

GREEN SHEET

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Informational Summary Report of Serious CAL FIRE Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-Miss Incidents



Firefighter Injured in Fall

May 4, 2013

Springs Incident – Vegetation Fire

13-CA-VNC-0253142

A Board of Review has not approved this Summary Report. It is intended as a safety and training tool, an aid to preventing future occurrences, and to inform interested parties. Because it is published on a short time frame, the information contained herein is subject to revision as further investigation is conducted and additional information is developed.

SUMMARY

The following is an Informational Summary Report of an incident that occurred when a firefighter slid down a steep bank and fell causing a head injury.

CONDITIONS

Weather- per Camarillo Airport RAWS at 19:55 on 5/4/2013

Temperature - 64⁰ F

Relative Humidity- 68%,

Winds- SSW 10mph

Topography – A dry creek bed/riparian area with an under-slung cut bank of 18-24 inches.

Fuels- Fuel model 4 (Annual Grasses, Brush and Chaparral)

Equipment – N/A

Personal Protective Equipment- Employee was wearing all agency assigned wildland PPE and a Line Paramedic Pack (department issued). Employee's boots were in good condition with good tread on the soles.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On May 4, 2013 at approximately 1955 hours a Fire Captain from the City of Anaheim (CA) Fire Department was assigned as a Fire Line EMT (FEMT) on Division "H" of the Springs Fire in the city of Camarillo in Ventura County. Engine crews were mopping up fire in a drainage and dry creek bed. Crews began to work on extinguishing fire in a snag. The FEMT recognized that he was working below the operation; he made the decision to move to a safer area above the operation. He surveyed the area and determined two routes to the advantageous area. One route was less steep but covered with poison oak, while the other route was steeper and more direct without the poison oak. The FEMT chose the steeper route without the poison oak.

While climbing up the bank, the firefighter began to slip in the duff layer. He reached out and grabbed a root from the tree. The root broke under the weight of the FEMT causing him to slide approximately 10 feet down the bank on his hands and feet, facing the bank. When he reached the bottom of the bank he was off balance and fell striking his head on a rock. Personnel from ST6848C were in the area and witnessed the FEMT slip and fall, they responded to him immediately. The strike team personnel found the FEMT unconscious and unresponsive with snoring respirations. They immediately made notification to their strike team leader on the tactical frequency who attempted to raise the division supervisor and branch on both command and tactical frequencies. He did not get a response so he made direct radio contact with the

communications unit on the command frequency to declare the emergency as directed in the incident action plan (ICS206-Medical Plan).

Communications personnel cleared the radio frequency for “emergency traffic only.” Ventura County Fire Department ECC also copied the information on the command frequency and advised that they had started a response including an Air Rescue Helicopter with night vision capability. Division “G” quickly arrived at the scene and established an Incident Within an Incident (IWI). Upon his arrival the Operations Section Chief assumed command of the IWI. He directed resources and coordinated the evacuation of the patient to the hospital. The determination was made to place the injured FEMT in full spinal immobilization and have members of ST6848C and ST9322C hike him the approximately 600’ to the road to meet with the responding ambulance. Upon arrival at the road he was alert but disoriented. The decision was made to transport him to the local trauma center via ground ambulance. Once the patient had been transported, the Operation Section Chief released the Command Frequency for routine traffic. He gathered the personnel to debrief and determine the need for additional debriefing or support. All personnel stated that they did not need additional assistance and returned to previous work assignments

INJURIES/DAMAGES

The FEMT was transported to the local trauma center and evaluated. He was admitted to the hospital for observation and released approximately 36 hours after the accident.

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

- All appropriate Personnel Protective Equipment must be utilized including helmet chin straps.
- All incident personnel should be aware of incident “Medical Emergency Procedures” found in the ICS206 – Medical Plan.
- Incident Communications Units and ECC Personnel should be familiar and briefed on the CAL FIRE Incident Management Team’s procedures for an Incident Within an Incident (IWI).
 - Keep Checklist near radio console and utilize in case of declared emergency.

INCIDENTAL ISSUES/LESSONS LEARNED (For Near-Miss and Non-Serious Accidents)

- During incidents with remote operations and a large commitment of resources, a dedicated 24 hour Air Rescue Helicopter should be considered.
- Fire line EMT/Paramedic packs must meet form, fit and function of required duties including having a waist strap.
- Personal fitness should match the requirements of the task.



Photo 1- View looking up at fall area including slide marks.



Photo 2 - Area employee landed and the rock he struck his head on.