

Fire in the Sky

aircoalition.org

March 17th -19th

In Association with the Colorado Springs Fire Department

**Strategy and Tactics for
Low Rise, Mid Rise, High
Rise and Big Box**



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY 1 TUESDAY, MARCH 17

8:00 AM

INTRODUCTION & PLEDGE

HOSTS Mike Gagliano & Steve Sanguedolce



High Rise Operations: Mindset Not Myths, Standpipe Operations: Over Analysis = Paralysis

»»» **Dave McGrail** : *Denver Fire Department (ret.)*

BREAK & VENDOR SHOWCASE



Fire in the Sky... And Now You're Out of Air

»»» **Mike Gagliano** : *Seattle Fire Department (ret.)*

»»» **Mike Dugan** : *New York City Fire Department (ret.)*

LUNCH



Protecting Vertical Cities: The First 5 Minutes

»»» **Jimmy Davis** : *Chicago Fire Department*

BREAK & VENDOR SHOWCASE



Big Box Fires = Big Problems

»»» **Clark Lamping** : *Clark County Fire Department*

CLOSING REMARKS

Meet the instructors, Q & A, and book signings.

DAY 2 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

8:00 AM

INTRODUCTION & PLEDGE

HOSTS Mike Gagliano & Steve Sanguedolce



Mid-Rise Mindset: Making Elevated Decision

»»» **Chris Sleighter** : *Mesa Fire Department (ret.)*

BREAK & VENDOR SHOWCASE



High-Rise Firefighting 2.0: Lithium-ion and Modernizing High-Rise Firefighting

»»» **Brent Brooks** : *Toronto Fire Services*

LUNCH



Bringing the Firefight to Mid/High-Rise Buildings Under Construction

»»» **Kris Blume** : *Meridian Fire Department*

BREAK & VENDOR SHOWCASE



Big Box Fires – Thinking Outside the Bigger Box

»»» **Daniel DeYear** : *Dallas Fire Department (ret.)*

CLOSING REMARKS

Meet the instructors, Q & A, and book signings.

DAY 3 THURSDAY, MARCH 19

8:00 AM

INTRODUCTION & PLEDGE

HOSTS Mike Gagliano & Steve Sanguedolce



Anatomy of a Stretch

»»» **Jay Bonnifield** : *Everett Fire Department*

BREAK



Truck Company Operations at Large Structure Fires

»»» **Mike Ciampo** : *New York Fire Department*

CLOSING REMARKS

Meet the instructors, Q & A, and book signings.

Fire in the sky

MEET THE INSTRUCTORS



Dave McGrail : Denver Fire Department (ret.)

BIO Dave McGrail is a 41-year fire service veteran, having served with the Aurora, CO Fire Department from 1982 - 1987, and the Denver Fire Department (DFD) from 1987 - 2023. Dave was assigned to some of the busiest fire companies and fire districts within the DFD. From Nozzleman to Incident Commander, Dave responded to and operated at thousands of fires and emergency incidents, including high-rise fires, plane crashes, technical rescues, and all of the other daily incidents that occur in a big city. Dave retired from the DFD in 2023, but continues to provide educational programs and hands on training to firefighters all across the American Fire Service, and Internationally. Dave is the author of the popular text book "Firefighting Operations in High-Rise and Standpipe Equipped Buildings", published by Pennwell, Fire Engineering Books, 2007. Dave has earned several College Degrees, including two Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Fire Science Technology, two Bachelor of Science Degrees, one in Human Resource Management, and one in Fire Service / Public Administration. (retired)

COURSE: High Rise Operations: Mindset Not Myths, Standpipe Operations: Over Analysis = Paralysis

This training program focuses on the essential components of successful high-rise and standpipe operations, emphasizing a simple, proven approach to low-frequency, high-risk incidents. Rather than overanalyzing tactics to the point of paralysis, the course reinforces that firefighters already know what needs to be done operationally and what equipment is required to be effective. Participants will learn how to develop, implement, and utilize practical operating procedures for both high-rise and low-rise standpipe-equipped buildings, while establishing a continuous, hands-on training program centered on engine company standpipe operations—with a clear focus on "Overwhelming the Enemy."



Mike Gagliano : Seattle Fire Department (ret.)

BIO Mike Gagliano has over 33 years of fire, crash, and rescue experience with the Seattle Fire Department and the United States Air Force. He teaches nationwide on Fireground Tactics/Decision-Making, Air Management, Leadership, and Company Officer Development and currently serves as the president of the Firefighter Air Coalition (aircoalition.org). Captain Gagliano has authored numerous fire service articles and co-authored the bestselling books Air Management for the Fire Service and Challenges of the Firefighter Marriage. He is a member of the Fire Engineering/FDIC Advisory Board and the Emeritus Board of the Firefighter Safety Research Institute. (retired)

COURSE: Lost, Disoriented & Out of Air - Air Management in Large Structures

This class takes an in-depth look at how smoke impacts firefighters and fireground operations in the world of big buildings. Some of the key areas of emphasis will be (1) how smoke moves in large structures, (2) the impact on victims and responders, (3) logistical challenges that impact air management, and (4) the air standpipe system (FARS) and its role in operations. As the building increases in size and complexity, firefighters must prepare for the unique challenges these structures present. Training on the front end is critical to strong operations in large structures, as they are dramatically different from the typical bread-and-butter house fire. This class provides a great set of building blocks on which to build your firefighter air training for large-structure fires.



