



National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System

Reports Related to Basement Fires & Near Misses Contributed to a Lack of 360° Walk Around

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Report Number: 06-0000200

Synopsis: Improper construction practice leads to collapse. Firefighter falls into basement.

Event Description: Fire service personnel responded to a structure fire in a non-hydrant area. Upon arrival, crews reported heavy smoke conditions with a possible basement fire. Engine company personnel entered the structure and encountered a hole in the first floor. There was a brick hearth supported below the first floor with heavy timber. The basement fire burned the heavy timber supports and the brick hearth collapsed the floor. While trying to locate the seat of the fire, in heavy smoke conditions, an engine company member fell to the basement through the hole. Ladder company personnel were close by and assisted the firefighter out of the basement. The collapsed floor was leaning on an angle, which saved the firefighter from being trapped. The firefighter was pulled to the first floor and removed from the structure with no major injuries or loss of life.

Lessons Learned: This event was prior to the RAT movement and was a significant event for our department. We have since trained our personnel in RAT operations and increased our awareness in search techniques.

Report Number: 07-0001005

Synopsis: Firefighter falls through basement stairs at structure fire.

Event Description: We had a basement fire in a two story residential structure. We could not see more than a foot in front of us. We had trouble finding the basement door. Once we found the basement door and I took a look inside, I couldn't see anything below so I had no idea of what was burning or how much was burning below us. I told the captain I didn't feel comfortable going down the stairs into the basement too far due to the intense heat I was feeling under the stairs. We were only about three or four steps down from the door that we entered. The captain was only one step above me. I saw some flames to the left of the stairs and started hitting it with the hose line when all of a sudden I felt the stairs give way and I was falling. At that point I wasn't sure how far I was going to fall or if I would be falling into any flames or anything that was still burning. It turned out I only fell about 6 feet and was unharmed. The captain's step didn't break away. He was still up top and didn't fall. The firemen at the basement door pulled him back into the door. I felt lucky that I was unharmed.

Lessons Learned: We rarely get basement fires in [region deletion] so even though I have been on the job for 21 years, it was the first time in a long time that I had been exposed to a basement fire. I didn't realize that the stairs could give way. The fire had been burning hot and long enough directly under the wooden stairs to finally cause them to give way once I stood on them. The next time I start to walk on the stairs of a basement fire, I will check to see if the stairs are made of wood, if possible, and possibly check the stability of the stairs before standing on them.

Report Number: 08-0000375

Synopsis: FF falls through hole into basement, Mayday occurs.

Event Description: Bracketed areas [] denote reviewer de-identification.

March 24, 2008 did not start out like most shifts at [name deleted]. The lieutenant, fire-technician and senior firefighter were all out on leave. I was the only one from my normal shift working that day. Only four months off probationary status, I had no clue that I was going to be tested on what I had learned one year earlier in the academy. Other than not having my normal crew, the day started out like any other. I started apparatus checks, changed the battery in my personal radio, and made sure that my Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) was in working order. I also made sure all of the hose lines were ready to be pulled if called upon since I was running the line that day.

At approximately 09:55am, Public Safety Communications (PSC) dispatched a box alarm [name deleted]. The assignment consisted of four engines, two ladder trucks, one rescue-squad and a battalion chief. Engine [1] responded to the assignment with four personnel. At 10:01am the crew laid their supply line about 100 feet to the address. The lieutenant of Engine [1] told PSC, "Have Engine [2] pick up my line at [name deleted]. I'm on the scene with a two-story single-family dwelling, nothing evident. I am establishing [name deleted] command.

Indeed we arrived with nothing evident. Because I was the lineman, I had to make a decision as to which line I wanted to pull. Since the only choice I have for lines is 2 inch or a 1 ½ inch hose, I chose a 200 ft. 1 ½ inch line with a breakaway [name deleted] tip nozzle. Normally I would pull a 200 ft. 2 inch line with a fog nozzle, but I had no fire evident and was not with my normal crew, so I wanted to make sure I had more mobility if I needed to advance my line. When I got to the tailboard of the engine, I noticed light brown smoke coming from a roof vent. At this time, I was thinking we possibly had a small room with contents fire on the second floor. I got to the Alpha/Delta corner of the house and noticed more brown smoke coming from a crack on the side of a basement window. Once I relayed this information to the lieutenant, I started to think of basement fire operations.

