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Report of the Week

It wasn't just a funny little beat
6/27/08

Report Number: 08-091

Report Date: 02/16/2008 0210

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: On-duty activities: apparatus and station maintenance, meetings, tours, etc.

Event date and time: 01/09/2008 0900

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

Event participation: Told to and submitted by safety officer

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

- Other

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury

Event Description

Department member was participating in annual physical. Physical consists of comprehensive program as outlined in the IAFF Wellness-Fitness Initiative and follows NFPA 1582: Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments. Abnormality noted during cardiac evaluation. Member followed up with specialist and was confirmed to have significant problem requiring immediate surgical intervention. Surgery was successful. Fire department physician's evaluation and recommendation along with member's immediate follow up are credited with saving member's life.

Lessons Learned

The role of a comprehensive annual medical evaluation program for firefighters cannot be ignored. All operational firefighters should be required to obtain an annual physical that includes a cardiac stress test and pulmonary function evaluation. Heeding the recommendation of the fire department physician will save your life. The IAFF Wellness-Fitness Initiative and NFPA 1582 are two proven documents for improving firefighter longevity.

Discussion Questions

The value of comprehensive health and fitness programs for firefighters is indisputable. Oftentimes small changes in lifestyle are the building blocks to the long term results that this year's Safety, Health and Survival Week are trying to

inspire. Therefore, the individual has a role at least equal to the department when it comes to improved health and longevity. The formal implementation plan of any thorough wellness-fitness initiative can be expensive for a fire department. However, many departments have been successful in executing comprehensive plans through staggered implementation, seeking grants, and inspiring personnel to implement lifestyle changes on their own. The department alone can't be expected to be the only one to make an investment. After you have read the complete account of [08-091](#), consider the following:

1. How would you describe your overall wellness-fitness level (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor)?
2. How would your performance improve by moving from "Poor" to "Fair," "Fair" to "Good," etc.?
3. What do you do (individually or collectively) to support the department's efforts to improve wellness-fitness?
4. How much thought goes into the health aspects of meal preparation for your shift/group/crew?
5. When was the last time you included exercise into your time at the station?

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.