



# THE REVIEW

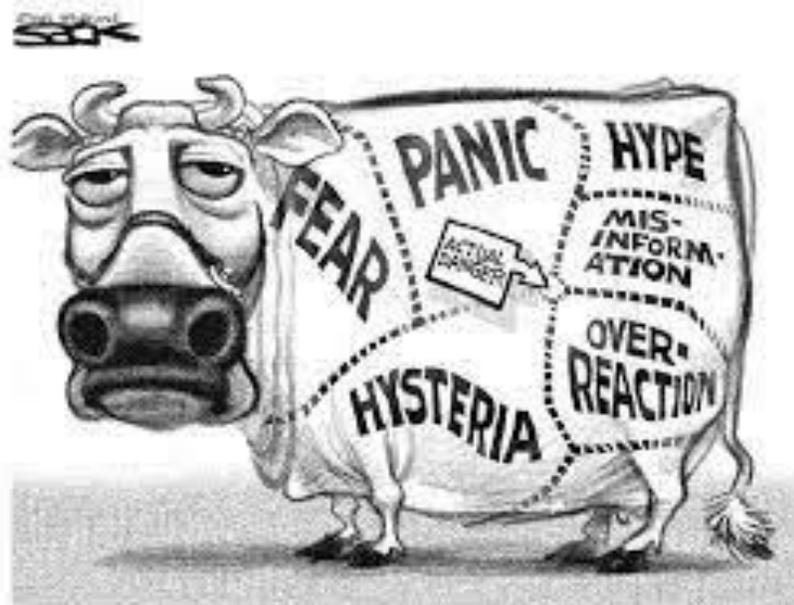
Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **Nov 6, 2020**

## This Edition:

The Chief's Desk ..... Page 2  
Rapid Cognition: Think Fast! .....Page 3  
How firefighters can size up their financial situation .....Page 3

It's not over until it's over as they say. At least the political ads and texts will stop.

However it goes, stay positive and stay the course.



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## The Chief's Desk

I've said it before and I will say it again, Operations personnel in the fire service are squared away operationally. What we lack is the same level of preparedness when it comes to the administrative part of the job. Conversely, I would say that our Non-Operations personnel are squared away administratively, but if we had to deal with some sort of administrative crisis, I believe we would find some gaps. This, in my opinion, applies to the private sector as well.

We are good at what we repeatedly do. Whether Operations or Non-Operations, we train sets and reps related to our primary job function. Unfortunately, at least from the operational perspective, we tend to focus our sets and reps on response. Don't get me wrong, emergency response is the low frequency/high hazard part of a firefighter's job that can cost them their lives, or if injured, their careers. We have to be default aggressive and ready to deal with any number of different high stress, high hazard events we may respond to throughout the shift. *Everyone goes home* means everyone trains to the point that we can respond both physically and mentally in the face of chaotic situations.

I've used the term 'rapid cognition' in a previous writing. Training for high stress environments means training to recognize a situation within seconds and then decide how to respond appropriately based on the information you have. It's not an easy thing for most people to do, but for firefighters it's a skill we begin to develop in recruit academy and continue to hone over the years.

Jackson Nickerson, PhD, of Washington University presented on the topic of strategic thinking during my *Executive Leaders Program* through the Naval Post Graduate School. According to Dr. Nickerson, it is our sympathetic nervous system that drives our fight, freeze, or flight instincts. It is our parasympathetic nervous system that allows us to remain cool, calm, and collected. Our sets and reps in training, as well as on the incident scene, allow us to rapidly identify and address an emergency event. This means we are able to override our sympathetic system's tendency to react and allow our parasympathetic system to remain engaged and respond.

This is all fantastic for the part of our job that includes emergency response. However, we do not train the sets and reps we need to maintain the engagement of our parasympathetic system when not on an emergency scene. Nor do we focus training on the high frequency/low hazard part of our job – administration, e.g. reports, paperwork, scheduling, etc. For those of you looking to promote in the coming years, you need to train for all aspects of your job, not just the fun part. There I said it, paperwork is not fun, trying to maintain your composure and maintain civil discourse no matter the situation, is not fun. However, both are required as you move through the ranks in all divisions within our agency. Continued on Page 4

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### Upcoming Events:

Nov 9: Senior Staff Meeting, Staff meeting with work comp, Internal leadership program meeting  
Nov 10: AFCA Board Meeting, Record two Podcasts  
Nov 11: Veteran's Day office closed  
Nov 12: AFSI, Record Podcast

### Board Meetings:

November TBD  
CAFMA – 1700-1830

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## **Rapid Cognition: Think Fast!**

By: Art Goodrich

We have been programmed to believe that the more information that we have, the better decisions we make.

It didn't help General Joe Hooker against General Lee at the Battle of Chancellorsville in the Civil War. Hooker had studied General Robert E. Lee extensively, had an army of spies in the Confederacy feeding him information, had hot air balloons in the sky giving him aerial information, and had twice as many cannons and men, but lost. Lee won because Hooker "read" him wrong.

