

FIREHOUSE[®]

Weekly Drill

DRILL #92: RULES OF THE ROAD

Introduction

Our firefighters are the number one concern we should have as a company officer. If we are not thinking about their safety every time they report to work, shame on us! An effortless, yet important, acronym KISS (keep it simple stupid) can help by following some of these “Rules for the Road.”

If we are not pre-assigning firefighter positions on the rig, we should be, as it helps both the firefighters and officers with accountability. Additionally, all firefighters must be dressed in their turnout gear before climbing onto the apparatus. Many firefighters think of this as a time delay; however, once the rig starts to pull out of the firehouse every firefighter should be seated and belted, not putting on their gear.

Once seated, firefighters can don their self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA); however, standing up while the rig is moving, to put on any equipment should not be permissible. As mentioned, seatbelts are mandatory whenever the apparatus is in motion. Many pieces of apparatus today have enclosed cabs, but there are still some older vehicles with open jump-seats. If your department has one of these older vehicles, hearing protection should be a requirement.

How many times have we read of a fire truck backing into an object, or worse, a person? Fire departments should have a policy in place for backing up fire apparatus. Generally, all firefighters and the officer should get off the rig and act as spotters for the driver. A good practice is that of having a firefighter posted at the rear of the apparatus on each side. In addition, the officer should take the front corner of the apparatus opposite the driver. At night, it helps to have a flashlight to illuminate the area for the driver, making it easier to see objects.

I have heard it stated that “the drivers job is a lonely job, but it the only job!” While this might be true, I do know that the driver is responsible for everything on the rig, especially the firefighters. Being able to get them to and from an incident safely is one of his key responsibilities.

Therefore, knowing the operational abilities of the vehicle and the safety features associated with it is an im-



portant mission for the driver. At the beginning of each shift the driver should go over all aspects of the apparatus, making sure everything is in safe working order. This should include a visual check of the area around the truck as well, ensuring that the floors are clean and free of any trip/slip hazards.

Before pulling out of the station it is the responsibility of the driver to have the correct address of the incident so he can start planning his route. This means that he should have all the information on road conditions and any closings to assure a quick response. Additionally, before moving the apparatus, the driver should ensure that all individual firefighters are seated and buckled in their seatbelts. Once on location, firefighters can unbuckle and dismount the apparatus.

Handrails have been added to the vehicle to assist firefighters. While mounting and dismounting; use them! Often there are firefighter injured because they slipped and were not holding on to one of these handrails.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick