

## THE SACRIFICE OF A FIRE ENGINE!

Thursday, March 31, 2005

*".....the proper placement of the fire engine, creating the safe work zone saved ten lives that afternoon....."*

On March 17, 2003 at 1330 hours Engine 4 and Medic 2 were dispatched to a child having a seizure on the Interstate 675 north bound at Indian Ripple Rd. Responding from another incident Engine 4 arrived on the scene approximately ten minutes later. Upon Engine 4's arrival we found the police on the scene with a car on the shoulder. The engine was positioned approximately 100 feet to the south of the patient's vehicle, nosed to the shoulder at a forty-five degree angle, blocking the shoulder and right lane. When the medic arrived within five minutes after the engines arrival and they positioned themselves approximately 20 feet in front of the patient's car halfway on the shoulder.

The patient was a 5 month old traveling with her mother and older sibling when the seizure occurred. The mother had called her parents to come pick up the sibling prior to our arrival. We had just loaded the patient into the back of the medic when the grand parents arrived. The grandparents had parked on the shoulder just south of the engine out of the safe zone. This now placed ten people on the scene, four fire department personnel, five civilians, and one police officer.

As crews were preparing the patient and mother for transport; approximately twelve minutes into



the incident Engine 4 was struck by a tractor-trailer going approximately 70 mph. The impact pushed the engine thirty feet forward and to the side of the road. The tractor trailer then crossed all three lanes of north bound traffic; went through the median and crossed all three south bound lanes of traffic and traveled up a embankment coming to rest just twenty feet from the south bound on ramp to the interstate. The distance traveled by the tractor-trailer after impact was over five hundred feet. Amazingly no other vehicles were involved in the crash. The truck driver was the only one injured. He was transported to a local hospital for treatment of minor injuries.

The driver of the tractor-trailer reported the medic crew that he had just hung up his cell phone when he hit the engine.

The accident caused debris field that littered all of the northbound lanes and the median for approximately two hundred and fifty feet from the point of impact. Medic 2 received minor damage on the top of the patient care module and hood from flying debris. The passenger side, saddle tank from the tractor- trailer was torn from the truck and went spinning down the highway covering the exterior of the medic with fuel before coming to rest in the median; approximately one hundred and fifty feet from the point of impact.

The proper placement of the fire engine, creating the safe work zone saved ten lives that afternoon.

## *Lessons learned*

Proper apparatus placement does save lives. The few extra seconds to properly park an apparatus creating a safe work zone is imperative. Once you are in that safe zone, that does not absolve the officer in charge of the incident from monitoring crew actions, and incident progress. Things happen quickly, always be mindful of what is going on around you.

The long-term effect of an incident like this is astronomical. We had to operate for fourteen months down a piece of apparatus. We received only \$110,000 for the apparatus and equipment damaged (\$80,000 for the apparatus and \$30,000 for equipment) from the trucking companies insurance carrier. The cost of our comparable replacement engine and the required equipment was \$264,000.

Our fire department did not have the money for the replacements in its budget. The Township Trustees graciously agreed to cover the difference in the cost, from the Township's general funds.

Here are a few questions your department needs to ask and be prepared to answer:

=How well are we insured?

=What exactly is your coverage?

=Do we have a contingency plan for being without a fire engine for a year to a year and a half?

=What would it cost to replace part of your fleet,

and how would you do it?

Keep in mind these questions are base around apparatus and equipment only; just try to imagine what the cost would be if someone was seriously injured or killed. Don't think in terms of money alone; consider the experience of personnel, leadership, friendships, and collateral effects and loses associated with the incident. The Beavercreek Fire Department was very fortunate we did not lose anyone directly or indirectly from this incident.

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