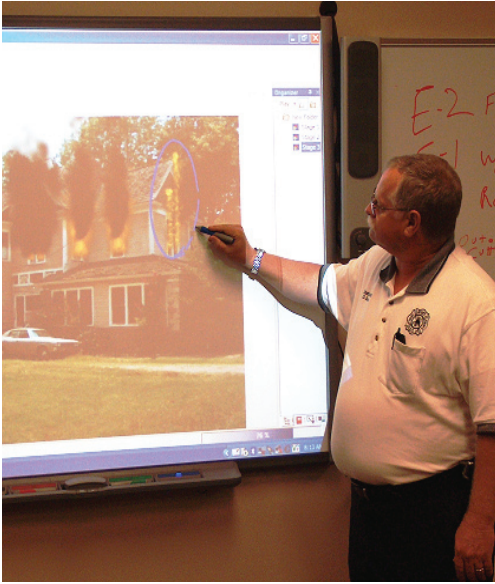


# SMART Profile

## Searcy Fire Department



Training officer Doug Baker uses the SMART Board interactive whiteboard for firefighting and emergency response training.

## Technology transforms the way firefighters train

When you walk into the training room at Searcy Fire Department's new Central Station, it may appear that the firefighters are playing video games. What they are actually doing is taking part in a state-of-the-art fire training simulation exercise using the SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard and StageIT fire simulator software.

"The SMART Board interactive whiteboard has changed the way firefighters train, enabling them to test their skills fighting a virtual fire in a controlled classroom environment," says Doug Baker, training officer, Searcy Fire Department. "It is easy to use, makes our training interactive and more interesting, and challenges the firefighters as they test their skills with fire scenarios in and around Searcy. It teaches them to think through the firefighting process and to be aware of possible dangers such as a building collapse or an explosion."

Baker has been responsible for training firefighters in Arkansas for the past 25 years. He knows the dangers and challenges that his team faces every time they respond to a fire alarm. His mandate is to engage all levels of the Searcy Fire Department staff, from new hires to the chief, with realistic situational fire training exercises. He chose the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to take his fire and emergency response training to the next level.

The SMART Board interactive whiteboard is a touch-sensitive screen that connects to a computer and a digital projector through a USB cable. The computer image is projected on the screen and trainers can write over applications in digital ink, access websites, play videos and capture images with SMART's Notebook™ software.

"The SMART Board interactive whiteboard enables firefighters to train interactively on strategy, tactics and incident command procedures," says Baker. "I take digital photos of buildings in Searcy for the training exercises and add fire, smoke and audio, challenging the firefighters to assess the situation and make command decisions just like they would at a real fire."

When they react, Baker reacts. He can change what is displayed on the SMART Board interactive whiteboard, allowing the fire to spread, creating an explosion or adding a trapped victim.

Baker also uses the SMART Board interactive whiteboard to conduct virtual exercises with the firefighters at Searcy's three fire stations, incorporating communication, fire strategy and tactical planning. During these exercises, Baker sends different images of the building to each of the firefighter's computers. The incident commander, for example, would see only the front side of the building while another firefighter would only see the back side. Linked by a radio, the team must work together to assess the situation and put out the fire.

The SMART Board interactive whiteboard is also used by the fire department for briefings and debriefings, and to simulate hazardous material incidents, chemical spills, freeway accidents, and search and rescue exercises.

"The real value of the technology is that it allows us to pre-fire plan a building such as a hospital or a school," says Baker. "The SMART Board interactive whiteboard will help us take our training to the next level and give back to the community by helping them with their emergency evacuation plans. It gets everyone on the same page and gets them thinking."

"The technology allows us to relate the training to a potential emergency scenario. The SMART Board interactive whiteboard gets the firefighters more involved in the training and because it's interactive, it makes the simulation more realistic."

**Doug Baker,**  
training officer,  
Searcy Fire  
Department