



National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System Reports Related to Ice-Related Reports

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Report Number: 07-0000685

Report Date: 01/12/2007 1224

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: Straight days (8 hour)

Age: 16 - 24

Years of fire service experience: 0 - 3

Region: FEMA Region VII

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 01/12/2007 0000

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 do you believe caused the event?

- Weather

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

We were responding mutual aid to a reported motor vehicle collision with unknown injuries. While approaching the emergency scene we hit a patch of black ice and lost control of the ambulance. We went into the ditch and then regained control and reentered the roadway. The weather was around 24 degrees, with freezing rain predicted. To that point the roadway had only been wet with no indications of the road being slick.

Lessons Learned

I will be more aware of what could happen with the freezing rain and worsening conditions. I will drive slower.

Report Number: 07-0000809
Report Date: 03/19/2007 1647

Demographics

Department type: Rescue/Ambulance Squad
Job or rank: ALS Provider
Department shift: 12 hour days, 12 hour nights
Age: 16 - 24
Years of fire service experience: 0 - 3
Region: FEMA Region V
Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Non-fire emergency event: auto extrication technical rescue, emergency medical call, service calls, etc
Event date and time: 02/21/2007 2300
Hours into the shift: 5 - 8
Event participation: Involved in the event
Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Snow
Do you think this will happen again? Yes
What do you believe caused the event?

- Weather
- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury
- Property damage
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

At approximately 2300 hrs on a cold snowy night, we were dispatched with the fire department as second in on an MVA with injuries on the interstate. As we approached the incident, we observed another accident in the opposite lanes. As there was already a fire department medic unit and one of our ALS units on the original accident, we proceeded to have dispatch assign us to the second MVA. As we approached the scene, we found a vehicle in the center lane with damage and another vehicle off in the median. We were advised that the fire department was running thin on resources so they were requesting that we evaluate the scene and call for more units if necessary. Since there would be no backup for the foreseeable future, my partner positioned the ambulance behind the car in the center lane with emergency lights flashing in order to block the scene and requested PD. Immediately upon exiting the squad it became evident the freeway was covered in a sheet of ice. There were no persons in the car directly ahead of us. I proceeded to the median to check on the other car. I found the occupants of both cars in the median denying all injuries. At this time, my partner informed me our squad had been rear-ended. We advised our dispatch of the situation and again requested PD. We proceeded to examine the occupant of the vehicle that had struck our ambulance. She also denied any injuries. An off duty-EMT also stopped to assist. Her truck was positioned behind our ambulance. We moved all persons forward of our

ambulance and were awaiting PD and a wrecker, when another vehicle struck the off-duty EMTs truck and pushed it into our ambulance. At this point, I requested that the fire department send an engine to block the roadway as well as a medic unit, and requested that the PD be called back and asked to close the freeway. We back boarded the driver of this latest collision and loaded her into the just-arriving fire department medic unit. Shortly thereafter, several police cars and other ambulances from our service arrived and proceeded to block all but one lane of the highway. Only the one driver sustained minor injuries.

Lessons Learned

1. Proper vehicle positioning is essential. Had our ambulance not been positioned where it was, it could have been us that were struck by the other vehicles. 2. In the system where we run, an initial assignment for an MVA only consists of one fire department medic unit and one ALS ambulance from our service. An engine or ladder is only dispatched if entrapment is found or a manpower assist is requested. It would be beneficial to initially dispatch an engine as well to every MVA, especially those on the interstate. That way it could serve as a blocker or be utilized immediately instead of waiting 5-7 min for it to arrive. If the engine is not needed, it can always be cancelled. In this case, an engine blocker could have allowed us to pull in front of the accident and work in an area of safety. Had we been loading a patient when our ambulance was struck we would surely have been injured. 3. Our field units do not have the portable radios or the capability to talk directly to the fire department or police department. All communications had to be relayed through two sets of dispatchers, which wastes time and often causes confusion.

