

WINTER 2021

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HELP – I NEED SOMEBODY!

SimsUshare's capabilities continue to expand, but so does our selection of product support materials. Here's a summary of what is available at the main Help portal online, <https://simsushare.com/tutorials-and-help/>.

We've got you covered whether you are a beginner sim developer, an expert, or somewhere in between.



1. How to install, update, and activate the app on all platforms
2. Basic SimsUshare: 8 short videos with 1-page PDF guides to get you started
3. CTC and SimCloud: How to get the most out of these web-based applications
4. FAQ: The most common questions we get asked
5. More (Free) Help Resources: in depth online sim developer classes, advanced tutorials, and documentation
6. Set up a free online demo or support meeting with us.

HINDSIGHT IS 2020

A message from
Jonathan Kaye,
President, SimsUshare

The start of a new year is an opportunity to turn the page and set new goals. Most of us will have no problem saying goodbye to 2020, a year of challenges that taxed our collective fortitude and determination. First responders and other workers—many of you out there—have literally been on the front line of this global pandemic, and we owe you a huge debt of gratitude.

Hindsight being 20/20, as they say (ironically this year), what do we see clearly now that perhaps we didn't recognize at the time, and what are we doing to address what we can? Consider the following:

When things get complicated, it is time to simplify and focus. The pandemic complicated everyone's life on both a personal and a business or organizational level. However, it did not change the core principles of what is required to do our job. Timely training and repetition of perishable skills, such as strategy, tactics, communication, and command, are still the cornerstones of enabling our best performance.

Plan for the knowns not the unknowns. There are people who work in cyber security or intelligence analysis whose only job is to plan for the what ifs, even the remotest of possibilities. We are thankful—they likely keep us safe more often than we realize. While you need to think about possible, even unlikely, scenarios, your primary focus is preparing for what you deal with day to day. It is essential to get the routine down and know what to expect from your team (and automatic/mutual aid partners) when you

show up on an incident. We at SimsUshare are trying to help by providing a user-friendly platform you can use to conduct exercises anywhere and anytime without software installs or downloads.

Stay ahead of the curve. One of the big lessons we learned in 2020 is that online training is no longer an option. A "return to normal" as COVID numbers improve cannot simply be a return to a mirror image of how things were done in the past, but more of a hybrid new normal. Running online training exercises for certain skills can be a safe and cost-effective complement to live evolutions. Much of our work at SimsUshare over the past several years has been devoted to further developing and implementing our training platform so that you can conduct virtual hands-on drills wherever you and your team happen to be. Soon we will be introducing a mutual aid enhancement that will further expand training possibilities!

We at SimsUshare appreciate your dedication and hard work. We look forward to helping you meet your goals as you continue to provide your vital service to the community. 🙏



P.S. On a personal note, 2021 is starting for me with a bucket list item as I begin Firefighter 1 training.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1815 Molly Williams of New York City became the first woman on record to serve in an official capacity as a firefighter. Molly was African American. She was also a slave.

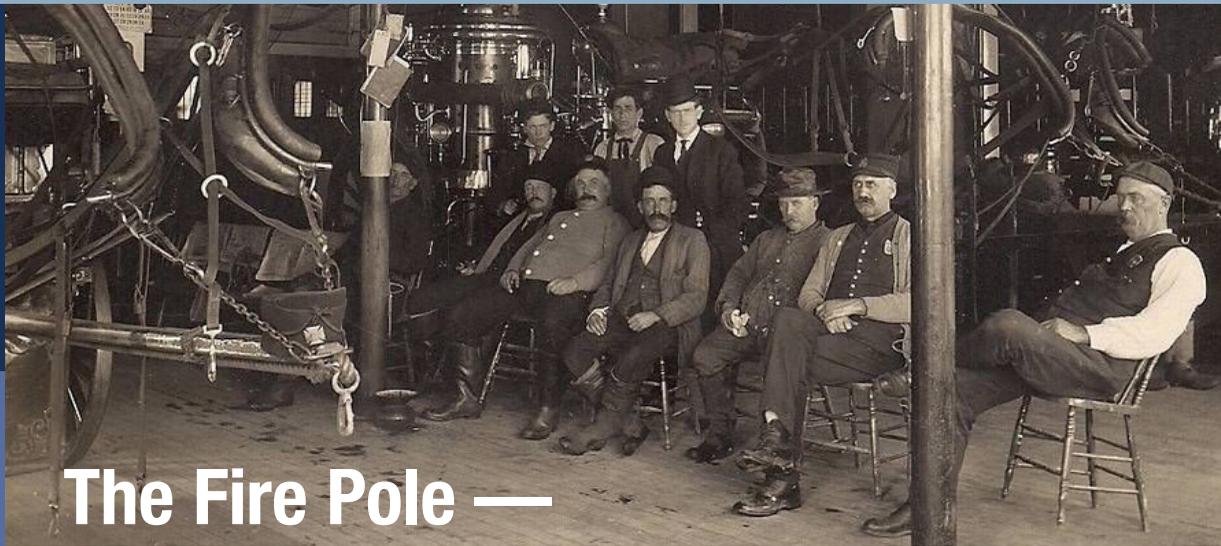
Medical assistance is the number one reason for firefighter response in the United States. In 2018 there were 23,551,500 such incidents.

