

Case Study C

Fort Lauderdale, FL

April 2, 2005

On Saturday morning April 2, 2005, Fort Lauderdale Rescue 8 (an ambulance staffed by two fire fighters) was returning to quarters after dropping off a patient at Broward General Hospital. The ambulance exited the SE 3rd Avenue ambulance exit from the hospital and proceeded north on SE 3rd Avenue. As Rescue 8 proceeded north through the intersection with a green traffic signal at NE 3rd and Broward Boulevard, an eastbound Honda Civic traveling at a high rate of speed struck Rescue 8. The car struck the ambulance near the rear of the patient compartment on the driver's side. Personnel in Rescue 8 reported that the ambulance seemed to shift towards the right and then back towards the left. At that time they noted numerous objects flying through the cab of the apparatus. The ambulance ended up resting on the driver's side, with both personnel being restrained by their seatbelts (**Figure C.1**).

The fire fighters self extricated themselves through the missing windshield opening (**Figure C.2**). Upon exiting the cab, the lesser of the injured fire fighters found a portable radio that had been thrown from the ambulance and used it to call dispatch to report the ambulance crash. This fire fighter then found a fire extinguisher and extinguished a small fire under the hood of the Honda Civic and sought assistance from civilians and a police officer on the scene to start treating the trapped driver of that vehicle (**Figure C.3**). He also checked on the welfare of the second fire fighter. By that time, other fire department personnel arrived on the scene and took charge of the incident.

Both fire fighters received minor injuries and were treated and released from the hospital. The driver of the Honda civic had to be extricated from his vehicle and was transported as a high priority trauma-alert to a local hospital. Rescue 8 was totally destroyed in the incident.

Lessons Learned From This Incident

In reviewing the details of this incident, the student should recognize the following important points:

1. Fire fighters must always wear their seatbealts whenever riding in a vehicle that is in motion. In this incident a vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed struck the fire fighters. As a result their ambulance rolled over and skidded a considerable distance. During the process the front windshield was completely dislodged from the vehicle. Had the fire fighters not been properly belted, it is likely that they would have been ejected from the vehicle and suffered more serious, possibly fatal, injuries.

2. Use caution when driving through all intersections, even when you have the right of way. In this incident Rescue 8 had a green light and the right-of-way to proceed through the intersection. A vehicle that drove through a red traffic signal at a high rate of speed struck them. Fire apparatus drivers must always be prepared to take defensive actions, even when they have the right-of-way.



Figure C.1



Figure C.2



Figure C.3