Just before we made entry, Chief [1] arrived on scene and took command. Realizing his third-due special service in charge of Rapid Intervention was understaffed with two personnel, he requested an additional engine and truck company for the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT).

Just as the forcible entry person opened the unlocked door, the second-due engine was starting to pull the backup line from Engine [1]. Engine [1] crew was met with a hazy blackish-brown smoke from ceiling to floor. Seeing this made me start to think that the fire had either smoldered itself out or that it was deeply seated in the house, like most basement fires. Knowing that the lieutenant and I were on the same page, we needed to find the basement stairs. As I advanced my line on the first floor with zero visibility, I asked the lieutenant if he had anything on the thermal imager. He responded, "No, everything is white". I decided to point my nozzle to the ceiling and open it to see how hot it really was. To my surprise, only a little water came back down. As I advanced my line, I felt heat to my left and saw fire. Thinking I ended up in a closet, I opened my line and knocked most of my fire. I yelled back to my lieutenant that I thought I found the seat of the fire and that I needed more line to get around

a corner. Little did I know at the time, the forcible entry person went back to the front door to make sure the door had not shut on the hoseline.

While on my knees pulling line I felt a sudden drop and no longer felt the hose in my hands. I ended up on my right side with my face mask ajar and my helmet hanging forward. I quickly resealed my face mask, placed my helmet back on my head, and realized that my right glove was missing. Thinking my right arm was broken, I placed my hand in my coat pocket and stood up to try to feel if I had fallen through the floor. I quickly thought I may have fallen off of a step, into a living room, a few inches down from the room I was in. Unfortunately, the fire I was trying to extinguish was higher than where it was when I just saw it and I realized that I must be in the basement.

Thinking now there might be a hole above me, I started yelling up to my crew to try to alert them to stay away from that area. Still in zero visibility, I remembered that I had my personal [name deleted] radio on me. At 10:10 am, I grabbed my extended microphone and called out, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday". Realizing that I was on "talk around" (a non-repeated channel that can only be heard within a small distance, usually the distance of a typical fire ground), I quickly switched my radio over to "A mode" (the repeated fire ground channel). Then I heard command telling PSC to activate the Mayday tones (a designated high pitch tone to alert units that there is a "Mayday" taking place). Command finally asked for the distressed firefighter to give his last location. At this time I gave my L.U.N.A.R (Location, Unit, Name, Assignment, Resources needed/Air supply), "Mayday this is Firefighter [name deleted] from Engine [1]. I fell through a hole into the basement. I'm at the end of the attack line. I need an attack ladder to get out. Once I knew that my message was received by command, I started fluttering my P.A.S.S device letting it have a 10 second burst then I reset the device and repeated the process again and again. Seconds later the crew of Engine [1] heard the Mayday and P.A.S.S device activating. They found the nozzle next to the hole and flowed water down on top of me. As they did this, I tried searching one-handed to see if I could get reoriented. At this time, I felt banisters to a stair-well to my right. I now started to think that the "closet" I was in really was a stairwell that had burned through. What also felt discomfoting was how I kept seeing flames popping out of smoke to my right. This made me think there was a basement fire. I realized I needed to get to the left of the basement. As I searched left, I found a desk against the wall and thought for a second to search the wall and possibly find an exterior exit. However, I am not a gambling man and realized I had a hole right above me, water flowing down on top of me and any second a ladder that I could climb up to safety. My final decision was to stay where I was and wait for the ladder.

On the outside with only two engines, one ladder truck, a battalion chief and two volunteer chiefs on scene, command gave the incident command to Battalion Chief [2] and had him switch to an alternate channel with all of the other units that were not on scene yet. Chief [1] took command of RIT operations that stayed on the original fire ground channel and assigned Chief [3], Engine [2] and the just arriving Truck [1] RIT duties.

Truck [1] entered through side Alpha and tried to find to basement steps. The senior truck lieutenant quickly realized that the layout of the house was odd and decided to pull his crew out and enter through side Charlie. Once on side Charlie, Truck [1] broke out a sliding glass door and searched ahead of the redeploying Engine [2]. Performing a right handed search pattern, the crew found an interior door and tried opening it. Due to debris blocking the door, they

forced their way into the room. At 10:14am, the ventilation of the sliding glass door and the interior door being forced-provided me with enough visibility to see smoke clearing and I crawled to the door where I was met by Truck [1] and exited the house via side Charlie.

