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## Report of the Week

**Sliding the pole should be left to the professionals.**

**10/14/2010**

**Report Number:** 10-0000912

Report Date: 07/01/2010 12:50

### Synopsis

Civilian injured sliding pole.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Other

Department shift: Straight days (8 hour)

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 14 - 16

Region: FEMA Region VIII

Service Area: Rural

### Event Information

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

Event date and time: 06/01/2009 17:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Told of event, but neither involved nor witnessed event

Weather at time of event: Not reported

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Situational Awareness
- Decision Making
- Individual Action
- Accountability
- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Unknown
- Other

### Event Description

Note: Brackets denote reviewer de-identification.

While attending a public meeting for the county library system in one of our classrooms at our main station, a past [identity deleted] invited a group of individuals from the public to go upstairs into the living quarters on a mini tour of the station facilities. While upstairs, individuals were encouraged to slide down the pole. One individual did, in fact, slide down the pole without any advance "training" and subsequently broke an ankle upon landing. The patient

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was treated by on duty personnel and transported to the emergency department of the local hospital.

### **Lessons Learned**

Develop formal training for sliding down the pole.

Limit public access to upstairs living quarters after hours, as well as other areas of the station (i.e. storage of medical supplies, etc.).

Develop guidelines and procedures for using the pole.

Post warning signs.

LOSS POTENTIAL

Time off for injured party from job

Medical costs

Potential law suit against district

### **Report of the Week**

Fire stations are the focal point of many communities and they can serve as landmarks, points of refuge and community meeting places. This week's ROTW, [10-912](#), takes place during a seemingly harmless event. The outcome is anything but harmless and serves as a reminder that fire stations and the equipment related to operations should be left in the hands of the professionals.

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*"While attending a public meeting for the county library system in one of our classrooms at our main station, a past [identity deleted] invited a group of individuals from the public to go upstairs into the living quarters on a mini tour of the station facilities. While upstairs, individuals were encouraged to slide down the pole. One individual did, in fact, slide down the pole without any advance "training" and subsequently broke an ankle upon landing..."*

The first slide pole appeared in Chicago's Engine 21 in 1878. Once derided, the pole became a mainstay in multi-story firehouses throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Since that first 3" varnished pine beam was installed in Engine 21, the pole has become one of the most recognized symbols of a fire station. Many fire station visitors ask, "Do you have a pole?" followed by, "Can I slide down?"

Sliding the pole is a learned skill and should not be treated lightly. Most firefighters become adept at sliding the pole through a vernacular training program of tips and demonstrations from the senior members of the house. Then, a few trips under the eye of the senior member are thrown in to ensure the skill is mastered. Allowing visitors to slide the pole is a risk better left to the pros. Once you have read the entire account of [10-912](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Does your department's station orientation program include instruction on how to slide the pole?
2. Is the pole area in your station compliant with NFPA 1500?
3. Does your department allow/permit non-firefighters to slide the pole?
4. If your station does not have a pole, what other hazardous activities exist around the station that civilians should not be allowed to participate in.

5. Has your department experienced any injuries or near misses related to sliding the pole?

**Related Reports – Topical Relation: (Station Tour, Slide Pole)**

[10-541](#)

[10-903](#)

[10-926](#)

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.