

10-11-08 Durham NC– Eric Rozier – USAR FF – Boat Training Injury

Firefighter battles for his life after Jordan Lake training accident

<http://heraldsun.southernheadlines.com/durham/4-988075.cfm>

Sep 11, 2008 By KEITH UPCHURCH - The Herald-Sun



DURHAM -- A Durham firefighter was in critical condition on Wednesday after he suffered a serious head injury during a boat training exercise at Jordan Lake, fire officials reported.

Durham fire technician Eric Rozier was injured Tuesday between 4 and 5 p.m., Durham Fire Chief Bruce Pagan said on Wednesday.

Rozier is at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill, where he was listed in critical condition Wednesday evening in the intensive care unit.

Capt. Angelica Stroud, community relations coordinator for the Durham Fire Department, said Rozier was participating in an Urban Search and Rescue Team training exercise at Jordan Lake when the mishap occurred.

"In the event of a large-scale incident, we can notify the entire task force (Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Cary) and expect a response from them within an hour for most incidents," Stroud said.

She said she wasn't sure exactly how the boating accident happened, but that the team is involved in training to make water rescues, rescues involving the use of ropes, and help in natural disasters and in building collapses.

No other members of the department's Search and Rescue Team were injured as a result of the training accident, Stroud said.

Fire officials continued to investigate the cause of the accident on Wednesday, and had no further comment Wednesday evening on what may have caused it.

Stroud said Rozier has been with the department "a little over" nine years, and has been a member of the search and rescue unit for three years.

North Carolina Firefighter Critical Following Training Incident

<http://cms.firehouse.com/content/article/article.jsp?id=60910§ionId=46>
9-11-2008 **KEITH UPCHURCH** *The Herald-Sun, Durham, N.C.*

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McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Firefighter still critical

<http://heraldsun.southernheadlines.com/durham/4-988461.cfm>
Sep 12, 2008 BY KEITH UPCHURCH : The Herald-Sun

DURHAM -- Firefighter Eric Rozier remained in critical condition on Thursday at UNC Hospitals after he suffered a serious head injury during a boat training exercise at Jordan Lake.

Meanwhile, Durham Fire Chief Bruce Pagan said on Thursday the department

is "very busy" investigating how the accident occurred and could shed no details on it at this time.

Rozier, 30, was critically injured on Tuesday afternoon and was rushed to UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill. A hospital spokesperson said he was in critical condition on Thursday.

Fellow firefighters have been visiting Rozier in the hospital's intensive care unit.

Rozier was participating in an Urban Search and Rescue Team training exercise at Jordan Lake when the mishap occurred between 4 and 5 p.m. No other members of the team were injured as a result of the training accident, said Capt. Angelica Stroud, community relations coordinator for the Durham Fire Department.

Rozier has been with the Fire Department for about nine years, and has been a member of the search and rescue unit for three years. He began as a firefighter and was later promoted to fire technician.

He is assigned to fire station No. 16 on Farrington Road

Probe into firefighter's accident completed

<http://heraldsun.southernheadlines.com/durham/4-989846.cfm>

Sep 17, 2008 by KEITH UPCHURCH : The Herald-Sun

DURHAM -- A Durham firefighter suffered a critical head and neck injury when the training boat he was in struck debris in Jordan Lake, throwing him and two fellow occupants out and injuring him as the boat circled around, an investigator has concluded.

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Master Officer Brian Scruggs made that finding Tuesday during his investigation of the Sept. 9 accident, according to Geoff Cantrell, public information officer for enforcement at the Wildlife Resources Commission.

Meanwhile, the injured firefighter, Erick Rozier, 30, was listed in critical condition on Tuesday at UNC Hospitals, a hospital spokesperson said. Rozier had been listed in serious condition on Monday, an improvement from his earlier critical state, but his condition has deteriorated to critical, the spokesperson said.

Scruggs said Rozier and two other firefighters with the Urban Search and Rescue Team of Durham were in the boat that afternoon when it struck debris that had washed up due to the rising lake level. After throwing out all three firefighters, the boat circled as the motor continued to run, and hit Rozier, injuring his neck and head, the officer said.