Report Number: 08-0000056
Report Date: 01/30/2008 0201

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer
Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief
Department shift: Respond from home
Age: 43 - 51
Years of fire service experience: 11 - 13
Region: FEMA Region III
Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.
Event date and time: 01/29/2008 1015
Hours into the shift:
Event participation: Involved in the event
Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Freezing Rain
Do you think this will happen again?
What do you believe caused the event?

- Situational Awareness
- Decision Making
- Weather

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

[Name Deleted] Fire Department was dispatched to a MVC with confinement. Engine [1], [type deleted] responded driver only. I [report writer] responded in my personal vehicle. There was a weather alert issued for the area of freezing rain and the roads in the area were iced over. Engine [1] arrived on the scene and gave a scene size-up of one car MVC with no injuries. I had arrived a minute later and assisted in blocking traffic. The firefighter who drove the engine had slipped on the ice and fell flat on his back. The firefighter was transported to the hospital for evaluation and I decided that I would drive the engine back to the firehouse once the incident was completed. Once the accident vehicle was removed by a tow truck, all apparatus were cleared from the scene. I got into engine [1] and put on my seat belt. The road department had gone through the area and salted the roadway several times. I turned around and drove back to the station without incident. Once I arrived at the station and pulled into the slanted parking lot, I saw that the lot was covered with ice. I began to tap the brakes but the engine only slid with the pitch of the parking lot. I put the engine in neutral and kept tapping the brakes but continued to slide. There is a guard rail that runs the side of the parking lot with a 100 foot drop-off on the other side. As the engine slid, I tried to steer the engine away from the rail without success. The engine stopped after going through the guard rail and hitting a large tree just on the other side of the rail. The tree was the only thing

that kept the engine and myself from what I believe was going to be a fatal accident. Brackets [] in this report denote identifying information being removed by the reviewer.

Lessons Learned

The lesson I learned was that I should have checked the lot for ice and other slippery conditions. I could also have approached the station from a different direction so that I would not need to go through the parking lot. We need to set up some guidelines for operations in icy conditions and for station maintenance.

Report Number: 08-0000132

Report Date: 03/07/2008 1149

Demographics

Department type: Volunteer

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: Respond from home

Age: 25 - 33

Years of fire service experience: 11 - 13

Region: FEMA Region VII

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 02/25/2008 2230

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear with Frozen Surfaces

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

- Weather

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage

Event Description

Members were responding to report of kitchen fire in personal vehicle. Weather conditions at time of incident were very poor with snow and ice on roadway. My vehicle hit a patch of ice on roadway and instead of hitting another member's vehicle, I decided to try and use a snow bank to slow or stop my vehicle. I rolled the vehicle onto the right side but sustained no injuries. Like I said, road conditions were very poor.

Lessons Learned

Consider road conditions when responding in POV and always expect the unexpected.

Report Number: 08-0000139

Report Date: 03/11/2008 1148

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region V

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 02/23/2008 0230

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 do you believe caused the event?

- Weather
- Communication

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage
- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury
- Minor injury

Event Description

Our engine was dispatched as a first responder to a vehicle accident involving a pickup truck and a utility pole. There had been numerous incidents earlier in the evening for vehicle accidents involving icy roadways but the road surfaces now appeared to be dry and salt covered. As we responded, I asked the driver how the road conditions were and he said that they were fine. In fact, the roads actually looked dry although white from salt that had been applied much earlier. As we traveled over a bridge, I once again asked the driver about the road surface over the bridge and he once again said that they were fine. Receiving a dispatch for a traffic accident at 0230 on a Friday night made me think that this was just another DUI driver that had not made it home. As we turned onto the road where the incident was, we observed a police cruiser that had stopped at the top of the hill. It was assumed that the cruiser was awaiting our entry into the street to block the road behind us so we proceeded down the slight grade. After traveling about 200 yards, the driver began to brake for a 90 degree bend in the road and the truck began to slide. At that point, the road did not appear to be icy but we were definitely sliding and gaining speed. I instructed the driver to ease off of the brakes to regain steering so we could make the bend and when we rounded to corner, we began down an even steeper grade. The driver touched the brakes and the truck was once again sliding and gaining speed. In the road ahead of us was the original accident that wound

