

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Tree Strike

Date: August 1, 2017

Location: Devils Lake Fire, Bly Ranger District
Fremont-Winema National Forest; Oregon



Medical care is given to the crewmember hit by a snag during falling operations.

NARRATIVE

On August 1, the federal Blue Mountain Type 2 Initial Attack Hand Crew (BMHC) was assigned to Division Delta on the Devils Lake Fire, being managed by a Type 3 Incident Management Team.

At 1930 on that day, this hand crew received an operational briefing from Division Delta. The operational plan was: 1) To prep (brush and remove fuel that would cause holding problems once ignitions started) along Forest Service Road 011; and 2) Assist the Pike Interagency Hotshot Crew with burnout operations.

Tactical Briefing

This operational briefing also consisted of a transition from the day division to night operations, including who was going to be in charge of all night operations—which would occur later that night.

The Crew Boss for BMHC gave a tactical briefing to his crew on the overall assignment, as well squad and crewmember assignments. The following was verbally stressed: 1) Communication during brushing and felling operations; 2) Spacing while cutting; and 3) Staying clear of felling area if snags needed to be cut.

The crew engaged in saw operations along Road 011, removing brush, limbing trees, and felling small diameter dead trees. For the first hour, the Crew Boss was with the crew helping swamp brush.

Tree Strikes Crew Member

At 2030, Division Delta picks up the BMHC Crew Boss in his vehicle for an ignitions briefing with the Pike Interagency Hotshot Crew. They traveled approximately 1.5 miles to the west down Road 011 for this briefing. During this time, BMHC continued to prep Road 011. Around 2115, the BMHC Crew Boss contacts the Crew Assistant and asked him to scout ahead as it was getting dark and he wanted to have all the snags near the line identified before it became too dark. The plan to burnout was going to proceed.

Around 2200, while the Crew Boss and Division Delta were traveling back to the crew, the Crew Boss was radioed on the crew channel, informing him that a crew member had been struck by a tree.

Crewmember Walks Through Cutting Area

Sometime just before this radio call came into the Crew Boss, one of the BMHC Sawyers was felling an 8-10 inch DBH snag, which was approximately 30 feet tall.

The Sawyer yelled “Back Cut!” Moments later, the snag started to fall toward its lay. At that same time, one of the BMHC crewmembers—not part of the Saw Team—was walking through the cutting area, bumping up the road. This crewmember was struck by the snag as it was falling.

It was observed that the crewmember took a glancing blow to the head, knocking his hard hat off, then struck his shoulder—knocking him to the ground.

The Sawyer said that as the tree started to go, he looked up and saw the crewmember walking through the area. The Sawyer tried yelling and attempted to grab at the tree as it was falling.

9 Line “Yellow” Priority

After the Crew Boss was radioed that this crewmember had been struck by the snag, he asked the Crew Assistant to start a 9 Line Medical Incident Report form.

The Crew Boss also knew that the Pike IHC had an EMT close by and requested this individual to respond. On their way to the tree felling incident, the Crew Boss and Division Delta picked-up the EMT.

At the same time, Division Delta radioed and informed the IC and IC trainee of this medical incident.

Once the 9 Line Report was started, it was relayed that this medical incident was going to be called into Dispatch as a “Yellow” (Priority 2) severity.

Once Division Delta, the Crew Boss, and the EMT were on scene they started to stabilize C-spine. The patient was conscious and talking. The Pike EMT took charge of Patient. The Crew Boss read the 9 Line Report to Dispatch.

Lakeview Dispatch asked if an ambulance was needed. The Crew Boss replied “Yes.” The IC had already contacted Klamath Falls 911 and had the closest ambulance responding from Bonanza, Oregon. It was decided that helicopter transport was not needed.

The Patient was placed onto a backboard and transported in Division Delta’s truck off Road 011 to Road 3790, where the injured firefighter was transferred to the ambulance service and taken to Sky Lakes Medical Center.

At approximately 0330, he was released from the Medical Center with no sustained injuries. The firefighter was put on light duty for a week. He was cleared by a doctor on August 7—seven days after his injury incident—to resume full duty as a firefighter.



Tree on ground is the snag that hit the crewmember.

LESSONS

Lessons from the Crew Boss

- ❖ The Crew Boss' intention was never to fall snags after dark. This was relayed to the Crew Assistant. It was the intention to have the Crew Assistant scout ahead and identify the rest of the snags on the remaining portion of Road 011.
 - ❖ Fallers need to control cutting areas at all times.
 - ❖ Individuals need to stay 2½ tree lengths away from any/all falling operations.
 - ❖ Continue to communicate throughout the operational period for people to stay out of any area where felling operations are occurring.
-

This RLS was submitted by:
Incident Overhead

**Do YOU
have a Rapid Lesson
to share?**

Click this button:

Share
Your Lessons