


|   |   |                                |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
|  | <b>FALMOUTH VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER'S ASSOCIATION</b><br><b>FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES</b><br><b>SAFETY INITIATIVE</b> |                                |
|   | <b>SUBJECT: STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTING</b>   | <b>NUMBER:</b><br>SI09-001     |
|   | <b>APPROVED:</b><br>Kevin Good, Fire Chief  | <b>INITIATED</b><br>04/01/2009 |
|   | <b>PREPARED:</b><br>James Morris, Sr., Safety Officer   | <b>REVISED</b>                 |

This quarter we are going to look at Structural Firefighting, especially in Light-weight construction.

It seems like every month the construction industry comes out with something that makes them more money and makes it easier and quicker to build a house. These advances may be a plus for the construction industry but they are a death sentence for the Fire Service.

Recently we learned about the XJ85 joist by Georgia-Pacific that is now available. In the last couple of years we have seen “Trusses without Gussets”, “Composite Walls and Floors” and “Cluster Homes”. (Refer to Previous Safety Bulletins for more information). Light-Weight Construction has changed how we operate and will continue to force us to make changes to counter these new products.

Now would be a good time to review the Prince William County Marsh Overlook Fire, and the Loudoun County Meadowood Court Fire. These reports are available on the computer in the Training Room.

Some of the items that came out of these two fires and a few other select incidents are:

- 1- Make sure you take a complete lap of the structure. Reminder, the Firefighting Manual requires a side “Charlie” Report before entry.
- 2- Knock down or extinguish any exterior fires (deck, siding) before entering the structure.
- 3- Do a good Risk/Benefit Analysis. The old “Risk a lot to save a lot, risk a little to save a little.”

When you read the “Near-Miss Reports”, you will see some common threads. What can we learn from these reports?

- 1- All companies should work to serve and protect the initial fire attack and search teams. We are not in competition with each other. We are in competition with the fire.
- 2- Incident Command is not established to look good on paper; it is established for our *Safety!* The IC is the boss and the ultimate authority. The IC is responsible for looking at the “big picture” and making decisions, right or wrong, based on the available data. The fireground is not the place to argue over strategy or tactics.
- 3- The Safety Officer is one of the most difficult jobs on the fireground. We are trying to predict the future. We do not have a crystal ball to look into. We can only make an educated guess and at times depend on that “gut feeling.”
- 4- Crew Resource Management. We all have a stake in what is happening. If you see something that others have missed, speak up. If you have that “gut feeling”, speak up. One person with two eyes and two ears cannot take-in and process everything that is going on.
- 5- We must not get complacent during overhaul operations. Even though the “Emergency” is over, this is in fact the most dangerous time. The atmosphere must be checked before SCBA’s are removed. Fresh crews need to be rotated in. Limit the number of personnel in the building. Don’t hang out in the structure, do your task and exit the building.

Let’s be aware of our surroundings. Get out and get inside these structures while they are being built.