up in the center of the roadway. There wasn't much time to react, but I decided to have the driver try and ditch the truck off of the left side of the road rather than impact the original scene. As our truck encountered the front yard, the front wheels sunk into the yard and the rear wheels continued down the slope and turned us around backwards into an embankment and a fire hydrant before shooting us back into the roadway straight at the pick up truck once more. We were out of options to ditch to the left and out of time so it was decided to try and run off the right side of the road into the tree line. I would estimate our speed at this point to be less than 10 MPH, but we were definitely sliding out of control. The impact with the trees was very abrupt but successfully stopped the event with just a few minor bumps. The crew was able to exit the vehicle and attend to the original accident victims as well as alert other responding units to avoid the hill. As it turns out, the pickup truck occupants had already left their vehicle and went to a nearby house for help.

Lessons Learned

This was my own first personal experience with black ice. Conditions earlier in the evening were hazardous and this thought certainly was present with us as we began our response. At no time did we ever suspect that the roads were bad, as they appeared to be dry. Perhaps the best lesson learned here is that there should have been some communication between the police and fire units. The cruiser that was stopped on the scene had done so because they had encountered the slippery slope but did not communicate the information to the fire department. It is imperative that first arriving units relay road conditions to the incoming units to prevent further incidents. Another lesson that was learned in fact occurred from a previous accident within our department that involved similar conditions. In that incident, another truck had left the roadway and ran into a yard, which prevented what could have been serious injuries to both firefighters and civilians. Having knowledge of that incident likely assisted me with the decision to ditch the truck during our own event. We truly are a profession that learns from others mistakes and or experiences.

Report Number: 08-0000415

Report Date: 09/06/2008 1242

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 16 - 24

Years of fire service experience: 0 - 3

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 11/20/1996 1000

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Freezing Rain

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

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

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage
- Lost time injury
- Minor injury
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

I was responding to the volunteer station for a structure fire on ice covered roads. I was driving too fast to slow down enough to make a 90 degree curve in the road. I slid off the road into a field. I sustained minor vehicle damage and no injuries.

Lessons Learned

Drive more carefully during extreme weather conditions and make it to the call.

Report Number: 08-0000511

Report Date: 10/14/2008 1251

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 48 hours on - 96 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 7 - 10

Region: FEMA Region VIII

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: 10/13/2008 0540

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear with Frozen Surfaces

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

- Other
- Weather
- Situational Awareness
- Decision Making

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury
- Lost time injury
- Property damage

Event Description

The scene is right shoulder/breakdown lane of divided highway in western [city deleted] suburbs. The highway runs north and south in this area bordered on the west by a [deleted] ridge and mixed residential, commercial and retail to the east. Also along the east border is a bike path. Dispatched to a rollover accident, initial response was 2 engines (1 for traffic safety) and an ambulance. Self assigned was the district chief temporarily housed with the first in engine and ambulance. The approach to the accident location is uphill across a short bridge with no change in grade of highway. Near the top of the hill is a right hand curve with off ramp. Weather conditions at this location were wet roads and temperature close to or below freezing (first truly cold conditions of the fall). The bridge did have black ice noticed by the engineer. In the trailing ambulance I noticed the townhome complex sprinkler systems operating and a rising mist. The engine parked and angled toward the shoulder in the breakdown lane on the right side of the highway with wheels chocked. The ambulance parked 150 feet in front of engine hugging the soft shoulder of the breakdown lane. The rolled over vehicle was on its roof approximately 100 feet up the adjacent hill on the right on the fence bordering the bike path. Most of the crews of both rigs were on the hill interviewing and

checking for injuries; there were none. The engineer was preparing to set out cones as the chief arrived and pulled up behind the engine. The traffic safety engine had not arrived on scene yet. There were skidding noises and the engineer quickly moved around the truck to the right side and the chief closed his partially opened driver door, as a pickup truck traveling sideways at highway speed struck the rear left corner of the engine. The pickup truck impact was right rear quarter of the bed. It came to a stop approximately 100 feet in front of the ambulance. The engine shuddered forward and about a foot and had to be backed off the chocks.

