



National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System

Safety, Health and Survival Week 2008 *Committed to Long Term Results*

2008 Key Area: Fully implement the Wellness-Fitness Initiative:

- a. Provide annual medical and physical evaluations.
- b. Provide equipment and time for exercise.
- c. Provide nutrition information.

(You may also search for these and other Near-Miss reports online at www.firefighternearmiss.com/nmrs-query/Query.htm)

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Report Number: 05-0000329

Report Date: 06/29/2005 1930

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 30+

Region: FEMA Region X

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 10/29/2004 1409

Hours into the shift: 5 - 8

Event participation: Involved in the event

Do you think this will happen again? No

What do you believe caused the event?

Accountability

Other

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Lost time injury

Life threatening injury

Event Description

Working as the Incident Commander at a routine apartment fire. Suddenly collapsed in ventricular fibrillation resulting in cardiac arrest. Given CPR by firefighter/EMTs on scene. Given one shock with a LifePak 500 by Firefighter/EMTs on scene which resulted in a successful resuscitation. I awoke and then the firefighter/paramedics continued with ALS support. I had a four-way coronary artery bypass graft two days later and was then outfitted with an implantable defibrillator. I returned to Operations Division on (date deleted).

Lessons Learned

Take better physical care of myself. Ask for more indepth physical exams, including exercise stress test, especially after the age of 45. Alter diet to ensure cholesterol is lower than 200. Maintain a standard of physical fitness with a regular and consistent exercise program. Be aware of the risks of heart disease as established by the American Heart Association and other related associations. Refrain from the use of tobacco products.

Report Number: 06-0000288

Report Date: 05/22/2006 1500

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 30+

Region: FEMA Region X

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

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

Event date and time: 10/29/2004 1409

Hours into the shift: 5 - 8

Event participation: Involved in the event

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

Training Issue

Other

Individual Action

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Lost time injury

Life threatening injury

Event Description

While working as the Incident Commander of an apartment fire, I suffered "Sudden Cardiac Death." My heart had gone into ventricular fibrillation resulting in cardiac arrest. Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics were next to me when I went down. They performed CPR and gave me one shock from a LifePak 500. Within four minutes of dropping dead, I was awake and talking with the crews who had just given my life back to me. I underwent a 4-way open heart bypass operation two days later. A couple of months after that, I went through a cardiac stress test and echocardiogram. Those tests revealed that I had no heart damage and was completely healed. Thirty years as a firefighter, many without use of a SCBA, poor diet, lack of exercise and tobacco use, were certainly factors that led to this event. Since that day I have quit smoking, started eating a much more heart healthy diet and exercise 4 to 6 days a week. I firmly believe in fire-based EMS and firefighter physical fitness.

Lessons Learned

I learned that our lives are not our own - we share them with a lot of other people. Keep yourself physically fit and be sure to get regular checkups from your doctor. Ask that you get screened for signs of coronary artery disease, heart history in your family, high blood

pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, lack of exercise, obesity, and so on. Be advised that Electron Beam Tomography (EBT) scans are good tools for determining the condition of coronary arteries, whereas cardiac stress tests, treadmill tests, generally do not recognize coronary artery disease problems until those arteries are nearly 70% blocked. Firefighting is one of the most stressful and dangerous jobs in America. We owe it to ourselves, our families and our fellow firefighters to be in the best physical condition possible. Likewise, we must insist that we become as proficient as possible in the emergency medical field, if for nothing else than those times when we can save the life of a fellow firefighter.

Report Number: 08-0000091

Report Date: 02/16/2008 0210

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: On-duty activities: apparatus and station maintenance, meetings, tours, etc.

Event date and time: 01/09/2008 0900

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

Event participation: Told to and submitted by safety officer

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

Other

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Life threatening injury

Event Description

Department member was participating in annual physical. Physical consists of comprehensive program as outlined in the IAFF Wellness-Fitness Initiative and follows NFPA 1582: Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments. Abnormality noted during cardiac evaluation. Member followed up with specialist and was confirmed to have significant problem requiring immediate surgical intervention. Surgery was successful. Fire department physician's evaluation and recommendation along with member's immediate follow up are credited with saving member's life.

Lessons Learned

The role of a comprehensive annual medical evaluation program for firefighters cannot be ignored. All operational firefighters should be required to obtain an annual physical that includes a cardiac stress test and pulmonary function evaluation. Heeding the recommendation of the fire department physician will save your life. The IAFF Wellness-Fitness Initiative and NFPA 1582 are two proven documents for improving firefighter longevity.

