

PASS IT ON PROGRAM

Bureau of Operations

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VACANT PROPERTY SECURITY



PARTICULARS OF THE INCIDENT:

Recently, units in Brooklyn observed a new method of securing vacant buildings. Known as VPS for Vacant Property Security, this method of securing vacant buildings presents new operational challenges to our units. Constructed of metal and weighing approximately 50 pounds, these window panels completely overlap the exterior of the window, including the frame. The covers are secured from the interior using iron cross bracing secured with threaded rods or cables. One advantage of this system is that it can be installed over existing windows and window bars. Once the exterior panel has been removed, the windows and window bars must still be forced to gain entry. These panels are not exclusively installed on vacant buildings and may be found on partially occupied structures as well. A serious life hazard could exist if FDNY members found their escape route blocked by these panels. Forcing these panels from the interior is a formidable task and will take time to accomplish.

LESSONS LEARNED OR REINFORCED:

1. Be alert to changes in your response area.
2. Ensure a tower ladder is responding when fire involves a building with VPS.
3. Special call an additional engine and tower ladder for fires involving buildings equipped with VPS.
4. Interior operations should be conducted with extreme caution. Secondary means of egress may be unavailable or seriously delayed if these panels need to be forced.
5. It is possible to cut cables or threaded rods from the interior with a pair of dikes or bolt cutters.
6. Panels can be removed from the exterior utilizing a partner saw with metal cutting blade attacking the attachment points of the panels.
7. A detailed training video is being developed to further explain the VPS System.