

# **BLUE SHEET**

## **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)**

### **Preliminary Summary Report of Serious CAL FIRE Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-Miss Incidents**



#### **Firefighter Injured during Airtanker Drop**

#### **Apple Incident**

#### **CAL FIRE - Riverside Unit**

**12-CA-RRU-004532**

#### **CSR**

This Preliminary Summary Report is intended as an aid in accident prevention, and to provide factual information from the first 24 hours of the accident review. To that end it is published and distributed within a short time frame. Information contained within may be subject to revision as further investigation is conducted, and other reports and documents are received.

**Lookout**

**Communications**

**Escape Routes**

**Safety Zones**

## SYNOPSIS

The following is a Preliminary Summary Report of an incident that occurred during the suppression of a vegetation fire when a Fire Apparatus Engineer was struck by a retardant drop from a CAL FIRE air tanker causing minor injuries.

## NARRATIVE

On January 13, 2012, units from CAL FIRE Riverside Unit/Riverside County Fire Department were dispatched to a vegetation fire in the Cherry Valley area near Oak Glen Rd. and Apple Tree Ln. The fire occurred mid-slope on a very steep hillside. The engine company had been assigned to determine if there was a good location to access the fire and start a hose lay. A Helitack Fire Captain was acting as a lookout and notified all personnel operating in the area that airtankers were about to make air drops. Communication was established both face to face and over the radio. A Fire Apparatus Engineer assigned to an engine was approximately 50'-60' downhill from the ridgeline near the flank of the fire. The FAE acknowledged the notification of incoming air drops. An air tanker then came over the ridge and began its drop run. The FAE saw the air tanker at the last second and discarded his tool but was unable to get into the proper safety position for the drop. He was struck by the drop causing him to roll approximately 50'-60' feet down the steep slope.

The FAE was immediately attended to by onscene personnel. The FAE was able to walk to the ridge with assistance and then transported by Copter 301 to a helispot where a private ambulance was waiting. The ambulance transported the FAE to a local trauma center for evaluation. The FAE was evaluated and released within a few hours with minor injuries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

- ✓ Ensure **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS** at all times.
  - Personnel must focus on fire conditions and suppression actions.
- ✓ Make sure communications are clear, understood and acknowledged.
- ✓ Immediately review proper safety procedures for ground forces during air tanker retardant drops (CAL FIRE Manual 4306.18).
  - All Wildland Safety Equipment (PPE) must be properly worn.
  - Lay flat on ground with head toward the direction of the approaching tanker.
  - Hold helmet tightly with one hand.
  - Hold hand tool firmly to one side with sharp edge away from the body.
  - Remain in the position until all clear.