



National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System Reports Related to Road Blocking

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Report Number: 10-0000286

Report Date: 02/18/2010 15:28

Event Description

Brackets [] denote reviewer de-identification.

On [date deleted] our fire department received a call for a reported motor vehicle accident with injuries on the interstate. It was just after sundown and the roads were completely iced over due to the “flash icing” that occurred that night. We responded with 1 Engine, 1 mini-pumper that we utilize as a rescue and our duty officer. The duty officer and rescue arrived on scene to find a one car accident, car vs. guardrail, off on the right shoulder. The engine arrived and blocked the shoulder and the right lane for safety. Its 6 person crew remained seated and belted in the cab.

The local ambulance service was on scene and had initiated patient care. The patient’s injuries were minor in nature and there were no spills or vehicle hazards. The rescue crew and duty officer assisted the ambulance. Due to a police matter on scene, transport had been delayed and crews were still operating on the side of the highway. Traffic was traveling at an unreasonable speed considering the road conditions. I was the driver of the engine and had been looking in the driver’s side mirror and observed 2 tractor trailers traveling in my direction. Both tractor trailers were traveling directly parallel to one another. Unfortunately one of the tractor trailers was in the right lane which we were blocking. The trucks did not slow down or change lanes even though all of our emergency lights were activated. I warned my crew of the impending impact as the trucks approached. The tractor trailer struck our driver’s side mirror, missing the engine by mere inches. Fortunately the tractor trailer was able to keep from hitting out truck directly and he was able to steer away from the rest of the scene.

Thankfully no one was injured. Unfortunately the ambulance, police and our crews were unable to immediately clear the scene. As the police handled the accident with the tractor trailer driver, I sat with my eyes fixed on the mirror. Shortly thereafter I observed yet another tractor trailer fast approaching and his vehicle appeared to be sliding directly towards us. Since I was able to see this coming, I placed the vehicle in drive and proceeded forward to avoid being struck again. Thankfully the driver was able to recover because of the extra space I gave him. All 10 members of my department, 2 EMTs from the ambulance and 1 police officer went home unharmed that night.

Lessons Learned

In an interesting twist, our department had recently finished applying NFPA complaint red and yellow chevrons to the rear of our entire fleet. All personnel on scene were wearing traffic vests in addition to full PPE and all the vehicles had their emergency warning lights operating. Our engine had been placed approximately 1000 feet prior to the accident. Regardless of all the safety measures that were in place that night, we still had not one but two extremely close calls.

Report Number: 10-0000025
Report Date: 01/08/2010 10:32

Event Description

During an extrication run on the interstate, a vehicle came around our blocking apparatus and nearly ran over our protection handline. The driver of this vehicle was focused on what the crews were doing and not paying attention to his driving. The scene had a blocking engine staged approximately 100 feet before reaching the scene. The engine was parked at an angle to serve as protection for the crews. This engine also had a 1 ¾ inch handline pulled for protection of the extrication crews. After passing the blocking engine, the vehicle entered into the protected lane. The car then swerved at the last minute and exited the protected area before striking the upcoming working apparatus or crews.

There is a need to be staged and blocking at a distance. However, there is a fine line between being far enough and not so far as to allow the vehicles to re-enter the protected lanes.

Lessons Learned

Have a spotter always looking up stream for oncoming traffic to alert working crews. All crews should wear reflective outer vests for visibility. As much as we try to prepare and protect on the roadway, expect anything and never assume you have covered every possible scenario for safety.

Report Number: 10-0000167
Report Date: 01/22/2010 16:12

Event Description

While on scene of a non injury MVA on an interstate highway, our pumper was struck from the rear by a car traveling at 45 to 55 mph. The pumper was parked in the left hand lane protecting the scene which included a State Highway Patrol car. There were no injuries to the responders, but, from the vehicle that struck the pumper, two occupants were transported with moderate injuries.

Lessons Learned

Proper apparatus placement saves lives and protects the scene.

Report Number: 09-0000629
Report Date: 06/30/2009 09:59

Event Description

We responded to a motor vehicle collision (MVC) on an interstate highway. Per SOP, our rescue truck was placed in a blocking position and cones were placed behind the vehicle for 100-200 feet. When the incident was complete and we attempted to pick up our cones, a vehicle ran over our cones and nearly struck the

rescue truck. I had been looking down the 3-lane highway and noticed that cars were not merging or slowing. I yelled at the other members and we ran to the concrete barrier and were prepared to jump over if needed. Two vehicles sat in our work area until they could merge back into traffic.

