Great Rescue and a Near Miss

Background: The photo in this session shows a heroic and brave crew making a successful rescue of a child in swift water. We got away with this one in that we had a good outcome, but several lessons can be learned from this story. As the safety officer or a crew member, you should have the ability to identify the need for protective clothing (personal flotation devices) safety lines, back-up / downstream rescuers or other methods. Discuss this operation with your crews and review the procedures and equipment that you have in place to handle this type of rescue.

Discussion Questions

- Do you carry floatation vests (life jackets) on your first-due apparatus for everyone who must work near water?
- Do you have several rope bags available for rescue, rescuer safety, scene support and other functions?
- What alternatives to this rescue method would you recommend?
- Who will rescue the rescuer if they get into trouble?
- Do you classify this as a near miss incident? How will you use this to reinforce crew safety to your department?

This is a classic example of risk a lot to save a lot. If protective equipment is available to the rescuer and is properly worn, then the risk level decreases. This is a great job done by a crew exposed to maximum risk levels due to the lack of proper PPE. Other control measures such as tag lines and downstream stand-by crews could be in place but the optimal method would be a vest and helmet with appropriate safety lines.