I was taken to a burn center nearby and treated for a third degree burn to my abdomen, sprained back, sprained right shoulder and sprained right arm. As soon as I was released from the hospital, I wanted to go back to the house on [name deleted] and try to piece together what had happened. With the help of Fire Investigations, I found that the fire had started in a kitchen island. The house was tightly sealed up which made sense, seeing as how we had nothing evident when we arrived. A fire had started in the kitchen island hours before anyone was home and burned undetected. When both the homeowner and fire department entered the house, oxygen also entered. This provided enough oxygen to the smoldered out fire to flare it back up. As hot as the heat conditions were, the bulk of the fire was not that large when we arrived on scene. Another surprise to me was how the "closet" I thought I had found was actually an opening to the kitchen. The fire I had found was a refrigerator on fire. Once I had that knocked and as I pulled my line, there was a perfect cutout of a hole where the island had fallen through the floor of the kitchen into the basement. The two by ten joists that were holding the island up were out-matched by the weight of the island and the fire conditions of the kitchen. As I pulled my line in zero visibility I must have lost my grip on the line and "tumbled" ten feet into the hole. I landed on the stove, sink and other remnants of the island. I do not remember trying to grab anything when I started to fall, but that is the only explanation as to why I didn't have my right glove.

My burn was more of an odd situation. I had an eight inch rip in my coat, which can only be explained by a nail or something of the sort catching the coat as I fell. When I was laying on my stomach giving my "Mayday" the burned metal stove must have come in contact to my metal coat buckle, which then burned a hole through my shirt and caused me to suffer a third degree burn. Another surprise I had was the banisters to the burned out stairwell that I thought I found. As it turns out, the banisters were really exposed studs to an unfinished room in the basement. The comforting information I found was that there was no fire in the basement. The fire I saw above me was the cabinets and fire running the floor joists above me. What made me realize how lucky I was, was the decision of Truck [1] crew to pull out and reenter through a side Charlie door. To make the basement steps, they would have had to make an immediate left through the front door, go through a computer room, which then had a door leading into a bathroom that took you to a hallway. In the hallway, there were four doors. Three of the doors were closets leaving the door to the basement.

Once I understood the incident I wanted to see what it was that I would learn from this incident. To my surprise, finding answers to that question was going to be tougher than I thought. As I talked to people about my incident, a common question I had was "If you ran the same fire tomorrow, only knowing what you knew at the time, what would you do differently?" That is a tough question. I ended up alive, with minimal injuries and the fire went out. What more could you ask for in this job? But, there was room for improvement.

From the beginning, I would have pulled my 200 ft. two inch-fog nozzle line. Had there been a basement fire, I think I would have rather had 200 gallons of water a minute than 100 gallons at the most. Secondly, since it was not that big of a house, a 360 of the house should have been completed. This would have given us a better face of side Charlie and the layout might

have been easier to understand. Third, I would have liked to have had a window broken out as I advanced my line. This of course would have cleared some of the smoke and made the fire easier to find. The most important lessons I learned on this fire was not to be on talk-around mode. Talk around is a nice tool at times but during a working incident of any kind there is no room for it. Had I been in a situation where I was unable to access the toggle switch, I might have not been heard. The last lesson I learned was from a senior lieutenant of Truck [1] and that is, never stop thinking outside of the box. He and his crew were unable to find the basement steps and realized any kind of rescue operation inside would have been difficult due to the smoke conditions. A big piece of the puzzle was the crew entering side Charlie and showing me the way to an exit.

Lessons Learned: Once I understood the incident I wanted to see what it was that I would learn from this incident. To my surprise, finding answers to that question was going to be tougher than I thought. As I talked to people about my incident, a common question I had was "If you ran the same fire tomorrow, only knowing what you knew at the time, what would you do differently?"

