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Report of the Week

A good, swift kick in the door...
2/12/09

Report Number: 06-454

Report Date: 09/03/2006 1351

Synopsis

Situational awareness minimizes danger when floor collapses.

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Lieutenant

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 11 - 13

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: 12/11/2005 0635

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event:

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

- Other

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Other

Event Description

We were dispatched to a house fire with one person trapped on the roof. Our units arrived along with the battalion chief right behind us. My truck was the first unit to turn on to the street. Visibility was diminished due to the amount of smoke being produced. We finally arrived and I gave a report of "Truck [# deleted] on the scene, with a two story single family, heavy smoke showing." ECC in turn asked if I was direct on the one trapped on the roof. I advised that "I was OK". At this point, my driver retrieved a 16' roof ladder and placed it to the awning on side-A and began to try to rescue the homeowner. This freed my tiller-man and me to do forcible entry for the Engine Co. as well as rapid ventilation. Once I donned my SCBA and proceeded to side-A, the homeowner advised me the floor was only held up by three beams and expressed concern for Fire/Rescue units operating in the house. I in turn radioed an urgent message to command advising him that "The homeowner advised that there are only three beams holding up the first floor, advise units that will operate on the first floor to use extreme caution." I then forced the front door open by kicking it and was greeted by a large amount of thick smoke. My next task was to perform a circle check. While performing this I realized that the fire was in the basement, again I gave an urgent radio message to command, "Be advised that the fire is in the

A good, swift kick in the door

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basement." They acknowledged and asked if there was an entrance to the basement from the exterior. I advised command that there was and ordered my tiller-man to force the door open. Unfortunately, he had dropped his hydra-ram in the front believing that when I kicked the front door we would proceed in to the first floor. I asked him at this point to retrieve it and come back in order to fulfill my request. At this point, I vented a window on side-B to the basement and could see where the bulk of the fire was. Engine [# deleted] crew was with me at the window, I asked the OIC if they were ready to attack the fire; he said yes. I then entered through the window followed by Engine [# deleted] crew. We began an aggressive attack on the fire, but realized our pressure was not sufficient to do the job. At this time, the door which I had asked to be forced was open, so by my tiller-man, along with Engine [# deleted] crew entered the door and joined in the operations in the basement. We continued our operation for a few minutes until I observed the first floor sagging and beginning to give way where the fire was most concentrated. I ordered all the personnel from the basement and advised command for a third time of an urgent message, "Be advised the first floor just gave way in to the basement." Command then advised me to remove all personnel from the fire floor. I advised him that "All personnel were told to do so and everyone was already out of the basement." At this point, we began to operate in a defensive attack until we extinguished the fire.

Lessons Learned

Proper communications played a key role. The ability to have control of personnel and have them follow orders also assisted in no one getting seriously injured and or killed.

Discussion Questions

The task of forcible entry is an assignment that does not end when the first door or other access is made. Personnel assigned to the task should keep all tools with them for this very reason. Once you have read the entire account of [#06-454](#) and considered the additional points in the related reports, discuss the following:

1. How is forcible entry assigned in your department?
2. Have you been taught to force entry using your body (i.e., shoulder into the door, kicking the door, etc.)?
3. What is the ratio of hydraulic forcible entry training (Hydra-ram/Rabbit Tool) versus manual forcible training (using irons/through-the-lock) you have received since getting on the fire department?
4. When was the last actual forced entry you had to make on the fire scene? On the non-emergency scene?
5. What actions do you take to restore the integrity of the forced door/lock after the emergency is mitigated?

Related Reports

[05-514](#)

[06-527](#)

[07-861](#)

[08-236](#)

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.