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Report of the Week

"Is the RIT Ready for Overhaul Operations?"
1/5/2012

Report Number: 11-0000330

Report Date: 10/26/2011 16:38

Synopsis

Ceiling collapses on FF during overhaul.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Lieutenant

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 10/25/2011 04:30

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 were the contributing factors?

- Teamwork
- SOP / SOG
- Situational Awareness
- Communication
- Accountability
-

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury
- Minor injury

Event Description

We were on our second air bottle and had just left rehab and relieved another company operating inside the structure. We proceeded to a bedroom where the fire damage was significant in search of hot spots. One crew member ascended a scuttle hole ladder in an adjacent bedroom to better assess the attic space, while the rest of us began accessing the ceiling with pike poles. I momentarily walked to the hall doorway to acquire a PAR when I heard a tremendous noise behind me. Turning, I saw a large pile of debris consisting of heavy roof material in the center of the room where we were operating. One firefighter was against an interior wall with no sign of the second. The firefighter against the wall cried out that the ceiling had fallen on a team member. A MAYDAY call was immediately

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transmitted and Command initiated RIT procedures. We instantly began to dig through the rubble in search of the downed firefighter. The firefighter on the ladder informed me he could not acquire a visual on the downed firefighter, stating the possibility of him falling into the basement. I radioed this to Command & continued our search. Surrounding fire ground operations continued as we located the trapped Firefighter underneath heavy debris. He was "on air" and conscious but unable to free himself throughout the ordeal. Extrication ensued and he was taken to an awaiting ALS unit where, after assessment, he was found to have only minor injuries. Department procedure then dictated he be taken to an appropriate medical facility for observation. He was treated and released later that day.

Lessons Learned

Addressing the collapse; any time a company is operating on the interior, regardless of phase, structural integrity is always a consideration. Advanced burn depths, the presence of gusset plates, and other factors should sound internal alarms, not only for the company officer, but for all team members operating on the interior. In my opinion, training as a team and keeping our team together on the fire ground was paramount in the quick and successful extrication of the trapped firefighter. Having procedures in place, and training extensively for MAYDAY type situations and RIT scenarios gave us confidence in our actions when the need arose to save one of our own.

Report of the Week

This year, the first Report of the Week (ROTW) for each month will focus on the topic of the corresponding month in the 2012 Near-Miss Calendar. In addition, on the Resources page of www.firefighternearmiss.com, under the heading "2012 Calendar" you will find supplemental training information for each month's topic. You can also download a copy of the calendar and the "War Stories with a Purpose" poster that appears on the back cover of the calendar.

January's calendar topic is "Mayday Command." The featured report for this ROTW is Report [11-330](#) which identifies the need to maintain a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) during the final phases of extinguishment. Fighting a fire is a dynamic activity. Many of the safety elements are predictable if all of the suppression factors are known. One of the strategies used to address the unknown is to assign a RIT. A RIT is the element that tips the "unpredictable" scale in the favor of a fire ground commander. This reserve of fresh personnel and equipment may mean the difference in a successful outcome if you hear the words "mayday, mayday, mayday" over the radio.

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Managing a mayday operation requires coordination of effort and advanced planning throughout the incident. Eventually, the incident will progress to the overhaul stage. When the conditions change, crews are reassigned to accomplish these new tasks. The RIT must stay in place to protect these crews. In the case of this report, the RIT maintained their assignment to protect firefighters still operating in the structure. After reading Report [11-330](#) and the related reports listed below consider the following discussion points.

1. Do the policies for your department define the duties of a rapid intervention team?
2. If you were the firefighter trapped in this report, would your crew have sufficient equipment and training to activate the mayday and remove you from this collapse?
3. Do you and/or your crew need to train more on mayday-related skills [search, extrication, Location Unit Name Assignment Resources (LUNAR) report, etc.]? If so, make plans to do so this month. Also discuss the last mayday call that you are aware of.
4. As a general practice, at what point during fire operations is the RIT released for reassignment in your department?
5. Take a moment to discuss with the crew the last mayday you have heard about.

Related Reports - Topical Relation: Mayday, RIT preparedness, Floor collapse

[10-1286](#)

[09-1129](#)

[08-851](#)

[07-1061](#)

[06-139](#)

[05-564](#)

Has an incident involving a mayday changed the course of your career? Send your report in to www.firefighternearmiss.com today so that everyone goes home tomorrow.

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.