Lessons Learned

1. Get early warning in place as far back as possible.
2. Be prepared that once one vehicle enters your work zone, the potential for more to follow is high.
3. Always wear all safety gear and your PPE.
4. Never take your eyes off the entire situation.
5. After the call can be as dangerous as during the call.
6. Have a roadway SOG or SOP.

Report Number: 09-0000961

Report Date: 10/29/2009 21:45

Event Description

While working an MVA, a pick-up truck towing a 24' camper fishtailed and overturned with the camper jack-knifed on an interstate. Both occupants of the truck were DOA and the vehicle came to rest on the median. Fire department units stood by and law enforcement conducted the investigation. Upon completion of the investigation, fire department personnel began extrication of the bodies from the truck. Traffic was severely jammed up as the firefighters were working. A police officer screamed, "Watch out" because a pick-up truck was barrel rolling toward the crew. Our apparatus was on the opposite side of the median and the only vehicle blocking traffic was the patrol car. All attention was on the extrication and not watching out for the safety of the crews working in the operating area.

Lessons Learned

Proper apparatus placement is a must! Especially when working on interstate highways.

Always keep a look-out. This includes the safety officer and company officer.

Risk a lot to save a lot and risk nothing to save nothing! This was a body recovery.

My department now trains on traffic incident management procedures with cones and added it into our SOGs.

Be aware of your surroundings.

Report Number: 09-0001025
Report Date: 11/17/2009 14:56

Event Description

Information in squared brackets [] has been de-identified.

While on scene of a non injury MVA (motor vehicle accident) on an Interstate [name deleted], our pumper was struck from the rear by a car traveling at 45 to 55 mph. The pumper was parked in the left hand lane protecting the scene, which included a state highway patrol car. There were no injuries to the responders, but two occupants in the vehicle that struck the pumper were transported with moderate injuries.

Lessons Learned

Proper apparatus placement saves lives and protects the scene.

Report Number: 09-0000419
Report Date: 04/14/2009 17:45

Event Description

Information in squared brackets [] denotes reviewer de-identification.

Approximately 0917, a 911 call was received for a multi-car MVC [on a local highway] on ramp. Response was a shift commander [CHIEF 1], Engine [1] (captain and 1 FF/EMT), Medical [1] (BLS ambulance w/ 2 FF/EMTs), and a mutual aid BLS ambulance from a neighboring town which automatically responds to this part of the highway. State police on were on the scene upon [CHIEF 1]'s arrival. [CHIEF 1] assumed command with a 2 car MVC on the breakdown lane side of the highway. [CHIEF 1] positioned his vehicle just south of the accident in the breakdown lane. Engine [1] was instructed to block the accident scene just north of the scene, taking the breakdown and first travel lanes due to debris and vehicles. Medical [1] was instructed to position just before [CHIEF 1], which is close enough to the injured parties' vehicle and safely below the engine. The mutual aid ambulance would be positioned by the second vehicle involved just above [CHIEF 1]'s vehicle. Members of both departments are required to wear safety vests on roadway incidents. The traffic had begun to slow, but as the mutual aid ambulance was slowing to enter the scene a large tractor/trailer (TT) unit did not clearly see them slowing. As I tried to warn them over the radio, I realized my radio had failed and was inoperable! I quickly waved my arms to signal them into the area. They moved, and the TT unit passed without incident. The ambulance crew was able to see me clearly and respond to my hand signals.

Several factors prevented this from becoming another highway tragedy.

1. Scene size up was done and both FD and PD were in agreement on vehicle positioning.

2. Appropriate but not excessive blocking was achieved with just one engine and 1 police cruiser.
3. Vehicle placement was determined quickly, which allowed them to come directly into the scene without discussion.
4. ICS was followed and crews followed their assignments rather than randomly moving around the scene.

Lessons Learned

Many lessons can be learned from this incident. First, never rely on just radios for communication. The vests allowed for easy ID of responders and subsequently, the hand signals used to wave them into the scene. Scene size up and the use of blocking to protect responders and victims were key elements. Preplanning how your department operates on highways is a key component. Vehicle placement after an adequate size-up will prevent apparatus from becoming obstructive and less effective at the scene. Wearing proper vests and utilizing chevron striping on apparatus improves responder visibility even on bright sunny days by identifying them as responders.

Report Number: 09-0000998

Report Date: 11/16/2009 13:37

Event Description

Brackets [] denote reviewer de-identification.

The fire department, police, and EMS personnel were dispatched to a 2-car vehicle collision with injuries. Once on scene, the fire department controlled traffic using traffic cones and placement of the rig, blocking one lane westbound and allowing eastbound traffic to continue. All emergency lighting and audio warning devices were in use as well as full PPE.

