

SAFETY BULLETIN

Ensure your Team is Prepared!

Perfect Backing Procedure

FOCUS: We have seen the demonstrations and read of the positive results that occur when we use safe backing techniques.

CHALLENGE

Backing is an every day activity for firefighters. Not surprisingly, a significant number of vehicle incidents involve backing, too many. Backing accidents result in damages to our vehicle, buildings, equipment and occasionally to other firefighters. As professionals, we have determined that the best practice when backing is to use a "spotter". Many departments have established this practice as a policy. Yet backing accidents continue to happen. Accident investigations reveal that one of the most common reasons for not using spotters is the lack of available personnel. Another reason provided is firefighters often don't feel there is time to locate personnel to assist them.

Due to the size and value of our emergency equipment, we must put additional emphasis on our backing procedures. Not only should we make greater attempts to ensure someone is designated in the capacity of spotter but also provide appropriate training for the spotters and drivers.

The training will ensure that there is coordinated communications between the driver and spotter. Additionally, the use of radio communications and the correct position of the spotter will ensure that emergency equipment is not damaged when backing.

DISCUSSION

- Have you been involved in a backing accident while in the department?
- Were you using a spotter, if not why not?
- Did you use a radio to communicate?
- What was the result of the accident investigation?
- Do you believe this decision supported department policy, why?
- What are the safety precautions that must be taken to safely back emergency equipment?
- How can we strengthen our safe backing procedures?

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

Funding and support for this project has been provided by the State of Washington, Department of Labor & Industries, Safety & Health Investment Projects (SHIP)

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