



ROTM October 2013

ROTM: “Technological improvement reveals adversity for FF” (13-353) (Topical Relation: Technology)

Technology is becoming an integral part of the fire service and is designed with the intent to help firefighters and not hinder them. However, depending on staffing levels, response matrix and city logistics, technology might not be the best practice for firefighters. This generation has become so programmed to respond to a beep on a phone, tablet or other computer device that we often times let the technology override the practice of using good judgment and common sense. Computers and technology are great and are a necessity in today’s fire service to help us evolve. However, as firefighters, we cannot let the computer take control of how we do business each and every day. Report [13-353](#) details a nearly catastrophic event caused by technology. In report [13-353](#), the reporter was locked into what the on-board computer device was saying and the reporter was not paying attention to the road, thus inhibiting the actual response to the scene.

“I was responding code to a reported fire in my first due district. I have been to this address a hundred times and could literally drive in my sleep there... We recently got computers in the chief vehicles and I was reading the notes and attempting to drive at the same time. Next thing I know I am head to head with oncoming traffic and nearly had a collision. I swerved and ended up going off the road and then recovered back to the pavement and continued to the call. Once on scene I was so frazzled I couldn't even make good decisions and was thankful that the call was burnt food... Technology is great and I am all for it. However, unless you have a driver, utilization of on-board computers is insane and someone is going to get hurt!”

Report [13-353](#) illustrates the reality we all face during responses in today’s fire service. The driver became so entranced by the information on the on-board computer that it impacted the ability to drive safely. In report [13-353](#), if the reporter didn’t show up on scene, there could have been a compromise in safety even greater than there already was. Command and control are the backbone to every operation. If the Incident Commander never shows up or is disoriented from a traumatic event, then the systems and protocols are breached, potentially providing an unsafe fireground. Technology is great and has been developed to help insure firefighter safety and health. Developing a best practice approach to using technology in the fire service is the key to success.

1. Chief Officers, do you have on board computers in your chief buggy? If so, do you have a driver, or do you not read it while en route to a call?
2. Officers, there is valuable information that can be transmitted via computer during a response. Do you communicate all information to your crew during the response, prior to arrival?
3. Firefighters, is the on-board computer in plain sight for you to review during a response? If not, do you ask the company officer what the notes say, so that it will help your pre-arrival IAP?
4. When was the last time you sat down as a crew and reviewed or developed a policy to utilize technology safely during response?



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Technology such as on-board computers is a useful tool that can provide a higher level safety during a response. There are several factors that limit firefighters from using technology at all times, but with deliberate training and sound policies these factors can be overcome easily. Technology is here to stay and the fire service needs to embrace these advances safely. Don't let a computer make the difference in making a common sense decision versus a programmed response.

Related Reports – Topical Relation: Technology

[10-066](#)

[10-332](#)

[13-332](#)

[07-827](#)

Have you avoided a near-miss because you took the time to utilize technology safely? Submit your report to [http://www.firefighternearmiss.com/](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com) today to pass on your experience.

Note: The questions posed by the reviewers are designed to generate discussion and thought in the name of promoting firefighter safety. They are not intended to pass judgment on the actions and performance of individuals in the reports.

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National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Report

Report Number: 13-0000353

Report Date: 08/19/2013 21:48

Synopsis: Technological improvement reveals adversity for FF

Event Description

I was responding code 3 to a reported fire in my first due district. I have been to this address a hundred times and could literally drive in my sleep there, I thought. We recently got computers in the chief vehicles and I was reading the notes and attempting to drive at the same time. Next thing I know I am head to head with oncoming traffic and nearly had a collision. I swerved and ended up going off the road and then recovered back to the pavement and continued to the call. Once on scene I was so frazzled I couldn't even make good decisions and was thankful that the call was burnt food.

Lessons Learned

Technology is great and I am all for it. However, unless you have a driver, utilization of on-board computers is insane and someone is going to get hurt!

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Assistant Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 24 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Region: FEMA Region X

Service Area: Rural

Event Information

Event type: Fire emergency event: structure fire, vehicle fire, wildland fire, etc.

Event date and time: 06/04/2013 09:30

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

What were the contributing factors? Human error, fatigue

What do you believe is the loss potential? Life threatening injury