

**Dry Creek Complex Fire**

**Near Miss: Near Miss(Entrapment)**

**Investigation**



## **Dry Creek Complex Fire Near Miss: Entrapment Investigation**

### **CHRONOLOGY**

On Friday, August 21, 2009, approximately 12:00 three type 6 engines, an ATV w/ firing device and one fire fighter on foot were assigned to a burn-out and holding operation in an indirect fire fighting strategy to hold a fireline in advance of a wildland fire.

The objective was to create an anchor point at the corner of a road and a vineyard, then to proceed west with an indirect burn-out on the road.

The fire behavior was changing rapidly with severe increases in rates of spread. The Captain in one of the holding engines attempted to yell out the window of the engine and tell the two fire fighters on the ground to get in the engine. The two on the ground were unable to hear the order. There was no attempt to call them on the radio.

The two fire fighters on the ground did not immediately leave the area. At the time they decided to leave they had to run. They ran east on the road, jumped a fence and ran into the vineyard. The two never radioed the Captain in the engine to tell him they had left the area.

Due to no radio communications between the two on the ground and the engine, the Captain in the engine was unable to move the vehicle until the fire had completely surrounded the vehicle and then passed it by. The Captain did not know where the two fire fighters were and radioed he had lost two fire fighters. The two fire fighters heard that communication and radioed they had left and were ok.





## FINDINGS

- ❖ During the pre-ignition brief:
  - Radio frequency Fire E was chosen for the burn-out operation.
  - Briefing did not cover LCES to entire strike team. Holding crews received minimal briefing while ignition crew received thorough briefing.
- ❖ Timing of the burn operations started just before peak burn window.
  - This was noted in brief but not relayed.
- ❖ There was a delay in aborting the burn operation by not recognizing the severity of the increased fire behavior.
- ❖ The radio was not being used for communications.
- ❖ Advancing fire was too close for a successful burn-out of the line.
- ❖ Only one of the fire fighters on the ground had a radio.
- ❖ Radio usage:
  - Engine had a mobile and portable radio, one of which was used for scanning frequencies and the other selected to one frequency.
- ❖ Escape to safety zone:
  - The two fire fighters on the ground didn't radio engine to tell him they had left.
  - Recognize situation and got out.
  - Recognized different fuel model in front of advancing fire.
- ❖ Good visibility prior to increased fire behavior.
- ❖ All three felt uneasy but didn't say anything.
- ❖ The two fire fighters on the ground had limited experience in wildland fire and less experience doing burnout operations in front of an advancing wildland fire.
- ❖ There were no injuries and no damage to the fire apparatus.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

In future similar situations it would be recommended that:

- ❖ Engine should be placed in a position that escape route can be used.
- ❖ Engine operator should always be able to see personnel on the ground.
- ❖ Longer hose line should be used.
- ❖ Communications between the three should be thorough and continuous. If something is changing advise others.
- ❖ Increased situational awareness prior to engagement of burn operation.
- ❖ If situations arise, speak up. Concerns, questions and comments should be verbalized.
- ❖ Know the capabilities and the experience of the personnel.



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August 2009

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