Lessons Learned

Situational awareness is a key. The cold, the bridge, the sprinklers, time of day are all contributing factors to a potentially bad outcome. Something had already gone wrong for someone and that's why we were there anyway. Preparation and knowing how and where to position and what the created safety zones are leads to going home the next day. Dumb luck and not ignoring an unexpected noise will always help. A couple of seconds sooner or later and this would have been a tragic event instead of property damage only. Even if you are tired or just woke up, train yourself to notice all you can and place yourself in the best spot for a good outcome. I was in the ambulance and we were in a good safety area to work from. The engine was as prepared as it could have been and did its job. The chief didn't ignore something, and narrowly missed participating in his own funeral.

Report Number: 08-0000576

Report Date: 11/07/2008 1316

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: 48 hours on - 96 hours off

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 24 - 26

Region: FEMA Region IX

Service Area: Rural

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 01/24/2008 0000

Hours into the shift: 24+

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Snow

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

- Equipment
- Decision Making
- Situational Awareness
- Communication
- Weather

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury
- Property damage

Event Description

We were in the middle of using the station snowplow to remove a small layer of dry snow from the driveway when we were called to the scene of a vehicle accident. We carry snow chains, but because the weather had subsided with the sun coming though and the roadways having been plowed, we opted to not put our chains on. We have a four wheel drive engine and generally have excellent maneuverability, especially when driving on cleared roads and the freeway. Two engines and two medic units responded to a reported traffic collision. After locating the incident, the first-in medic unit drove past the scene to the bottom of the roadway where six vehicles had lost traction and slid into the bank and each other, with minor injuries. The engine operator decided at last moment to park on the uphill side of the incident in order to protect the scene. Roadway had a very thin layer of ice because of its south-facing slope and intermittent thawing and freezing. The occupants were all out milling about with two women standing between two of the vehicles. Unfortunately, the engine lost traction and slowly slid into a Ford Excursion that was nosed into the bank, and a small pickup. The two women were now screaming for their lives. One of the women was taken to the hospital with minor injuries. We very easily could have witnessed a crushing death because of several obvious factors. Additional responding units were advised not to drive down this steep area. Even the

Highway Patrol officer went head over heels walking alongside the engine. After the incident, we find that our dispatch was aware of the ice condition and that the Highway Patrol officer had told them directly to notify the responding units not to drive on this particular stretch until the Department of Transportation had time to sand the area. The engine operator was given a written reprimand for endangering lives and not controlling the vehicle. The captain was disciplined with two days off without pay for carelessness in not having the engine chained. The battalion chief had advised the shift (just the day prior) of the necessity of using chains when needed. The Highway Patrol officer refused to cite the engine operator as requested by the chief officer.

Lessons Learned

The primary lesson learned is to have the chains on when necessary. Unfortunately, we wear out a lot of chains on a limited budget. The second lesson is to be aware of road conditions whenever possible and that some areas will have varying levels of safe surfaces. The third lesson is to realize there is a reason why so many vehicles have slid off the roadway. Fourth, don't make sudden lane/position changes on ice. Fifth, be aware of the confidence and driving ability of the operator. Sixth, be more proactive in locating the positions of the equipment at scene.

Report Number: 08-0000622

Report Date: 11/28/2008 1035

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Assistant Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 21 - 23

Region: FEMA Region VIII

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Training activities: formal training classes, in-station drills, multi-company drills, etc.

