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Report of the Week

Skip the safety stuff, it is only training
6/18/09

Report Number: 09-502

Report Date: 05/19/2009 1048

Synopsis

Tripod breaks causing FF to hang from rope.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 14 - 16

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Training activities: formal training classes, in-station drills, multi-company drills, etc.

Event date and time: 06/15/1999 1300

Hours into the shift: 5 - 8

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?

- Training Issue
- Procedure
- Situational Awareness

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury
- Lost time injury

Event Description

We were training on some rope rescue operations. I was going to be the rescuer on the end of a rope that was going to be put down in a well approximately 50 feet to retrieve a dummy that simulated a person who fell in a well. We were going to use the tripod and rig a harness around me, lower me into the well, then I was going to tie a makeshift harness around the dummy and bring it up with me. We started the exercises and I was placed in the harness, inverted, and sent down into the well head-first to retrieve the victim. After placing the makeshift harness on the victim and starting back up from the bottom the tripod broke. The tripod was over-weighted with both of us on the line at the same time and failed.

The issue was that I was hanging upside down and did not have a safety line in place. I had to hang upside down the entire time while they rigged a secondary line up to get me out. This took several minutes and I ended up cutting the line

with a knife that attached the victim to me to release some of the pressure off of me while waiting. I ended up getting out of the well OK, without injury, but it definitely was not a fun time and could have turned out a lot different. We ended up losing a good life safety rope due to me cutting it to get the victim off of me. That was the only loss in the event but it could have been planned better.

Lessons Learned

Lesson learned was to always have a safety in place, even in training. Suggestions were to be more prepared in case something goes wrong. Actions to correct the situation include making sure to know the limitations of your equipment.

Discussion Questions

The goal of the training ground is to develop and reinforce skills. Timing evolutions are infused into the training to foster skill proficiency however; many times this creates a dilemma. Once time constraints are introduced to the training formula, there is a natural tendency to shave steps in an effort to meet the time requirements. One area that is frequently cut short is safety. Many think that because it is a training exercise, the situation is not dangerous. Report 09-502 illustrates why safety practices should be integral from the moment the equipment is purchased, until the equipment is retired. Consider the following:

1. How often does your department conduct training on rope rescue and rope use?
2. What technical rope equipment is available to you for training?
3. Does your technical rope training follow the provisions of NFPA 1670 (Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents)?
4. When was the last time your technical rope equipment was inspected, and by whom?
5. Is the safety officer assigned to the drill trained to the safety officer level, or just assigned to the function?

Related Reports

05-432

06-567

07-1070

08-051

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.