

Volunteer firefighter seriously injured after fall from aerial platform during vertical ventilation operations – Wyoming

F2026-09 WY · November 2026

NIOSH FIRE FIGHTER FATALITY INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

KEY POINTS

- On May 25, 2026, one volunteer firefighter was seriously injured after falling from an aerial platform while performing vertical ventilation operations.
- Fire departments should equip firefighters with means to work at heights while maintaining their safety.
- Professional development plans can be established to enable firefighters to overcome experience and knowledge gaps.
- Activating the fire department as early as possible after fire detection may reduce damage and loss.



View of Side Alpha of the structure once the fire had breached the roof from the Side Alpha/Delta corner. (Source: Fire department)

SUMMARY

- When the Truck 16 (TK16) crew arrived on scene, they were tasked with vertical ventilation of the Side Delta portion of the structure.
- They positioned the aerial platform and successfully completed the first ventilation hole near the peak of the roof.
- The platform was repositioned between two dormers on Side Delta near Side Alpha.
- A firefighter working within the platform unhooked his safety tether from the platform and moved to the roof to complete the next vertical ventilation cut.



TK16 personnel operating on the ladder after venting the peak of the Side Delta portion of the building. (Source: Fire department)

SUMMARY

- When he stepped onto the steep roof, he lost his footing.
- He slipped from one dormer to the other, then to the ground approximately 20 ft below.
- A Mayday was declared from both the aerial turntable and the platform.
- The firefighter sustained fractures to the lower leg and heel and was transported for treatment.



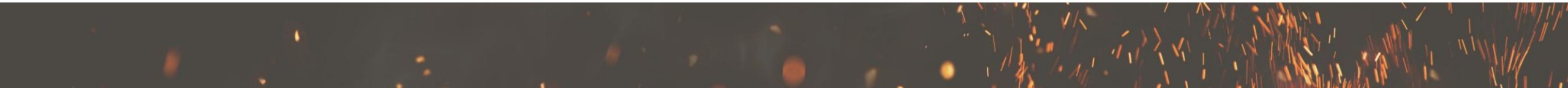
The collapsed facade on Side Alpha. (Source: Fire department)

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS & PREVENTION ACTIONS

Contributing factor	Prevention action summary
1. Fall from aerial platform during vertical ventilation operations	Ensure firefighters use and properly maintain fall prevention devices when working from an elevated aerial platform.
2. Initial scene size-up and risk assessment	Ensure the first arriving resource completes an initial scene size-up and risk assessment to inform a risk-benefit analysis before committing firefighters to vertical ventilation.
3. Training and evaluation for rank and skill	Develop and implement a professional development program that includes routine evaluation based on rank and skill for all combination fire department personnel.
4. Department culture and risk management	Promote a department culture that balances the life safety mission with proactive risk management.
5. Standard operating procedures/guidelines (SOPs/SOGs)	Train firefighters on and routinely review SOPs/SOGs.
6. Delayed activation of fire department response	Consider requiring property owners to use and maintain monitored detection systems in all commercial occupancies, regardless of when they were constructed.

FIRE DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

Category	Information
Department type	Combination
Divisions	Fire prevention, operations, and training
Jurisdiction	4,200 square miles
Population	22,473 residents with 25,000 average daily visitors
Average response	2,300 calls for service annually
EMS	Advanced life support
Personnel	30 career and 75 volunteer firefighters
Shifts	Three (A, B, and C)
Shift type	56-hour work week (24-day cycle)
Shift staffing	7 minimum, budgeted for 9
Leadership	One fire chief, two deputy chiefs, and three battalion chiefs



FIRE DEPARTMENT ACTIONS TO ECHO

- Plan the apparatus placement.
- Request additional resources early.
- Dedicate a staged RIT company.

POST-INCIDENT FIRE DEPARTMENT PREVENTION ACTIONS

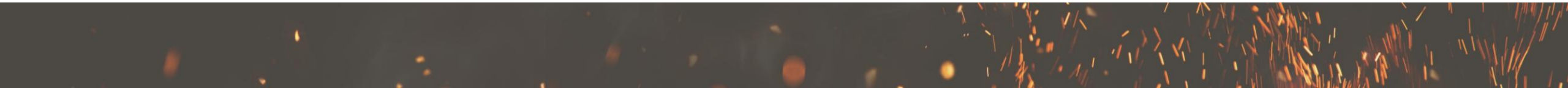
After this incident, the fire department implemented changes to its incident response and fireground operations. These changes were based on the department's critique of the incident.

Post-incident analysis: The analysis focused specifically on command procedures, department SOPs, operational practices, and training. This analysis was done concurrently with the current NIOSH investigation.

Safety Stand Down: The purpose of the stand down was to conduct retraining on various vertical ventilation practices and verify that personnel could perform the task safely.

Truck Task Book: The department began developing a truck company task book to ensure that personnel assigned to the truck company were trained to perform the tasks that may be required of the truck company at an incident. This includes vertical ventilation tasks on residential and commercial structures.

SOP Review: The department has also begun a thorough review and revision of SOPs to ensure alignment with recognized best practices across the fire service.



CONSIDER THIS

Specialty task books

If a department focuses on just one aspect of fire and emergency services for training but requires personnel to fulfill roles of a specialty crew (e.g., heavy rescue, hazardous materials company, truck company), personnel should complete training and demonstrate the competencies required for that company's assigned tasks.

Transmitting critical information

When the initial companies begin operations and establish command, the incident commander should update dispatch with the correct address and information to ensure any available pre-incident plans can be located and reviewed by companies not already on scene.

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