

**LINE OF DUTY
DEATH REPORT
REPORT SLIDES**



F2024-05

Career Battalion Chief Dies from
Explosion while Fighting Tractor
Trailer Fire - Georgia



Summary

- On September 4, 2024, a 35-year-old career battalion chief (Battalion 1) died while operating at a tractor trailer fire.
- He was the command officer at the incident and was killed while investigating the type of cargo that was held within the refrigerated trailer involved in the fire.
- At approximately 0921 hours, the local public safety answering point (PSAP) received a call for a vehicle fire.
- While the incident was being dispatched to the responding units, the call type was updated to a tractor trailer fire with black smoke and multiple callers.
- Battalion 1 and Engine 11 were dispatched to the incident.



Fire conditions on arrival of Battalion 1.
(Photo courtesy of the fire department)



Summary

- Upon hearing the update from the dispatch center, Battalion 1 requested an additional engine company and that station 1 be re-paged for a tanker response.
- At approximately 0928 hours, Battalion 1 arrived on-scene and positioned past the involved tractor trailer, blocking traffic.
- Battalion 1 established command and sized the incident up as a tractor trailer fire with heavy fire involvement at the rear of the tractor, including tires and diesel fuel, with unknown cargo and occupant status.
- Battalion 1 provided a further update to all responding units that there was off-gassing at the rear of the tractor with an unknown source.
- He ordered Engine 11 to stop short, deploy an attack line from the front bumper, and utilize foam.



Summary

- Engine 11 stopped approximately 100' short of the involved tractor trailer and deployed the 100' 1 3/4-inch front bumper attack line.
- The Chief of the department (Chief 1101), who arrived just before Engine 11, assisted with deployment of the attack line.
- Engine 11's officer extended the line with a 50' section of attack line that was stored in the bumper well.
- At approximately 0931 hours, Battalion 1 updated dispatch that they had water on the fire and walked away from the engine crew.



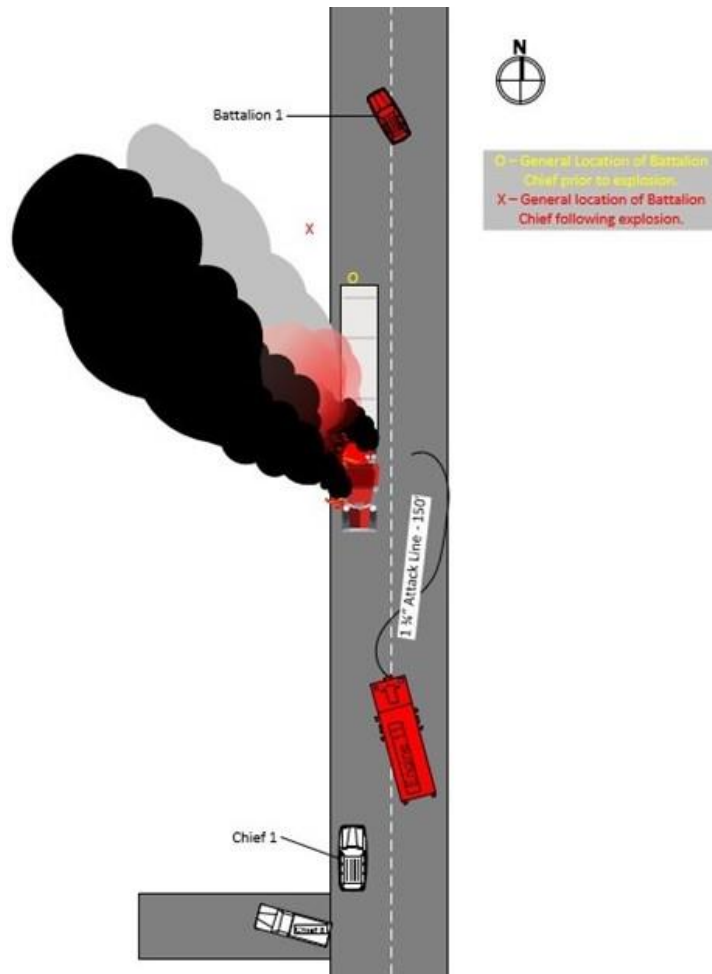
View from the fire attack team as Battalion 1 declared water on the fire. (Photo courtesy of fire department)



