

STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

Firefighter Fatality Investigation



Investigation Number 08-01

Volunteer Firefighter Joe Pat Jordan

Pickton-Pine Forest Volunteer Fire Department

July 4, 2008

Texas Department of Insurance
Austin, Texas

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Hopkins County Fire Department
- Pickton-Pine Forest Grove Volunteer Fire Department

Executive Summary

On July 4, 2008, Pickton-Pine Forest Volunteer Firefighter Joe Pat Jordan, age 71, died from myocardial infarction and ventricular fibrillation (heart attack).

Firefighter Jordan was responding to a dispatch call from Hopkins County Fire to a motor vehicle accident on July 2, 2008. Firefighter Jordan was a passenger in Rescue Truck 7 when he went into cardiac arrest. He was taken to Hopkins County Memorial Hospital and transferred to East Texas Medical Center where he later died.

Joe Pat Jordan was a founding member of the Pickton-Pine Forest Volunteer Fire Department where he served as secretary/treasurer since its creation in 1976.

THE INVESTIGATION

Introduction

The Texas State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) began a firefighter fatality investigation into the death of Firefighter Joe Pat Jordan, of Pickton-Pine Forest Volunteer Fire Department, on July 7, 2008. The investigation was assigned to Belinda Ambrose, Deputy State Fire Marshal.

Texas Government Code, Section 417.0075, requires the SFMO to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of a firefighter, including the cause and origin of the fire, the condition of the structure, and the suppression operation, when in connection with a firefighting incident, to determine factors that may have contributed to the death of the firefighter. This fatality did not occur in connection with a fire-fighting incident.

Death Investigation

Firefighter Jordan was an active member of the Pickton-Pine Forest VFD. He did not respond to structure fires, but he would occasionally assist with brush fires and motor vehicle accidents. Firefighter Jordan assisted at the station by working on vehicles, maintaining the station, and mentoring firefighters. Firefighter Jordan was retired.

On July 2, 2008, Firefighter Jordan woke up at 5:00 am and dressed for breakfast with his wife, Nell Ann. They had cereal and coffee, and then started working in the yard at 6:00 am. Firefighter Jordan mowed the lawn with a riding mower. He took short breaks every thirty to forty minutes. He became hot and frustrated with his lawn mower. He worked on it throughout the morning.

Firefighter Jordan ate lunch between 11:30 am and 11:45 am in his work shop. His wife heard his diesel truck leave around 12:45 pm. This was just after the page out for Pickton-Pine Forest VFD.

Pickton-Pine Forest Volunteer Firefighter Jordan responded to a page out at 12:41 pm for his department to a motor vehicle accident on July 2, 2008. Firefighter Jordan drove 2.6 miles to the Pine Forest Station and accompanied Firefighters Trey Thompson (Driver) and Travis Thompson in Rescue Truck 7.

Rescue Truck 7 was en-route to the motor vehicle accident. The firefighters were talking when Firefighter Jordan became quiet. Firefighter Trey Thompson noticed Firefighter Jordan slumped over and nonresponsive. Rescue 7 radioed man-down at 1:16 pm and pulled over .5 miles south of Pine Forest Station.

Firefighter Trey Thompson and Firefighter Travis Thompson pulled Jordan out of Rescue 7 and began basic Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). Fire Chief Mark Sustaire arrived at the scene to assist. CPR was administered using a Bag Valve Mask (BVM) and an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) was used to defibrillate Jordan twice. The medics arrived on scene and defibrillated Firefighter Jordan one time regaining pulse and rhythm. Firefighter Jordan was transported by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to Hopkins County Memorial Hospital,

Sulfur Springs, Texas, and then transferred by Air 1 at approximately 6:30 pm to East Texas Medical Center, Tyler, Texas, for cardiology and neurology treatment that was not available at Hopkins County Memorial Hospital. Firefighter Jordan passed away at 9:12 pm on July 4, 2008.

Medical Background

Relatives stated that Firefighter Jordon had no history of serious medical problems. His wife stated that he had slightly elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels. He took 10 mg Crestor and 20 mg Lisinopril daily. He also took one Advil daily for mild arthritis.

The death certificate listed myocardial infarction and ventricular fibrillation as the cause of death. No autopsy was performed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pickton-Pine Forest Grove had incorporated some recommended health and safety practices into their department. All fire departments should be aware of the content of health and safety standards, including the examples below.

- Provide mandatory pre-placement and annual medical evaluations to all firefighters consistent with NFPA 1582, Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments to determine their medical ability to perform duties without presenting a significant risk to the safety and health of themselves or others.
- Perform an annual physical performance (physical ability) evaluation to ensure fire fighters are physically capable of performing the essential job tasks of structural fire fighting.
- Ensure that fire fighters are cleared for duty by a physician knowledgeable about the physical demands of firefighting, the personal protective equipment used by firefighters, and the various components of NFPA 1592. Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medicine Program for Fire Departments.