

Fall From Ladder During Training Exercise

BACKGROUND AND DAMAGES

The injury occurred while an acting lieutenant attempted to exit the 2nd-floor window of a training facility onto a bedded 24-foot ladder. The 3-person truck company crew had just completed a Vent-Enter-Search (VES) scenario:

- The firefighter was the simulated victim inside the 2nd floor of the building during the training exercise;
- The acting lieutenant was the crew member that entered the building and completed the search of the 2nd-floor bedroom off the 24-foot ladder;
- The engineer was on the ground and approached the window on the ladder to receive the victim.

The ladder was tied-off and secured. The evolution was completed and was successful. Once the evolution was completed, the firefighters' equipment (helmet, mask, etc.) was still in the 2nd-floor bedroom. The acting officer inside the room handed the equipment out of the window. The acting lieutenant determined not to hand down the SCBA; instead, he exited the window with the air-pack over one shoulder. While exiting the plane of the window, the air-pack swung out and pulled the acting lieutenant off the ladder. He fell approximately fifteen feet to the concrete ground. The acting lieutenant suffered a severe head laceration and brief loss of consciousness as his helmet was dislodged in the fall. EMS crews were dispatched to the scene and arrived within six minutes. On scene BLS personnel maintained the patient's status until ALS services arrived.

INJURY AND DAMAGES

The lieutenant lost several units of blood and was transported to the local trauma center. The injured officer was diagnosed with a skull fracture, received 18 staples to the head and spent three days in the trauma center for observation. A mandated release from duty was initiated until the follow-up was proven clear. The officer was out for a total of 147 days before he was able to return to his position.

INVESTIGATION

The supervisor's accident review identified the below contributing factors:

- The crew held the training scenario without proper EMS coverage available;
- The crew never completed a pre-assessment of the training ground and what steps to take in the event of a true emergency;
- The crew or crew officer never discussed standard use of PPE during evolution;
- Improper procedure in removal of equipment from training grounds; and
- Improper planning of drill. No plan on file.

CIRMA LIABILITY ASSESSMENT

CIRMA is 100% responsible for this work-related incident. The total direct cost of this claim, including medical expenses, totaled \$83,000.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION ITEMS

CIRMA Risk Management has provided recommendations based on feedback from the Fire Service Task Force on some best practices to reduce Workers' Compensation costs associated with training events. Those recommendations include:

- Establish EMS crew that is assigned to all training events;
- Establish SOP regarding proper use of PPE on training grounds;
- Establish criteria for allowing proper supervision of crew management;
- Establish or review department procedural guidelines for independent company crew training;
- Require an on-site, independent Safety Officer present at all operational drills;
- Review operational and training safety procedures with staff; and
- Always complete a walk through and emergency procedure process in all training scenario events.

Questions on this topic? Ask your Supervisor or contact your CIRMA Risk Management Consultant at (203) 946-3700.