

GREEN SHEET

Pinole Fire Department (POE)

Informational Summary Report of Near-Miss Incident



Vehicle Fire

Engineer (AO) Minor Burn

December 9, 2012

POE 12-991

A Board of Review has not approved this Summary Report. It is intended as a safety and training tool, an aid to preventing future occurrences, and to inform interested parties. Because it is published on a short time frame, the information contained herein is subject to revision as further investigation is conducted and additional information is developed.

SUMMARY

The following information is a preliminary summary of a minor burn injury that occurred after the extinguishment of a fully involved vehicle fire on the freeway. After the fire had been knocked down, the Engineer (AO), in PPE, but without an SCBA, approached the side of the vehicle and was momentarily enveloped in a flash fire. The Engineer was able to self rescue, narrowly avoiding an inhalation injury. The Engineer suffered minor 1st degree burns to the face and singed hair.

Well intentioned help without the proper protective equipment, even for a short task, can have significant potential consequence. Crews need to stay disciplined and follow their training.

CONDITIONS

Weather: Clear and cool.

Fuel Type: 2005 Dodge pickup truck. The secondary flash fire is suspected to have been caused by a spilt flammable liquid of undetermined origin. The truck's fuel tank was ruled out as a source and was intact.

Road conditions: Eight lane divided freeway, traffic moving at reduced speed around the incident. Vehicle fire was located on the right shoulder, out of traffic. Smoke drift was away from traffic.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Engine 73 responded to a fully involved pickup truck fire on eastbound Interstate 80- west of Highway 4, in western Contra Costa County. By dispatch protocol, passenger vehicle fires are a single unit (engine) response. The engine was staffed with four personnel; the regular shift Captain, Engineer and Firefighter and an overtime Captain filling in as the second firefighter. The engine arrived to a fully involved pickup truck fire located on the right hand shoulder, out of traffic. As the Engine approached the scene, the Engineer spotted the Type 1 engine in a blocking position 30 feet prior to the vehicle fire and engaged the pump. The Captain transmitted a condition report and directed the two firefighters to pull a hoseline. The vehicle's driver was identified and complained of minor burns to his hand that he sustained while attempting to extinguish the fire prior to Engine 73's arrival. The driver declined medical treatment at the scene. The two firefighters, in full PPE and SCBA on air, deployed an 1 ¾" hoseline located on the engine's front bumper and knocked the fire down. The Engineer, at the pump panel, was wearing full turnouts but no SCBA or mask.

During overhaul, the Engineer approached the driver's side of the pickup bed with a halligan tool in order to help open up a truck bed toolbox. As the Engineer reached over the side of the truck, a flash fire of undetermined flammable liquid origin ignited on the ground under the truck and momentarily enveloped him in fire. The initial ignition was witnessed by the overtime Captain, who was in full PPE and on air. The overtime Captain tried to call out a warning to the Engineer and the Engineer recalls hearing the Captain but could not understand what was said due to the Captain being on air, surrounded by roadway noise. The Engineer was able to self-escape the fire and stumbled back toward the engine. The Engineer recalls hearing the crackling of his hair

being singed and had some minor eye irritation from the exposure. The re-ignition lasted for less than 30 seconds and self extinguished.

The original fire was determined to have started in the pickup's bed, from barbeque ashes left in the bed after a football game tailgate party. The fire extended to the passenger compartment prior to the engine's arrival. The cause and origin of the secondary flash fire was not determined at the scene.

Upon return to quarters, the Captain made all required notifications and initiated a City Minor Incident Report.

INJURIES

The Engineer suffered minor eye irritation and noted singed hair. No lost work time resulted and the Engineer was not seen by a physician.

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

The firefighters involved directly in the extinguishment followed applicable department policy regarding PPE, SCBA and vehicle fire extinguishment tactics. The Engineer spotted the engine in a blocking position and kept emergency lights on, as per policy. With a four person crew, the Engineer typically does not don an SCBA on passenger vehicle fires.

- Maintain situational awareness at all times.
 - Do not underestimate any fire's potential to reignite. The Engineer stated he believed the fire was completely extinguished and was assisting with overhaul/investigation when the re-ignition occurred.
- Fight fire aggressively but provide for safety at all times.
 - All personnel in or near the hazard area must wear all PPE and SCBA.

INCIDENTAL ISSUES/LESSONS LEARNED

(For Near-Miss and Non-Serious Accidents)

- A potential life threatening inhalation injury was narrowly avoided. Upon escaping the secondary fire, the Engineer could have stumbled into traffic.
- All personnel must ALWAYS use full protective clothing and SCBA when engaged in overhaul.
- Use extreme caution when conducting fire operations on a roadway.
- Use LCES everywhere.

Contact POE Battalion Chief Brian Lowry @ 925-383-4120 or Blowry@ci.pinole.ca.us for more information.

Events and/or issues of interest that are significant enough to include in the Green Sheet as they may assist in preventing similar occurrences in the future. These may or may not be contributing or causal factors of the Near-Miss or Non-Serious Accident but focus on what can be learned and should be geared for the target audience.