

FIREHOUSE®

Weekly Drill

DRILL #127: MVA SCENE SAFETY

Introduction

It is not unusual for the fire department to be dispatched to the scene of a motor vehicle accident (MVA). How are you treating these incidents? Some may say that they are no different than a structure fire incident, but they really are different.

Just pulling up on location and treating patients is not a good strategy. Having a step-by-step sequence of actions to evaluate the incident with, however, makes a whole lot of sense. By training for this sequence during company drills, these actions will become ingrained in your mind, so when you are dispatched to a MVA, your actions will come naturally.

Like any incident, we want to conduct an assessment (or size-up) of the scene. Often times this is completed by the company officer. However, more and more company officers are encouraging their firefighters to conduct their own size-up. By having our firefighters conduct their own size-up it will help them anticipate many of the needs the officer is confronted with.

Ideally, we would like to focus on the items listed here, but your agency may have others concerns that can be added to this list.

- Number of vehicles involved
- Potential number of patients – keep in mind that your agency may have a plan in place to address a mass-casualty incident (MCI)
- Entrapment
- What hazards confront us – fire, electrical, water supply, weather conditions and/or hazardous materials
- Traffic congestion

Gathering this type of information in your assessment will assist you in determining additional resource needs.

A nice simple operation is implemented by the establishment of work zones or areas. In the perfect world, we would shut down all traffic to the area, but this is not the perfect world so we need to adapt. One method for controlling traffic is to place traffic cones. Cones are placed in such a manner that the flow of traffic is funneled to a specific lane of the highway. This method is also called “traffic calming.” Other traffic calming methods include:



- Portable traffic signs
- Arrow sticks
- Firefighter/police officers directing traffic

Generally the first on-scene fire vehicle will be strategically positioned, creating a barrier, between the firefighter working the incident and the traffic flow. Traffic cones should not be used as a barrier, as they can easily be run over. As more law enforcement personnel arrive, they can assist in controlling the traffic.

Department of Transportation (DOT) laws require firefighters and other emergency responders to wear highly reflective clothing while working at these incidents. Our personal protective equipment (PPE) does not meet this requirement, so many department have issued vests to be worn over the PPE. Vests don't have to be worn, however, for car fires or if the scene has been totally isolated from outside traffic.

Safety should be our number one concern at all times. Having a charged hose line at the ready, along with a fire extinguisher, makes good sense.

–Prepared by *Russell Merrick*