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Several firefighters injured after two fire trucks collide in Brooklyn

BY JAKE PEARSON, MATTHEW LYSIAK, JOE KEMP / DAILY NEWS WRITERS / Saturday, October 24, 2009, 3:34 PM

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FEVELO FOR NEWS

A firefighter is rescued out of a truck that flipped on Ashford St. and Hegeman Brooklyn NY, October 23, 2009.

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Two fire trucks racing to an emergency collided in Brooklyn Saturday - injuring a dozen firefighters, including one who was pinned for two hours and emerged to cheers.

The Ladder 107 rig flipped on its side and Engine 236's truck was sent careening into a wall when they slammed into each other on Ashford St. in East New York.

Eleven Bravest were sent to area hospitals after the 9:38 a.m. crash while rescuers toiled to remove Ladder 107's driver, Firefighter Robert Puppa.

"I could see it in his face that he was scared," a fellow Ladder 107 firefighter said of the trapped nine-year vet. "But he knew we would get him out."

The 35-ton truck had flipped onto the driver's side so crews had to cut through the steering panel to free Puppa, who was pulled out through the windshield.

The crowd watching the drama erupted in cheers, and Puppa gave a thumbs-up sign to let onlookers know he was out of danger.


"[Puppa] was in a lot of pain," the other firefighter said. "But he was hanging in there."

Puppa and his commanding officer, Lt. Kevin Washington, were taken to Brookdale Hospital, where both were treated for serious leg injuries, a source said. Ten other firefighters were taken to Kings County Hospital and Jamaica Hospital and treated for minor injuries, sources said.

When the FDNY vehicles hit each other, they had their lights and sirens on and were responding to a report of a gas leak a block away on Warwick St., a source said.

They were on separate streets and collided at the intersection.

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"It sounded like an earthquake," said Jake Rothel, 24, who ran to his window when he heard the impact.

"I saw the two trucks just crippled," he said. "One firefighter looked like he was crying. He was screaming. It was terrible."

Pamela Brown, 48, was cleaning her bathroom when she heard a "Pow!"

"I walked outside and I see the fire truck in my front yard," she said. "Everyone was running and screaming."

Many of the firefighters were stoic as they were taken from the scene. "I'm okay, this is my job," said a member of Engine 236. "It was an accident."

Two replacement trucks will be sent to the affected stationhouses so they are not understaffed while the rigs are repaired.

The FDNY ruled the crash an accident but is still investigating and plans to give the drivers blood and tests, a source said.

While there were some tense moments after the accident, a firefighter from Ladder 107 said he never lost faith in Puppa. "All firemen are tough," he said.

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