Mike Dugan : New York City Fire Department (ret.)

BIO Mike is a 45-year veteran of the fire service and a 27-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), retiring as Captain of Ladder 123. As a firefighter in Ladder Company 43, Dugan received the James Gordon Bennett Medal in 1992 and the Harry M. Archer Medal in 1993, the FDNY's highest award for bravery. He developed training programs that were taught to all FDNY members. Mike is a contributing editor at Fire Engineering magazine, a teacher at the Fire Department Instructor Conference (FDIC), and a Fire Engineering and FDIC Executive Board member. He is a featured lecturer across the country, teaching Truck Company Operations, the impact of building construction on firefighter safety, leadership, and issues affecting today's fire service. He was awarded the "Tommy Brennan Lifetime Achievement Award" in 2021. (retired)

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Jimmy Davis : Chicago Fire Department

BIO JAMES “Jimmy” DAVIS is a captain and 30-year veteran of the Chicago (IL) Fire Department assigned to Engine Co. 43 serving Logan Square. He teaches regularly at the Chicago Fire Department R.J. Quinn Fire Academy on a variety of subjects, including the department’s high-rise and standpipe programs. He instructs and lectures both nationally and internationally on many subjects relating to mid-to high-rise firefighting strategies and life-safety concerns in tall buildings. He is a (FSRI-UL) technical panel member for the Study of Fire Dynamics and Firefighting Tactics in Multi-Story Residential Structures.

COURSE: Protecting Vertical Cities: The First 5 Minutes

High-rise fires pose some of the most complex challenges for firefighters, requiring critical decisions and actions within the first five minutes—a brief window to apply essential tactics. This program explores a systematic, highly effective response model and highlights the risks of delayed or ineffective interventions. It aims to deepen understanding of the operational vulnerabilities unique to high-rise incidents, where every action must be timely and precise. The course also offers key insights into the vertical challenges these events present and emphasizes the importance of coordinated, value-based responses to achieve the best possible outcomes.



Clark Lamping : Clark County Fire Department

BIO Clark Lamping is a Captain with the Clark County Fire Department with over two decades of fire service experience. He has served as a company officer for more than 10 years and is a member of the department’s technical rescue team, as well as a rescue specialist with NV-TF1. Clark is a nationally recognized instructor and speaker, known for his practical, experience-based approach to commercial and high-rise fire operations.

COURSE: Big Box Fires = Big Problems

There are very few things on the fireground that will kill you faster than underestimating the potential danger and arriving unprepared for a large commercial structure fire. History has repeatedly shown us that taking residential tactics and strategies into a commercial structure is extremely dangerous. Big Box, Big Problem will first address the common problems and issues you will face. We will examine different occupancy types and strategies for operating within these buildings, considering human behavior during emergencies. We will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of fire protection systems, what to expect from them, and how to use them to our advantage. We will discuss strategic, tactical, and command-level fireground assignments and draw comparisons between residential and commercial fires. We will have a conversation about the different storage configurations that are commonly found in big box stores and how they affect our tactical decision-making. In addition, we will review multiple significant fatal and near-miss fires that occurred across the country and evaluate what happened and how we can prevent it from reoccurring.



Chris Sleigher : Mesa Fire Department (ret.)

BIO Chris has served with the Mesa Fire and Medical Department since 1999, currently holding the rank of Battalion Chief. Over his 27-year career, he has worked in heavy rescue, responded to large-scale disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, and taught fireground tactics nationwide. He has been fortunate enough to contribute to organizations like Fire Nuggets and Fire by Trade and was honored with induction into the Arizona Fire Service Hall of Fame. Chris approaches instruction with a practical mindset, aiming to share lessons learned from the field and help others sharpen their tactical edge. Midrise Mindset reflects that approach—focusing on code basics, access challenges, water supply, and first-due suppression tactics that matter when seconds count.

COURSE: Mid-Rise Mindset: Making Elevated Decision

The mid-rise mindset is designed for all ranks. Overcoming today’s modern structural firefighting challenges, covering building system basics, interior firefighting operations, achieving tactical objectives, and developing a strategic decision-making plan. This class is a must for cities going vertical. Understanding how to safely and effectively operate in these structures is no longer optional—it’s essential.



Brent Brooks : Toronto Fire Services

BIO Brent Brooks is an Acting District Chief with 30 years of service. His firefighting career began at Pearson International Airport and Bombardier Aerospace, and he is a retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces reserves. With 18 years in the High-Rise Unit, he has advanced operations through research, training, and improved incident management. Brent has toured 36 of the world’s tallest buildings and is a published author, FDIC instructor, and panelist on Fire Engineering’s Hump Day Hang Out. He has spoken internationally, serves on several fire safety boards, and has supported over 100 fire departments worldwide. Brent is dedicated to improving firefighter safety and occupant survival in high-rise incidents.

