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Report of the Week

Training + Seat Belts = Survivors
4/2/09

Report Number: 09-265

Report Date: 03/11/2009 1545

Synopsis

Seat belts protect ARFF FFs when unit rolls.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 09/23/2008 1215

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Told of event, but neither involved nor witnessed event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

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

Event Description

An ARFF unit was dispatched by the airport FAA control tower on a "response drill" to a location within the aircraft operating area. Because of aircraft traffic occupying the primary response route from the fire station to the location dispatched, the ARFF driver chose an alternate route that included traveling a short distance on a two lane airport service road. While attempting to negotiate a fairly tight left hand curve, the right front wheels of the apparatus left the roadway onto the right shoulder. The driver applied brakes and attempted to bring the wheels back onto the roadway but over corrected left causing the apparatus to roll onto it's left side then top. All three personnel aboard were properly belted and were not thrown about or ejected. One firefighter suffered an injury. The apparatus was destroyed. Approximate replacement cost = \$750,000.00

Lessons Learned

Training + Seat Belts = Survivors

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Although timed responses such as this one are important to ensure compliance with standards of response coverage, NO event is so important as to deviate from safe driving guidelines. If a response drill is delayed by irregular operations of any kind (such as unexpected traffic), it should be aborted and attempted again at a later time.

Drivers of this type apparatus (ARFF) must maintain situational awareness regarding all aspects of the response (terrain, weather conditions, visibility, etc), and the performance characteristics of the apparatus they are driving.

Discussion Questions

There are several points to draw from this near-miss event, so do not put this one aside if you do not ride an ARFF rig. The rollover of an ARFF rig is similar in circumstances to another large piece of firefighting apparatus, the tender (or tanker if you are east of the Mississippi). Once you have reviewed the entire contents of [09-265](#), consider the following:

1. Does your department include "response" type training in its training regimen?
2. Are there any special considerations, training or instruction provided to drivers of your department's larger apparatus (i.e., tanker/tenders, special service rigs, etc.)?
3. Does the pre-drill briefing include a safety message that emphasizes personnel safety as high a priority as goal achievement?
4. During "timed" drills, who monitors performance to ensure safety supersedes all other performance aspects?
5. In this week's report, aircraft traffic blocks the primary response route. What other obstacles/impediments do you encounter in your own jurisdiction when training on the street?

Related Reports

05-402

06-089

07-1106

08-601

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.