



[www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://www.firefighternearmiss.com)

## Report of the Week

Shots fired!

3/4/2010

**Report Number:** 10-0000308

Report Date: 02/24/2010 07:51

### Synopsis

Exploding ammo hits FFs TOG and apparatus.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Deputy Chief

Department shift: Other: 8 or 12 hour days (career), Vol. nights

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Rural

### Event Information

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

Event date and time: 01/15/2010 10:30

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Witnessed event but not directly involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Other

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage
- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury
- Minor injury

### Event Description

First arriving units to a fully-involved structure fire (a double-wide with add-ons), were met with the unmistakable sounds of ammunition being cooked off in the structure about fifty feet from their engine. Based on these conditions, the crews decided upon a defensive operation. They used the truck mounted deck gun to quickly cool the corner of the structure where the ammunition was located.

Incident command was established and a safety perimeter was declared. After just a few minutes on scene, one of the pump operators felt that he had been struck on the back by a projectile. A quick check, noted no visible injury and he quickly returned to pump operations. However, damage was noted to the outer shell of his bunker coat.

A post incident review and an inspection of the pump operator's gear revealed a projectile had penetrated his coat's outer shell, skimmed across the vapor barrier, and exited the outer shell a few inches lateral of the first penetration.

After leaving the coat, the projectile then struck the engine causing damage to the unit. The pump operator was standing next to the engine, facing the rear of the truck. This angle allowed the projectile to pass through his gear and then hit the apparatus. It is now obvious that if the operator had been facing towards or away from the apparatus, the projectile would have most likely entered his body.

A couple of days after this incident (as another member of the first arriving engine was inspecting his gear), he also noticed that his coat had been penetrated with an entrance and exit hole under the arm area. He felt that this most likely occurred while he was on top of the engine setting the direction of the deck gun. Therefore, there were actually two close calls of a similar nature on this single incident.

### **Lessons Learned**

One of the important lessons learned or reinforced on this incident, is that situational awareness to the potential hazards along with appropriate decision making for the incident is imperative. Also, that wearing your gear can make a difference in more ways than it was designed. Even in defensive operations there can be many unanticipated risks and the "hot zone" can quickly change at an incident. Spending a little extra and buying gear that will protect you from more than just the "minimum requirements" is not a bad idea. Engineers and others not involved in (active) firefighting need to be in gear and are not exempt from the hazards of the job.

### **Discussion Questions**

Once you have read the entire account of [10-308](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Has anyone in your crew experienced the sound of ammunition "cooking off" at a structure fire? If yes, what can they tell the rest of the crew about the experience (e.g., when the sound was recognized, what the cooking off sounded like, etc.)?
2. Does your department have an SOP addressing tactics for fighting fires involving firearms and ammunition?
3. Do you have ammunition on your list of concerns when you arrive at a structure or vehicle fire?
4. Can ammunition that is "cooking off" develop enough velocity to penetrate tissue and bone?
5. What are some precautions that should be taken when ammunition or weapons are known to be involved in a structure or vehicle fire?

### **Related Reports – Topical Relation: Ammunition**

[05-321](#)    [06-562](#)    [07-1147](#)    [08-190](#)    [09-631](#)

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.