That is a tough question. I ended up alive, with minimal injuries and the fire went out. What more could you ask for in this job? But, there was room for improvement. From the beginning, I would have pulled my 200 ft. two inch-fog nozzle line. Had there been a basement fire, I think I would have rather had 200 gallons of water a minute than 100 gallons at the most. Secondly, being it was not that big of a house, a 360 of the house should have been completed. This would have given us a better face of side Charlie and the layout might have been easier to understand. Third, I would have liked to have had a window broken out as I advanced my line. This of course would have cleared some of the smoke and made the fire easier to find. The most important lessons I learned on this fire was not to be on talk around mode. Talk-around is a nice tool at times but during a working incident of any kind there is no room for it. Had I been in a situation where I was unable to access the toggle switch, I might have not been heard. The last lesson I learned was from a senior Lieutenant of Truck b [number deleted] and that is, never stop thinking outside of the box. He and his crew were unable to find the basement steps and realized any kind of rescue operation inside would have been difficult due to the smoke conditions. A big piece of the puzzle was the crew entering side Charlie and showing me the way to an exit.

Report Number: 09-0000200

Synopsis: Nozzle man falls through floor at basement fire.

Event Description: [] Brackets denote de-identification by reviewer.

We were dispatched for the possible structure fire. Upon arrival we were confronted with an older single-family ranch with fire showing from the exterior of the B division.

Walk around identified a side door located on the B side with a minimal amount of fire visible inside a small room towards the A side. Observation of the C and D side showed no obvious

signs of smoke or fire present. I returned to the B side to meet up with Engine [1] who was deploying a 1 ¾" hose to that location.

I was unable to locate any basement windows and did not observe any smoke or heat (melting snow) coming from around the foundation of the home or the eaves. There was approximately 6-8" of snow on the ground and temperatures were in the -20 degree range.

There were no indications of any occupant escaping from the building and very high potential for occupants to be inside the structure, considering the time was 0430.

Total fire involvement was approximately a 20' X 10' area to the exterior with a minimal amount of fire present inside the structure's front AB room. The 1 ¾" hand line was deployed to the B side with communication to Truck [1] for a coordinated attack. Engine [1] was assigned to scrub the exterior quickly then transition to an interior attack of the structure. Engine [1] was able to conduct a complete knock down of the exterior fire with a 10 second sweep, wide fog pattern. They prepared to enter the structure by donning full PPE and SCBA.

Truck [1] was assigned to enter from the D side and provide supportive ventilation along with a primary search of the structure for victims. Communication between the truck and engine acknowledged this coordinated attack. Engine [1] made the transition to an interior attack through the B side door with the nozzle adjusted to straight stream in an effort to meet up with Truck [1] entering through the D side and knocking down any remaining fire in the structure.

I conducted a visual inspection of the entry area and direction of intended travel with the TIC while entry into the structure was being made by Engine [1]'s nozzle man. There were no indications of fire penetration through the floor at the point of entry, but a moderate amount of steam from initial knock down was present. Visibility was adequate and there was moderate to high heat levels.

Engine [1] entered the structure crouching, but in the standing position, advancing at a cautious pace. The nozzle man was sounding the floor while advancing.

Upon entering the structure approximately 3 steps, the nozzle man went to his knees and did not advance any further. When I leaned forward to check on him, he stated that he was through the floor. There was no flame impingement on the nozzle man but he was unable to remove himself from the hazard. I noticed that his left leg was completely through the floor to his hip and his right leg was through to his knee. The nozzle man never let go of the hand line. I was able to provide some assistance to free him from the hole by grabbing onto the harness of his air pack and pulling backward, rolling out to the exterior of the structure with the hose line still in his hands. The nozzle man then quickly jumped to his feet and stated he was okay.

Lessons Learned Initial size up did not indicate the possibility of a basement fire, but a cautious interior attack may have prevented a potentially worse situation and complete collapse of both members into the basement. Once Engine [1]'s crew had exited the building, an immediate radio transmission to all companies announced that the floor was unstable. This announcement should have been made by Engine [1]. Other extreme fire conditions were being transmitted by Truck [1] on the A side of the building simultaneously. It was assumed by Engine [1] that the timing of the immediate evacuation occurring was due to the IC witnessing the trouble entering the structure from the B side, when in fact the fire conditions on the A side

may have been the actual reason for the withdrawal. Engine [1] should have made this transmission to ensure that everyone operating at the scene was aware of the condition of the floor and the presence of a basement fire.

Report Number: 11-0000044

Synopsis: Catastrophic floor collapse during fire attack.

Event Description: Brackets [] denote reviewer de-identification.

