

**LINE OF DUTY
DEATH REPORT
REPORT SLIDES**



F2020-01

Firefighter-EMT Dies After Falling
from the Roof of a Five-Story
Commercial and Residential
Condominium Complex -
Colorado



Summary



Chimney chase fire as seen from Side Charlie/Delta corner. *(Photo taken by the condominium owner and provided to NIOSH courtesy of the fire department.)*

- 0148 hours, 9-1-1 received a report of a fire on the roof of a building at a mountain resort.
- 0150 hours, Truck 1 (T1), Engine 2 (E2), Engine 8, Engine 4 from a neighboring department, Battalion 8 (B8), and Medic 2 (M2) were dispatched. The 911 caller also notified resort security.
- 0153 hours, the building's fire alarm system was manually activated, and residents of the condominium complex began evacuating.



Summary

- At 0156 hours, T1 arrived on-scene. T1's officer, an acting Lieutenant (LT), established Command and conducted a 360° size up. He reported small flames showing from a Side Charlie chimney and that he would be investigating how to best access the fire.
- The T1 apparatus was unable to access Side Charlie due to the narrow opening on both Sides Delta and Bravo. T1's engineer started to connect a 5-inch supply line to the hydrant on the Side AD corner.
- T1's crew (Acting LT, FF-EMT, and a probationary FF-EMT) grabbed their tools and high-rise packs and moved to the bottom of the east stairwell. They were joined by the property manager and resort security who had access keys to the roof and residential units.
- At 0203 hours, Command made assignments over the radio to incoming resources. At 0204 hours, the T1 attack team climbed the east stairwell to the top floor of the building.



Summary

- As the team climbed up the stairs, no smoke was observed in the stairwell or in any of the hallways.
- At the top floor, the ceiling scuttle-hole was unlocked providing access to the attic. Command instructed his crew to investigate whether the fire could be accessed from the roof.
- Command headed down the hallway with the property manager to investigate if any of the residential units provided better access.
- TI's FF-EMT climbed through the scuttle-hole into the attic. The probationary FF-EMT could not navigate through the scuttle hole due to his bulky SCBA.
- Carrying a dry chemical fire extinguisher, the FF-EMT continued up the fixed attic ladder to the attic hatch which opens to the building's roof.



Photograph of the building's attic. The fixed black metal ladder extended from the scuttle-hole on the ceiling of the fourth-floor to the roof access hatch. (Photo courtesy of the fire department.)



Summary

- At approximately 0210 hours, the FF-EMT reported to Command that they have an involved chimney chase fire and need a hose lay. Command stated he would work with E2 on that.
- M2, staged on Side Alpha, were surprised to see a firefighter's reflective turnout gear standing atop the 5-story building with a snow-covered 4:12 pitched roof.
- At 0207 hours B8 arrived on-scene but did not assume Command. He received a report from the resort security and the county Sheriff's office.
- B8 walked to Side Charlie and saw the chimney chase fire.
- Command and E2 were in unit 406 with flashlights.
- B8 reported to Command that he saw flashlights in the unit below the chimney fire.



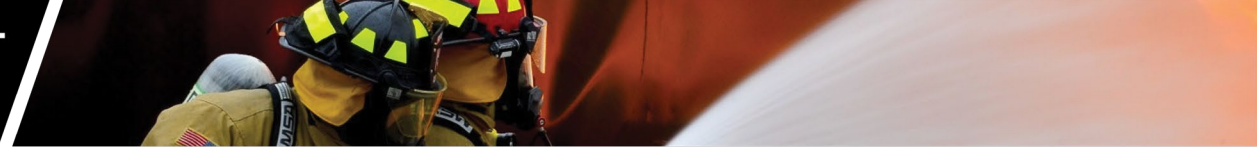
Summary

- Command told B8 that they had a firefighter on the roof who had access to the fire. He asked B8 if this unit [406] provided the best access to the fire.
- B8 responded that the best access would be the skylight [in unit 406].
- B8 copied that and tasked E2 with accessing 406's skylight.
- Command returned to the east stairwell and tasked the probationary FF-EMT to couple and stretch the hoses from the east stairwell to unit 406.
- At this point, there was conflicting information as to whether the FF-EMT had returned to the attic or had remained on the roof.



Summary

- Establishing unit 406 as the base of fire suppression efforts was not radioed to dispatch or to on-scene firefighters.
- At approximately 0214 hours, witnesses observed a firefighter on the south facing roof slip, slide about 15 feet, then fall about 35 feet from the roof onto the 1st floor sheet metal roof.
- The FF-EMT was unresponsive. Crews extracted the FF-EMT from the 1st floor roof.
- Despite immediate advance life support administered on-scene, during transport, and in the local hospital, the FF-EMT succumbed to his injuries.
- He was pronounced deceased at 0242 hours. The death certificate listed several traumatic injuries “due to a blunt force trauma from a 34.5 foot fall.”



Contributing Factors

- Aerial apparatus could not be utilized due to lack of access to Side Charlie
- Insufficient situational awareness
- Adverse environmental conditions (snow and possible ice on the roof)
- Breakdown in communication components of the department's incident command system
- Lack of a fire department roof access/operations policy
- Insufficient roof training exercises
- Breakdown of crew integrity



Recommendations

- Fire departments should ensure all firefighters and other personnel responding to the fire scene are trained in situational awareness and personal safety.
- Fire departments should ensure all firefighters and fire officers follow all aspects of NFPA 1561 (*Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System and Command Safety*) and their individual department's standard operating guideline (SOG) for incident command.
- Fire departments should develop and enforce an SOG for roof access/operations and develop classroom and practical roof training exercises.
- Fire departments should ensure firefighters responding to hazardous area at emergency incidents maintain crew integrity.

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