



National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System

These reports coincide with the new monthly podcast entitled: *Seatbelts* which will be posted the week of June 14, 2009.

For more information about the Near-Miss Reports, please visit the official National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System at www.firefighternearmiss.com.

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Report Number: 08-506

Report Date: 10/07/2008 2216

Synopsis

Bus strikes Engine at intersection.

Demographics

Department type: **Combination, Mostly paid**

Job or rank: **Driver / Engineer**

Department shift: **24 hours on - 48 hours off**

Age: **52 - 60**

Years of fire service experience: **21 - 23**

Region: **FEMA Region III**

Service Area: **Urban**

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 04/22/2008 2230

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event:

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Human Error

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Lost time injury

Event Description

The brackets [] denote reviewer de-identification.

While returning from an incident, I was driving E [1] back to the station. I was driving due to the fact, that I had lost my driver who had upgraded an ambulance for a transport. I had been the unit officer for the shift on E [1]. We were returning back to the station understaffed because I had no qualified unit officer or third. I had 2 volunteers with me.

I was traveling back to the station and had exited off at the ramp for [name deleted]. Approaching the road, we had a red light. I stopped well before the intersection at the first white stripe indicating the proper stopping area. While awaiting the change of the light to proceed, I had observed a blue compact in the lane to turn left. He was stopped at the same stopping point as E [1]. He was in the inside left turn lane (to my left) and I was in the outside left turn lane of the 2 lanes to make the left turn. This intersection has 2 left turn lanes with green arrows for westbound [name deleted]. When the left turn green was indicated, the blue compact immediately proceeded through the intersection without incident. I hesitated, checking intersection clearance before proceeding through. The intersection was clear and I proceeded into the intersection with green arrow active. A bus was traveling at a high rate of speed eastbound on [name deleted]. The bus immediately slammed into E [1] after running the red light. I was hit at the driver's compartment side. The engine was rocked and pushed a distance from impact point. I looked over at the driver and raised my arms up to indicate what are you doing? The driver said (I could read her lips) "it wouldn't stop." At impact, I observed the passengers on the bus thrown to the floor. I also looked back up and our green arrow was still active and she still had a clear red. I called our communication center, requested an assignment, and advised them of our location. I told them that we had been smeared by a bus that ran a red light. I was initially stunned and

shocked and remained in the driver's seat before climbing over the engine cowl and exiting out of officer's door to evaluate the situation. There were no skid marks from the bus indicating any brake activation.

Units were on scene immediately. The bus occupants and my crew were attended too. My crew and I were transported to the emergency room for evaluations. I did have neck and back pains.

In regards to the blue compact, if he had not immediately proceeded through the intersection he would have been struck first and pushed into us. In my opinion, we definitely would have had a fatality. There was nothing different I would have or could have done to avoid this collision. I exercised all possible safety procedures. There are traffic cameras at this intersection and all of my personnel were belted at the time of the collision.

Lessons Learned

I have always been an advocate of seat belt use both on and off the job. I always make sure that all of my crew is belted, whether I am driving or the OIC of the apparatus. If they are not belted, then we go nowhere until they are. I always verbally check with my crew for an acknowledgement that they are belted and ready.

In this incident, there was nothing else that I could have or would have done differently. This was an unavoidable incident on my part. This incident would have been much more serious with possibly fatal repercussions, if my crew and I were not belted. I feel that if we all were not belted, then someone may have been ejected at impact when we were hit by the bus. I can say to all who have hesitations or just blatantly ignore seat belt use, if you are involved in a similar incident it would make you a believer. Where seat belts for your safety. To give you an indication of what non belted passenger's experience, all of the passengers on the bus that struck us were forcefully thrown to the bus floor upon impact. I witnessed this with my own eyes.

In summation, I would urge drivers and passengers to use your seat belt. It does not matter what your job may be. Also, wear a seat belt in your personal vehicle. If you care about yourself or your loved ones, you will wear your seat belt at all times when in a moving vehicle. It makes no difference if it's a law or department policy, wear it. Don't feel that an incident such as this could not happen to you. It can at any time. Belts are there. Wear them!

Report Number: 08-134
Report Date: 03/08/2008 1610

Synopsis

Routine inspections reveals seat belt damage

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer
Job or rank: Fire Chief
Department shift: Stand-by (in-station)
Age: 52 - 60
Years of fire service experience: 30+
Region: FEMA Region VIII
Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Vehicle event: responding to, returning from, routine driving, etc.
Event date and time: 03/05/2008 1500
Hours into the shift:
Event participation: Told of event, but neither involved nor witnessed event
Weather at time of event: Not reported
Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

- Equipment

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Property damage

Event Description

Our fire mechanic was conducting a survey of seat belt condition of all apparatus in the department fleet. His investigation revealed that nine seat belts or retracting mechanisms were damaged beyond a safe operating condition. The biggest problem is damage occurring to belts caught in apparatus doors causing cuts and abrasions to the belts. Based on this inspection it was determined that nine seat belts and mechanisms would be immediately replaced. This replacement of nine belts indicated that we were replacing at least one belt in 50% of our apparatus. Of course, this was a non budgeted item but what price do we put on safety of our crews. The area apparatus vendor was extremely helpful in getting replacements ordered and shipped within 24 hours. Whether or not this classifies as a near miss or not, I am not sure but when it came to our knowledge, we were not going to take a chance. I certainly do not think we are alone in this dilemma.

Lessons Learned

Regular inspections of apparatus occur on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Verifying the working and proper condition of the seat belts should be a daily requirement as well. Inspect your belts. We all have or should have a mandated policy concerning the wearing the seat belt and should indicate what the consequences of not wearing seat belts are. Every week we read about another firefighter death or serious injury from the lack of wearing a belt. This week was no exception. However, we must also take the responsibility of ensuring that those belts comply with standards and operate correctly. Replace defective or worn out seat belts, be cautious about shutting seat belts in doors, and enforce your policy of mandated wearing of the belt.