On [date and time deleted], units were dispatched for a reported house fire. The address was in close proximity to the first due station. Chief officers and the first arriving engine arrived on scene within two minutes of the dispatch to find a 1.5 story single family dwelling with fire showing from the A/B corner of the first floor and a working fire in the basement. The engine took the hydrant a couple houses before the structure and pulled a 1 ¾" handline. The irons-firefighter on the engine forced entry through an iron security door and the residential door while the nozzle man completed his "minute-man" hoseline stretch. While the irons-firefighter was finishing forcing the doors, the nozzleman hit the fire extending from the first floor window. The line was quickly charged and the crew proceeded into the structure.

Upon entering we had visible fire in the living room towards the right. It appeared that the fire was coming up near the floor board area of the A/B corner. This fire was quickly knocked down. Conditions were zero visibility with light heat conditions at this time. The engine crew then advanced the line through the living room in an attempt to locate the basement stairs. Per our SOP, the first engine is to locate and hold the steps, the second engine provides a back-up line for the first engine on the fire floor, and the third due engine advances a line to the exterior access, if one exists (the fourth due standbys until directed, first truck to first floor, second truck to basement, third truck/squad is RIT). This SOP works well with our department since staffing is rarely an issue and units arrive within minutes of one another.

As the engine company made their way out of the living room, a stairwell leading to the attic was noticed on the right side. The engine company continued forward until we ended up towards the rear of the structure at the kitchen/bathroom area. We are familiar with our first due area and figured one possible location of the interior basement access would be just off of the kitchen; this was not the case in this structure. The engine crew noticed the temperature gradually increase, visibility was still zero. The engine officer attempted to notify command that we were towards the rear of the structure and still attempting to find the steps.

At this time it was noticed that the second engine was beginning to advance their line onto the first floor, along with several members of the first due truck company beginning their search. We began to move our line back towards the way we came in an attempt to find the stairwell (now thinking that we needed to get to the other side of the attic stairs). The engine crew ended up just barely entering the initial living room area again. At this point we heard a "crack", and the floor gave away in what felt like a two stage motion. First, the floor dropped an inch or two, followed a half a second later by a drop of about 8-12". It felt as if the floor had failed in the corner that we initially attacked the visible fire, and the rest of the floor

subsequently leaned towards that end. This failure occurred roughly eight to ten minutes after the arrival of the first engine. The engine officer was immediately to the left of a chief officer who had Division 1. Both fully understood what occurred and immediately notified command of a floor collapse and to evacuate the building. Command requested EVAC tones on all channels and for units to sound their horns/sirens. Inside the structure, the EVAC tones were clearly heard along with an abundance of apparatus sirens/horns. At this point, visible fire was beginning to lap out of the hole on the floor. Units were able to successfully get out of the living room and out of the front door they entered, immediately off of the living room. One member of the search crew was separated from his team and unaware of the conditions present. Although not in immediate danger in the A/D corner of the structure, this member bailed out of a window to get to safety. Upon exiting the structure, units operated from the exterior for approximately 15 minutes until the majority of the fire was knocked down. Upon starting an interior attack again, there was significant extension in all the walls and into the attic. Extensive overhaul began. Units returned to service in the early morning and all members went home safe with no reported injuries.

Lessons Learned: Although no one was injured at this structure fire, it was a very close call. After talking to the crew after the fire, they all agreed that they never want to feel the feeling of a floor giving away below them again. At our post incident discussion back at the station, several key items were brought up. Some of these items could have proved to add a great significance to the crew's safety.

