Paramedic Dies at Accident Scene



The victim and his co-worker were working a busy 24-hour shift, due to icy rain and reduced visibility that made area bridges icy. They were headed to the depot when the crew saw vehicles going out of control on the other side of a four-lane bridge. There was a gap between the lanes of the bridges, which spanned a deep gully.

The paramedics stopped their ambulance on the bridge and put activated its warning flashers. Although there were high-visibility vests in the ambulance they did not put them on. The second ambulance attendant returned to the cab for warning flares, leaving the victim with a motorist near the concrete barrier at the inside edge of the bridge.

Suddenly, a second car spun out towards them. The motorist looked at the vehicle, then back, but the paramedic had vanished.

Investigators think that the victim didn’t know there was a gap between the bridge lanes. To avoid being struck by the oncoming car he jumped the barrier and fell through into the gully, 300 feet below.

Paramedics need hazard-recognition training. Had the accident scene hazards and traffic been controlled, the victim would not have been scared into jumping the barrier. He might also have known about the gap. If your work involves poor visibility, darkness or adverse weather conditions, you should always wear a high-visibility vest.

Source: West Virginia Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program, Case Report 97WV073