Firefighter Air Launches the Next Standpipe Initiative to Address Firefighter Air Resupply in Large Buildings

New resources help fire departments evaluate firefighter air-resupply demands in high-rise, warehouse, fulfillment center, and large-footprint occupancies.

KANSAS CITY, MO, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Firefighter Air Coalition today announced the launch of The Next Standpipe Initiative | Know the Distance, a national effort designed to help fire departments evaluate firefighter air-resupply demands in today's increasingly large and complex buildings. The initiative introduces a collection of educational, planning, and assessment resources intended to help departments understand the operational impact of distance, air resupply, firefighter workload, staffing requirements, and departmental capacity.

> “The American fire service carries 250 years of tradition. The standpipe exists because previous generations recognized when the fireground had changed. Today's buildings deserve the same evaluation.”
>
> *Mike Gagliano, President*

The initiative launches with several interconnected resources, including the This or That? discussion video, the Know the Distance background, objectives and assessments, a Know Your Distance Planning Guide, and the Know the Distance Firefighter Air Resupply Assessment Worksheet. Together, these resources are intended to help departments evaluate whether current air-resupply practices can keep pace with the demands created by modern buildings.

A Question About Distance

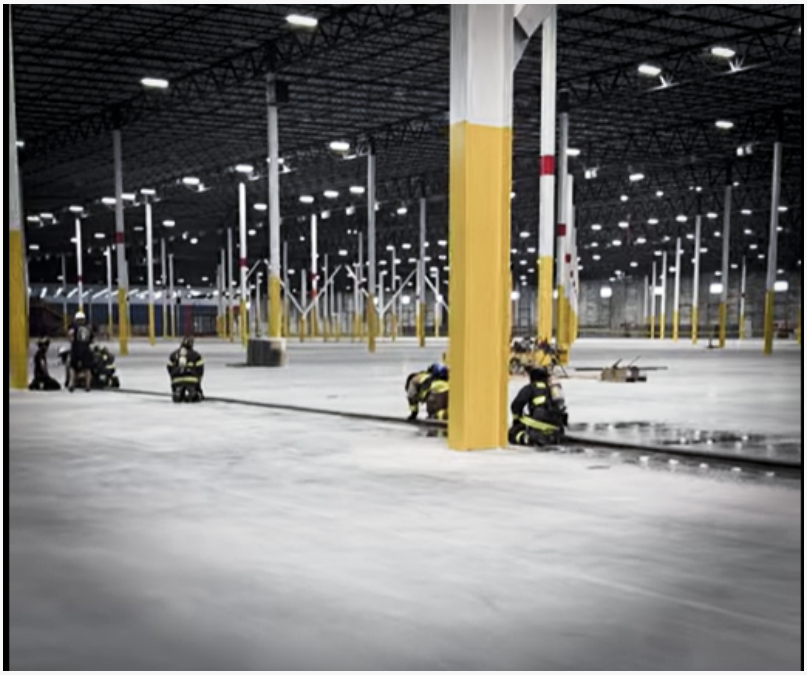
At the center of the initiative is a simple question:

THIS or THAT?

THIS: Continue relying on firefighters to carry breathing air to the point of operation.

THAT: Explore ways to bring reliable breathing air closer to where firefighters need it.

The initiative does not prescribe the answer. Instead, it encourages departments to examine whether building size, height, depth, occupancy type, travel distance, staffing levels, and operational demands are creating air-resupply challenges that deserve closer evaluation.





The discussion begins with a reality familiar to every firefighter. A firefighter climbing 20 floors in a high-rise carries the same cylinder as a firefighter operating in a house fire. A firefighter advancing a charged hoseline hundreds of feet into a warehouse or fulfillment center carries the same cylinder as well.

The firefighter is the same.

The buildings are not.

Why the Initiative Was Created

For generations, the fire service improved how water reached firefighters. Hydrants, fire pumps, standpipes, sprinkler systems, and other building-support systems all grew from the same understanding: some buildings eventually become too tall, too deep, or too large to move water efficiently from the street to the point of operation.

The Firefighter Air Coalition believes today's buildings are creating a similar conversation about breathing air. Warehouses, fulfillment centers, data centers, industrial occupancies, large-footprint commercial structures, and high-rise buildings are becoming increasingly common in communities of every size. As travel distances grow, firefighters may consume a portion of their air supply simply reaching the assignment. Time, manpower, and logistical demands increase as replacement cylinders must be moved farther to reach operating crews.

The initiative was developed to help departments understand those demands before they are

encountered during an emergency.

Distance Is More Than a Travel Issue

The coalition emphasizes that distance affects more than the movement of cylinders.

