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Report of the Week

Even more slippery when wet.
06/24/2010

Report Number: 10-0000815

Report Date: 06/08/2010 12:06

Synopsis

FF injured while sliding pole.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 72 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 4 - 6

Region: FEMA Region I

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Non-fire emergency event: auto extrication, technical rescue, emergency medical call, service calls, etc

Event date and time: 06/06/2010 19:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Rain

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Human Error
- Individual Action

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury

Event Description

Our area had experienced a Micro/Macro Burst which resulted in the town being deluged with 9-1-1 calls for downed wires and numerous trees into homes. All of our companies were responding to multiple incidents for a few hours after the storm.

My company returned to quarters for a few minutes to eat a quick dinner. While in quarters, we were called out for arching wires. Without thinking about it, I went to the 28' pole and slid to the apparatus floor. I did not take my bunker pants off when we went upstairs for dinner, and once I started to slide the pole, I had no control of the speed I was descending due to the pants being saturated with water from the rain. The water in my pants was essentially greasing the pole as I slid.

Even more slippery when wet.

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Once on the main floor, I bounced off of the floor and hit my head on the tail board of the Engine. The remainder of the company (who had taken the stairs) found me lying on the floor. I had suffered a few injuries from the fall and had to be transported to the hospital.

Lessons Learned

I learned to not slide the pole with wet gear. Leave turnout gear on the main floor and don't bring up to living quarters.

Discussion Questions

"Sliding down the pole" is a fixture in many fire stations and has been successfully used for generations. In fact, the likeness of a firefighter sliding down a pole is an image that many people in our communities equate with a fire department's swiftness of response. The pole has not been without its share of near misses, injury producing events, and detractors. Either way, sliding down a pole deserves its share of attention in the response scenario. An injury during a pole slide can take a company out of service when it is needed most. Once you have read the full account of [10-815](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. When new members arrive in the station, are they trained to slide down the pole before being permitted to use it?
2. If yes to #1, how much training are they given in elements such as hand and leg placement, alternative slide techniques (e.g., towel around the arm, feet wrapped versus insteps on the pole, etc.)?
3. Is the padding at the bottom of the pole shock absorbing and water resistant?
4. Does your station have a scheduled maintenance program for its slide pole(s)?
5. Does that program include frequent polishing or varnishing of the pole?

Related Reports – Topical Relation: Pole Sliding and Water Hazards in Station

[05-667](#) [07-1082](#) [08-414](#) [09-1055](#) [10-541](#)

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.