We research, analyze, and study the subject matter to the smallest micron until we convince ourselves that we can make the best case argument or decision. And I had the mindset until I read the book [Blink by Malcolm Gladwell](#).

The book came as a suggestion from my good friend Mick Mayers of Firehouse Zen. It was in response to a blog that I wrote titled "Thought-Less." I wrote that I felt that society's attention span and appetite for information were getting shorter.

Blink is a fascinating book with

regard to how we process information. It is a little "heavy" and somewhat clinical, but it literally gave me an "AH-HAH!" moment.

The book is about rapid cognition, the ability to make snap judgments in the blink of an eye. It is about what we know in the first two seconds. It is about reading faces. It is about making decisions from our "unconscious." It is about creating white space. I was immediately drawn to this phenomenon and how it might apply to decision-making in the fire service.

[fireengineering.com](http://fireengineering.com)

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## **How firefighters can size up their financial situation**

By: Mathew Broom



The siren is screaming. The lights are flashing. A column of smoke is on the horizon.

Your blood pressure has spiked, and your heart rate is on the rise.

You arrive on the scene, take a breath, and deliver a size-up. You complete a walkaround. And now it's time to get to work.

You've gathered as much information as possible to now execute on the goals of search, rescue, contain and extinguish.

You might be wondering what this has to do with your finances. Well, let's change the scenario.

You and your wife are screaming. Your face is turning red like the flashing lights. And you wait for smoke to start pouring out of yours or your spouse's ears as the conversation heats up.

Your blood pressure has spiked, and your heart rate is on the rise.

This is a money emergency.

Money is the No. 1 topic couples fight over – and I can't imagine it's any different for firefighters who are married. In fact, like many things, we are probably at a higher risk. Why? Because we are gone for 24 to 48 hours, we don't earn a huge income, and we often communicate poorly.

So, what can you do to avoid money emergencies and get on the path to financial freedom? You can start with a financial size-up.

[firerescue1.com](http://firerescue1.com)

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## **Chief's Desk Continued**

If you think about times in your career when you've reacted, rather than responded, to an outside influence, I would guess that more often than not your reaction was in an administrative or non-emergency situation. It is amazing that we can control our internal systems enough to respond during an emergency event, but not during a tense dialogue in the station or at the office.

I've personally experienced this more than once in my career. As a matter of fact, I had to count higher than ten so I took my shoes off. I've improved my ability to respond rather than react over the years, but I'm certainly not perfect. I've been able to improve through both introspection as well as by performing a personal after-action following situations where I have lost my cool.

It is important to develop tools that work for you. There are books available that may provide nuggets, listening to some podcasts may help, and/or talking with others. That said, don't read a book and haphazardly employ the principles or concepts. Trying to flip a switch and quote self-help books will not help you on your journey. You have to take the information, truly internalize it, and then decide how best to employ what you've learned. It takes emotional intelligence, intestinal fortitude, and sometimes a really good filter to realize some level of success. You will a times find yourself in situations where it is best to say, "Can we take 15 and then reconvene?" That is a good tool that more people should use in an effort to deescalate a situation, or to deescalate their rising emotions.

Training for the administrative side of the job requires commitment. I cannot count the number of times over the years that I've read an incident report and wondered if the person writing it was on the same

scene as me. As an Air Traffic Controller in the military, and as a paramedic student, I learned the importance of communicating clearly and completely; I'm still working on the concise part. Honestly, my paramedic reports were complete, concise, and clear, as were my incident and investigative reports.

When it was my responsibility to fill out a report, I made sure I sat down to write the narrative as soon as possible after the call. By sitting down as close to the incident as possible to complete my report I was able to clearly recall and articulate what happened. Remember, the report you write is for you, not anyone else. It is the only document you will be able to refer to if you are called to court. Society today is more litigious than when I started, so we are seeing far more record requests for your reports.

The more mundane reports are just as important, e.g. daily activity logs, training reports, inspection documentation, etc. All seem less important than your incident report. However, when someone reads your incident report stating that you performed a procedure or task, the next documents they will request are your training records. They want documentation showing that you were properly trained and qualified to take that action.

TeleStaff seems the bane of many officers' existence. If you are not up on the program, or diligent with your inputs, someone's pay, vacation, or sick time are likely to wind up incorrect. It is important that you take the time now to learn how the program works, and pay attention to detail.

Paying attention to detail is really the bottom line regarding the paperwork side of your administrative functions. Paperwork is not the fun or sexy part of being in Operations, but if you want to promote, you have to be able to clearly write and document.

We have a lot of openings in the coming years both in Operations and Non-Operations. If you're in Ops, start spending a little more time on learning to control your emotions in non-emergency situations, and pay attention to the small things – they actually do mean a lot. If you are in Non-Ops, make sure you spend some time thinking through what could go wrong in your division, and how you would address an emergency issue should one occur. Focus on emotional intelligence as well, not just suppressing emotional outbursts, but how you deal with conflict and difficult conversations.

Sets and reps will help you respond in an emotionally-charged environment. They will also help to ensure you pay close attention to the detail required for all administrative functions of your respective positions.

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