

Case Study F Toledo, Ohio March 10, 2005

At 13:50 pm on Thursday March 10, 2005, Toledo Fire Department Engine 7 was responding to a reported garage explosion on the western side of that city. Engine 7 was traveling behind a rescue company and both units had their warning lights and sirens in use. The fire vehicles were traveling westbound on Bancroft Street near the intersection of Ashland Avenue.

Two civilian vehicles that were also traveling westbound pulled over to the shoulder as the fire vehicles approached. After the rescue vehicle passed, one of the civilian vehicles failed to note Engine 7 approaching and pulled back into the lane of traffic. Engine 7 was unable to take evasive actions in time to prevent a collision. It was reported that following the collision, Engine 7's steering and braking systems were rendered inoperative and there was little the driver/operator could do to control the vehicle. The careening engine missed several other vehicles and then came to a rest after striking a utility pole and a tree (**Figure 1**).

All four of the fire fighters on Engine 7 were transported to the hospital. Two were admitted with non-life threatening injuries and two were treated and released. The driver of the car also received minor injuries. The civilian driver, who had a long history of traffic violations and license suspensions, was cited for failure to yield right-of-way to an emergency vehicle. The fire apparatus was completely destroyed (**Figure 2**).

Lessons Learned From This Incident

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

1. Fire apparatus traveling together to an emergency incident should maintain a safe following distance between the vehicles. Most sources, including NFPA, IFSTA, and the United States Fire Administration recommend that emergency vehicles traveling together maintain a distance of 300 to 500 feet between the vehicles. This reduces the chance of emergency vehicles running into each other and also allows room for evasive maneuvers should a civilian vehicle pull back into the lane of travel after being passed by the first emergency vehicle.

2. Wearing a seatbelt can prevent serious injuries when the apparatus is involved in a collision. In this incident the fire fighters on Engine 7 were wearing their seatbelts. Despite the fact that the apparatus struck a car, a utility pole, and tree and was totally destroyed, the fire fighters all received minor injuries.



Figure F.1



Figure F.2