

# BLUE SHEET

## County of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAC)

### Preliminary Summary Report of Serious Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-Miss Incidents



### CONFINED SPACE ENTRY FIREFIGHTER ILLNESS

### ALONDRA INCIDENT (7223 E. Alondra Blvd., Paramount)

CA-LAC 16-320300

This Preliminary Summary Report is intended as an aid in accident prevention, and to provide factual information from the first 24 hours of the accident review. To that end it is published and distributed within a short time frame. Information contained within may be subject to revision as further investigation is conducted, and other reports and documents are received.

## SUMMARY

Two firefighters entered a confined space to rescue one unconscious civilian patient. They were breathing supplied air through an air management manifold system utilizing SCBA compressed air cylinders. During the rescue, it was decided to change the air source from SCBA compressed air cylinders to an umbilical air-line connected to a mobile air unit. After the change, the two firefighters inside the tank became ill.

## NARRATIVE

Units responded to a cardiac arrest at a bulk tank service center. Upon arrival, a patient was observed to be unconscious in a mobile liquid petroleum tank. The call was upgraded to a confined space incident. The patient was unconscious in a bulkhead near an entry hatch. Access to the patient was through a hatch large enough to lower a rescuer with their hands straight up in the air, then crawl through an 18” hole in the bulkhead separator.

The entry plan was developed and executed. Two firefighters were identified as the entry team and two firefighters were identified as the back-up team. The first firefighter was lowered into the tank 12 minutes prior to the second firefighter being lowered into the tank. A ventilation tube was inserted into the entry hole, partially obstructing the attendant’s view of the rescuers. Verbal and radio communications were frequent and consistent. The entry team manager was three feet from the attendant. Thorough air monitoring and written notes were maintained by the air supply manager.

Both firefighters were on air-lines connected to the air source. While both firefighters were in the tank, the source of air was changed from SCBA compressed air cylinders to an umbilical air-line from a mobile air unit.

Three minutes after the change to the umbilical air-line, the entry attendant heard strange breathing sounds emanating from the entry team. The attendant called “**MAN DOWN**” and verbally stimulated the rescuers. One rescuer responded and shook the other rescuer. Both rescuers were successfully extricated. Both rescuers were fully awake and oriented as they exited the confined space.

The rescuers were evaluated on scene by paramedics and a physician at the hospital. Both firefighters were released from the hospital and returned to full duty.

A secondary entry plan was developed, executed and a successful body recovery was completed.

### OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediately before use, umbilical air lines should be flushed long enough to expel stale air out of the line.
- When changing air sources, notify the entry team; consider having rescuers remove themselves from the confined space and test- breath prior to re-entry.
- Consider secondary access, egress, and effective emergency extraction routes when operating in a confined space.



Air Management System



Access hole in baffle