



www.firefighternearmiss.com

Report of the Week

The value of always having a back up
6/4/09

Report Number: 09-501

Report Date: 05/19/2009 1048

Synopsis

Enforcement of backing policy avoided accident.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Lieutenant

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: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 02/12/2008 0000

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- SOP / SOG
- Decision Making

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury
- Property damage

Event Description

We were enroute to a training exercise on a dirt access road behind the county DOT. We arrived at the area and began to look for a training site. We passed a hill and found a training area on the other side. We then realized we had just passed the road that provided access to the site. The driver of the truck told me that he would back up and pull down the road. He told me I didn't have to worry about backing him up because we were on county property and there was no traffic or property to worry about backing into. I told him to stop and let me out anyway.

I walked to the back of the truck and found a small car sitting behind the truck that was waiting to go around us. The car had stopped so close to the rear of the truck that it could not be seen in our mirrors. I waved the car around and backed the driver up.

Lessons Learned

The value of always having a back up

1 of 2

We learned that SOGs are in place to prevent accidents and provide guidelines. We followed the SOG for backing fire apparatus and avoided an accident.

Discussion Questions

Compromising simple best practices has consequences. When faced with a challenge to “skip it this time” or “Don’t worry, I don’t need a back up,” it is incumbent on the officer to lead by example and act in a manner that minimizes risk and gets the job done. Consider the following once you have reviewed the entire narrative and lessons learned from 09-501 and the related reports:

1. What is your department’s backing policy?
2. What are the consequences/discipline set forth if the policy is not followed?
3. Should the officer in 09-501 counsel the driver for suggesting no back up person was needed?
4. Does this incident suggest that the driver deviates from other policies as well?
5. Where is your personal “line in the sand” regarding following safety policies (i.e., unbending, bend when no one is looking, give in to peer pressure, etc.)?

Related Reports

05-170

06-068

07-980

08-405

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.