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## Snapshot Size-Up #101



### Flooding Underground Manhole Fires

Firefighters should never approach or attempt to extinguish fires involving electric equipment found in vaults and manholes. Attempting to do so can be extremely dangerous and deadly. When responding to these types of incidents, stay upwind and at a safe distance (300 to 500 feet away) establish command, and call for the utility company. If the utility company requests that the FD floods the manhole or vault, take the following actions:

- 1. Do not apply water directly into the manhole.** Equipment in the manhole may still be energized and water can act as a conductor of electricity. Water will also force Carbon Monoxide, fire, and smoke into unknown areas.
- 2. Place an unmanned, open-butt, 2 ½ - inch hose line on the ground, facing the manhole.** Connect the hose directly to a hydrant and use hydrant pressure only. Place a heavy object on the hose to secure it. Keep the hose as far away as possible. If you do use a nozzle, set it on a fog pattern.
- 3. Open the hydrant and let the water flow from the unmanned line.** Never hold the line.



Deputy Chief Frank Viscuso is a twenty-year veteran of the fire service. He is a regular contributor to Fire Engineering Magazine & FireOpsOnline.com. He is also co-author of the book Fireground Operational Guides (PennWell 2011). The book features universal tactical worksheets and operational guides for more than 70 incidents that range from water, gas and electrical emergencies to multiple-alarm structure fires.