

BLUE SHEET

Preliminary Summary Report of Serious LAFD Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-Miss Incidents

Los Angeles Fire Department



FIREFIGHTER INJURY

VEHICLE FIRE

January 9, 2011

This Preliminary Summary Report is intended as a safety and training tool, and to provide factual information from the first 24 hours of the incident review. To that end, it is published and distributed within a short time frame. Information contained within this report is subject to revision as further investigation is conducted, and additional information is received.

Firefighter Injury Blue Sheet
Vehicle Fire
January 9, 2011

SUMMARY

On January 9, 2011 at 2104 hours Engine 1 was dispatched to an auto fire at 546 West Solano Avenue adjacent to the Arroyo Seco Parkway. The auto was fully involved with fire as Engine 1 arrived on scene. During fire attack operations an explosion occurred knocking the Captain to the ground. A Rescue Ambulance transported the Captain to a local hospital with serious head injuries.

NARRATIVE

On January 9, 2011 at 2103 hours Operations Control Dispatch (OCD) received a mobile 911 call of an auto fire visible from Arroyo Seco Parkway. Engine 1 was dispatched to an auto fire at 546 West Solano Avenue at 2104 hours.

Engine 1 arrived on scene at 2110 hours and found a 2000 Chevy Impala fully involved with fire. Engine 1 personnel using a 1-1/2-inch line attacked the auto fire and encountered difficulty in knocking the fire down. During fire attack operations leaking fuel ignited creating a running fuel fire on the ground that was initially countered with the use of a dry chemical extinguisher. During this time the Engineer established a 2-1/2-inch supply line.

The Captain directed both firefighters to establish an additional line for Class B foam application to mitigate the re-ignition of fuel on the ground. As the firefighters were establishing the second line, the Captain observed fire in the passenger compartment in the vicinity of the steering column and attacked the fire with the initial fire attack line in order to prevent re-ignition of the fuel. The fire around the steering column displayed unusual burning characteristic of combustible metals (small white hot appearance, similar to a sparkler). The quick application of water to extinguish the fire around the steering column caused a violent reaction/explosion.

The violent reaction/explosion forced the Captain backwards, causing him to strike his head on the pavement and rendering him unconscious. Engine 1 personnel rushed to the Captain, assessed his injuries and rendered first aid. The Engineer reported an Emergency Traffic, Firefighter Down on Channel 7 at 2118 hours. OCD dispatched additional resources after the Emergency Traffic broadcast. The Captain was treated and transported to a local hospital/trauma center and is currently being evaluated and treated.

Arson/Counter-Terrorism Section and the LAPD Bomb Squad are investigating the cause of the fire and subsequent explosion.

Safety Issues For Review

- Training Bulletin 145, Page 21 (Auto Fires) – Working within 30 feet of any auto fire constitutes working in an Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) environment. Any member working within the IDLH of any auto fire prior to extinguishment or before being determined to be safe by the Incident Commander shall be fully encapsulated (full PPE's, SCBA, on air). Keeping a safe distance can minimize injuries.

Auto fires are one of the instances where copious amounts of water in a course stream can effectively extinguish burning combustible metals. Firefighters should be aware that the fire may initially intensify with the application of water and may react violently. Full encapsulation and keeping a safe distance increase firefighter safety.