

# Los Angeles Fire Department



PRELIMINARY REPORT

**FIREFIGHTER FATALITY  
TRAFFIC ACCIDENT**

**JAMIESON AVENUE, ENCINO**

**AUGUST 14, 2004**

SUBMITTED AUGUST 23, 2004

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## INFORMATION ON FIREFIGHTER FATALITY TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

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This is preliminary information reflecting facts available at the time this report was prepared. Members are advised that further investigation may change some information presented in subsequent reports.

On Saturday, August 14, 2004, Firefighter Jaime Leah Foster was fatally injured when she fell from or dismounted Engine 273's tailboard. Fatal injuries were sustained when Engine 273 rolled over her as it backed down the street. The following narrative describes the circumstances surrounding the accident.

The accident involving Firefighter Foster occurred on Jamieson Avenue, approximately 57 feet south of Zelzah Avenue. Jamieson is a thirty foot wide residential street with a slight curve and parking allowed on both sides. Road crown and slope on Jamieson are insignificant. Weather at the time was clear and sunny. There were light winds, the temperature was 90 degrees Fahrenheit and relative humidity was 49 percent.

At 1251 hours Engine 83, Engine 100, Light Force 93, Light Force 73, Rescue Ambulance 93, and Battalion 10 responded to a structure fire at 5716 Jamieson Avenue, in Encino (Incident 494). Light Force 93 was first to arrive at 1259 hours. They encountered a one story single-family dwelling with fire involving one room.

The last fire fighting resource to arrive, Light Force 73, was assigned by the Incident Command Team to perform "Inside Truck Work" (**See Diagram A / Photo**). Anticipating the need to provide positive pressure ventilation, Light Force 73 members, including Firefighter Foster, proceeded to the front door and placed a smoke ejector in position. They donned self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and proceeded into the structure where Firefighter Foster utilized a pike pole for one to two minutes to pull ceiling and check for fire extension. The fire did not extend into the attic and was contained to the room of origin. The fire was extinguished by Engine 83. A "Knock Down" was declared at 1305 hours, six minutes after the first LAFD resource arrived. Fire origin was determined to be accidental.

Shortly after knock down, Light Force 73 members returned to their apparatus to remove their SCBA and turnout coats. Members, including Firefighter Foster remained in their turnout pants and brush jackets during overhaul. For training purposes, Firefighter Foster went to the roof and used her axe to assist "cleaning up" the ventilation hole.

Light Force 73 members, including Firefighter Foster, returned to their apparatus and removed their brush jackets, turnout pants, and turnout boots. Firefighter Foster drank water and verified Truck 73's equipment inventory. Light Force 73 was released by the Incident Command Team at approximately 1330 hours.

Rescue Ambulance 93 and Engine 100 were released by the Incident Commander and left the scene before the accident occurred.

Remaining fire apparatus parked at the incident blocked Jamieson. This necessitated that Light Force 73 back their apparatus in a northerly direction on Jamieson toward the intersection of Jamieson and Zelzah.

Firefighter Foster positioned herself on Engine 273's tailboard as the "Tailboard Safety Member". The Task Force Commander (TFC) personally directed the backing operation. He strategically positioned himself behind the apparatus on the driver's side, as the "Traffic Control Officer". Firefighter Foster, utilizing the button located at the Tailboard Safety Position, signaled the Engineer to begin backing down the street. Upon hearing the standard LAFD three-bell signal, the Engineer started backing the apparatus. The apparatus traveled uninterrupted in reverse at idle speed; approximately 2½ mph. As he backed up, the Engineer "covered" the brake pedal with his right foot. He did not disengage the clutch.

The TFC turned away from the apparatus as Engine 273 approached Zelzah. He walked toward the intersection to control cross traffic. Engine 273's Engineer had visual contact with the TFC in the driver's side mirror, anticipating a signal to slow or stop for cross traffic. The backing operation continued uninterrupted at idle speed. Shortly thereafter, the TFC looked back at Engine 273's tailboard. The TFC observed that Firefighter Foster was no longer on the tailboard. He immediately ran toward Engine 273, crossing behind the tailboard to the passenger side. Seeing Firefighter Foster lying in front of the apparatus, he yelled at the Engineer to stop.

The Engineer saw Firefighter Foster come into view through the windshield and simultaneously heard the TFC yelling to stop the apparatus. No LAFD "one-bell" stop signal was reported to have been heard. **(See Diagram B)**

Light Force 73 members, along with additional members who were on scene at the structure fire, rushed to aid Firefighter Foster. Advanced life support was quickly initiated. An Advanced Life Support (ALS) paramedic ambulance was requested from the dispatch center.

Rescue Ambulance 93 had cleared the incident. At 1344 hours they were dispatched back to the scene. Engine 273 was moved by the members on scene to expedite Firefighter Foster's treatment and transportation. Firefighter Foster was quickly loaded into Rescue Ambulance 93. Rescue Ambulance 93 arrived at Tarzana Hospital at 1355 hours, twelve minutes after the accident occurred. Despite all efforts, Firefighter Jaime L. Foster was pronounced dead at 1419 hours.

Members involved in the incident were moved to Fire Station 73 where a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing was held under Psychologist Dr. Robert Scott's direction. Assistant Chief Donald L. Frazier commanded the Significant Incident Investigation Team (SIIT) formed to investigate the incident. The Team immediately began investigating the accident. That evening, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and LAFD SIIT personnel started interviewing members who were involved. Light Force 73, Rescue Ambulance 93, and Battalion 10 were placed out of service for the balance of the shift.

An autopsy was conducted on August 15, 2004. At this time, the cause of death for Firefighter Jaime Leah Foster is listed as "multiple blunt injuries". The LAFD and LAPD are aggressively investigating this accident to develop a comprehensive report.