There were two firefighters and a police officer that were controlling traffic while the rest of the crew was working the scene. Firefighter [A], who was directing westbound traffic, was giving a conditions report to command when a car went around the accident at a high rate of speed and nearly hit Firefighter [A]. At the time, Firefighter [A]'s field of vision was blocked by a cargo van at the head of an intersection and never saw the car coming. As the driver proceeded through the intersection, Firefighter [A] was able to get out of the way. However, Firefighter [B], who was directing eastbound traffic, saw the car and had to jump into a ditch to avoid being struck. The police witnessed the event and ticketed the driver.

Lessons Learned

We were unable to control traffic with the personnel on scene. In the future, we need to do a better job of coordinating with local police to make the scene safer.

Report Number: 09-0001145
Report Date: 12/26/2009 14:09

Event Description

Information in squared brackets [] has been edited for de-identification. We were at the scene of a motor vehicle collision on the interstate, during icy conditions. Members of the department were in the process of laying out equipment. This was between the two pieces of apparatus needed to remove the roof of a car that had hit the ledges of the side of the roadway and came to rest of the driver's side of the car. We had positioned our rescue truck just past the scene of the incident and the engine just prior to the incident to protect the scene and members, as is our protocol. Both trucks were off the driving portion of the roadway and well within the ten foot shoulder.

The roadway was very slippery due to the policy of the [state DOT] of not applying product (salt or sand) until it was absolutely needed. The State Police had yet to arrive on scene, as they were at other incidents similar to this one. Flares were in place behind our vehicles, prior to the scene.

Another vehicle, being operated at a speed greater than what the road conditions would allow, and using a cellular phone, lost control and started to slide. One member, who happened to hear and see this yelled, to the other members, who were laying out the equipment, to look out. These members ran away from the equipment in the direction of the ledges along the side of the interstate. They were missed by the vehicle by split seconds.

The vehicle, while out of control, hit the front of the engine, which slowed the car down a great deal, but it still drove into the equipment that was being laid out. The power unit was knocked into the ditch, and the spreader unit was run over along with a section of hose. No one was injured, including the operator of the out of control vehicle.

The original vehicle was stabilized, the roof was removed, and the patient was removed.

Lessons Learned

The lesson learned from this incident is to continue to be observant to the traffic that is still moving on the roadway. We respond to incidents like this countless times a year, and this is a great reminder of the hazards of operating on or about the roadway. All command officers are given the option of completely blocking the roadway if it is deemed necessary to protect the members and those involved in incidents. Although our department does a great job of working incidents on the roadway, we take every opportunity to educate the public about paying attention, slowing down, and not becoming distracted by using cell phones and other such devices.

Report Number: 09-0000084

Report Date: 01/28/2009 23:57

Event Description

Dispatched engine, rescue, and medic unit to a multi-car MVA. Rescue was on scene blocking the roadway, oncoming traffic side. I was sitting behind the captain's seat in the back. When I stepped out of the truck, I did not look before I got out. A black F-150 flew by me and brushed my coat.

Lessons Learned

-The driver parked at an angle that only blocked 2 out of 3 lanes. Better truck placement on the roadway.

-I should have looked at oncoming traffic before exiting the rescue.

Report Number: 08-0000152

Report Date: 03/24/2008 11:48

Event Description

On Friday, February 22nd, shortly before 2000 hours, the EMS units of [departments names deleted] were dispatched to [interstate name deleted] for a reported motor vehicle crash with injuries. As policy for the responding companies, a medic unit, operations supervisor and rescue truck were dispatched. The rescue truck is dispatched to all emergencies that occur along the interstate. This is in accordance with the guidelines established by the [state agencies deleted] to help establish a "safe work zone" for the EMS crews. The EMS service follows the guidelines provided to them through the Highway Incident Scene Safety and Management (HSTC) course offered by the [name deleted].

As crews were evaluating and treating multiple patients from the crash, the rescue truck was placed along the freeway to provide a safe and secure environment for the crews working. Shortly after operations began, crews were disrupted by the loud sound of vehicles crashing. The incident commander immediately reporting that the rescue truck had been struck by a vehicle. The young male driver had witnessed the lane restrictions and attempted to move out into the fast lane to continue past the scene. However, due to the road conditions, the vehicle began to spin on the icy roadway, striking the front of the rescue truck positioned for the crews. The driver of the vehicle sustained minor injuries and was not transported by EMS.

