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Report of the Week

Keep your head on a swivel

3/12/09

Report Number: 08-582

Report Date: 11/10/2008 1055

Synopsis

Training Officer hit by apparatus guide stick.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 25 - 33

Years of fire service experience: 7 - 10

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 11/07/2008 1400

Hours into the shift: 5 - 8

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

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again? Uncertain

What do you believe caused the event?

- Individual Action
- Equipment
- Decision Making
- Situational Awareness
- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury
- Minor injury

Event Description

Our F.D. recently took delivery of a new mid-mount tower ladder. During E.V.O.C. training with the ladder, a broom handle was zip-tied to the bucket of the tower and stuck out on the driver's side so during driving operations, the drivers can visualize how far back the bucket sits. One engineer had just completed the evolution and a new driver jumped in the seat to place the apparatus at the starting point. The training captain moved a cone to allow the apparatus to pass. After the apparatus had passed and began its turn to move to the starting point, the training captain returned the cone and began to walk forward, not taking account for the bucket, which had not passed him yet. The captain was struck in the hip by the broom handle (which had a tennis ball on the end of it). The zip ties broke off and the broom handle fell off the bucket.

Keep your head on a swivel

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The captain reported no injuries, but luckily was only hit by the broom handle and not the bucket itself. The driver never knew what had happened and continued on.

Lessons Learned

Stay clear of any moving apparatus, especially when it is during training evolutions where the drivers are unfamiliar with the vehicle. It is also important to always keep clear of the rear bucket of a tower ladder. The drivers cannot see you when you are in close proximity to the bucket. Keep situational awareness at all times. If driving, keep eye contact with those around your vehicle and keep your speed in check. Never assume that those bystanders will move out of your way. If you are working around vehicles, even in training situations, wear your traffic safety vest.

Discussion Questions

Whether you are staying “in tune,” or “situationally aware,” or as lacrosse players are told, “keeping your head on a swivel,” report [08-582](#) presents another timely and well written submittal to improve firefighter safety. Reviewing this experience can better equip everyone involved in driver training with another reminder to ensure safety elements are in place to maximize learning and minimize risk. After you have reviewed [08-582](#) and the related reports below, consider the following:

1. When new apparatus arrives, does your department complete a “train the trainer” program with the manufacturer’s representative, or are all members directly trained by the manufacturer’s rep?
2. How many hours of driver/operator training are required for new apparatus delivered to your department?
3. When a new type of apparatus goes in service (e.g., first aerial, new pump, air service truck) is there a recertification requirement to ensure competence?
4. Is there a safety officer assigned to your department’s training section?
5. Who monitors safety during your department’s training activities?

Related Reports

[05-525](#)

[06-390](#)

[07-1071](#)

[09-208](#)

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.