Cantrell said the Wildlife Commission's investigation has been completed, and that no criminal charges are expected.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has been conducting its own investigation of the accident at the same time that Durham fire officials have.

Durham City Manager Tom Bonfield is expected to receive the Fire Department's preliminary report on the mishap today.

Rozier, who has been with the Fire Department about nine years, was participating in an Urban Search and Rescue Team training exercise at the lake when the accident occurred about 5:30 p.m. He has been a member of the rescue unit for three years

Report: Firefighter hurt while helping co-worker

<http://heraldsun.southernheadlines.com/durham/4-990620.cfm>

Sep 19, 2008 By Keith Upchurch - The Herald-Sun

DURHAM -- A report of a Durham firefighter's life-threatening injury during a boat training exercise at Jordan Lake says the boat's operator lost control as he tried to avoid debris and reached out to help a fellow firefighter from falling out. It said the boat was traveling at nearly top speed.

The report, released on Thursday, also said the three firefighters on board didn't have communications equipment with them and weren't wearing the required helmets or life jackets. It concluded that "may not have prevented the accident from occurring" but the injuries probably would have been less severe.

The injured firefighter, Erick Rozier, is fighting for his life at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill, where he was reported in critical condition on Thursday. The report said he suffered severe head injuries, lacerations to his body and a fractured left collarbone.

The report said Rozier lost his balance when firefighter Daniel Pennell, who was operating the boat, tried unsuccessfully to steer around a piece of floating debris. Firefighter Leonard Rhew reached out to steady Rozier after the impact jolt, and Pennell reached out to steady Rhew.

As Pennell reached out, he moved the boat's tiller in a way that forced it into a hard left turn. The motion tossed all three into the water.

"He lost enough control to cause the ejection," said Deputy City Manager Ted Voorhees.

After Pennell and Rhew surfaced, uninjured, they noticed Rozier lying face-down in the water, unconscious and bleeding. As Rhew was helping Rozier,

Pennell tried to recover the boat, which was running out of control because the kill switch, which shuts off the motor, hadn't been properly secured to Pennell, the report said.

Rhew helped Rozier to shore, about 300-400 yards away, and Pennell, realizing he could not retrieve the boat, swam to shore. Rhew used his shorts to apply pressure to Rozier's head and Pennell ran for help.

While Pennell was away, Rozier told Rhew he "did not want to die here," so they made their way through the woods and found a house on Sexton Road in Apex, where they called 911. North Chatham Volunteer Fire Department personnel recovered the boat on the eastern shore of the lake.

Fire Chief Bruce Pagan said the department's safety committee would examine the accident.

After, its job is to offer "recommendations about any changes in procedure or policy that need to follow" the accident, rule on whether or not the accident was preventable and "recommend whether any personnel will be subject to discipline," Pagan said.

By policy, the committee has to finish its work within 90 days. But "we'll have it done a lot sooner than that," Pagan said.

Pagan and Voorhees said that although all three firefighters in the boat are members of a regional search and rescue team, the accident occurred while they were working for the fire department. They got their battalion chief's permission to do the training exercise.

Report: Procedures ignored in exercise that injured NC firefighter

<http://www.firerescue1.com/vftraining/articles/429357-Report-Procedures-ignored-in-exercise-that-injured-NC-firefighter/>

September 19, 2008 By The News & Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina)

DURHAM, NC — Durham firefighter Erick Rozier was critically injured by the boat he had just fallen out of during a training exercise, according to a Fire Department report released Thursday.

Rozier remains in critical condition at UNC Hospitals. He was hurt Sept. 9 during a search-and-rescue exercise at Jordan Lake.

Rozier was not wearing the safety helmet or life vest that department policy requires, nor were the two other firefighters conducting the exercise with him. Nor was the boat's operator connected to the motor's emergency kill switch.

"That's also a procedural problem," said Assistant City Manager Ted Voorhees, who presented the report along with Fire Chief Bruce Pagan.

According to the report, the firefighters were returning to shore when the operator, Daniel Pennell, tried to steer around some debris. Rozier lost his balance and started to fall out. The third firefighter, Leonard Rhew, tried to grab Rozier but began falling overboard himself. When Pennell reached for Rhew, he accidentally pushed the tiller and sent the boat into a turn so sharp that all three went into the water.