The heavy rescue vehicle sustained moderate front end damage to the extended front bumper and officer side cab of the apparatus. Actions taken in compliance with policy certainly paid off this evening resulting in no injury to emergency providers. Just on the other side of the blocking heavy rescue, approximately eight people was performing operations of one fashion or another related to the

crash. They were protected only by proper positioning of the vehicle for a safe work zone.

Appropriate actions are not always received well by some officials that prefer to keep interstate traffic moving regardless of hazards, patients and contributing weather conditions. Though the crash is unfortunate, we are hopeful that our incident can support our operational efforts for a safe work zone and educate those who don't understand or blatantly disagree with the need for apparatus placement and lane restrictions.

Brackets [] in this report denote identifying information removed by the reviewer.

Lessons Learned

This event is one that we have learned; "This can happen to us". Though we have recognized the potential, I believe many of us really never thought that it actually would. Though our actions and work zone intrusion helped prevent an injury, the entire situation was preventable. A request was made to the police regarding road conditions and stopping all traffic flow for our safety. The request was denied prior to and after our vehicle was struck. Actions were then taken against the police officers unwillingness to comply and crews were in motion to shut down the remaining travel lanes. This was supported and assistance was offered after the arrival of the third police officer. Better communication, pre-planning, and operational awareness with law enforcement is necessary to provide for our safety and prevent future potentials of this preventable occurrence.

Report Number: 08-0000197

Report Date: 04/24/2008 16:04

Event Description

While operating at the scene of a previous accident, the squad driver/firefighter was struck by an automobile driven by a 70 y/o female. This female drove through the already established traffic cones nearly striking the fire police captain who was trying to get her to stop. She then proceeded into the original accident scene. The driver/firefighter was struck from behind at about 55 mph while he was sweeping up debris from the first accident. The driver/firefighter was thrown over the hood and the roof of the car and then slide a crossed the roadway approximately 25 feet. The female driver struck one of the cars from the original accident head on, pushing that car into a police car and a tractor trailer. The driver/firefighter was transported to a local hospital and then transferred via air medical to a trauma center due to mechanism of injury. The driver/firefighter was released the next afternoon with abrasions, bumps and bruises. It is possible that due to having his back to the car and not knowing he was going to be struck is what saved his life. The investigating police officer later found out that the 70 y/o woman had been declared legally blind 2 days prior to this incident. While apparatus placement, traffic cones and traffic vests being are worn by all personnel, we are never completely safe from motor vehicle traffic.

Lessons Learned

We have learned that we need to improve our apparatus placement to protect our own in any situation. We also need to give the public as much advance notice as possible giving ourselves notice if someone does not stop at fire police preventions.

Report Number: 08-0000443

Report Date: 09/18/2008 01:56

Event Description

This report contains several near-misses involving PPE, apparatus placement and communication.

We responded to a vehicle fire on the highway early on a Saturday morning. Approaching the scene, we could see a long trail of motor oil and light smoke. Upon arrival, we found a vehicle in the right breakdown lane with an engine fire. We positioned in the far right traffic lane at a slight angle but left the break down lane open. I interviewed the driver and passenger about other occupants and hazards. I donned my SCBA face piece and noticed one my crewmembers doing the same and the "Proby" pulling the highway line to the vehicle. He started an attack from an appropriate position but he had failed to don his SCBA face piece. I walked up to him and took the nozzle and told him to put his mask on.

After extinguishing the main fire, we started working on forcing the trunk open. Neither the keys nor the interior trunk release handle were able to operate the locking mechanism. Three of us were using the hand tools and the engineer was acting as a traffic lookout. A car nearly stopped in lane one to observe the scene and the car behind them continued to travel at full speed, eventually requiring heavy braking to avoid a collision. We all heard the screeching tires and started to head for the concrete barrier in the breakdown lane. Since traffic was traveling at high speeds, another near collision occurred directly following this incident. I advised my engineer to reposition the apparatus to fully block the right shoulder and right lane nearly perpendicular to the traffic flow.

After the traffic incident, I contacted dispatch and asked for an ETA for police for traffic control. I was advised that fire dispatch had cancelled PD response but they would request them again. After we returned to quarters, I contacted fire dispatch to find out why the police department had been cancelled. It is department protocol to request PD on all car fires for traffic control and I was expecting their arrival on-scene. The original call taker informed me that the 911 call sounded bogus and he assumed that we would not find a car fire upon arrival so he cancelled PD thinking they would not be needed.

Lessons Learned

All firefighters should wear full protective clothing, including SCBA when operating at car fires. The firefighter stated that he simply forgot to utilize the

SCBA. However, I feel this was a product of department culture as I have seen many firefighters operate at car fires without appropriate PPE.

