

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



Debris Fire – Near Miss

July 1, 2011

“E” St Incident

11-CARRU-059880

Review Team Number

11-CARRU-060005

CA-CSR

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 a near miss incident that occurred in the Riverside Unit. The incident resulted in power lines falling narrowly missing an engine and where two CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department Type I Fire Engines sustained damage from radiant heat during the suppression of a debris fire that threatened structures.

CONDITIONS

Weather:	Temperature -106 °F Relative Humidity -16% Fuel Moisture- 4%
Fuel Type:	Dry/cured grass 2-3 feet high, wood fencing, palm tree, juniper tree, two wood sheds and various other materials.
Road conditions:	Road is a narrow (25 feet) asphalt paved residential street.
Topography:	Occurred on flat ground.
Fire Behavior:	Fire was actively burning materials, including isolated torching of trees within perimeter of the fire.
Equipment:	RVC E-72 (05-802) – 2005 Smeal Type I Fire Engine RVC E-26 (04-801) - 2004 Smeal Type I Fire Engine (Reserve E-272)

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On July 1st 2011 at 1446 hrs. Battalion Chief 3110 (B-3110) was driving North on Fairview Avenue having just left Bautista Camp, when he noticed smoke coming from the area just north east of his location. He proceeded into the area to investigate the cause of the smoke. Upon his arrival in the area of 4th Street and D Street, in the unincorporated community of Val Vista he located a grass and debris fire that was near a wood fence and an outbuilding. He reported the fire via radio to the Perris emergency command center (ECC). The ECC initiated a Structure Fire Response and five engines were dispatched to the location.

Riverside County Engine 26 (E-26) and Riverside County Engine 72 (E-72) arrived simultaneously at the incident. The operators of both engines attempted to contact B-3110, incident commander (IC), for instructions as they approached the scene; (neither unit was able to contact the IC on the assigned tactical frequency). E-26 pulled past the active fire and stopped the apparatus. The operator of E-26 instructed his crew to pull an attack line. E-72 spotted approximately 50 feet directly behind E-26. Both engine companies were instructed to attack the fire with one firefighter from E-72 assisting E-26's company. As the officer of E-26 exited

the cab he noticed a power line directly over the engine. The officer made a decision to not move E-26 based on the fact the firefighters already had hose on the ground.

As the officer proceeded to the pump panel to engage the pump, a palm tree and debris next to the engine ignited. The radiant heat drove the officer from the pump panel to the passenger side of the vehicle. The operator was wearing a T-shirt and structure pants. The officer does not drive with a turnout coat donned and keeps his safety gear in the brass box. The officer made a second attempt to get to the pump panel and was again driven away by radiant heat. The officer on E-72 was alerted to the situation and preceded to the pump panel of E-26. The officer on E-72 was wearing full structural PPE. The officer stated the pump panel was so hot he needed to put his structural gloves on to engage the pump. As fire attack was initiated, the officer from E-72 returned to his engine. At the same time of the fire flare up, two sets of overhead wires burned through, one dropped to the ground on both sides of E-26 and the other laid across the first arriving engine company. It was determined that the set of wires across the engine were phone and cable TV wires. The second set of wires was an energized electrical service drop which broke in half, missed hitting E-26 and landed on the ground igniting a second fire in vegetation on the opposite side of the road. The hazard of the energized electrical wires was communicated to all personnel on the scene and isolated until the wires could be secured by the utility companies.

The crews continued suppressing the fires, which were controlled within 10 minutes after the initial dispatch of the incident. The normal covering Riverside County Battalion Chief 5 (B-5) arrived and assumed B-3110 would continue to command the incident. B-5 (also a CAL Fire Peace Officer) immediately began investigating the fire and became occupied with an uncooperative subject resulting in the subject being handcuffed and detained. B-5 left the scene transporting the subject to the Southwest Detention Facility. Although the officer on E-26 reported the engine damage, command was passed back to the company officer by B-3110. Another Battalion Chief, B-3115 arrived on scene at approximately 1800 hrs, determined the extent of damage and initiated the notification process.

INJURIES/DAMAGES

Injuries: There were no injuries to responding personnel.

RVC E-72: Received a broken windshield from the heat. Damage to the lighting and pump panel gauges on the driver side of the vehicle.

RVC E-26 (E-272) Received damage to multiple lighting lenses and pump panel gauges. Paint was scorched on the left side of the vehicle and an axle seal was melted.



Figure 1: Scene Overview from Google Earth



Figure 2: Radiant heat damage to E-26

Lookouts

Communications

Escape Routes

Safety Zones



Figure 3: Spotting Location E-26

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

- Ensure all personnel are in proper personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Base all actions on current and expected fire behavior.
- Apparatus must be spotted based on actual and predicted fire behavior.
- Look up, look down, look around.
- Fires can spread quickly in light flashy fuels.
- Seasonal weather and fuel conditions have transitioned to hot and dry; the fuels are mostly dried and cured and are readily available for burning at all hours of the day or night.

INCIDENTAL ISSUES/LESSONS LEARNED

(For Near-Miss and Non-Serious Accidents)

- Personnel must be familiar with all assigned radio equipment.
- Incident Commanders must monitor all assigned frequencies.
- Strong command and control must be maintained on all incidents.