



SHIFT BRIEFING



FIRE APPARATUS: WORKING ON TOP OF BEST PRACTICES

The fire service has lost and seriously injured firefighters when they fell from the tops of fire apparatus performing routine, and non-emergency tasks. Job tasks that may be completed from the top of cabinets are top-side vehicle or equipment inspections, mounting tools or other equipment, or using the truck to perform station maintenance.

Sometimes, to maximize equipment on a vehicle, it may be stored or mounted where climbing on top of cabinets is needed to access. Department officers and truck committees should look at every activity where a firefighter must climb on top of a vehicle over 4 ft. high and look for a safer way to conduct that job.

NJPEOSH requires fall protection when working at heights over 4 feet in the General Industry Standards. The top of engines and trucks are more, sometimes as much as 10 feet, above the bay floor or apron. Additionally, many surfaces on top of fire apparatus were not designed as walking or working surfaces.

Some tasks cannot be easily avoided without purchasing new fire apparatus. However, many tasks are performed atop fire trucks that can be better controlled in the short term.

- A firefighter in a hose bed with side rails is exposed to a significantly less hazard than working from the tops of side cabinets to do the same job. When repacking the hose, KNEEL within the confines of the hose bed.
- The tops of the cabinets are not a walking/working surface. Work on top of cabinets should be completed from the safety of a portable ladder.
 - Move the ladder to avoid overreaching.
 - Keep your belt buckle between the beams of the ladder.
- When a firefighter must work from the top of the cabinets, assign a monitor to monitor them and warn them as they approach the edge of the cabinet.
- Use 3-points of contact when getting off the apparatus.

Discussion questions:

1- What job tasks in your department require firefighters to walk on top of surfaces higher than 4 ft. and not designed for firefighter use?

2- How else can the job task be completed? If the job cannot be performed from a safe work platform, what other protective measures can be put in place to protect the firefighter?