Initial positioning should provide for scene safety for the working crews. Make sure to leave no more than a car width between the concrete barriers and the apparatus if possible. Park so as to increase visibility for approaching drivers by exposing the sides of the apparatus to traffic. This will also increase the number of emergency lights visible compared to parking parallel with traffic flow and provides for the maximum "safe" working area.

Always follow procedure when requesting other agencies for assistance, but do not rely on their response. Advocate the need for these procedures when they are not followed and be accountable for your responsibilities. After discussing the incident with the dispatcher, I am confident he will remember the need for assistance from the police on car fires.

Report Number: 08-0000559

Report Date: 11/02/2008 09:04

Event Description

My unit responded to an MVA. We arrived on the scene of a two vehicle MVC on a divided highway to find all southbound traffic lanes blocked by wrecked vehicles. EMS and law enforcement units arrived at the same time as fire units. Fire units placed apparatus at 45 degree angle from inside lane to a paved break in the median. Law enforcement units parked next to fire units but straight in the lane and leaving the right shoulder open. EMS parked past the wrecked vehicles for egress. All responders were wearing PPE (Fire - turnouts, EMS - none available, Law enforcement - none available).

After transporting the victims of the accident, law enforcement had re-routed a lane of traffic through an adjoining shopping center parking lot to ease congestion around accident site. During investigation and fluid mitigation, two separate vehicles disobeyed a law enforcement officer directing traffic into the shopping center and proceeded into the accident site. The first was a motorcycle and when approached by other law enforcement officers, he stated "he had room to clear the accident and didn't need to go around". The second was an elderly gentleman whom apparently just didn't see the emergency vehicles or the officers directing traffic.

Even though we thought we had done an adequate job of blocking access to our accident site, two vehicles managed to encroach into our scene. Both times, good situational awareness prevented another accident. We need to always make sure that responders stay in areas protected by emergency vehicles when possible and wearing available PPE to increase visibility. Unfortunately, our EMS service and law enforcement agencies in the area don't want to issue reflective vests or other PPE to their employees.

Lessons Learned

Proper apparatus placement.

Safety zones.

Proper PPE and reflective safety vests are important.

Situational awareness will help prevent accidents.

Report Number: 08-0000556

Report Date: 10/31/2008 19:37

Event Description

The incident location is a complex intersection of a four lane highway intersecting with a two lane major roadway. The general description is the intersection forms a stretched "X" with clear visibility in all directions. One roadway travels two lanes to the Northeast and Southwest. While the other four lanes travel Northwest to Southeast. All directions of traffic are controlled by traffic signals. The area is very developed suburban with considerable traffic flow at all times. The dispatch information was a motor vehicle accident with injuries and no report of entrapment. The initial response was one ALS first responder, 2 chiefs, and an ambulance.

The first arriving unit was the ALS first responder who located the accident and reported a rear-end impact across the intersection from the route of arrival. One vehicle was blocking the Northeast roadway 20' North of the intersection (Car-A). The other car was still within the intersection in the right lane of the Northwest approach to the intersection (Car-B). Already on scene, was one police cruiser parked behind and blocking Car-B. Approaching the scene, the first responder pulled into the scene with all traffic stopped by traffic signals. The police officer was out of his vehicle attempting to assist Car-A off the roadway. The first responder pulled off the roadway onto the shoulder to the right of car-A. The police officer was walking behind Car-A, when a third vehicle Car -C traveling Northeast across the intersection and operated by a young inexperienced and distracted driver, impacted the rear of Car-A at 40-50 MPH. The police officer, at the last minute, saw Car-C and dove out of the way.

The first responder had not yet exited the vehicle and did not hear or see Car-C approaching. The resulting impact placed Car-C directly in front of the first responder missing this vehicle by 1 to 3 feet. The two responding chiefs and multiple additional police units arrived moments after the second crash and secured traffic at the intersection. The resulting secondary accident added two additional injured victims as well as adding additional injuries to the operator of Car-A.

Lessons Learned

Vehicle placement and planning and awareness are of paramount importance!

This is especially important in the initial moments of any incident. The unpredictable is always out there. Being a solo unit on scene prior to the arrival of additional units, amplifies the need for awareness and strategy in positioning and the commencement of any operation. A minor 2 car accident, such as this incident, nearly resulted in both a police officer being struck (if not a killed) as well as the potential for serious injury to the first responder operator.