Event date and time: 11/07/2008 1400

Hours into the shift:

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

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

- Procedure
- Equipment

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury

Event Description

While training with a new 500gpm fast attack monitor (single 2-1/2" inlet), the monitor became unstable and lifted off of a broom finished concrete surface and caused a swift and violent reaction. This action caused an experienced firefighter to be knocked to the ground and then to be hit in the head by the monitor. The firefighter suffered two broken fingers, 14 stitches to his hand, and 17 stitches to his head. The firefighter was transported to the hospital by an ambulance and will be off work for 4 to 6 weeks. The monitor became unstable when the firefighter was in the process of turning it off. The firefighter kneeled down on the supply hose which was suspended about an inch over the ground for approximately three feet. When he applied his weight to the hose-line, it apparently caused a lever type action which caused the front leg to lose its grip and become unstable.

Lessons Learned

First of all, I believe that there is/was a design problem with this particular monitor. I believe that it is a poor design feature to have the supplying hose line suspended over the ground directly behind the monitor, especially considering that firefighters naturally kneel on this hose thinking that this will further stabilize the monitor. We compared this particular monitor to a newer version and found that the newer monitor has been slightly changed to allow the supplying hose line to be closer to the ground. Secondly, when training with this type of monitor it should always be secured to a fixed object with rope or webbing.

Report Number: 08-0000653

Report Date: 12/15/2008 2333

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: 24 - 26

Region: FEMA Region V

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 12/15/2008 0840

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear with Frozen Surfaces

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury

Event Description

Companies responded on the highway for a reported accident. The first arriving battalion chief and fire companies quickly set up a safe work zone. As they were operating within this work zone, another vehicle accident occurred upstream just before the start of the work zone. I responded in my car and blocked traffic until another piece of apparatus (our Traffic Safety Unit-Heavy Rescue Squad) arrived and set up a safe work zone for both accidents. The TSU arrived and created a shadow for my vehicle. I stepped outside and walked over to the personnel on the TSU. The three of us stood between the TSU and the cement wall as I was briefing them on what I wanted for a work zone. When we were done talking, we began to walk to the rear of the vehicle to begin deployment of the traffic control devices when we heard a crashing noise coming from the rear of the TSU. We jumped towards the five foot tall cement wall as a means of protecting ourselves and had plans of jumping over it if the TSU was struck. The vehicle that crashed stopped just short of our TSU. None of our personnel were injured. Apparently, this driver was traveling southbound and lost control of his vehicle because of black ice. His truck came across four lanes of traffic and struck a short cement wall which was a barrier between the on-ramp and the traffic lane. His truck hit this wall, spun around a few times, and stopped just five feet from our TSU. If it had not been for this cement barrier wall at the end of the exit ramp, he would have hit our TSU and possibly injured us. His truck struck the very end of this wall. If he was another 5 to 7 feet south, he would have missed this wall and crashed into our TSU possibly injuring us. Once things calmed down, we were able to set up our safe work zone and help those involved in the three accidents. No other accident occurred while we were on the scene. State DOT trucks arrived and helped move the vehicles off to the shoulders. Police from a neighboring town helped us by shutting down the on ramp which was at the beginning of our safe work zone.

Lessons Learned

Situational awareness comes to mind first. All companies operating out on the highway that morning were all aware of the black ice. State police were not available and state DOT trucks were not on location. We were there by ourselves! There were a lot of cars traveling past us at high rates of speed and were not aware of the black ice. This could have happened again without warning and there were three accidents within about 400 feet of each other. This made us all become more aware of looking around the scene and planning your moves prior to actually moving.

Report Number: 08-0000666

Report Date: 12/29/2008 1307

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: 11 - 13

Region: FEMA Region II

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 12/24/2008 0000

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Not reported

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

- Teamwork
- Weather

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage

Event Description

We were returning to our quarters from a MVA involving 8 vehicles in our 2004 [manufacturer deleted] pumper. The city was experiencing freezing rain and we were proceeding with extreme caution. We were crossing a bridge that spanned 4 lanes when our apparatus began to slide on the down slope of the bridge. The driver of the apparatus began to pump the brakes and turn into the slide but to no avail. The apparatus, now sideways was increasing in speed. About 30 feet down from the top of the bridge, the apparatus jumped the curb and crashed into the 8" concrete railing. The front of the vehicle caused the rail to collapse to the roadway below. The front of the apparatus bumper was hanging over the side of the bridge, the driver pulled the parking brake and placed the vehicle into the park mode. As the firefighters exited the vehicle to check for injuries, a passenger car proceeded over the bridge out of control and crashed into the side of the apparatus. Before the officer could radio for help, a second vehicle came crashing down, nearly missing the firefighters who jumped over the 1st vehicle to get out of the way. The officer was able to radio Communications to get help. Luckily no firefighter injuries were reported but there was extensive damage to the front of the apparatus. Accident is currently under investigation by City Officials.

