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Report of the Week

Following 1403 Pays Off.

01/27/2011

Report Number: 11-0000011

Report Date: 01/13/2011 15:19

Synopsis

Floor collapses at training fire.

Demographics

Department type: Volunteer

Job or rank: Deputy Chief

Department shift: Respond from home

Age:

Years of fire service experience:

Region: FEMA Region II

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Training activities: formal training classes, in-station drills, multi-company drills, etc.

Event date and time: 12/12/2010 00:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event:

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Event Description

Brackets [] denote reviewer de-identification.

On Sunday [date deleted], the Training Division of the [name deleted] Department of Fire-Rescue Services held a live fire training exercise. Firefighters were just finishing up our fourth burn, and were looking at the previous fire re-progression, when the floor collapsed as they were standing in the room. Five firefighters fell into a four foot crawl space, suffering minor injuries. Our RIT team that was in place as per NFPA 1403 initiated rescues and assisted all five firefighters in self-extrication. All were ambulatory and walked to the EMS staging area where they were treated and transported for minor injuries. They were then treated and released from a local hospital. There were a total of 47 firefighters from seven fire departments, on scene.

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1 of 3

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Lessons Learned

The building in question was inspected by the Code Enforcement Office and building inspectors. The entire exercise was based on NFPA 1403. The Office of the Chief is working with local authorities and the state, to determine this unforeseen structural problem.

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Conducting a live fire burn provides firefighters with a level of realism that is unsurpassed. Such training exercises are much sought after and provide valuable experience. Today's live burn requires an extensive investment of time and preparation because at the end of the day, as we have been tragically reminded, we are still dealing with an element that still refuses to be fully harnessed – fire. The acquired structure burn, following NFPA 1403 Live Fire Training Evolutions, lays out a comprehensive plan for conducting an exercise in the safest manner possible. The value in following the standard is never more evident than when safety precautions need to be put in practice. "Checking the boxes" with diligence pays off every time.

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"On Sunday [date deleted], the Training Division of the [name deleted] Department of Fire-Rescue Services held a live fire training exercise. Firefighters were just finishing up our fourth burn, and were looking at the previous fire re-progression, when the floor collapsed as they were standing in the room. Five firefighters fell into a four foot crawl space, suffering minor injuries. Our RIT team that was in place as per NFPA 1403 initiated rescues and assisted all five firefighters in self-extrication...."

A second element that provides a degree of unpredictability is the stability of the structure being burned. As [11-0011](#) suggests, fire related maydays are not the only consideration to prepare for. A rapid intervention team properly trained, staffed and positioned pays huge dividends when their activation is needed. When everything is in place, "unexpected" events are handled swiftly because the "unexpected" event is actually anticipated. Once you have read the entire account of [11-0011](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. How in depth of a structural stability assessment does your department conduct when the pre-burn inspection is conducted?
2. Does your department have a relationship with the local building department that allows you to use a building inspector for the structural assessment?
3. What are some of the components you should be looking at when conducting a structural stability inspection.
4. Would you consider it safe to burn in a structure that was structurally sound in one portion of the structure, but not in another?
5. What criteria does your department have for staffing a rapid intervention team?

Related Reports – Topical Relation: 1403 Live Burn Training

[05-053](#)

[06-341](#)

[07-851](#)

[08-234](#)

[09-153](#)

[10-335](#)

To view NFPA 1403, [click here](#).

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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.