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## Report of the Week

All by myself...

7/30/09

**Report Number: 09-556**

Report Date: 06/06/2009 0939

### Synopsis

Shadow hides washed out roadway, FF falls.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 25 - 33

Years of fire service experience: 0 - 3

Region: FEMA Region IV

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: 05/31/2002 2000

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?

- Weather
- Human Error
- Decision Making
- Staffing
- Situational Awareness

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury

### Event Description

At approximately 2000 hours, a severe wind storm came through and several trees were downed. I was toned out to a tree down blocking a roadway. I responded to the scene and advised my captain, who was also enroute, that I needed no additional resources. I proceeded to cut the tree limbs back to clear the roadway. What I didn't realize was that the shoulder of the road was washed away and I was directly over a drain culvert. The lights I had deployed shadowed the shoulder, making it impossible to see.

While cutting the limbs, I stepped off the roadway and fell approximately six feet, until a vine from the tree caught the underside of my leg. With a running chainsaw in my hand, I attempted to reach the radio on my hip. To my surprise, it had been knocked loose in the fall. After several minutes of hanging there, my

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captain showed up on the scene. Fortunately, he had attempted to contact me and got no response. I was then pulled up to the roadway. We put a 14 foot roof ladder into the wash to retrieve my radio. I then realized how bad things could have been when I noticed that the tip of the ladder barely reached the roadway.

### **Lessons Learned**

Always be aware of your surroundings and don't be too proud to ask for assistance.

### **Discussion Questions**

There are few areas of the country that are unaffected by storms. Damage created by storms range from inconvenience to devastation. The call demand from storms cause fire departments to modify their response models to handle the increased call load. The increased demand for service puts pressure on responders to proceed into action as quickly as possible, with as few resources as necessary so the demands for service can be met in a timely manner. Once you have reviewed the complete version of 09-556, and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Does your department have a policy on operating in teams of two for all incidents?
2. What type(s) of auxiliary lighting has been provided on your apparatus?
3. Does your department remove downed trees after storms?
4. Have your members received formal training in the use of chain saws?
5. What are the OSHA (or state plan) rules for operating chain saws in your jurisdiction?

### **Related Reports**

05-409

06-488

07-880

08-084

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.