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Report of the Week

It's all fun and games until...

11/20/08

Report Number: 08-122

Report Date: 03/02/2008 1550

Synopsis

Rescuer nearly poked in eye by car antenna at MVA.

Demographics

Department type: Volunteer

Job or rank: Assistant Chief

Department shift: Respond from home

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 30+

Region: FEMA Region II

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Non-fire emergency event: auto extrication, technical rescue, emergency medical call, service calls, etc

Event date and time: 12/21/2007 2335

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

- SOP / SOG
- Situational Awareness
- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

On Friday December 21, 2007 at 2335 hours, I responded to an MVA on our interstate – north bound. I was the first fire department unit on the scene and assumed command. Also on the scene was a unit from the state police. The vehicle involved was a late model SUV that was resting on the shoulder on the driver's side. I had put on my PPE when the police officer asked me to tend to the victim. I approached the vehicle and sized up the situation. There was no fire or smoke, a slight amount of antifreeze had leaked. I was able to make contact with the victim by the rear tail gate. The victim was in no immediate distress. I backed away from the vehicle, and the police officer moved me to the front of the car to point out a possible entry point. As I approached the area, I made

contact with the vehicle antenna, marginally missing my left eye, but it made a mark on my skin near the eye socket. This was a very near miss by I would say 2 to 3 mm's. The loss of an eye could have been a real thing in this case.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned: • The road conditions were very dark – even though on an interstate, the use of hand lights should have been taken in this case to better see the area. • When approaching a vehicle, make sure all PPE – including eye protection are fully on • Do not get lulled out of command into a task function.

Discussion Questions

We only have one pair of eyes. They are among the most fragile organs we have, yet they provide us with one of the most powerful capacities we know. A survey conducted in Britain found that over 90% of the people polled ranked sight as the sense they would most hate to lose. While working at the incident scene or for that matter anyplace that has the potential to damage our eyes, the simple act of putting on a pair of ANSI approved safety glasses lessens the potential for the "unexpected." The whole concept of "unexpected" in our business is worth extensive exploration. But that is for another discussion. After you have reviewed the reports cited this week, and given some thought to your own experience, consider the following:

1. What are your state's "OSHA" rules for eye protection?
2. Why do you think firefighters are lax about wearing eye protection?
3. Is your faceshield an acceptable substitute for eye protection?
4. Does your department issue ANSI approved eye protection to each member or provide it at hazardous work stations?
5. What is your department's SOPs for wearing eye protection?

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.