The complexity for vehicle traffic negotiating this intersection was underestimated by both the police officer as well as me, the first responder. There were no heavy apparatus on scene to provide cover to operating personnel nor were there enough police or fire units on scene to control traffic safely around the accident scene. If I had parked behind Car-A (as I initially thought to do) and not pulled off and onto the shoulder, I probably would have taken the impact in my driver's door.

The second you let down your guard, bad things can happen!

Report Number: 08-0000063

Report Date: 02/04/2008 11:11

Event Description

This was a two car MVA on a lightly traveled 2 lane highway. The wreck was sitting mostly on the dirt shoulder but extended about 2 feet onto roadway and was facing the direction of lane travel. Our Chief forbid "blocking out" (he did not want to risk damage to the equipment) so we parked behind the accident with our small rig that extended about 3 feet into the lane. A single patient was in my assigned vehicle, partly hanging out the driver's window. There was no traffic coming toward me as I exited the driver's side of the rig and walked to the rear heading for passenger's side to retrieve the BLS bag. I quickly grabbed the bag and walked back around the back of the rig and into the road. I looked down at the bag intending to retrieve gloves and a stethoscope so as to be ready when I got to the patient. Everything happened at once. I heard a voice holler "STOP". I stopped in my tracks still looking down at the bag and saw semi-truck wheels pass before my eyes at about 25 miles per hour. After the truck passed I glanced over to see a state police officer across the road and continued to the vehicle. I can still see the mud patterns on the side of that semi rigs tires and cringe when I think of what only one more step would have meant.

Lessons Learned

Situational awareness was lost because I was focusing on upcoming care over the first priority, responder safety.

Blocking out should have been required as well as placement of cones in the roadway.

Report Number: 07-0000945

Report Date: 06/06/2007 15:08

Event Description

Fire rescue units that included an Engine and Rescue responded to a semi-tractor trailer that struck the outside concrete barrier of the westbound lanes of Interstate [number deleted] and careened across three lanes of traffic. This left a large oil spill on the road. The Engine was placed in a "fend-off" position with all strobes operating to protect the scene and crews. The road hazard kit and flares were also positioned several hundred yards behind the scene. The Rescue was placed west of the scene protected by the Engine in the safe zone. Two Road Rangers (DOT units that assist stranded motorists and assist with traffic control during accidents), had set up a position east of the accident about 1/8 of a mile. The Road Rangers had all their vehicle emergency lights operating and flares placed to reduce the lanes of traffic from a safe distance. There was also an electronic message board about 3 miles from the scene with a message stating "ACCIDENT AHEAD 3 MILES LEFT LANE OPEN." After being on the scene for approximately 30 to 40 minutes, crews had gathered near the oil spill area awaiting a sand trailer. The company officer was watching approaching traffic and noticed that another semi-tractor trailer with a tandem trailer was losing control and sliding towards them. The company officer yelled for everyone to "lookout" and jump over the center concrete barrier for cover. The truck and tandem trailers slammed into the back of the Engine that was in the "fend off position" causing considerable damage the rear of that apparatus. One firefighter had been sitting in the Engine due to the heavy rain conditions. The firefighter was treated for a sore back and a finger injury. About 10 minutes before the incident, the Firefighters had been sitting on the rear bumper of the Engine that was struck waiting for the sand trailer to arrive.

Lessons Learned

1. The importance of proper placement of apparatus on highways and road ways in a "fend off" position.
2. The importance of keeping all personnel, law enforcement, civilians, highways workers, wrecker drivers, etc. in the safety zone.

Report Number: 07-0000928

Report Date: 05/25/2007 13:31

Event Description

While operating at a multi-vehicle accident in the left lane of an interstate highway, the first-due engine proceeded to the accident site to begin initial size-up. No extrication was needed and the orders were to put absorbent on the leaked antifreeze and disconnect the battery cables. As IC, I instructed the 2nd engine to assume a blocking position approx. 1/2 mile behind the accident. Department fire police were approx 300 feet behind the accident setting up a cone pattern. A heavy rescue was dismissed while enroute, however it was on the interstate at the time.

Prior to the arrival of the blocker, a small 4-door sedan saw the accident and cut across the high-way into the path of a tandem tractor trailer unit. The truck drove over the back of the vehicle and sent it spinning into the fire police area of operations. Several fire police members had to jump out of the path of the vehicle. The truck [fairly undamaged] pulled over to the right side of the highway.

This writer immediately called for the blocker and heavy rescue to respond to the scene. The driver of the sedan needed to be extricated, the gas tank had also ruptured and AFFF was applied to the hazard.

