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Emergency Instructors Newsletter

Editor V. DeFrance
v.defrance@.att.net

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You're an Instructor.
So now what?
By Bill Kanoff, NREMT-P

You've finally done it. You've taken all of the classes, completed all the requirements, and have been blessed by the powers that be. You are now certified as an instructor. They gave you an instructor's manual and said "go forth now and instruct."

Yes, you've been a provider of emergency service for many years. You've been to your share of fires and emergency medical calls. You know you can teach the new guys a thing or two. But do you really feel comfortable teaching all of the topics they say you can? Do you think you can teach all of the topics in the EMT, Paramedic, or Firefighter curriculum well? Or should you just teach the topics that you know you are good at and are enthusiastic about?

I find that many "young" (not necessarily new) instructors tend to believe that they can do anything. They are the "blessed" ones and will teach anything they think they can. This is not always a bad thing. They, hopefully, will learn that they do not know everything there is to know about EMS or Firefighting. They will learn from their mistakes.

I am one of the fortunate ones that have been blessed by the powers above to "go forth and instruct" on a variety of subjects. They include EMS and Fire Service courses. There are topics on the list of classes that they say I can teach that I know that I can't teach. One good example from the Firefighting tract is Pump Operations. I've been driving and operating fire apparatus for many years. I know that I can operate an Engine on the fire ground and make it work its magic. I also know that I am not qualified to teach Pump Operations, even though the powers say I am. Give me a ladder truck and ask me to teach Truck Company Operations, and I'm there.

We've all had instructors that were excellent in some subjects, mediocre in others, and poor in a few. Our mission as instructors is to provide "quality" education to our students. If we can't teach our subject effectively, we are not doing our job. Our students, and the public that they're going out to serve, deserve the best.

My philosophy is simple. Teach well the things you know. Improve your knowledge in the areas that you are weak. Strive to learn what you do not know.

Good instructors will teach to, as well as learn from, their students. Education is a never ending process and the instructor should always strive to learn.

Go forth and instruct!

Bill Kanoff, NREMT-P is a Firefighter/Paramedic in Lancaster County Pennsylvania. He is employed by the Lancaster General Hospital as a paramedic, educational director and is a volunteer firefighter in his hometown of Mount Joy. He instructs and oversees various Fire, Rescue and EMS subjects. A former Flight Paramedic, Bill has over twenty-one years of fire fighting and EMS experience. He is the recipient of the Medal of Valor.