



IAFF SAFETY ADVISORY

FIRE FIGHTER EJECTIONS AND EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS JULY 2026

The IAFF is issuing a safety alert to inform members of risks associated with fire and emergency vehicle response – specifically ejections from apparatus and emergency vehicle response crashes.

Responding to emergencies is the highest-frequency/highest-risk activity members perform.

While warning systems, traffic control technology, and modern apparatus all contribute to a safer response, the professional emergency vehicle operator remains a critical factor in outcomes for crew members and the public.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Secure all members before moving the apparatus. Members should be fully seated and belted before the apparatus moves. Departments and Locals are encouraged to review and reinforce policies and training related to apparatus riding positions and seat belt use.

Follow applicable state law and department policy on emergency vehicle operations. Authorized emergency vehicles are permitted to pass through stop signs and red traffic signals in most jurisdictions, subject to due care requirements. Departments and Locals are encouraged to review applicable state law and ensure members are trained on emergency vehicle operation policies.

RELATED EVENTS

- **[Hemet, CA \(2026\)](#)** – In June 2026, a civilian vehicle collided with an engine responding to a brush fire in Riverside County. The engine had lights and sirens activated. The civilian driver and a 10-year-old passenger were killed. Three CAL FIRE fire fighters sustained injuries.
- **[Rockdale County, GA \(2026\)](#)** – A Georgia fire fighter was killed in the line of duty on June 12, 2026, when he was ejected from his responding fire apparatus (tower ladder) and subsequently crushed when the apparatus rolled over. They were responding to a structural fire. [Video linked here.](#)
- **[Glens Falls, NY \(2026\)](#)** – On April 9, 2026, a fire fighter fell from a fire truck while departing for a fire call, sustaining severe head trauma. She was transported to Albany Medical Center in critical condition and later transferred to Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital. She was released on June 12, 2026. Her recovery is ongoing.
- **[Columbia, SC \(2025\)](#)** – On July 12, 2025, a Columbia-Richland Fire Department engine struck a civilian vehicle while responding to a call, killing the 64-year-old driver. The engine was traveling north in a southbound lane at the time of the collision. A wrongful death lawsuit has since been filed.
- **[Tulsa, OK \(2024\)](#)** – In February 2024, a collision between a responding fire truck and a civilian vehicle resulted in the deaths of one adult, three children, and the unborn child of a pregnant passenger. The civilian driver was charged with five counts of manslaughter. A subsequent lawsuit alleges the fire truck was traveling at an unsafe speed and entered the oncoming lane without confirming it was clear.
- **[Kansas City, KS \(2022\)](#)** – On Aug. 24, 2022, a fire fighter fell from a pumper during a non-emergency response when the front passenger door opened during a left turn. He was not wearing a seat belt. Investigation found the seat belt had been lodged against the door's locking mechanism, preventing it from latching properly. He sustained severe head trauma.



IAFF SAFETY ADVISORY

FIRE FIGHTER EJECTIONS AND EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATIONS JULY 2026

- **[Massillon, OH \(2008\)](#)** – In May 2008, a responding fire truck struck a minivan at an intersection, killing a 72-year-old man and his 4-year-old grandson. The apparatus pushed the minivan approximately 110 yards. Two of four fire fighters aboard sustained minor injuries.
- **[Amarillo, TX \(2005\)](#)** – On April 23, 2005, a fire fighter fell from Amarillo Ladder 1 when the left rear door opened during a slow right turn while responding to a residential fire. He landed on the back of his head, sustained a severe head injury, and died following emergency surgery.
- **[Brookline, MA \(1982\)](#)** – A fire fighter fell from the exterior of the apparatus when the truck turned left exiting the station. He sustained a severe head injury and functioned at a significantly diminished capacity until his death in 2002. His case led to [changes in apparatus design standards](#).
- **[Prince George's County, MD \(1982\)](#)** – On Sept. 28, 1982, a fire fighter fell from a ladder truck while responding to a call after reaching for a boot that had slipped from her jump seat. She was struck by the rear wheels and dragged more than 30 feet, sustaining severe injuries including the loss of a leg. Her case contributed to changes in apparatus riding standards.

RESOURCES

- [Alive on Arrival: Tips for Safe Emergency Vehicle Operations](#) (USFA)
- [Our decades-long struggle to change the seatbelt culture drives forward](#) (Dr. Burton Clark, PhD, FireRescue1, 2025)
- [How to get firefighters to wear seat belts](#) (Dr. Burton Clark, PhD, FireRescue1, 2016)
- [Seat Belt Pledge campaign](#) (SeatBeltPledge.com)
- [Defensive driving during emergency response](#) (Gordon Graham, JD, FireRescue1, 2026)

CRASH VIDEOS

- [California \(2026\)](#)
- [New York \(2026\)](#)
- [New York \(2025\)](#)
- [Texas \(2025\)](#)
- [Florida \(2024\)](#)
- [New Jersey \(2022\)](#)
- [Florida \(2018\)](#)
- [California \(2016\)](#)