- 1.) Engine Placement: Taking your own hydrant ensures an adequate water supply as quickly as possible. This fire occurred right at the end of a major snow storm so the roads were in poor condition and the 2nd due engine took longer than usual to arrive. However, the hydrant location left the engine a little bit farther away than desired and the 1 3/4" line pulled was not long enough to get into the attic or make the basement steps if we needed to. Towards the end of the incident, an additional 50' was added to make the steps into the attic (which subsequently led to its own problems such as the bale on the 1st floor accidentally being kicked closed). Laying out, even if it is only one length, is a much better option and gets the tail end of the engine just past the A/D corner of the structure. If need be, the engine driver could easily run the 100 or so feet down the street and charge his own line.
- 2.) 360 Walk-around: While the irons-man was forcing entry into the structure, this was a great time for the engine company officer to do a complete 360 of the house. A chief officer did conduct this almost at the same time of the engine company's arrival, but conducting the 360 himself would have given the engine officer going into the house a better idea of the house layout and fire conditions prior to entry.
- 3.) Using the TIC: The engine company officer brought the thermal imager with him, but did not turn it on prior to entering the structure. Once he wanted to use it, he was unable to use it due to it being tangled in equipment and poor visibility. The TIC, although not the be all-end all, would have helped the crew in locating the basement stairs by showing where the thermal conditions were coming from. A sweep of the floor also may have shown heated rafters, indicating a significant fire in the basement.
- 4.) Tunnel Vision: Crews also have to keep in mind all the information given to them while en route. It was stated that this was a reported basement fire. Upon arrival visible fire was seen from a 1st floor window. This indicated that there was a significant basement fire since there was already extension to the 1st floor. Don't get caught up by the fire venting out a window; think how advanced is this fire that I already have fire venting that window. Also, don't fall susceptible to the "be aggressive" attitude. A possible tactic for a well involved

basement fire may have been to start knocking this fire from the exterior. You are not being a wimp by conducting an exterior attack. You are potentially saving your crews lives and still performing an aggressive, proactive attack.

5.) Building Construction: This house had 2X8 rafters in the basement and the floor failed within 10 minutes after arrival of the 1st engine. Building construction is important to keep in mind. Many basements are unfinished, with rafters and supports susceptible to the fire right off the bat. Know the various types of construction and the possibility that a poorly constructed or older chimney can deteriorate these supports slowly over years by "falldown" without igniting, leading to an earlier failure once an actual fire does occur. What if this house was lightweight construction? The engine company crew most likely would have fallen through the floor as soon as they entered the house.

Report Number: 09-0000898

Synopsis: Incomplete 360 results in surprise at structure fire.

Event Description: We responded to a report of a fire in a single-family dwelling. The response included three engines, one ladder, one rescue, one squad, and one B/C. Upon arrival, the first arriving engine reported moderate smoke showing from a one story, wood-frame structure. I was the B/C and had a lieutenant who was acting as my aide. I had told him that, if the opportunity presented itself, I would put him in command of a fire and let him gain some experience while under my supervision. This fire seemed like a good one for that purpose. As we rolled up on the scene, I could see the A, C. and D sides of the small house. Crews were inside attacking the fire. I told him to take command. I assumed his duty of personnel accountability, while at the same time monitoring his actions. Radio traffic was very hard to understand as interior crews were wearing SCBAs. The lieutenant did a good job of keeping up with crews and the fire fighting progress.

When they reported the fire was under control, I left the command post and went to look at the structure. I was very surprised to learn that another structure on the B side had been on fire too. This was a garage that contained two vehicles, as well as several cans of fuel. No one had reported this to command. Though the fires were extinguished without injuries or incidents, this fire would have been handled a little differently had I known the whole story. The fire turned out to be a suspected arson fire.

Lessons Learned:

- 1) Be sure a complete 360 degree walk-around is done on every fire.
- 2) Be sure and communicate all relevant information in your initial report.
- 3) As the IC, sometimes you will need to ask questions to fill in the gaps.
- 4) When communications are difficult, that is the time when things can be missed.

Report Number: 09-0000967

Synopsis: Basement fire found by third due engine during 360.

Event Description: Units were dispatched to a structure fire. The response was three engines, one ladder, one squad, two ambulances, and command staff. The first arriving engine dropped a supply line and drove down a long, winding driveway. The first arriving engine had three people on board and the ambulance was right behind them with two. The company officer ordered a charged hoseline into the front door for an attack. He did not do a 360 walk-around. Smoke and heat were noted on the first floor, along with a charred area with little fire. The fire was extinguished, but the smoke and heat continued. The second floor was searched. Meanwhile, the officer from the third arriving unit did a 360 and found that the house was on a basement and a fire was burning there. A TIC from the first arriving engine was used to aid in extinguishing the fire and check for extension.

Lessons Learned: The first arriving engine did not do a scene size-up to include a 360 degree walk-around. The TIC was not used on the initial attack. Following the SOP would have eliminated the hazard to the firefighters on the initial attack crew. The first arriving officer had many years of experience, but was complacent and overlooked the tools he had available to him.