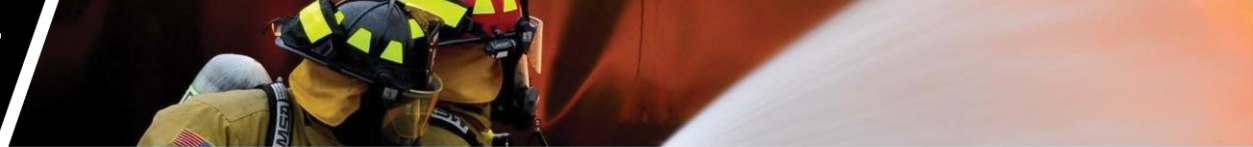
Summary

- At approximately 0932 hours, while investigating at the rear of the trailer, Battalion 1 updated all units on-scene that the cargo was still unknown, but the rear of the trailer indicated it was refrigerated.
- At approximately 0933 hours, Battalion 1 attempted to open the rear trailer doors.
- The trailer exploded and Chief 1101 called to Battalion 1 on the radio stating they were okay.
- Battalion 1 did not acknowledge the message.
- At approximately 0934 hours, Chief 1101 updated dispatch that the trailer had exploded, was fully involved in fire, and he was going to check on Battalion 1.
- At approximately 0935 hours, Chief 1101 updated dispatch that Battalion 1 was down and requested air medical.
- At approximately 0937 hours, Chief 1101 assumed command of the incident and confirmed Battalion 1 was deceased on-scene.

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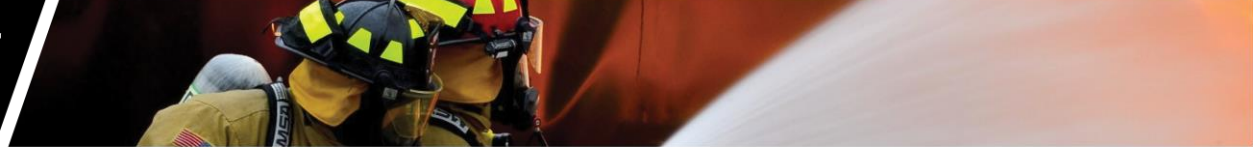


Approximate locations of all on scene apparatus and attack line at the time of explosion. (Diagram courtesy of NIOSH)



Contributing Factors

- Standard operating procedures/guidelines (SOPs/SOGs)
- Incident command
- Risk/benefit analysis
- Staffing
- Hazard recognition, including control zone establishment with unknown hazard



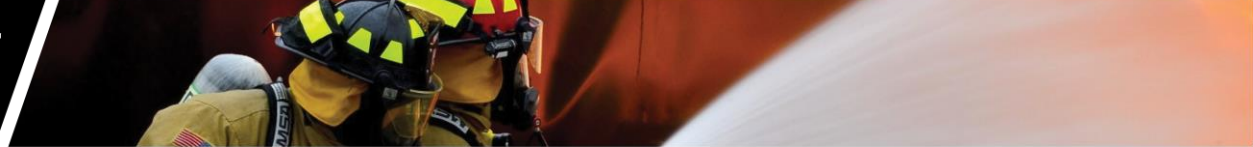
Recommendations

- Fire Service Organizations should develop and maintain SOPs/SOGs with industry best practices.
- ICs should establish an IMS at all incidents.
- ICs should integrate risk assessment as a risk management practice into their fireground strategy and tactic SOGs/SOPs.



Recommendations

- Fire service organizations should follow the appropriate standards for organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations.
- ICs should establish control zones on incidents where IDLH environments exist.
- Fire Service training should provide insight and education around commonly unrecognized pressure vessels in the form of intermodal freight trailers and mixed cargo trailers.



UL - Fire Safety Research Institute Findings

- Foam insulation within the walls of refrigerated intermodal containers releases heat at a rate two times higher than wood.
- Refrigerated trailers that are empty, still have a large fuel load, with the potential for significant fire or explosion hazard.
- Ventilation limited fire conditions can occur in compartments of tractor trailers such as: closed refrigerator trailer, tanks, and tires.
- Pulsating fire behavior is indicative of the potential for a smoke explosion and a safe distance should be maintained from these pressure vessels.

Contact Us

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