



Getting out of the Apparatus

5 Minute Lesson Plan for Fire & EMS

Vincent Dunn has a series of videos called Back to the Basics. In this risk control bulletin, we are going back even farther. A skill so basic, it is often overlooked. This most-basic-of-tasks we are referring to is **getting out of the fire truck**. Firefighters slipping as they exit, or falling from the elevated surfaces of trucks have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in claims, and firefighters and their families much pain. These losses are driven by both frequency (the number of cases) and severity (average cost per claim). Together they are referred to as slip-trip-fall (S-T-F) injuries.

The risk factors can be numerous:

- Apparatus are getting larger and the running boards are getting higher
- Working in unfamiliar locations; roadways, driveways, lots, etc.
- Working in all environmental conditions; rain, sleet, snow, darkness, etc.
- Working in extreme conditions and under severe time constraints
- Focusing on numerous, immediate priorities (fire conditions, rescues, hose line strategies, etc), we can neglect watching our step
- Tool placement on apparatus

Control measures which should be considered:

- Apparatus Drivers need to be aware of gullies, severely sloped or rough terrain, icy patches, etc. when positioning the vehicle.
- Inspect soles of boots frequently. Insist firefighters promptly report worn soles.
- Consider trip-fall hazards when positioning tools. Avoid running boards, areas next to handholds, steps, and atop fire apparatus.
- Train firefighters on the 3-points of contact method for getting on or off vehicles. Face the vehicle and use available handholds. Reinforce proper technique and correct improper ones consistently..

Despite our control measures, accidents can still occur. A comprehensive Accident Review must be conducted to identify all the circumstances that resulted in the fall. Accidents and near-misses must become learning opportunities, not just for the firefighter involved, but for everyone. Take pictures and use them to illustrate the conditions, reinforce positive behaviors / conditions, or correct undesirable behaviors / conditions. Some possible questions for the Accident Review team might include:

- Could moving the apparatus a couple of feet in any direction have provided a better surface for firefighter to exit the truck onto? A couple of feet difference rarely affects fire operations, but can have a significant impact on firefighter S-T-F hazards.
- What were the conditions of the ground? What were the environmental conditions? What were the conditions of the boots? S-T-F incidents involve the foot-surface connection. Both must be carefully considered.



Note:
Facing
truck, with
3-points
of contact



Risky:
Facing
outward.

Like a
ladder,
always face
the truck



Note:
Strap hanging
into steps.

Watch storage
adjacent to doors
and running
boards

This lesson plan is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization's policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor. For further information regarding this bulletin, please contact your Safety Director at 877.398.3046.