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## Report of the Week

Thrown under the carpet  
4/9/09

**Report Number: 09-251**

Report Date: 03/06/2009 1517

### Synopsis

Carpet traps firefighters.

### Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: 24 hours on - 24 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region VI

Service Area: Urban

### Event Information

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

Event date and time: 04/10/1987 0455

Hours into the shift: 21 - 24

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What were the contributing factors?

- Situational Awareness
- Unknown

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury

### Event Description

We were at a carpet warehouse trying to make entry into a pole barn type structure. On a scale of 10, this incident was shaping up to be about a 5. When all of the sudden, someone hollers "it's falling". When I heard this, I pivoted and took about a half step when carpet and wall buried me and others. The carpet and wall pinned me facedown in a fetal position and the contents were on fire. I could not move anything. I did not have my regulator popped in. If it had been in, I might have died due to not being able to remove the regulator once I ran out of air.

### Lessons Learned

Our company needs a pass device so they will be able to locate trapped firefighters.

There needs to be better awareness that it is common practice in the carpet industry to stack carpet against the walls. A couple years prior, another firefighter was killed under the same circumstances.

### Discussion Questions

Thrown under the carpet

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The carpet warehouse in this report and other warehouses store rolled, unsecured stock which poses an ominous, irreversible threat to firefighters. These occupancies often mask the severity of the fire inside the building due to the large ceilings, and limited visibility created by the rolls of stored stock. Seemingly insignificant signs (little smoke showing, no fire evident, hazes of smoke at the ceiling level) belie significant working fires in the structure. Once you have read the entire account of [09-251](#), and the related warehouse reports listed below, consider the following:

1. How many "high hazard" occupancies can you identify in your first due response area?
2. When did you last conduct a walk-thru of warehouse/storage areas in your area?
3. Does your department have strategies, SOPs and pre-plans in place for handling large area buildings?
4. How do you maintain awareness of fire conditions in high ceiling occupancies?
5. Under what conditions should personnel be committed to areas where unsecured, rolled stock is being stored?

### **Related Reports**

05-658

06-171

07-851

08-079

*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.*