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## Report of the Week

**And the wall came tumbling down.  
12/30/2010**

**Report Number:** 10-0001250

Report Date: 12/03/2010 14:47

### Synopsis

Safety officer injured in wall collapse.

### Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Fire Fighter

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 16 - 24

Years of fire service experience:

Region: FEMA Region IV

Service Area: Urban

### Event Information

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

Event date and time: 01/06/2006 21:00

Hours into the shift:

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

Weather at time of event: Fog with reduced visibility

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Situational Awareness
- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Life threatening injury

### Event Description

There was a structure fire at a commercial structure still under construction. During suppression efforts the safety officer was completing another walk around when a cinder block wall collapsed onto the safety officer. Personnel were immediately sent to the location of the incident and the safety officer was removed. The safety officer received minor injuries and was transported to the hospital by the EMS crew.

### Lessons Learned

Always keep in mind the collapse zone of all structures. Be mindful of pre-collapse warning signs and length of time the fire has been burning.

### Report of the Week

This week's ROTW is our last for 2010. We hope you have benefitted from this past year's efforts. On behalf of the staff at Near Miss, we want to extend our sincere thanks for your support in 2010 and look forward to serving you again in 2011. Celebrate the New Year in moderation if you are heading out for New

**And the wall came tumbling down.**

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Year's Eve, especially if you are on duty New Year's Day. One of the best ways to avoid a near miss is to be fully alert mentally.

No structure is immune from collapse. Structures under construction are especially vulnerable to wind and fire. Weight bearing components are not properly protected, walls are not fully supported and the structure is often open to increased air flow. This week's featured report, [10-1250](#), recounts an event that catches a safety officer unawares.

*"There was a structure fire at a commercial structure still under construction. During suppression efforts the safety officer was completing another walk around when a cinder block wall collapsed onto the safety officer..."*

The legendary Frank Brannigan said any building on fire is a building under demolition. The building under construction that catches fire exponentially reinforces that statement. Firefighters arriving at the scene of working fires in a building under construction should be wary of all aspects of the incident. Early, catastrophic collapse should be an expectation, not a surprise. Armed with that mindset, establishing collapse zones and ensuring personnel do not enter those zones are critical to keeping personnel out of harm's way. Once you have read the entire account of [10-1250](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. The safety officer in this incident becomes the victim. How would you characterize the ISO's situational awareness in this incident, high or low? Explain your answer.
2. What "mode" does your department take when arriving at the scene of a structure fire in a structure that is under construction; offensive or defensive? Why?
3. If this incident occurred in your department, what follow-up actions would be taken and why?
4. How are your department's incident scene safety officers selected?
5. All elements being equal, which type of wall collapse presents the greatest potential for debris being thrown the farthest, 90°? curtain fall? Or inward/outward?

#### **Related Reports – Topical Relation: Collapse Zones**

[05-218](#)      [06-224](#)      [07-1039](#)      [08-170](#)      [09-519](#)

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.