will determine the mode of operation, method and location for fire attack.

### Access:

The best access to the garage should be identified during the scene size up. In selecting the offensive mode of fire attack, the Company Officer may select access to the garage by:

- Making entry through a side entry door or window to cut off fire extension. This access may be the first choice, as this door is easier to force and block open so fire attack crews can confine the fire to the room of origin.





- Attacking the fire directly from the front to achieve knockdown then enter the home and determine extension. Attack crews are now working through a relatively huge opening and from the outside of the fire building. Residential garage doors, both roll up and slab design, are easy to force. Most of these doors are attached to an automatic opener with no other lock. The mechanism that moves the door up and down is most often plastic and will break with little effort. When confronted with this type of set up a roll up door can be forced by simply prying up from the bottom of the door with a halligan or other prying tool. Slab doors are even easier; often they can be forced by pulling outward on the exterior handle with a hard jerking motion. Doors that are bolted closed require a little bit more work. The springs that normally hold it open are shot from the heat and have already broken the automatic opener to gain access so the firefighter will include the need to prop the door in the open position. A pike pole works well. Also, place a firefighter in charge of the door to avoid accidental closure.
- Attacking the fire from the unburned portion from the interior of the home. If the door between the garage and the attached residence is closed during the fire it may help to keep the products of combustion from entering the residence. Opening the door to begin extinguishment may further expose the residence to products of combustion. However if the door between the garage and residence was open or has been compromised, the fire gasses and smoke will extend into the residence and must be confined and extinguished.



### **Strategy and Tactics:**

- Rescue of victims is always the firefighter's first priority.
- Protection of exposures such as the attached residence is critical. One crew should be assigned to conduct a primary search for victims and check the condition of the door between the garage and the house.
- Gain entry for fire attack crews to contain the fire to the area of origin.
- Extinguishment is possible when crews deploy sufficient size hoseline and nozzle pattern to control the fire.
- Ensure that the garage is completely overhauled, the interior is evaluated for extension and the many other potential hazards present are identified and mitigated.



Remember, no fire is routine, and always plan ahead to protect firefighters.