Pennell and Rhew were not hurt. Rozier suffered severe head injuries and a fractured clavicle.

The Durham findings are consistent with those of an investigation by the state Wildlife Resources Commission, Pagan said.

Pagan said the report next goes to a review committee for recommendations on policy changes and possible disciplinary action. Pennell and Rhew have returned to duty, he said.

Injured NC Firefighter Markedly Improved

<http://www.firefightingnews.com/article-US.cfm?articleID=54940>

Sept 23, 2008

North Carolina - Injured Durham firefighter Erick Rozier's condition has improved. He was listed in fair condition Monday at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill. Rozier had been in critical condition since his injury on Sept. 9 during a boat training exercise at Jordan Lake.

Fair condition is two stages better than critical. The ratings, from most to least serious are: critical, serious, fair and good, a hospital spokesman said. Rozier suffered severe head injuries, a fractured left collarbone and other injuries when he was thrown from the boat when the boat's operator lost control trying to avoid debris during an Urban Search and Rescue Team training exercise, according to a Durham Fire Department report released on Thursday.

The report said Rozier and the other two firefighters on board didn't have communications with them and weren't wearing the required helmets or life jackets. It said the boat was traveling at nearly top speed.

That "may not have prevented the accident from occurring" but the injuries probably would have been less severe, the report concluded.

Durham Fire Chief Bruce Pagan said the department's safety committee will examine the accident and recommend whether the accident was preventable and "recommend whether any personnel will be subject to discipline."

Pagan has said the report will be completed "very, very soon."

Written by The Herald-Sun

Panel to look into boating accident

<http://heraldsun.southernheadlines.com/durham/4-990899.cfm>

10-20-08 By Keith Upchurch - The Herald-Sun

DURHAM -- A committee of three Durham Fire Department safety officers will soon begin the process of looking into the boat training accident that critically injured a Durham firefighter and recommend whether disciplinary action is warranted, Durham Fire Chief Bruce Pagan said.

"This is going to be a priority," Pagan said on Friday.

He said the committee will submit its written recommendations to him.

The committee's job also is to offer "recommendations about any changes in procedure or policy that need to follow" and whether the accident was preventable, he said.

The injured firefighter, Erick Rozier, 30, remained in critical condition Friday at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill. He suffered severe head injuries, a fractured left collarbone and other wounds.

In a report released Thursday, fire officials said the injury occurred during an Urban Search and Rescue Team training exercise at Jordan Lake during the afternoon of Sept. 9.

It said Rozier lost his balance when firefighter Daniel Pennell, who was operating the boat, tried unsuccessfully to steer around a piece of floating debris. Firefighter Leonard Rhew reached out to steady Rozier after the impact jolt, and Pennell reached out to steady Rhew.

As Pennell reached out, he moved the boat's tiller in a way that forced it into a hard left turn. The motion tossed all three into the water, and Rozier was injured when the boat or motor struck him. The two other firefighters were not hurt.

The report said the three firefighters didn't have communications equipment with them and weren't wearing their required helmets or life jackets. That "may not have prevented the accident from occurring," but the injuries probably would have been less severe, it concluded.

It also said the boat was traveling at nearly top speed.

By policy, the committee has to finish its work within 90 days. Pagan said on Friday it will completed "very, very soon."



<http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=1735>

November 2008

Bruce Pagan, Durham Fire Chief, thanked the Fire Department for providing assistance to the Durham Fire Department following a boating accident that critically injured Durham Fire employee Erick Rozier. "The professionalism and willingness to help exhibited by you and the other members of the Chapel Hill Fire Department will not be forgotten by the members of the Durham Fire Department."



<http://raleighfirenews.org/pdf/2008-vol4.pdf>

On September 9, Durham Firefighter and USAR Task Force 8 member Eric Rozier suffered a severe head injury during a USAR exercise on Jordan Lake. Eric and two others were thrown out of their boat. He was transported to UNC hospital in critical condition, and suffered massive swelling of the brain. His recovery will be long, and may require as much as a year before he can return to duty. Please keep this brother in your thoughts and prayers.