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Report of the Week

That is somebody's loved one.
02/10/2011

Report Number: 05-0000435

Report Date: 08/12/2005 15:56

Synopsis Firefighter carrying 10' pike pole nearly touches high power line. Ignored fire line tape.

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: Straight days (12 hour)

Age: 16 - 24

Years of fire service experience: 0 - 3

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 08/08/2005 14:00

Hours into the shift: 5 - 8

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event:

Do you think this will happen again? No

What were the contributing factors?

- Individual Action
- Decision Making

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury

Event Description

First off, I'm a rookie in the department, so my experience is limited to what I have done in the field already and my academy. The event that took place that could have seriously injured, if not killed me happened at a structure fire of a single family home. After extinguishment of the fire, a firefighter went to the side of the house to start hooking siding. I really wanted to do something so I asked my officer if I could help out. He told me okay and I grabbed a pike pole off the first-in pumper. I didn't quite focus on the fact that the pike pole was 10 feet long, but I knew it was big. I didn't think anything of it because we were pulling off siding that was high on the house. I started walking over to where everyone was standing next to the house. On my way over to the house I had to duck under fireline tape that was stretched across the side yard. When I stopped I propped the pike pole up and asked everyone what I could do. When everyone turned around they all freaked because my pike pole was inches below a possibly live powerline. I later found out that the fire line tape that was stretched across

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the yard was not to keep citizens out of the way, but to let everyone know there was a hazard.

Lessons Learned

The lesson that I learned from this was that when I get anxious I need to stop and think about the situation and take in the scene. I will also always pull a six foot pike pole unless instructed otherwise. Finally, whenever I see fireline tape I won't just think of it as a tool used to keep onlookers out, but to inform everyone of hazards.

Report of the Week

"Rookies," "probies," "boots," or whatever the new firefighter is called in your department is a unique and special breed of person. They typically have boundless energy, are eager to please, want to prove themselves and are looking for acceptance. All of these attributes and desires should be evaluated with one thing in mind. The rookie is the most vulnerable member of the organization due directly to all of these attributes. This week's ROTW, [05-435](#), was selected after entering "rookie" in the keyword search and fifty reports were returned. Nine additional reports are returned when "probie" is entered. Each of these reports contains a reminder that while the rookie may dress like us; they are still in need of an extra measure of attention to allow them to make it from their probationary period to journeyman firefighter.

"First off, I'm a rookie in the department, so my experience is limited to what I have done in the field already and my academy. The event that took place that could have seriously injured, if not killed me happened at a structure fire of a single family home... I really wanted to do something so I asked my officer if I could help out. He told me okay and I grabbed a pike pole off the first-in pumper. I didn't quite focus on the fact that the pike pole was 10 feet long, but I knew it was big... I started walking over to where everyone was standing next to the house. On my way over to the house I had to duck under fireline tape that was stretched across the side yard. When I stopped I propped the pike pole up and asked everyone what I could do. When everyone turned around they all freaked because my pike pole was inches below a possibly live powerline. I later found out that the fire line tape that was stretched across the yard was not to keep citizens out of the way, but to let everyone know there was a hazard."

The "rookie" in this submission is by now a seasoned veteran. One of the remarkable aspects of this report is the fact that it was submitted by a rookie when near-miss reporting was also a "rookie." This contribution to firefighter safety at the reporter's early development suggests that the value of near-miss reporting resonates at all levels of our service. Once you have read the entire account of [05-435](#), and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Review the probationary development program your department uses. Does it include a continuation of the training/evaluation process after academy training is complete?
2. The reporter notes he "...didn't focus on the fact that the pike pole was 10 feet long..." Would you describe this as a "rookie mistake" or loss of situational awareness on the part of his officer and crew? Discuss your point of view.
3. How often is fire line tape crossed at your incident scenes?

4. What strategies do you employ to ensure a healthy learning environment is maintained to balance a rookie's enthusiasm with the need to protect them from making "rookie mistakes" that could result in injury?
5. Do you employ a mentoring process where a senior firefighter is responsible for rookie development or do you personally handle rookie development? What are the pros and cons of each method?

Related Reports – Topical Relation:

[06-415](#)

[06-567](#)

[07-744](#)

[08-599](#)

[09-050](#)

[10-903](#)

Do you know of near miss that involved a rookie or experienced a near miss while you were a rookie? Submit your report to www.firefighternearmiss.com today so other rookies make it through probation in one piece.

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.