



Hey,

The Texas State Fire Marshals Office has released an excellent comprehensive report on the Line of Duty Death of Wharton VFD Captain Thomas Araguz III, who was killed during firefighting operations at that egg production and processing facility on July 3rd, 2010.

We are posting the findings first, as a sort of "check list" that can be used to benefit any of our FD's and honor the loss of Captain Araguz by us all learning. **If you don't read the entire report, at least read the list of findings (below) as a template for ANY FD's operations.**

HERE ARE THE FINDINGS:

=FINDING 1:

There were no lives to save in the building. An inadequate water supply, lack of fire protection systems in the structure to assist in controlling the spread of the smoke and fire, and the heavy fire near the windward side facilitated smoke and fire spread further into the interior and toward "A" side operations. Along with the size of the building, the large fuel load, and the time period from fire discovery, interior firefighters were at increased risk.

=FINDING 2:

Initial crews **failed to perform a 360-degree scene size-up** and did not secure the utilities before operations began.

=FINDING 3:

The Incident Commander **failed to maintain an adequate span of control** for the type of incident. Safety, personnel accountability, staging of resources, and firefighting operations require additional supervision for the scope of incident. Radio recordings and interview statements indicate the IC performing several functions including: Command, Safety, Staging, Division A Operations, Interior Operations and Scene Security.

=FINDING 4:

The interior fire team advanced into the building **prior to the establishment of a rapid intervention crew.**

=FINDING 5:

The interior team and Incident Commander **did not verify the correct operation of communications equipment** before entering the IDLH atmosphere and subsequently did not maintain communications between the interior crew and Command. Although Chief Barnett stated he communicated with Captain Cano, there was no contact with Captain Araguz.

=FINDING 6:

The interior operating crew **did not practice effective air management techniques** for the size and complexity of the structure. Interviews indicate the crew expended breathing air while attempting to breach an exterior wall for approximately 10 minutes, then advanced a hose line into a 15,000 square foot room without monitoring their air supply. During interviews Captain Cano estimated his consumption limit at 15 - 20 minutes on a 45 minute SCBA.

=FINDING 7:

Captains Araguz and Cano **became separated from their hoseline.** While it is unclear as

to the reason they became separated from the hose line, interviews with Captain Cano indicate that while he was finding an exterior wall and took actions to alert the exterior by banging and kicking the wall, he lost contact with Captain Araguz.

**Captain Cano credits his survival to the actions he learned from recent Mayday, Firefighter Safety training.

INCIDENT SUMMARY:

On July 3rd, 2011, At 9:41 PM, Wharton County Sheriff's Office 911 received a report of a fire at the Maxim Egg Farm located at 3307 FM 442, Boling, Texas. Boling VFD and the Wharton VFD responded first, arriving approximately 12 minutes after dispatch. Eventually, more than 30 fire departments with 100 apparatus and more than 150 personnel responded. Some departments came as far as 60 miles to assist in fighting the fire.

The fire involved the egg processing building, including the storage areas holding stacked pallets of foam, plastic, and cardboard egg cartons and boxes. It was a large windowless, limited access structure with large open areas totaling over 58,000 square feet. A mixed construction, it included a two-story business office, the egg processing plant, storage areas, coolers, and shipping docks. It was primarily metal frame construction with metal siding and roofing on a concrete slab foundation with some areas using wood framing for the roof structure.

Captain Araguz responded to the scene from the Wharton Firehouse, approximately 20 miles from the fire scene, arriving to the front, south side main entrance 20 minutes after dispatch. Captain Araguz, Captain Juan Cano, and Firefighter Paul Maldonado advanced a line through the main entrance and along the south, interior wall to doors leading to a storage area at the Southeast corner. Maldonado fed hose at the entry door as Captains Araguz and Cano advanced through the processing room.

Araguz and Cano became separated from the hose line and then each other. Captain Cano found an exterior wall and began kicking and hitting the wall as his air supply ran out. Firefighters cut through the exterior metal wall at the location of the knocking and pulled him out. Several attempts were made to locate Captain Araguz including entering the building through the hole and cutting an additional hole in the exterior wall where Cano believed Araguz was located. Fire conditions eventually drove the rescuers back and defensive firefighting operations were initiated.

Captain Cano was transported to the Gulf Coast Medical Center where he was treated and released. Captain Araguz was recovered at 7:40 AM, the following morning. Initially transported by ambulance to the Wharton Funeral Home then taken to the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office in Austin, Texas for a post-mortem examination.

HERE is the ENTIRE Report: <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/reports/fire/documents/fmloddaraguz.pdf>

As you may recall, there has been significant controversy related to the benefit claims and family members of Captain Araguz.

MORE ABOUT THAT HERE: <http://tinyurl.com/685kv4n>

Take Care-BE CAREFUL.

BillyG

The Secret List 6-25-11 / 2210 Hours

www.FireFighterCloseCalls.com
