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Report of the Week

I thought he...she...they took care of that!
4/25/08

Report Number: 06-348

Report Date: 07/01/2006 1935

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Other: PM/FF

Department shift: 10 hour days, 14 hour nights (2-2-4)

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 24 - 26

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Non-fire emergency event: auto extrication, technical rescue, emergency medical call, service calls, etc

Event date and time: 06/21/2006 2300

Hours into the shift: 5 - 8

Event participation: Involved in the event

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

- Situational Awareness
- Training Issue
- Human Error
- Communication
- Teamwork

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury
- Minor injury
- Property damage

Event Description

We responded to a multi-victim collision on a major interstate, involving a single vehicle. We arrived after the first-in engine, medic and supervisor were on scene. Multiple firefighters were in and around vehicle, removing injured victims. It wasn't until the 3rd transport unit was on the scene that someone realized the vehicle was never secured. It wasn't in park, the ignition was on, and no wheel chocks or vehicle stabilization measures had been taken. The senior officer on the scene had 20 plus years of experience. Everyone must have ASSUMED that "someone else" had already taken care of securing the vehicle. We all have to watch out for those "someone else" guys... they seem to miss a lot...

Lessons Learned

Never assume that someone else has already performed critical safety measures. Beware of tunnel vision - everyone tends to focus on the obvious, and forget about the "little things". Safety Officer is necessary on even the most routine kind of calls. Complacency can hurt

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personnel, and damage equipment. [Reviewers note: If a safety officer is not assigned, command accepts responsibility for that function.]

Discussion Questions

A single vehicle collision draws a multi-unit response due to multiple patients. With everyone vectored in on the victims, who is minding the firefighters? The natural response to the question is that everyone should be looking out for each other. The reality is everyone is focused on the victims and not on one another; even when a department operates under well defined SOPs and SOGs. You may wish to review several of the other reports for additional references to complacency such as **07-916**, **06-487**, **05-482**. After you have reviewed the entire report, consider the following questions.

1. Do your SOPs call for specific duties for each riding assignment? If so, could this same scenario still occur in your department?
2. Does "seniority" play a role in complacency here?
3. Would a separate, designated incident scene safety officer be of any benefit here, given all hands are working?
4. If stabilization was missed, what else may have been overlooked by the crews engaged in patient care?
5. Who would be the incident commander here; the engine officer, medic or the supervisor?

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.