Lessons Learned

The first lesson is that seatbelts save lives. I don't know what would have been the outcome if the apparatus did go over the side of the bridge 20 feet down. Black ice is something that we cannot correct without the help with our public works. It took 2 Hrs. before a salt truck

arrived. I believe that if roads and bridges were treated with the appropriated care, this accident could have been avoided. With today's economic downturn City Officials were reactive instead of proactive and that resulted in extensive damage to a front line engine.

Report Number: 08-0000670

Report Date: 12/31/2008 2240

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Deputy Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 24 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region V

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.

Event date and time: 12/31/2008 1920

Hours into the shift: 9 - 12

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear with Frozen Surfaces

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

- Situational Awareness
- Individual Action
- Training Issue
- Weather
- Decision Making

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury
- Property damage
- Environmental

Event Description

On 12/31/2008, our fire department responded to a reported natural gas leak at the meter of a house. We responded with 2 engines and 1 ambulance to this incident. The ambulance was the first crew on scene; they were already on the road, returning to the station following an EMS call. Staffing for a normal day at our fire department is 10 personnel maximum with 8 minimum staff. Today, because of the holidays, we were at minimum staffing which included 2 people on the first engine, 2 people on the second engine, 1 on the aerial truck, and 3 on the first out ambulance. The third man on the ambulance crosses over to the first engine for fire runs, however for this run he was out on an EMS call, so we were staffed with only 2 personnel on the first engine. We also had one other firefighter out of the station on an assignment at the time of this alarm, leaving us with four people in quarters. Weather conditions during this run: cold and cloudy, -4 degrees with a wind chill of -14 degrees and visibility was excellent at 9+ miles. Roads were snow and ice covered. The 2 engines responded following the normal route for this particular complex. En route, the driver of the lead engine was unsure exactly which driveway was the proper one to use. The complex has 4 different ways of getting into it, depending on where in the complex it is. I (the officer in the

lead engine) was looking in the map book getting the Motor Pump Operator (MPO) the exact location to turn into the complex. As I was letting him know which entrance it was, he took his foot off the accelerator and began braking, which quickly slowed the rig down. The engine began to slide due to the snow and ice on the road. The lead engine stopped just past the entrance and the MPO decided he could back up a little bit and make entry into the complex. The MPO had looked in the mirrors prior to backing up and saw the second engine. In his eyes, it did not appear to be as close as it actually was. As I was looking in my mirror (passenger side), I noticed our second due engine was sliding towards us. I told my driver to "go" and he was able to move forward before the second engine made contact with us. The second MPO did a very good job at trying to brake and control his slide by turning his wheel to the right and going into a snow bank instead of into the front engine. Had the second MPO decided to go left and try to go around the lead engine, there was a greater chance for significant vehicle damage to both rigs. This incident, for our department, was truly a near miss event. Had a collision occurred between the two engines, we would have had to rely on the backup and reserve engines until repairs or replacements could have been made. The two MPO's were following department SOP's as they relate to responses. As the road conditions were not ideal, they were traveling at or slightly below the speed limit; however, due to the unseen ice under the snow, they slid when braking, but were able to prevent collision.

