

SAFETY BULLETIN

Ensure your Team is Prepared!

An Every Day Problem

FOCUS: Strains and sprains represent a significant number of injuries that can sideline firefighters and must be reduced.

CHALLENGE

Strains and sprains represent the largest category of injury to emergency personnel. Patient transfer is one part of the problem; however a significant number of strains and sprains are the result of falls and performing activities at the station! The placement of equipment, housekeeping, body mechanics, team work and use of material handling aids are just as important in the station as when on a call. A strain can be disabling and will limit your ability to perform safely. Surprisingly, falls contribute to approximately one third of strains and sprains. It is important to provide thorough accident investigations when strains occur to determine the cause. Trends should be analyzed and recommendations made to correct the situations. Housekeeping issues can also be culprits that contribute to falls. It's important for everyone to address housekeeping issues promptly. It takes a team effort to review procedures for storing equipment and materials to make sure the placement is safe for access and doesn't create hazards. Facility inspections should always address work that is being performed around the station. Teamwork is as important in the station as when responding on a call. If we can find a safer way, injuries and accidents can be eliminated.

DISCUSSION

- Do we maintain good housekeeping habits at the station?
- Have we evaluated how equipment is stored for safe access?
- Do you routinely investigate near misses involving fall exposures?
- Do you look for equipment or techniques to solve the problems as identified?
- What can improve teamwork when performing tasks that need more than one person?
- You are the safety officer, what instructions do you have for your crew?

The greatest asset of the fire service is our people; protect them!

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See more Safety Bulletins online: www.washingtonfirechiefs.org and be prepared!