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Report of the Week

Do I look fat in this turnout coat?
9/5/08

Report Number: 08-373

Report Date: 08/12/2008 0202

Synopsis

Steam burns caused by improper fitting gear.

Demographics

Department type: Volunteer

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: Respond from home

Age: 16 - 24

Years of fire service experience: 0 - 3

Region: FEMA Region II

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 07/01/2005 1300

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?

What do you believe caused the event?

- Equipment

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury

Event Description

During live burn training, at a private dwelling, I received steam burns due to being assigned a mismatching/improperly fitting set of gear. The gear left an opening for steam/hot water to cause burns to my wrists.

Lessons Learned

1 - Assure all firefighters have properly fitted gear 2 - Assure all gear is adequately maintained

Report Number: 07-1022

Report Date: 08/11/2007 0859

Synopsis

FF burns foot when boot comes off in mud during wildfire.

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: Straight days (12 hour)

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region VI

Service Area: Rural

Event Information

Event type: Fire emergency event: structure fire, vehicle fire, wildland fire, etc.

Event date and time: 03/01/2007 1730

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 do you believe caused the event?

- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Minor injury

Event Description

While working a wildland fire my right boot became stuck in "muck" close to a stream. I had known for sometime that the size 14 boot was two sizes too large and had failed to ensure that I got new ones that would properly fit. Our department had needed other equipment so I decided the cost would not outweigh what I needed...after all I have been on the fire lines for 30 plus years. During this event, my boot became stuck in muck, and as I tried to pull it out the foot came out, which caused me to trip. When I fell backwards, my right ankle was burned by several hot embers. Although not life threatening, it created an on-scene void for our team. The injury took several weeks to heal. Proper fit of all of PPE is a mandatory requirement. As the department safety officers, we are responsible for ensuring our personnel are protected including ourselves.

Lessons Learned

Ensure all personnel are properly equipped. Keep open communications with all personnel and have them report torn, damaged, or loose fitting equipment.

Discussion Questions

Reports [08-373](#) and [07-1022](#) confirm that improperly fitted PPE comes with a cost. An injured firefighter creates more than just "*an on-scene void.*" Departments of all sizes and configurations are affected "back at the house" when members are injured. The role of PPE is to protect firefighters and emergency responders while they are participating in mitigation activities. We have learned through the last 25 years that the fit of PPE garments is as important as the material's protective qualities. On the EMS side, exposures or injuries due to poorly fitted PPE can result in career ending and life altering conditions. The bottom line is injuries due to improperly fitted PPE are avoidable. Once you have reviewed the reports, consider the following:

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1. Does your department have SOPs/SOGs in place that define what level of PPE is required for the various types of incidents the department runs?
2. What was the process used to fit you for your current set of PPE?
3. Can you describe the materials used and protective abilities of your issued PPE (e.g., Thermal Protective Performance [TPP] rating, impact resistance, permeability, rip stop protection, etc.)?
4. How often do you inspect your PPE?
5. How often is your PPE formally inspected for cleanliness, damage and fit?

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.