A crew climbing 20 flights of stairs or advancing charged hoselines through a large warehouse is performing significant physical work before reaching the location where search, rescue, fire attack, or overhaul begins. As workload increases, so can air consumption, fatigue, staffing demands, and the need for rehabilitation and crew rotation. The result is an operational challenge that includes firefighter performance, air-resupply logistics, manpower allocation, and overall department capacity.

The initiative's Executive Brief examines those relationships using firefighter physiology research, high-rise operational experience, large-footprint building operations, and firefighter air-management principles.

Bottle Brigades and Department Capacity

The initiative does not argue that bottle brigades are ineffective. Firefighters have moved cylinders and established air-resupply operations for generations.





However, every firefighter assigned to move cylinders is unavailable for other assignments. Every crew traveling to and from an air-staging location is temporarily removed from the operation. As travel distances increase, departments may experience increasing demands on staffing,

accountability, search, rescue, crew rotation, rapid intervention, and mutual-aid resources.

“Bottle brigades work, and firefighters rely on them every day,” said Mike Gagliano, president of the Firefighter Air Coalition. “But they're not free. The farther air has to travel, the more firefighters and time it takes to move it. That commitment can delay search, fire attack, rescue, rapid intervention, and other critical operations. Every department should know what that cost looks like before they're counting on it at three in the morning.”

The initiative encourages departments to determine whether current staffing, air resupply resources, mutual-aid response, and operational plans can sustain those commitments during a prolonged incident.

The Rule of Air Management Remains Essential

The Firefighter Air Coalition emphasizes that nothing within The Next Standpipe Initiative replaces the Rule of Air Management (ROAM).

The Rule of Air Management remains foundational to firefighter safety and is reflected in the respiratory-protection training principles addressed by NFPA 1404. Firefighters remain responsible for knowing how much air they have, managing that air during operations, and leaving the hazardous environment before consuming their emergency reserve.

The initiative focuses on the separate challenge of air resupply.

“Air management and air resupply are connected, but they are not the same challenge,” Gagliano said. “ROAM only solves part of the problem. It helps firefighters manage the air on their backs. It does not solve the challenge of getting replacement air to firefighters operating far from the entrance, far from staging, and far from the next full cylinder.

Air management and air resupply are connected, but they are not the same challenge.

Measure It. Staff It. Plan for It.

The initiative encourages departments to start with three basic steps.

Measure It – Walk the route between the anticipated point of operation and reliable breathing air. Understand the actual distance firefighters must travel.

Staff It – Determine how many personnel are required to sustain air resupply while maintaining search, fire attack, rescue, rapid intervention, accountability, and crew relief.

Plan for It – Understand what that commitment means for incident duration, rehabilitation, mutual aid, staffing, and community response.

According to the coalition, departments should understand those demands before the fireground forces the answer.

A National Discussion

The Firefighter Air Coalition describes The Next Standpipe Initiative | Know the Distance as a national conversation rather than a campaign for a particular solution.

“The American fire service carries 250 years of tradition,” Gagliano said. “Tradition has never meant standing still. As buildings change, the way firefighters are supported inside them must change too.”

Learn More

Resources are available through the Firefighter Air Coalition:

Before the fire service can answer the question: This or That? - it first must know the distance.

About the Firefighter Air Coalition
The Firefighter Air Coalition (FAC) is a national network of fire service leaders, instructors, chiefs, company officers, and subject matter experts dedicated to advancing firefighter air safety through education, research, collaboration, and advocacy.

Our mission is rooted in a simple reality: firefighters cannot do their job without air. It is one of the most critical resources on the fireground, yet it is often taken for granted until it becomes scarce.

The modern fire environment has changed dramatically. Today’s homes, businesses, warehouses, and industrial facilities contain unprecedented amounts of plastics, synthetics, and other petroleum-based products that generate hazardous gases and toxic contaminants during and after a fire. As a result, firefighters must rely on respiratory protection throughout every phase of an incident, from suppression and overhaul to investigation and recovery operations.

FAC was created to help the fire service meet these challenges. Through training programs, research initiatives, and industry collaboration, we bring together experienced fire service professionals to promote responsible air management, improve firefighter preparedness, and explore solutions that support safe and effective operations in increasingly complex buildings.

As structures grow larger and incidents become more demanding, ensuring firefighters have access to breathable air is no longer simply a tactical consideration. It is a firefighter safety issue, an operational readiness issue, and ultimately a survivability issue.

Our goal is to ensure firefighters have the air they need to complete the mission, protect their communities, and return home safely.

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