Lessons Learned

This near-miss really opened the eyes of everyone that was involved in the response. I believe the big things learned from this event were training needs (or re-training), situational awareness - being aware of the road conditions and anticipating what the conditions might be (such as the ice under the snow), following department SOP's, and following the guidance and direction by the officers riding in the apparatus. For apparatus that are following one another - leave enough room in between each other and leave even more room when conditions are not ideal. Anticipate what the apparatus in front of you is going to do or might do. If you know the turn-off is getting close, slow down and anticipate the turn. We do nobody any good if we do not get there safely. Take the extra time if needed to respond and arrive on scene safely. Training is a huge issue; departments need to conduct driver training not only when it is nice out, but also when the weather is not optimal. Most people can drive a piece of apparatus with little to no problems on dry, clear days, but that changes when there is snow or rain on the ground or temperatures begin to fall. Another issue related to training is making sure everyone who is put in the position is comfortable with the operation of the apparatus and is able to control and use it as designed. We do not have permanent MPO's. Positions on a daily basis are primarily decided by seniority within the shift. In this type of set-up, you might not have a driver/MPO that is as experienced as others are and consequently needs to train on the apparatus more. Practice, practice and practice some more. Practice using equipment and apparatus until you do not have to think about it - it is second nature.

Report Number: 09-0000031

Report Date: 01/14/2009 0947

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Driver / Engineer

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 25 - 33

Years of fire service experience: 4 - 6

Region: FEMA Region X

Service Area: Rural

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 12/15/2000 2200

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Cloudy and Freezing Rain

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

- Weather
- Situational Awareness
- Procedure

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury
- Minor injury
- Lost time injury

Event Description

The situation is a one vehicle (3 occupants) MVC into a tree. This occurred on a hill at a corner with limited visibility in the best conditions. On this night, it is dark, foggy, and freezing rain. The vehicle is in a turnout off the road. We have a medic, rescue, and police on scene. The three occupants are uninjured and need a ride. I am the lead medic on scene and have one patient in the back of the ambulance while the other two are getting into the police car. I have one person off the rescue in the ambulance with me. We hear a very loud swoosh noise and screech and then a crash. A small car flew around the corner on ice and lost control, barely missing the ambulance and rescue, but hitting the police car. One of the non-injured patients suffered leg injuries due to the police car sliding into her. Everyone survived and there were no major injuries.

Lessons Learned

1. Always set up road flares and provide traffic control. 2. Ensure that all members are aware of surroundings and potential. 3. Wear protective gear when on MVCs. 4. Keep track of accountability to know where your people are. 5. Don't remain on scene longer than necessary to complete tasks. Since I was in the ambulance, I had no idea if anyone was hit by the car, or

where my people were as this played out. We needed to do a better job of letting drivers know to slow down and be aware of our presence.

Report Number: 09-0000041

Report Date: 01/16/2009 2307

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 34 - 42

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

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: 01/04/2004 0600

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear with Frozen Surfaces

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

- Weather

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Unknown
- Property damage
- Lost time injury
- Life threatening injury

Event Description

I was responding as the department safety officer to an MCI involving several vehicles that lost control on black ice and crashed on a major interstate. As I was responding, I nearly crashed on a patch of invisible black ice. I was approaching an office park complex when I began to make a right turn onto an off-ramp. As I was clearing the ramp, the rear end of my staff vehicle began to come around on me. I immediately let off the accelerator, remained calm, and steered into the skid keeping control of the vehicle throughout the limited traction period. I was able to immediately get control of the vehicle but was thinking how close I was to being wrecked myself. This is not something I would want to explain as the safety officer. One major reason for the positive outcome is that I prepared ahead in my mind for the eventuality of being on ice. I slowed my response speed because we had experienced sporadic icing in the county that morning. Other positive factors in avoiding a crash were light traffic conditions and many years of experience on winter roads. Take time and be aware of ever changing weather conditions.

Lessons Learned

When weather factors into your response, you must reduce the speed of your vehicle. This prevented serious injury potential and a crash all together. Driver experience was a key to

preventing this crash. Ability of driver to remain calm and exercise defensive driving techniques made for a positive outcome of no damage or injury. Awareness that ice could present itself during response made managing the drive to the emergency possible. Total time of event was less than two seconds.