

## LESSONS LEARNED

Subject: RIT Operations involving a firefighter down  
Area of concern: Operational guidelines  
Distribution: San Juan County Fire Department (SJCFD)

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to provide lessons learned from an actual event within SJCFD. The event shared is not a punitive measure nor does it place blame on the agencies or persons involved.

**Dispatch and size-up:** At 0121hrs on August 4, 2013, San Juan County Fire Districts 1, 4, 14 along with Medic 4 and SJC Sheriffs Deputies were dispatched for a structure fire on County Road 6480. The initial size up reported that a doublewide mobile home presented with twenty-five percent involvement and that a thirty by forty foot shop was an immediate exposure. The following, listed below, describes what transpired prior to and up to the Down Firefighter incident.

### **Initial assignments of incoming units:**

E127 Fire attack / exposure protection to sides Bravo/ Charlie utilizing an 1 ¾ attack line. Bravo/Charlie presented with the most fire involvement. (Attack team 1)

T138 Water supply to E125 and assume operations

E125 Fire attack and water supply. An 1 ¾ attack line was deployed to side alpha while a water supply, utilizing 5" hose and a fire hydrant on the south side of CR 6480, was placed into operation. (Attack team two) Sheriff Deputies were monitoring the Tac channel and rerouted vehicles off of Rd 6480 since the hose ran across the roadway.

U117 Assist E125 with Fire Attack operations

R116 Rehab unit

Medic 4 Staged on RD 6480 outside of the fire operations area. (Important so that the unit may remain mobile and not be blocked in by incoming fire apparatus or operations)

U114 Safety

U118 On Deck

CF5 Support operations

CF1 Support command

Mutual Aid No Response

### **Progression:**

E127 had successful knock down on the exterior of the building. E127 assumed the responsibility of backup and RIT for E125. E125 entered side Alpha and began interior fire attack while operations secured the electricity (no gas to the building). E125 also conducted a primary search and reported all clear with the exception of the room/s involved with fire. E125 exited the building when a ceiling collapse occurred, thought to be a roof collapse at the time. E125 was PAR and Fire Operations were changed to exterior operations only. E127 attempted to remove the Air conditioner unit to assist with ventilation but was unsuccessful. E127 *did not* get on the roof to perform the task. 104 reevaluated the roof and advised operations that the roof was still intact and a partial ceiling collapse had occurred where E125 was working earlier. 104 requested to reenter the structure to put out fire located in interior walls and attack space in Sector 2. Operations approved the request. Crews were rehabbed and swapped as needed. Accountability was maintained by utilizing an IPAD device with note taking and ICS capabilities. E125 performed a secondary search and confirmed an all clear. A loss stop was called and overhaul operations began. Medic 4 was released 11 minutes into the overhaul operation. Additional crew swaps occurred as needed however both hose lines were manned throughout the operation. Attack team 1 was now utilized for interior overhaul operations with Attack team 2 utilized as exterior backup / RIT.

### **The May Day:**

Attack team 1 entered the structure to perform additional overhaul to sectors 1 and 2 of the building with three personnel. The assigned officer performed an air and gear check as his crew entered. The crew was assigned to pull ceiling and check for extension. FF1 was asked to advance additional hose into the building while FF2 continued to pull ceiling. As FF1 reentered, FF1 told FF2 that she needed to exit the building. At this time FF1 fell against FF2 and pinned FF2 against a wall. FF2 called out to his officer and the officer was able to assist FF1 off of FF2. The officer and FF2 began to drag FF1 toward the side alpha exit and called out to Attack team 2 of the mayday situation. Attack 2 announced the mayday for Attack team 1 over the radio. Attack team 2 assisted team 1 removing the firefighter from the structure.

Command contacted dispatch on Channel 90 to request a Medic unit; however the dispatcher was taking a proactive approach by monitoring the Tac. channel and had already begun the dispatch.

All operations were moved to Tac. channel 85 after the mayday was called. Units involved with the mayday stayed on channel 89. (The original Tac. channel assigned).

FF1 remained unconscious until she was removed from the building. The rehab officer initiated a pt. assessment with the assistance of Attack team 2. The FF was transferred to Medic 4 on arrival and transported non-emergent for further evaluation.

The mayday was terminated and all crews were moved to Tac. channel 85 for the remainder of the operation.

**The Lessons Learned:**

Listed below were items in place that contributed to a successful operation:

- 1) An effective command structure providing accountability and scene control
- 2) Adequate communication between crews and operations
- 3) Crew in place to perform RIT duties
- 4) Dispatch and Sheriff deputies monitoring the assigned Tac. channel
- 5) Crew integrity
- 6) Crews did not become complacent when operations changed into overhaul operations
- 7) Proper training to deal with a mayday situation

Items to improve on:

- 1) Although a team was in place for RIT operations, a clear distinction of duty should be assigned.
- 2) When changing Tac channels on an incident efforts should be made to ensure all units have changed to the appropriate channel as soon as possible.
- 3) Although a firefighter can go down for a variety of reasons on scene, it is vital that firefighters take appropriate measures to ensure their own health and safety prior to responding to assist the public.
- 4) An SOG should be in place for all districts in SJCFD to follow in case of a similar incident in the future.

**Attachments include:**

- 1) a sample SOG on RIT and Mayday operations
- 2) Diagram of the scene