Lessons Learned

This is a tough one to learn lessons from. We addressed the initial incident correctly, by policy brought in a blocker, and appropriately utilized the fire police. I observed all members wearing appropriate reflective vests and all vehicles utilized the emergency warning lights.

Report Number: 06-0000470

Report Date: 09/15/2006 19:27

Event Description

The truck company (crew of 4), ambulance (private-crew of 2) and state trooper were operating at a rollover accident on an interstate highway. The truck apparatus is tractor-drawn 100' aerial. The crew discussed positioning the truck (over the intercom) to afford best scene protection as they arrived. They blocked the entire "slow" lane, and angled the trailer as per standard practice. All warning lights were activated and visible, and there was no impairment of visibility due to weather. Traffic was heavy for the time of night, and roads were wet. The ambulance and state patrol car were 50-60 feet ahead of the truck, totally protected by it. As the patient was being loaded into the ambulance, an SUV traveling at a high rate of speed hit the rear of the truck without warning. The captain looked up from his position at the right side door of the ambulance to see the SUV airborne and barrel-rolling past their position. It came to rest on its wheels, minus the passenger side door, and with the passenger hanging out, feet touching the road, restrained by the shoulder/lap belt. Bottom line; no injuries to responders, and only minor injury to one of the two SUV occupants. The state trooper on scene, and all those investigating the accident, stated emphatically that the truck company's defensive apparatus placement saved several lives. The apparatus successfully deflected the SUV and parts as they "passed" the scene. We are extremely pleased with the preventative actions taken by our company before the event, as well as the instantaneous assistance rendered after the event. This was the second major high-speed rear end collision in 5 months for this department. Circumstances were similar for both incidents.

Lessons Learned

This incident reinforced the value of scene protection and continuous attention to scene safety. Years ago, State Troopers would criticize the fire service for such physical scene protection, calling it "overkill." Clearly, that is no longer the case hereabouts. The apparatus was well lit and marked, as was the entire scene. It is unknown why the driver hit the apparatus at this time; the incident is under investigation.

Report Number: 06-0000356

Report Date: 07/09/2006 08:02

Event Description

The engine crew was extinguishing a vehicle fire in a lane of traffic on an interstate highway. During the operation a tractor trailer driver was watching the fire and not the road. He drifted into the lane occupied by the firefighters causing them to jump for cover. No serious injuries were reported.

Lessons Learned

Training in proper rig placement and staying alert on ALL highway operations is a must. The state or municipal police cannot dictate rig placement to "keep the traffic moving".

Report Number: 06-0000141

Report Date: 03/07/2006 15:50

Event Description

On responding to a reported possible personal injury auto accident on (Location deleted) I responded as (Company deleted) and was the first arriving unit on the scene ahead of all police and fire rescue units. I visualized a two vehicle accident up ahead of me with substantial damage to both cars and blocking the driving lane. I placed my vehicle, a 2001 Ford Explorer, approximately 300 feet upstream from the accident, angled in the driving lane towards the passing lane, with all emergency lights activated. I exited the vehicle as traffic slowed and passed by in the passing lane. I walked to the rear of the Chief's car. I was reaching for the latch to open the rear gate to secure traffic cones, when I hear the sound of screeching tires. I looked back to see a sedan skidding approximately 200 ft towards me in the driving lane. I stepped back, looked over the guard rail, and realized I was on an elevated bridge with a 200 foot drop off. I stepped back towards the guard rail and watched as the oncoming auto skidded straight into the rear of my vehicle and underneath the rear tow hitch. I was not injured. The other driver was not injured either although her car sustained substantial front end damage. The weather was clear, sunny, and dry with a temperature of 10 degrees.

A year previous to this date, a Deputy Sheriff had been killed in a similar accident along the same stretch of highway. We had discussed at length revising protocols for sacrificial barriers and for appropriate emergency light deployment.

Lessons Learned

The incident and ensuing similar responses were critiqued. There were discussions suggesting we totally close the Interstate at future occurring situations. There were discussions of deploying a larger piece of apparatus as a sacrificial barrier. However, with manpower assignments largely dictating responding one initial piece of apparatus, either a heavy rescue or a rescue pumper, it was argued that the single piece needs to be in position to operate closer to the original scene. It was also discussed that the duty chief will usually get out first and be first on the scene requiring utilizing his vehicle as the upstream barrier initially. We all agreed that we could simply never underestimate the driver inattention and high speeds of vehicles approaching accident scenes. Traffic cones will not stop vehicles nor will they protect manpower. We are discussing mutual aid assignments that will get us at least two vehicles on Interstates, one acting as an upstream barrier and the other one being the primary accident response vehicle.

