



www.firefighternearmiss.com

Report of the Week

Look out 5 floors below!

5/7/09

Report Number: 09-415

Report Date: 04/11/2009 1116

Synopsis

Debris thrown from high-rise can be hazardous.

Demographics

Department type: Volunteer

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: Respond from home

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 07/14/2005 2100

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

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? Yes

What were the contributing factors?

- Command
- Situational Awareness
- Decision Making

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury
- Minor injury

Event Description

We were dispatched to a working structure fire at an 8-story apartment building with the fire on Division 5. Arriving units reported smoke and fire showing from Side 'A' of the structure on Division 5. Arriving units went to work with evacuation and fire suppression. After fire suppression was completed and the fire was under control, salvage and overhaul started. The officer working within the apartment decided to call command and ask for authorization to remove the smoldering debris from the apartment (i.e. couch, chair, mattress, etc.).

Command gave authorization to have the contents removed. The officer decided to throw the contents from the fifth floor. Upon the mattress hitting the ground, several springs from the mattress shot off like rockets, striking a pump operator in the back of the head. Fortunately, the pump operator was wearing a helmet.

Lessons Learned

Make sure that everyone is clear from the fire ground prior to throwing out debris. Wear proper PPE.

Discussion Questions

The firefighting crews face a dilemma in this week's ROTW in taking care of smoldering debris exists on the fire floor. Past practice (the norm) is to throw the debris out the window. The officer on Division 5 calls for and receives "authorization" to "have the contents removed." After you have reviewed the entire contents of 09-415 and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Should there be a limit on the number of floors above grade debris can be thrown from?
2. What safeguards should be in place when debris is thrown from upper floors?
3. Are there other alternatives to removing smoldering debris from upper floors?
4. Is it necessary to remove debris from upper floor fires?
5. Consider the words used to describe the communication between Command and Division 5. Could there have been a misunderstanding between Command's "authorization" to "remove debris" and Division 5's decision to throw the contents from the 5th Floor? How could that miscommunication be corrected?

Related Reports

05-046

06-554

07-879

08-287

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.