



www.firefighternearmiss.com

Report of the Week

**"Nobody wins if neither of us gets there."
6/14/2012**

Report Number: 12-0000124

Report Date: 04/25/2012 15:53

Synopsis

Ambulance nearly collides with fire truck.

Event Description

While responding to a medical call with lights and sirens activated on the engine, we experienced a near miss with the responding ambulance from another agency. Our city has [signal preemption devices-brand deleted] on the street lights, where a light on the engine triggers the stop light to turn green and all other directions to turn red. To designate which direction of travel has the light locked up, a solid light is lit up on the light pole while all other directions have a flashing light to designate that there is an emergency vehicle coming from another direction.

In this near miss, we had the intersection locked up with a green signal light and the solid white light illuminated. Approximately 200 feet before the intersection, the responding ambulance came into the intersection.

Lessons Learned

Having the light locked up is not a sure thing. Be sure to yield at every intersection.

Make sure other agencies have the correct training to know what the lights mean.

Have good situational awareness.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 24 hours off

Age: 25 - 33

Years of fire service experience: 4 - 6

Region: FEMA Region VIII

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 04/01/2012 19:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

"Nobody wins if neither of us gets there."

1 of 3

- Training Issue
- Situational Awareness
- Decision Making

What do you believe is the loss potential?

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

Report of the Week

Multi-unit responses require all units to have an awareness of each other's response routes. When the units are from different agencies, and possibly using different radio systems, the likelihood of an unintentional encounter is elevated. Place those units on intersecting streets, and you can end up with this week's ROTW.

"While responding to a medical call with lights and sirens activated on the engine, we experienced a near miss with the responding ambulance from another agency. Our city has signal preemption devices on the street lights, where a light on the engine triggers the stop light to turn green and all other directions to turn red...In this near miss, we had the intersection locked up with a green signal light and the solid white light illuminated. Approximately 200 feet before the intersection, the responding ambulance came into the intersection."

Traffic signal preemption devices have a proven history of providing emergency vehicles with safe passage through congested areas. Drivers are conditioned to stop for red lights; or are they? Even the casual observance of today's driving environment finds red lights being run many seconds past the light turning red. The theory behind traffic signal preemption devices is sound; the reaction of the other drivers overrides the system's best intentions. Once you read the entire account of [12-124](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Do the drivers of your agency complete an emergency vehicle driving course before being permitted to drive?
2. Is your department's intersection policy the same as other agencies in your response area?
3. What is an underlying message conveyed about intersections in this report?
4. It appears the EMS unit in this near miss is not equipped with traffic signal preemption technology, or their system was overridden by the engine gaining control of the intersection first. If you were discussing this event with the EMS agency supervisor, what would be some of your key discussion points?
5. List five habits that drive emergency responders to run red lights. How many of these habits are inherent (internal to the driver) and how many are learned (passed on from observed behaviors)?

The critical factor in emergency response is navigating traffic for a safe arrival. Even with the technological advances offered by traffic signal preemption devices the intersection is a hazardous location. As emergency responders, getting there is more than half the challenge. The public is unable to get assistance if the responding assets end up in a pile of twisted metal several blocks from the scene.

Related Reports – Topical Relation: Safe Driving - Intersections

[05-565](#)
[09-892](#)

[06-433](#)
[10-744](#)

[07-785](#)

[08-042](#)

Have you ever had a near miss at an intersection? Submit your report to www.firefighternearmiss.com today so everyone goes home tomorrow.

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.

If you would like to subscribe to the ROTW please e-mail ROTW@firefighternearmiss.com with "Subscribe" in the subject line.

Firefighternearmiss.com is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. Founding dollars were also provided by [Fireman's Fund Insurance Company](#). The project is managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs and supported by FireFighterCloseCalls.com in mutual dedication to firefighter safety and survival.

National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System
4025 Fair Ridge Drive
Fairfax, VA 22033
P: 571-238-8287
F: 703-273-0920
info@firefighternearmiss.com
www.firefighternearmiss.com