

Post Incident Analysis

House Fire with a Firefighter that fell through a hole in the floor

6000 Muncaster Mill Road

May 5, 2012

Battalion Chief Doug Hanson 703 A



This is a Post Incident Analysis (PIA) for a house fire at 6000 Muncaster Mill Road on May 5, 2010 at 0541. A working fire was found in the basement and on the first floor of a single family dwelling. The house was not occupied at the time. The family was out of town. During fire attack, a firefighter fell through a hole that was burned through the floor while checking for extension. He was quickly rescued by basement division crews and evacuated from the building.

Dispatch: Engine Co 28, 40, 8, 3 and 23, Trucks 725 and 703, Rescue Squad 703, Ambulance 728, BC 703 and 704 and the volunteer duty officers.

RID assignment: AT 708, RS 717 and M725.

Others: Canteen 704 and Fire investigators. DOC Chief A and B, Safety 700, Special Ops Chief 700.

ECC did an exceptional job updating responding units of conditions prior to arrival. Reports from the caller revealed that fire was visible in the basement and first floor and smoke throughout the house. ECC also checked the traffic cameras on the corner of Needwood Road and Muncaster Mill and could see smoke coming from the house and updated command.

The building: The house is described as a single family dwelling of ordinary construction. There was brick on the exterior of the house. The house had a full basement with 2 walk out doors on side C. The house was fully furnished. What was unusual about the house was that the footers and concrete walls were constructed for a large addition but no other construction had been completed. At first look the walls created some confusion of exactly what the crews were encountering. You actually had to move through the new construction to get to the basement doors. The unfinished foundation could have also created a fall hazard as none of the walls were marked or secured in anyway. The drop off was about 10 feet. Firefighters advancing lines or working in the area could have fallen if the fire due to darkness. Firefighters also did not find any interior stairs connecting the basement to the first floor.





Fire ground Tactics: E 728 arrived and provided a good report. The Captain on E 728 did a circle check and reported fire on both floors. At this time BC 703 arrived and established command on side A with a good look at side A and B of the house and a direct look into the front of the house through a large picture window. BC 704 arrived and the command team was built in the BC 703 buggy. With the report from Engine 728 command asked E 728 where they would commence the initial attack. They choose the side A entrance on the first floor. With that command instructed the second due engine E 740 to begin an attack on the side C entrance to the basement. Command made sure that both engine companies were to stay on the division they were assigned and not to ascend or descend any stairs to avoid opposing hand lines. This tactic worked well. Trucks were assigned to each division, the rescue squad performed searches and controlled utilities and back up lines were in service. RID was set up on side A in the driveway with a look at 2 sides of the house. Approximately 0600, or 19 minutes into fire attack, a firefighter from T 703 fell through the hole that had burned through the floor. The firefighter stated that he was hooking ceilings and was looking up and did not see the hole in the floor. Command actually observed the firefighter disappear through the floor from command post vantage point and then asked the basement division if they heard or saw the firefighter fall. Basement division immediately reported that they had the injured firefighter and they were getting him out of the house. Command also asked if RID needed deployed which they were not needed. A good point here is that the officer on E 740 activated his EB button in which ECC immediately called command and command called E 740. The EB button was activated for the down firefighter. Normal firefighting activities resumed after the firefighter was rescued. The fire was declared under control at 0620.



Other duties assigned: Safety 700 was assigned fire ground safety officer. Safety took possession of the injured firefighters PPE and SCBA. Preliminary reports were that there were no indications of burns on the PPE and no malfunction of the SCBA. Special Op's chief provided 360 reports which kept command updated on progress. Chief 8 was assigned to division 1.

Fire investigation: FEI determined that the fire originated in quad E of the house. There was significant charring on floor joists which indicated the fire may have been burning for some time. An accelerant canine from the Howard County Fire Department was utilized. The investigation continues as of this report.

Pro's and Con's: Good water supply instructions for all engine companies.

Good positioning by all rigs. Due to the location on the corner rigs positioned on side B (Needwood Rd) and this provided resources to all sides of the house.

T 725 was on the wrong talk group. Command called T 725 numerous times to give them an assignment. They were later located in the basement where T 703 was initially assigned. Adjustments were made.

E 728 advised command of the location of the hole in the floor during their attack. Command broadcasted this information to the fire ground. It was later learned that the hole was actually not located exactly where command reported it was located. This could have created more problems however the crews placed a chair in the hole to warn others of the presence of the hole.

A hot wash was conducted with good feedback from all. Of significant importance is should command have initiated a MAYDAY for the firefighter that fell through the hole? Should the officer or crew who finds the down firefighter call a Mayday until the firefighter is rescued and removed? Even though the firefighter was located quickly, a MAYDAY activation would have set into place the procedures for a Mayday deployment which would have given all on the fire ground notification that a firefighter was in

trouble. If the MAYDAY deployment was not needed crews could have stood down and got back to normal firefighting activities. The firefighter was found immediately by the crews working in the basement. E 740 advised the firefighter actually fell through the hole and landed in front of them.