

Overview of Incident

On 19 February 2009, the Craigsville – Beaver - Cottle Volunteer Fire Department (CBCVFD) responded to the report of a structure fire in the Cottle area of Nicholas County. Upon arrival at the fire scene, department members who arrived on the first apparatus (Engine 30) reported that there was a camper on fire with flames impinging on a mobile home. While one attack team performed fire suppression activities on the camper, a second attack team composed of Lt. Johnnie Hammons and FF Timothy Nicholas entered the mobile home to perform fire suppression activities. During fire ground operations, Engineer Bill Phares on Engine 30 sounded an air horn to alert all personnel of a low water situation. This action was also used to evacuate the attack team from the interior of the mobile home. Realizing that the interior attack team had not evacuated the mobile home, Chief Tim Blake became alarmed. He then pulled the hose line from the interior of the structure in an attempt to get the attention of the interior attack team. Following the removal of the full length of the hose line out of the structure, Chief Blake then put search teams into the structure to locate the missing firefighters. On the fourth search attempt, department members located Lt. Hammons and FF Nicholas in the living room area of the mobile home.

Contributing Factors

- No integrated or separately attached Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) Device located on the individual Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).
- No documented program within the Department regarding the proper testing, maintenance and care of department owned and provided Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).
- No documented program within the Department regarding the proper testing, maintenance and care of department owned and provided SCBA air cylinders.
- No fire ground Incident Safety Officer assigned.
- The Incident Commander did not provide or establish a fire-ground Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) prior to any interior fire suppression operations.
- The Incident Commander did not properly account for the location and activities of all firefighters present on the fire ground.
- The Incident Commander did not maintain overall scene command while becoming physically involved with multiple fire ground operations.
- The Department Command Staff did not mandate proper firefighter grooming standards with regards to facial hair and the use of Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).
- The fire fighters did not secure personal communication using department issued handheld radios.

Recommendations from the WVSFMO

- The Fire Department should implement a documented program that assures the recommended maintenance, care and testing of the entire Department owned and provided Self Contained Breathing Apparatus in compliance with national standards as cited in NFPA 1852 “*Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Open Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).*”
- The Fire Department should implement a documented program that assures the recommended maintenance, care and testing of all Department owned and provided Self Contained Breathing Apparatus Cylinders in compliance with national standards as cited in NFPA 1852 “*Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Open Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).*”
- The Fire Department should provide and mandate the use of Personal Alert Safety Systems (*Integrated or Attached*) on all Self Contained Breathing Apparatus. Further, this program should involve written documentation detailing all measures regarding the recommended maintenance, care and testing performed in compliance with nationally recognized safety standards.
- The Fire Department shall require the use of an Incident Management System on all Department Scenes, as required by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and in compliance with national standards as cited in NFPA 1561 “*Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System.*”
- The Fire Department should require the use of an Incident Safety Officer on all Department Scenes, in compliance with national standards as cited in NFPA 1521 “*Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer.*”
- The Fire Department should implement an on-scene accountability system. This program would allow the Incident Commander to properly account for the location and activities of all firefighters on the scene. This program is required by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and is in compliance with the national standards as cited in NFPA 1561 “*Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System.*”

- The Fire Department should develop and maintain a documented training program regarding structural firefighting tactics, techniques and fire ground procedures in compliance with nationally recognized safety standards.
- The Fire Department should implement a Department Policy to ensure members who have a beard or facial hair at any point where the facepiece is designed to seal with the face or whose hair could interfere with the operation of the unit shall not be permitted to use respiratory protection at emergency incidents or in hazardous or potentially hazardous atmospheres. This is in compliance with nationally recognized safety standards.
- The Fire Department should implement a Department Policy which ensures that all members on Emergency Scenes be equipped with and carry portable radio devices which would provide contact with the Incident Command Staff. This is in compliance with national standards as cited in NFPA 1561 *“Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System.”*
- The Fire Department should implement a Department Policy which would ensure the use of a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) on those Emergency Scenes in which structural firefighting activities are occurring. This is in compliance with nationally recognized safety standards.
- The Fire Department Leadership should maintain and foster an atmosphere which encourages and promotes personal safety. The Leadership should also promote the ability of the general membership to provide input on issues that directly affect the personal safety of their fellow firefighters. This is in compliance with nationally recognized safety standards.