



## FIRE APPARATUS: EXITING BEST PRACTICES

In this briefing, we will discuss one of the most basic firefighting tasks, 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 events are referred to as slip-trip-fall (S-T-F) injuries.

### Risk Factors

- 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.
- Firefighters focus on numerous immediate priorities (fire conditions, rescues, hose line strategies, etc.)
- Tool placement on apparatus.

### Control Measures

- Apparatus Drivers need to be aware of gullies, severely sloped or rough terrain, icy patches, etc., when positioning the vehicle.
- Officers should inspect the 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 techniques 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. Use pictures to illustrate the conditions, reinforce positive behaviors/conditions, or correct undesirable behaviors or 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 firefighters to exit the truck onto? A couple of feet difference rarely affects fire operations but can significantly impact firefighter S-T-F hazards.
- S-T-F incidents involve the foot-surface connection. Both must be carefully considered. What were the conditions of the ground? What were the environmental conditions? What were the conditions of the boots?



**Best Practice: Face truck, use 3-points of contact**



**Risky: Facing away from truck**



**Watch storage adjacent to doors**