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## Report of the Week

**"Wear your gloves, that ladder bites."**

**10/13/2011**

**Report Number:** 09-0000512

Report Date: 05/21/2009 20:00

### Synopsis

Folding ladder catches FF's finger.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: Respond from home

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 14 - 16

Region: FEMA Region III

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: 04/26/2009 16:30

Hours into the shift: Volunteer

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?

- Human Error
- Individual Action
- Equipment

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury
- Lost time injury

### Event Description

While opening the folding ladder that is mounted on the rear of our rescue vehicle, I caught my finger in the cross brace as it was opening. I should have been more attentive to what I was doing and I should have been wearing gloves. This necessitated a visit to the hospital and three stitches.

**"Wear your gloves, that ladder bites."**

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## **Lessons Learned**

I should have been more attentive to what I was doing and I should have been wearing gloves.

## **Report of the Week**

Many quarters of the fire service emphasize the importance of speed. We are learning through the experience of other high risk professions that speed can often lead to cutting corners. Cutting corners can lead to leaving out steps, which may save seconds, but increases exposure to harm. That increased exposure opens the door to harm. If we are lucky, the exposure ends in a near miss. If we are less fortunate, the incident escalates as defenses put in place to prevent harm break down.

Wearing gloves is a basic safety practice that accounts for scores of injury avoiding mishaps each day. The challenge of wearing gloves in the fire service is wearing the right glove for the right exposure. Firefighting gloves are relatively thick and cumbersome at best when it comes to the dexterity needed to perform certain motor skills. On the other hand, work gloves give little thermal protection. Lastly, wearing no gloves provides the best dexterity needed to perform fine motor skills, but leaves our hands vulnerable to quick incapacitation as noted in this week's report [09-512](#), excerpted below.

*"While opening the folding ladder that is mounted on the rear of our rescue vehicle, I caught my finger in the cross brace as it was opening. I should have been more attentive to what I was doing and I should have been wearing gloves. This necessitated a visit to the hospital and three stitches."*

Once you review the entire report and the related reports, consider the following:

1. How many pair of gloves do you carry and what type?
2. How many injuries (of all types) have your hands suffered in your career?
3. How often do you perform work requiring gloves and not wear gloves?
4. Does your department permit firefighters to work if they are missing digits?
5. Where would you be transported in the event that you suffered an injury that severely injured your hands?

The medical community has made incredible strides in treating hand injuries. They are often called to perform their work because their patient decided to save a few seconds and not don a pair of gloves. Funny, how we are willing to risk months (and potentially years) away from the job to save a few seconds. The math doesn't seem to add up in the long run. Wearing your gloves is worth the time it takes to put them on. The more you wear them, the better you will get at working in them.

## **Related Reports – Topical Relation: PPE, Wearing Gloves**

[05-463](#)    [06-363](#)    [07-1023](#)    [08-350](#)    [09-951\\*](#)    [10-365](#)

\*[09-951](#) recounts an event where having gloves on averted serious injury.

Have your gloves (or other PPE component) save you from injury? Submit your report to [www.firefighternearmiss.com](http://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.*