The second highest reason for firefighter response in the United States is false alarms. In 2018 there were 2,889,000 false alarms.

From 1603 until 1867, Japanese firefighters would hose themselves down so that they would be less flammable while fighting fires. Their wet uniforms might weigh up to 75 pounds. Their most important firefighting task was to prevent fire spread to nearby buildings by quickly pulling the burning structure down using hooks on poles.

“Most of our apparel, lodging and private provisions were destroyed, I begin to think that it is safer for me to dwell in the wild Indian country than in this stockade, where fools accidentally discharge their muskets and others burn down their homes at night.”

— *Captain James Smith writing in his journal about the first recorded structure fire in the New World that occurred at Jamestown on January 7, 1608.*



The Fire Pole — Past, Present (and Future?)

Back in the 19th century, many urban fire stations housed their horses and equipment on the main floor and their firefighters and food for the horses on the upper floor(s). It was soon discovered, however, that the stairs connecting the upper and lower floors had a drawback in that horses tended to wander upstairs looking for hay. Evidently, it is much easier for a horse to go up a staircase than it is for them to go down a staircase, so this created a bit of a logistics problem for firefighters who awoke from sleep to find a horse staring at them.

The initial solution was to replace regular stairs with a spiral staircase or a tube chute (think playground slide chute today). Neither was ideal as the slides were slow and the stairs were cumbersome. It would take a brainstorm of an idea from a Chicago firefighter named David Kenyon to introduce a revolutionary idea to the fire service in 1878.

Kenyon belonged to Company 21, an all African American firehouse in Chicago. As the story is told, a call came in to respond to a fire and a fellow firefighter used a wooden pole normally used to bale hay for the horses to slide down to the ground floor. That got Kenyon thinking. Why not install a permanent pole to connect the upstairs sleeping quarters to the ground floor. Initially, other firefighters in the city thought this was a crazy idea but when Company 21 earned the bragging rights

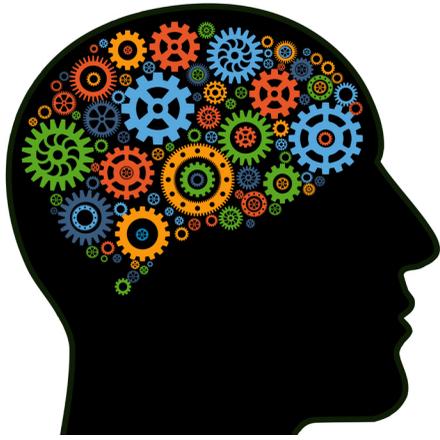
of regularly arriving first on scene, the idea began to catch on. A couple of years later (in 1880) the Boston Fire Department installed a permanent brass pole, like the kind still used today, and within another decade or so their use had spread across the US, Canada, Britain and beyond.

Fire (or sliding) poles are the subject of much debate today. In many places they have been or are being phased out. The primary issue is one of safety. For example, The Occupational Safety and Health Administration says that poles are “inherently dangerous” and cause too many sprains, strains, and broken bones to justify their continued use. Safety features to prevent accidentally falling through the pole opening and padding at the base of the pole to help absorb the impact of a fast descent have helped

reduce but not eliminate injuries. In many jurisdictions, new fire stations are designed so that poles are no longer needed.