Report Number: 06-0000255

Report Date: 04/26/2006 1312

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Battalion Chief / District Chief

Department shift: 24 hours on - 48 hours off

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 27 - 30

Region: FEMA Region III

Service Area: Urban

Event Information

Event type: Other

Event date and time: 04/03/2006 0800

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

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

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

Other

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Life threatening injury

Event Description

While participating in an annual physical exam, a positive colon cancer was detected.

This positive test was confirmed by an outside source. This case is but one of four or five that have surfaced in the past three years.

Lessons Learned

Extensive annual physical examinations for all fire/rescue personnel are a must. In fact, an intense Wellness-Fitness Program should be an integral part of every department.

The annual physical exam is, in part, a discovery phase. Other components of the Wellness-Fitness Program may help reduce the chance of developing this disease or at the very least promote early detection.

Report Number: 06-0000498
Report Date: 10/03/2006 2016

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly volunteer
Job or rank: Fire Fighter
Department shift: Straight days (8 hour)
Age: 25 - 33
Years of fire service experience: 7 - 10
Region: FEMA Region IV
Service Area: Rural

Event Information

Event type: Other: firefighter wellness plan
Event date and time: 09/27/2006 1930
Hours into the shift:
Event participation: Involved in the event
Do you think this will happen again? Yes
What do you believe caused the event?

Unknown

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Other

Event Description

The department is mostly volunteer and we have three paid staff that work five days a week. The chief made a proposal to the board of directors for the purchase of a large amount of physical fitness equipment. In the proposal, he included that all of the members take a physical assessment. In the assessment, there would be a breathing test, height and weight assessment, and a 12 lead EKG resting and riding a stationary bike. In the first round of assessments, a member passed all aspects of the exam until he got to the stationary bike. He then was requested to stop the test. His heart rate was extremely elevated. He then was told to see his doctor as soon as possible. He then reported to his doctor. One day later, he experienced server chest pains and was admitted to the hospital. He is still in doctor's care at this time.

Lessons Learned

The lesson learned was it may be expensive for the department to take on a bill of \$200 per person but it may save a life. In my opinion, this assessment could have been the prevention of a deadly event.

Report Number: 08-0000058

Report Date: 02/01/2008 0341

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: 01/29/2008 1840

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Do you think this will happen again?

What do you believe caused the event?

Fatigue

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Minor injury

Event Description

In an attempt to prevent health related injuries we have started physical fitness training on a regular basis. This particular drill included jumping jacks, sit ups, push ups, and a ¼ mile run around the block. After about 30 minutes of physical fitness training the group began to cool down. One firefighter became light headed and felt like he was going to pass out. We immediately provided assistance to him. An ambulance was called to the station. After 1000 cc's of NACL (Saline) the firefighter was hydrated and his heart rate returned to normal. He refused to go to the hospital and was released with the permission from a doctor at a local hospital. He was excused for the remainder of drill and placed in the care of his family.

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned: Communications - the firefighter should have told the instructor that he was not feeling right, sooner. Communications - the instructor should have verified that all firefighters training properly hydrated themselves before starting. Suggestions to prevent a similar event: Stress the importance of being physically and mentally prepared for duty. Discuss the importance of health and nutrition. Discuss the importance of communications, especially if you're not feeling well.

Report Number: 06-0000285

Report Date: 05/19/2006 1146

Demographics

Department type: Combination, Mostly paid

Job or rank: Fire Chief

Department shift: Other : Administrative

Age: 52 - 60

Years of fire service experience: 30+

Region: FEMA Region VIII

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Other

Event date and time: 01/25/2006 1100

Hours into the shift: 0 - 4

Event participation: Involved in the event

Do you think this will happen again? Yes

What do you believe caused the event?

Protocol

What do you believe is the loss potential?

Life threatening injury

Event Description

I participated in the Departments annual medical physical. A 12 lead EKG indicated a non diagnostic, abnormal EKG. The physician recommended a stress test. The first stress test led to a cardio light stress test. The results showed blockages and the recommended course of action was a cardio cath with the intent to perform angioplasty or stenting. The cardio cath showed total blockages in two arteries and partial in a third resulting in bypass surgery. I had participated in my own annual physical 6 months prior to the Department physical and the EKG at that time showed no indications of any problems. I never experienced chest pain and was asymptomatic. The required annual Department physical was key in identifying the issue. My surgery was February 1st and I returned to work on a part time basis April 3. I expect to be released to full duty in mid June.

Lessons Learned

Our organization implemented annual physicals three years ago. It is imperative that departments have a medical physical program that identifies potentially fatal diseases such as cancer or coronary artery disease. It is our intent to expand our program to include further coronary screening as well as providing presentations regarding lifestyle changes, i.e. diet and exercise, which will help improve the physical well-being of our employees.

