

Report Number: 08-0000619

Report Date: 11/25/2008 21:12

Synopsis

Live burn training.

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Training Officer

Department shift: Straight days (8 hour)

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region VIII

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 11/08/2008 00:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event: Clear and Dry

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Training Issue
- Individual Action
- Decision Making

- Communication
- Situational Awareness

What do you believe is the loss potential?

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

Event Description

Event:

During a live burn training session, a firefighter had heat conditions in the burn building training area cause damage to his [name deleted] face piece mask and damage to his helmet. Incident was on Saturday 11/8/2008 at the [deleted] County Training Center.

Chain of events:

Training Officer [Lieutenant a] was assigned as lead for a crew of three (3) which included Firefighter [b] and Firefighter [c]. As the Ignition Team 2, we were assigned to monitor and keep the Class A fire in the burn building burning, and the metal drum in the room smoking to simulate a burn condition in a residential home. There was a 1 3/4" hose line with a nozzle charged in the room with us. We had communications with the Safety Officer Chief [d] on the outside, and the Control room personnel who were monitoring the heat conditions in the designated burn room.

I was asked to make more smoke in the training area. I directed Firefighter [c] to put more straw in the smoke drum next to the door that went into the burn room. Firefighter [b] was standing at the doorway with the door open, looking to see if more pallets were needed to be put on the training fire. I could at all times see and talk to both firefighters during this process.

I asked Firefighter [b] to grab a piece of the wood on the floor next to the training fire so we could use it to try to get the smoke drum burning. Firefighter [b] stepped into the room and stated "It's too hot" and stepped away. I stepped in, grabbed the piece of wood, and took it to the drum. Firefighter [b] asked to leave the area because the face piece on his mask had gotten hard to see out of. I told him to exit through the door and I would grab Firefighter [c] to also exit behind him. Firefighter [c] had in the mean time stood up from the smoking drum and went a couple feet to also get a piece of wood to put into the smoke drum.

I sent Firefighter [b] out of the door a few feet from the drum and turned to grab Firefighter [c], who at this time was standing at the doorway going into the room. I grabbed Firefighter [c] and directed him to exit so we would all be out. All three of us had exited the burn building within seconds of each other. I verified with Firefighter [b] and [c] that they were OK. At that time, Firefighter [b] stated "Look and at my SCBA mask face piece, it was damaged from heat." There was also damage to both of the firefighters yellow leather shields and the reflective triangles on the front aspect of the helmets.

Firefighter [b] said he didn't feel any heat while standing at the doorway into the burn building room as he was waiting to add wood to the smoke drum. Firefighter [c] also said he didn't feel any heat until he went to the doorway to also try to go in. Firefighter [c] did not enter because I grabbed him to exit the building. Once I knew the two firefighters were okay I contacted and showed the damaged equipment to Chief [d] and explained what had happened.

I notified the personnel who were assigned to monitor the heat conditions in the burn building room to ask what the temperature reading was in there. I was told it was in the low 700 degree range. I stated "That can't be right because I've got several pieces of firefighter gear that is damaged due to high heat conditions." Training was terminated and clean up started. I went to the front of the burn building and met with several of the fire department personnel to discuss the event. I showed them the damaged helmets and SCBA mask from the event. As by their policy, they notify the interior personnel that the temperature in the room is reaching 900 degrees, so hit the ceiling with the hose line to cool it down. They didn't notify me and my crew because the sensors didn't show the heat as being that high in the room.

When the clean up of the burn building room was done, County Fire personnel, Firefighter [b], [c], and I went into the room to discuss the sensors. They stated they would see about getting the sensors checked to see if they were working right and let me know the status. I will follow up on this immediately in regards to possible malfunction of heat sensors.

Tasks to do:

- Go look at [the] County burn building and get data on heat sensors
- Check on specs for helmets and SCBA masks
- Complete reports from all parties involved
- Develop a lesson learned plan/report
- Submit incident to the www.firefighternearmiss.com web site.
- Review results as soon as possible with fire department personnel.

Lessons Learned

Situational Awareness:

This involves being aware of what is happening around you to understand how information, events, and your own actions will impact your goals and objectives, both now and in the near future. Heat rises; due to this fact, we need to be aware of our body position during training and on real fire situations. Our firefighter gear is designed to protect us under very adverse situations, but that doesn't mean to ignore the hazards that are associated with live fire training.

Time:

Keep the heat off you and operate in the environment as short amount of time as possible. Don't stand up too long in a high heat environment.

Distance:

Stay as far away from the fire as possible. Don't be in front of the fire to take the direct hit of high temperatures to impact your equipment, and yourself.

Shielding:

All of the firefighter's bunker gear is the latest and best there is for our safe use, but it is only as good as you use it. Don't expose it to extreme heat for a long period time or it will fail. We can't rely on heat sensors in the ceiling and wall of a burn building to remind us that the environment we are in is hot and dangerous to us and our firefighter gear. Just because you don't feel the heat doesn't mean it's not there waiting to get you.