

Bricelyn Street Fire
Multiple Fire fighter Fatality
Pittsburgh, PA
February 14, 1995

SUMMARY

On Tuesday, February 14, 1995, a fire in a one-family dwelling resulted in the deaths of three Pittsburgh, PA fire fighters. Three other fire fighters were also injured.



The building involved was a three-story, wood-frame structure with a basement and was constructed on a sloping grade that caused the building to have a different appearance depending on the side being viewed. Fire fighters entering the building saw only one side and were not aware of the building's actual arrangement. The fire fighters' distorted perception of the building may have impaired their ability to assess alternate escape routes.

During interior fire fighting operations, the stairway used by fire fighters to enter a room collapsed. Sometime after that collapse, fire fighters outside the building realized that other fire fighters were trapped inside. Since fire fighters from several companies were working at the scene, fireground supervisors were not able to quickly assess which companies

and individual fire fighters were working in the building. After several trapped fire fighters were rescued through an exterior window, a full accounting of all fire fighters was not performed. Unknown to the incident commander, three other injured fire fighters remained trapped in the building. These fire fighters were discovered after most of the fire had been extinguished and smoke had been removed from the building, about one hour and ten minutes after they originally entered.

Adherence to procedures that allow for quick accounting of fire fighters on the fireground and the use of rapid intervention teams are precautions that can reduce risks to fire fighters during structural collapse and other unplanned events that can threaten fire fighters during suppression operations. The importance of these precautions is evident in two NFPA documents, i.e., NFPA 1561, Standard on Fire Department Incident Management System, and NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program. Both have complete sections containing specific accountability requirements. In addition, NFPA 1500 contains requirements for rapid intervention crews.



This Summary may be reproduced in whole or in part for fire safety educational purposes as long as the meaning of the summary is not altered, credit is given to NFPA and the copyright of the NFPA is protected. This may not be used for advertising or commercial purposes without the express written consent of the NFPA.

© 2001 NFPA, Quincy, MA