COURSE: High-Rise Firefighting 2.0: Lithium-ion and Modernizing High-Rise Firefighting

High-rise fires have evolved—and if we don’t adapt, we fall behind. Lithium-ion runaway incidents, cladding and façade fires, underground parking blazes, and Energy Storage Systems failures are pushing conditions beyond the reach of traditional tactics. This class states plainly: increase flow, control the pressure zones, outpace the smoke/fire, and stop relying on outdated playbooks. Modern buildings respond differently. We must update our tactics—or be overwhelmed by the smoke/fire.



Kris Blume : Meridian Idaho Fire Department

BIO Chief Blume is Fire Chief of the Meridian Fire Department (Idaho) with over 25 years of fire service experience. He is author of "Carry the Fire: The Crucible of Leadership in the Fire Service"; a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer program, and an instructor at the National Fire Academy. Chief Blume has written extensively for industry publications, speaks and teaches across the country, and is truly one of the most important forward-thinking leaders and voice in the U.S. fire service.

COURSE: Bringing the Firefight to Mid/High-Rise Buildings Under Construction

This class will immerse firefighters and fire officers in the high-risk, fast-changing world of mid- and high-rise buildings under construction. Students will unpack real incidents, decode modern building trends, and sharpen their ability to read a chaotic, incomplete structure before it turns against them. With a focus on aggressive pre-planning, decisive action, and rapid tactical adaptation, this class empowers responders to anticipate hazards, outpace fire development, and command the construction-site fireground with clarity and confidence.



Daniel DeYear : Dallas Fire Department (ret.)

BIO Daniel is originally from The Bronx in New York City and began his fire service career in the Northeast over 45 years ago. He previously worked for the Carrollton Fire Department for nearly 10 years, serving in several capacities, including Training Chief. He then served as an International Fire Marshal and Ambassador for the American Fire Service for the U.S. Department of State, Foreign Building Operations, where he traveled to more than 35 countries, providing fire and life safety to United States embassies and consulates around the world. (retired)

COURSE: Big Box Fires – Thinking Outside the Bigger Box

This course provides firefighters and Incident commanders with a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges presented by fires in big box retail and warehouse style occupancies. Participants will explore building construction features, occupancy risks, and common fire behavior patterns that influence operational features, occupancy risks, and common fire behavior patterns that influence operational decision-making in large-area structures. Emphasis is placed on firefighter safety during situational size-up practices, coordinated tactical approaches, resource allocation, and command considerations for extended operations. Through scenario-based discussion and case studies, students will learn to evaluate collapse potential, unusual fire dynamics and behaviors, and develop effective defensive or offensive strategies. Attendees will be prepared to make informed, risk-conscious tactical choices that will enhance firefighter safety and improve incident outcomes in big box structures.



Jay Bonnifield : Everett Fire Department

BIO Jay Bonnifield is a Captain with the Everett Fire Department in Washington, assigned to Engine 6 serving Casino Road and the surrounding neighborhoods in South Everett. He has been a firefighter for 17 years and has taught both locally and nationwide at many different venues including FDIC and other conferences around the country.

COURSE: Anatomy of a Stretch

In low and mid-rise buildings, Anatomy of a Stretch ties together the size-up and stretch call to provide a simple system that results in faster, more accurate decisions. During search efforts on multi-family buildings, engine companies aim to locate, confine, and extinguish fires, and the ability to read and react quickly to arrival conditions is crucial to these efforts, which often requires multiple lines to gain confinement and extinguishment. We will tie together the fire behavior cues, building construction attributes, and stretch options to give firefighters and officers confidence and decisiveness. If you are a first arriving engine that sets the tone of the fire with the first line, or a later arriving engine company tasked with establishing confinement lines or protecting searchable space, what you learn can be applied on your next fire.



Mike Ciampo : New York Fire Department

BIO Michael N. Ciampo is a 39-year veteran of the fire service and a retired Lieutenant from the Fire Department of New York. Previously he served with the District of Columbia Fire Department. He has a bachelor's degree in fire science from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He is a technical editor of Fire Engineering and an instructor for FDIC International HOT program. He wrote the Ladders and Ventilation chapters for Fire Engineering's Handbook for Firefighter 1 & 2 and the Bread-and-Butter Portable Ladders DVD. Recently he wrote the textbook Tower Ladders, Tactics, Tips & Tales available at mikeciampo.com

COURSE: Truck Company Operations at Large Structure Fires

Each and everyday firefighters engage in firefighting in large structures. From midrise multiple dwellings to high rise residential and office buildings. Truck company operations will vary and not be the run of the mill fire in a wood frame private dwelling. Compactor fires, rubbish in the hallway, apartment fires, wind-driven fires and fires in "toothpick towers" will all alter the functions of the truck company. From controlling the elevators, limiting ventilation, use of aerial devices for rescue or master streams are all part of the truck's functions, besides searching and confining the fire prior to hoseline operations. This lecture will review numerous operational tactics for these structures.