Among the rank and file, many firefighters disagree and still consider the pole essential. They feel it is more than just an iconic tradition, that it is a major part of firefighting, and something we should not let go of. Although in many stations poles are still the fastest and most efficient way to get to ground floor, the opposing forces of workplace safety and government regulations will likely win the day, and we will bid adieu to a defining fire department tradition. 🔥

An iconic tradition faces an uncertain future



Your Most Valuable Piece of Equipment

A popular interview and parlor game question is some form of: If you could have one item on a deserted island, what would it be? The question is so problematic that it is often revised to include three, five or even more items. The problem with the question is the unknowns. What kind of island is it? Is it a barren island, a tropical island, an island with fresh water, an island with a food supply? Knowing these parameters narrows down or prioritizes your list of must have items.

First responders use a lot of sophisticated and high-tech equipment. Some of it is very expensive and may be out of the financial reach of smaller departments, but there are items such as SCBA and protective clothing that have become mandatory for every department, no matter the size of the budget. If asked what his or her most valuable piece of equipment is, however, a first responder faces a dilemma similar to the one posed above, namely what kind of emergency is he or she responding to.

Even then, how do you measure the value of a piece

of equipment? Obviously, it isn't purely monetary, because a relatively inexpensive monitoring device can mean the difference between lives lost and lives saved on the fireground. Value then is measured by what produces the best result—and the best result is always that everyone goes home safe.

Interestingly, the word "equipment" has several definitions as noted below:

- EQUIPMENT** (noun)
1. anything kept, furnished, or provided for a specific purpose.
 2. the act of equipping a person or thing.
 3. the state of being equipped.
 4. the personal knowledge and skill required for a task, occupation, etc.:
 5. the rolling stock of a railroad.

Except for number 5, all the definitions could be applied to first responders. However, note especially number 4, "the personal knowledge and skill required for a task, occupation, etc." Arguably, the most important piece of your equipment weighs about 3 lbs. and floats in a bath of CSF (Cerebrospinal Fluid) within your cranial cavity. We're talking of course about your brain but more importantly what you have chosen to store in that allows you to make the right decisions especially in a highly stressful environment.

Decision making is a cognitive process where you select a course of action among several alternative possibilities. Every decision-making process produces a final choice, which may or may not prompt an action. First responders need to fine tune this process through training and repetition of the various scenarios they may face when responding to an emergency. It is this type of training that elevates your most valuable piece of equipment to something that is truly priceless.

QUARTERLY TIP: STATE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

Would you like to make simulations that have evolving conditions such as a fire extending to an exposure? We use the term "state" to describe a meaningfully different set of conditions. If you build your sim using the naming convention we recommend (see "All About those States", here: <https://simsushare.com/ctc-webinars/>), you can run your exercise in the CTC and flip a switch to change the conditions in your sim for all participants at once. Here's how:

1. Make all the locations you want for the current (original) state.
2. Go to the **Locations** menu and choose "Manage Locations"

3. Then go to the menu and choose "Create/Fill State"
4. Enter the **new state name** (such as "Extension") when asked. SimsUshare will automatically create a copy of all the original locations as shown in the picture below but with a suffix in brackets added.
5. Press **BACK** or the ← key to return to editing, and edit the new locations so they reflect the new condition (state) you have created.

Note: Once you have created at least one state in addition to the original, you will be given other options such as delete or rename a state. (See picture.)

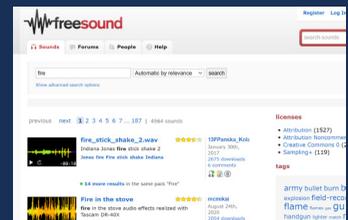


This new functionality also sets up the navigation for you based on the state you are copying from, so it is a huge time-saver.

RECOMMENDED APP: FREESOUND.ORG & FREESOUNDEFFECTS.COM

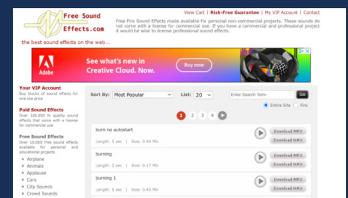
This month we are highlighting two websites that feature sound effects to enhance your simulations.