Report Number: 10-0000396

Synopsis: Lack of walk-around jeopardizes FFs.

Event Description: I was first in on a three man engine crew responding to a structure fire. Upon arrival, we found a two-story townhouse with heavy smoke coming from the front door window and the rear of the roof. At that time, I was working for a small department that only had eight firefighters on duty at one time. The mutual aid was approximately ten minutes away and was not called for until my engine company first arrived on scene. Also, earlier, before the fire, an employee had gotten sick and went home, which forced the shift commander to ride in the OIC position for the rest of the shift.

Myself, the OIC and engineer, arrived on scene and made an initial attack in the front door without a second unit being on location. Due to the legend of the townhomes and the plan of a fast attack, there was no walk-around done. While inside fighting fire, we were met with post-flashover conditions that consisted of heavy heat and heavy smoke. We also had reports of a victim inside the townhouse. Due to the conditions inside, we were not able to advance very far into the structure. Once the mutual aid department arrived on scene, they were assigned (by the OIC who was interior with me AND running command) to pull a 2 1/2 inch handline around the "C" side and protect exposures.

The mutual aid company began flowing water into the window of the involved unit because that's where they saw fire. They did not know we were inside and having the flames pushed down onto us. A third crew also made a fire attack by laddering the second story and going in

through a bedroom window. One of the firefighter on that crew had one of their legs fall through the floor. Luckily, they were able to self extricate and proceed in extinguishment.

The fire eventually got placed under control. During overhaul it was noted by me and command, that the "C" side of the structure was three stories. The whole time we were inside the fully involved townhome, we were above a basement.

Lessons Learned: To me, this report includes three near-miss events. A walk-around should have been made regardless of the fire conditions, especially with the little manpower we initially had. If something were to have happened to me or my shift commander, there were no other units on scene to assist with a rescue situation. The walk-around could have given time for other responding units to arrive and for knowledge of the basement below, that may or may not of been on fire. Having the IC actually being inside and assigned to fire attack, was a huge risk for the safety of not only me, but every person on the fire ground.

The engine company on the "C" side of the structure should not have flowed water into the window of the structure occupied by firefighters. The exposures were not being protected. The principal of fighting the fire from the unburned side was not put into play and almost cost lives and property.

The firefighter who fell through the floor got lucky! Regardless if they should have been on the assignment of fighting fire through the top floor window, extreme caution should have been used.

We were able to contain the fire to the one unit, but only by the grace of God. There were no occupants inside the structure and we risked at least three lives in order to save an unsaveable townhome.

Report Number: 10-0000634

Synopsis: Lack of 360 leads to unnecessary risk at fire.

Event Description: Another fire fighter and I made entry into the first floor of a residence. The residence was a one-story in front, with a two-story walkout in the rear (unknown at time, no 360). We knocked down the fire on the first floor and tried to find basement steps (reported as a basement fire). Heat on the first floor was high and we noticed the floor was getting soft so we backed out. After the fire, we went into the basement and realized that all the floor joists below us were burned, and we were basically held up by carpet. If we had stayed where we were, I believe we would have fallen into the basement, which was modified in a way that we probably wouldn't have found the exit. RIT was not established until several minutes into the event.

Lessons Learned: Many things have changed at my department since the event. We do not operate interior until a 360 is complete. Our response is upgraded to 22-24 fire fighters on every response.

Report Number: 11-0000188

Synopsis: Lack of 360 causes problems.

Event Description: The engine, ladder, and BC were dispatched to a residential fire. When we arrived on scene there was fire showing at the C/D corner. We advanced a line into the fire room. Water had little effect on the fire. We advanced further into the room. The decking on the floor joist gave way. I was unable to remove myself from the floor, but luckily I was sitting on a floor joist. The firefighter advanced into the room and assisted in my extrication. The cause of this basement fire was arson. No 360 was done, so the building was assumed to be normal wood construction. The fire was caused by copious amounts of gasoline being poured and lit in the basement.

This near miss would have been prevented if a 360 had been done and fire origin was determined. It would have been prevented with better situational awareness and realizing the amount of water we used should have had an effect on fire.

Lessons Learned: Do a 360 to determine building construction and fire origin. Have a better situational awareness of effects of hose streams on the fire.