Report Number: 05-0000156

Report Date: 05/27/2005 14:10

Event Description

Ladder company was operating at the scene of a personal injury vehicle accident on a divided interstate highway. The incident was at the point of being cleared. The ladder truck was blocking the two left lanes of a three lane highway. The truck was parked on a 45% angle with the front facing the median strip. Several road flares (appx 5) were placed behind the truck for a distance of appx. 150 feet. An occupied state police vehicle was located between the ladder truck and the road flares. All four members of the Ladder crew were in the vehicle preparing to leave the scene. The EMS vehicle had already left the scene.

At this point a tractor trailer driver lost control of the vehicle that he was driving (a double trailered semi). The vehicle came to a stop between the ladder truck and the guardrail narrowly missing both the state police vehicle and the ladder Truck. All FD personnel were wearing high visibility safety vests during the entire incident.

Lessons Learned

1. ALWAYS BE ALERT!
2. Make absolutely sure you or part of your response can be seen from as far away as possible.
3. Quicker response of state roads safety vehicle.

4. Disassemble the scene from the down traffic side of incident first.

Report Number: 05-0000270

Report Date: 05/27/2005 14:10

Event Description

At the time of the call, our local interstate was under major construction with multiple lanes being added. During that time of construction, which lasted for about 4 years, the lanes that occupied traffic were lined with jersey walls to protect construction crews. During construction it was predicted that there would be multiple deaths related to the narrowing of the traffic corridor due to the jersey walls and the length of interstate involved in this project; about 8 miles total and continuous.

Our station was dispatched to a multiple vehicle accident on the interstate on January 25th at 2:30 am. Enroute we had our normal discussion of duties and our assignments once on the scene. Upon arrival we noticed the accident was just past the on ramp to the interstate we were traveling on.

We noticed that there was a tractor trailer stopped short of the on ramp, parked in the slow outside lane. At this point he had that lane shut down. We parked the apparatus at the top of the on ramp, just short of the interstate, and asked that the police department block traffic to the entrance of the on ramp we occupied. There were very few vehicles in the lanes of travel stopped on our side of the interstate. In fact it was very unusual for traffic to be that light and to be that quiet.

Our crew dismounted the apparatus and proceeded to the accident scene with proper turnout gear and equipment to perform their tasks of accessing injuries and any possible hazards that may be present.

Just before the crew approached the vehicles, two vehicles out of nowhere entered our emergency scene at a high rate of speed and hit the multiple car accident. It happened so fast we had to take accountability of our crew as well as bystanders and victims. Luckily there were no patients in the original vehicles. They were all on the grass area of the interstate behind the jersey walls at the time of the second collision.

If our crew had been just a little quicker in dismounting the apparatus or if we had arrived a little sooner, we would have possibly had three fatalities involving fire personnel.

Lessons Learned

The lessons learned here were to secure the emergency scene before committing yourself and your crews.

All lanes were not secured before emergency crews committed themselves to this incident scene.

We suspect that due to the position of the parked tractor trailer and the position of the fire apparatus, the fast lane traffic could not readily see the emergency lights of our vehicle. We, as an emergency unit, did not make a visible statement and make our presence known to traffic or warn traffic of the hazards ahead of them.

Every individual in your crew must take responsibility for situational awareness and insure the safety of others as well as themselves.

Since this incident, we are insuring that we have control of the interstate when an incident occurs. Make your presence known in a big way. We now have multiple lanes to deal with, five to six in both directions.

If we have an incident on the interstate, we shut down up to three lanes utilizing the apparatus along with traffic cones and the police department. When we do this, traffic is bottlenecked down to two to three lanes of travel. This slows traffic down to a manageable level and makes the emergency scene much safer for crews to operate in. If traffic begins to speed up to a level that is unacceptable, either the police department or fire department will stop traffic momentarily and then release it again.

Take control of the situation and make it as safe as it can be. If necessary, shut it all down. You may have the police department question this action, but it's better to stop traffic than to have a worse scene than you started with when you arrived.

Emergency personnel should wear their turnout gear to be highly visible, especially at night.

The night the incident occurred, we don't know if placing the apparatus across both lanes would have prevented the second collision or not. This is due to the fact that the two vehicles that entered our emergency scene were racing each other and may not have had time to stop anyway.

With this in mind, apparatus placement is crucial. Park the apparatus diagonally to the lanes of travel and far enough back from the incident scene to give yourself a buffer zone in case it is hit. When weather is a factor such as snow or ice, increase this distance. Use common sense and think safety. Know that there are no routine incidents and that we as emergency workers can't afford to take our safety for granted.