There are many sources of sound effects on the web, but they often require you to purchase them. [FreeSound.org](https://freesound.org), as its name suggests, has a large collection of sounds effects that are licensed to be shared for free under the Creative Commons license, which merely requires attribution in most cases.



Our customers tell us they have found fire-related sounds, alarms, etc. to use in their sims. Please remember that SimsUshare only accepts sound files in MP3 format currently, but thankfully you can find free converters online (or for download/installation, such as the free VLC Player - <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/index.html>) for converting other sound formats into the MP3 format.

The other website we recommend is <https://www.freesoundeffects.com> :



This site has a nice collection of free clips in addition to those you can purchase. Remember to check the licensing information before you assume you can use an effect!



Overnight Success – 15 years in the Making

Part I of II

As told by Jonathan Kaye

When I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a PhD on the subject of Cardiopulmonary Interactions in Trauma, SimsUshare was nowhere to be seen. Instead, on January 1, 2000, Frank Primiano Jr. and I founded Amethyst Research LLC and set about creating equipment simulations for medical device companies to use for training and marketing, primarily in ventilator-related industries. During my PhD studies, I also became an EMT and worked as a volunteer for the next six years at various ambulance services.

As a lifelong computer techie, I began to explore how you could apply software training to pre-hospital conditions. This led me to write a book in 2002 about my methodology to create equipment simulations for training. In the process of presenting this work, I gave several conference presentations, one of which attracted the attention of two officers, Bill Godfrey and Jim Murphy, from Orange County Fire Rescue (FL). Our discussion turned into other discussions, and a couple of years later, the many ideas and experiments came together in the development of a commercial system called CommandSim. Orange County Fire Rescue was a beta testing site for several years, producing one of the first officer development and credentialing systems in the country for incident command.

The Company debuted CommandSim at FDIC 2005. CommandSim was a photo-based, single- and multi-player sim development system much like SimsUshare, but it used Adobe Flash for customers to create their simulations. From 2005-2012, the full CommandSim system community grew to a few dozen major Command Training

Centers, including the Utah Fire Rescue Academy, Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, and Chesterfield Fire Rescue, as well as many dozens of individuals and smaller departments who appreciated the versatility and realism it could provide. Customers loved what they could produce but felt they could not fully realize its potential because of the time it took to make simulations compared with other software.

After marketing and selling CommandSim for a few years, we decided to use the lessons learned to create a simpler, web-based development tool called uSim. In the original design meetings, uSim was defined to meet the market need of a product in which one could simply ‘take a picture and set it on fire.’ Another goal was to make simulation building a cooperative endeavor, meaning it would be easy to share simulation development and reduce redundancy. The vision was to create a website that had editor and sim-sharing capabilities baked in. As development progressed, however, it became clear that the initial rollout would be app-based, rather than web-based.

Ultimately, uSim was renamed SimsUshare and was launched at FDIC 2012. True to its design of simplicity, SimsUshare let its customers take or choose a single photo and mockup the photo with realistic, animated smoke and fire. The industry reaction was very positive and the outlook in 2012 was strong.

Little did I know that the roller coaster had just reached the top of the first big incline! 🎢

Stay tuned for the gripping conclusion in the Spring 2021 ‘Take Command’ Newsletter

NEW SERVICE

Promotional Exam Consultation, Development and Design

Promotional exams are vital to maintaining effective leadership in the fire service. Although general guidelines are available to test the applicant’s knowledge and aptitude, fire departments should strive to tailor their exam format so that local policies and procedures are highlighted. An effective means to achieve this is to incorporate simulations based on local buildings in the exam process.

Our staff and consulting group have acquired extensive experience in all aspects of promotional exams using simulation software. We have designed and conducted over forty (40) promotional exams for large and small departments. These exams have ranged from Lieutenant to Fire Chief and include both Civil Service and Union organizations.

Our promotional exam services include the following:

- Consulting
- Photography
- Scenario Design
- Storyboard Design
- Examiner Grading Documents
- Scenario Design Review

If you are in the planning stages of your next promotional exam or if you want to update your current exam format, we can help.

CONTACT US

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