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## Report of the Week

"Look out from above!"

2/16/2012

**Report Number:** 10-0000495

Report Date: 03/17/2010 15:35

### Synopsis

Attic crew collapses ceiling above attack crew.

### Event Description

While overhauling a room in a live burn at an acquired structure, a firefighter in the attic displaced part of the ceiling causing the collapse of the ceiling onto a fire suppression crew below. One firefighter sustained minor injuries to the shoulder and a second was uninjured when the ceiling fell. Both were struck with debris. Proper communication between levels could have prevented the incident from occurring. While the injuries were minor, they could have been worse depending on the location of the firefighters in relationship to the collapse.

### Lessons Learned

When working on multiple floors, communications must be established to ensure a clear understanding of the events that will occur on each level. If proper communication procedures had been utilized, the fire suppression crew could have been relocated while the attic crew overhauled the ceiling, reducing the risk of injury.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Lieutenant

Department shift: Duty night (in-station)

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region I

Service Area: Suburban

### Event Information

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

Event date and time: 03/09/2010 20:00

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?

- Communication

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury
- Minor injury
- Life threatening injury

"Look out from above!"

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## Report of the Week

Although fires in burn buildings at training facilities serve an important function, sometimes the training is marginalized because of familiarity with the building and knowledge of where the burn pan is located. Live fire training in acquired structures is beneficial to departments because of the dynamic challenges that it poses to firefighters. Live burning in acquired structures allows for departments to deviate from the "routine training burn" and offer new and unique challenges that cannot be produced in a training building. The development and implementation of a sound NFPA 1403 burn plan is essential in providing a safe training environment for firefighters. In a burn plan, parameters must be set for each operational period with objectives clearly stated and understood by all participants. Report [10-495](#) details the adverse and dangerous outcomes that can happen without a coordinated NFPA 1403 burn plan.

*"While overhauling a room in a live burn at an acquired structure, a firefighter in the attic displaced part of the ceiling causing the collapse of the ceiling onto a fire suppression crew below. One firefighter sustained minor injuries to the shoulder and a second was uninjured when the ceiling fell. Both were struck with debris. Proper communication between levels could have prevented the incident from occurring. While the injuries were minor, they could have been worse depending on the location of the firefighters in relationship to the collapse."*

Taking extra time to communicate objectives and goals, as they relate to the training, can make all the difference when it comes to live fire training. Using a NFPA 1403 burn plan with pre and post briefings will help establish a "best practices" approach toward training in acquired structures. Report [10-495](#) illustrates that the lack of a good communication plan with clear and deliberate objectives jeopardized the safety of personnel. Once you have read the entire account of Report [10-495](#), and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Does your department have a policy regarding live fire training in acquired structures?
2. Does your department work with the city legal department to determine acceptable liability limits when training in an acquired structure?
3. When training at an acquired structure, do you have a safety officer that does a preplan to identify potential exposure hazards, such as asbestos?
4. When was the last time you and your crew reviewed NFPA 1403, prior to engaging a training evolution in an acquired structure?

Training in acquired structures is a luxury that departments can take full advantage of, as long as they follow a detailed NFPA 1403 burn plan. Unfortunately, without a plan, we unnecessarily put our firefighters at risk, without fully realizing the risk that is associated with training of this nature.

## Related Reports – Topical Relation: Live Fire Training

[06-341](#)

[10-996](#)

[10-1048](#)

[09-1008](#)

Have you avoided a near-miss because of proper planning and developing a NFPA 1403 burn plan? Submit your report to [www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com) today to pass on your experience.

*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.*

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