

**ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST
FACILITATED LEARNING ANALYSIS**

EAST FORK EMPLOYEE ASSAULT

August 18, 2010



This Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA) was requested by the forest supervisor for the following reasons:

- Identify procedures that aided the employee, cooperators, and organization
- Identify management deficiencies
- Highlight lessons learned
- Direct lessons learned to all forest employees
- Adopt preventative measures
- Prevent future incidents of this nature.

Additional Questions to be Addressed in the FLA Process

- Assaulted employee's government cell phone was stolen from his FS vehicle on August 7, 2010. What process was followed to report this theft of government property? Did this incident have anything to do with the assault?
- Did dispatch give enough information to the engine crew responding to the assault?
- Was management notified regarding the violation notice and encounter with intoxicated citizen?
- Who was the Incident Commander?
- How was the Forest's response in notifying the family, providing patient updates, safety/security and addressing other family concerns?
- Did the response to this incident meet Forest standards?
- Did the Forest restrict resources from responding?
- Did the District follow Forest Supervisors direction (after the incident) regarding no person working alone ?

Summary:

On August 18, 2010 at approximately 1445 a Forest Service Prevention Patrol employee (Patrol 21) was working alone completing paperwork at East Fork, a remote station. An unknown male knocked on the door asking to use the telephone. Upon entry, the male attacked the employee for no apparent reason,

by striking him in the head, knocking him to the floor, and continued to kick the employee while unconscious.

Description of Event and Outcome:

Somehow the employee was able to use the cordless station phone to make a 911 call, which went to the local Los Angeles County (LACO) Sheriff's Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) station. The LACO sheriff relayed information to LACO Fire. That information was sent via a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) to the Angeles National Forest Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC staff immediately dispatched the closest Forest Service engine to the East fork station.

The engine crew was staffed with Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) who revived the employee who was unconscious and not breathing by inserting an air way, and prepared him for transport via an LACO fire helicopter to a Los Angeles area trauma hospital. The employee was released later that evening with no significant internal injuries after examination by the emergency room staff and doctor. However, his injuries consisted of two hematomas to the head, bruised ribs, bruised spleen, compacted intestines, and multiple contusions on his left side. A criminal investigation involving the FBI, OIG, and the LACO Sheriff is ongoing. A motive for the assault is unknown at this time, but a theory the investigators are pursuing is that:

- Assaulted employee had written a US District Court Violation Notice on August 7, 2010 to a private citizen for threatening a Forest Officer engaged in performance of official duties. This action also resulted in the citizen being arrested, after a struggle, by the county sheriff for public intoxication.

Sequence of Events:

- Employee believes assault occurred between 14:45 and 15:00 hrs
- 15:39 injured employee placed a 911 call received by LACO Sheriff
- 15:46 LACO Fire contact ANF EOC via Mobile Data Terminal (MDT)
- 15:46 LACO Fire E-152 dispatched
- 15:46 LACO Fire dispatched Cole Schaefer ambulance

- 15:46 LACO Medical Squad 32 dispatched
- 15:49 LACO Fire E-154 dispatched
- 15:50 LACO Fire E-32 dispatched
- 15:50 ANF 1C1 (LE&I Patrol Captain) enroute
- 15:51 ANF BC21 enroute
- 15:52 ANF PT22 dispatched
- 15:53 ANF E-27 dispatched to East Fork Station to stage & observe only and wait until LEI cleared the scene.
- 15:53 ANF EOC attempted to contact PT21 for a Status check – no response
- 15:55 LACO Fire Copter 11 dispatched
- 15:55 LACO Sheriff from San Dimas dispatched
- 15:57 CHP enroute
- 16:02 ANF EOC attempted to contact PT21 for a Status check – no response
- 16:02 LACO Fire BC16 dispatched
- 16:05 ANF E-27 on scene PT21 vehicle in driveway
- 16:05 LACO Sheriff San Dimas Station received a 911 call from (PT21) stating: a male driving a green Mitsubishi Eclipse may be the assailant
- 16:07 ANF E-27 entered the station and found victim unconscious
- 16:11 LACO Fire Copter 11 on scene
- 16:11 ANF EOC requests Azusa PD to a send unit
- 16:14 LACO Fire S32 on scene
- 16:28 LACO Fire BC16 on scene
- 16:33 LACO Fire Copter 11 transporting victim plus his supervisor to USC Medical Trauma Center in Los Angeles

Total First Responders Dispatched to Incident: 18

- 1 Helicopter
- 1 Ambulance
- 1 Paramedic Squad
- 4 Engines
- 1 Patrol
- 1 Prevention Supervisor

- 2 Chief Officers
- 7 Law Enforcement Officers

Conditions:

The East Fork Station is a remote station that has a small office, barracks and an engine bay that cannot be used to house the engine because it was built for much smaller equipment. The engine crew was on a day off and the engine was parked in the lot, in plain view. The location is about 30 minutes or 17 miles from Azusa. No law enforcement units were in the canyon at the time of the assault. The closest LACO Fire engine (s) and squad (s) are located in the valley (Azusa).

Response to Questions:

- ***Assaulted employee's government cell phone was stolen from his FS vehicle on August 7, 2010, the same day the US District Court citation was written. What process was followed to report this theft of government property? Did this incident have anything to do with the assault?***

The employee reported the loss to the Duty Officer and notified the carrier (Verizon) the same day of the loss. The employee reported the loss to his immediate supervisor the following day. The employee contacted the appropriate SO employee to have the phone replaced. A check of the invoice for that time period showed that no unusual numbers were called with this phone. There is no apparent connection with the assault and the stolen cell phone.

- ***Did dispatch give enough information to the engine crew responding to the assault?***

Recently the fire and law enforcement dispatch operations in the ANF EOC have been physically separated because of the volume of calls. In this particular incident, the center manager acted as the go between for the two dispatchers. The assault information was not given to the engine crew because of the potential of others listening to the radio via scanners and not knowing if the assailant was still at the location. ANF Dispatch requested the engine crew to wait for law enforcement before proceeding.

This was a complex situation in a short period of time and was not like a fire scene. Bits and pieces of information were flowing and not always transferred to all parties involved. The engine crew discussed the scenarios while responding to the incident and had figured out the potential of them meeting the assailant at the scene. "We have a brother down and were going in". This decision ultimately turned out in their favor, but could have led to the crew being additional victims had the assailant still been in the area.

- ***Was management notified regarding the violation notice and encounter with intoxicated citizen?***

The employee's supervisor was on days off the day of the encounter, but was notified by the employee the next working day. The supervisor contacted FS Law Enforcement to inquire of the status of the individual that was arrested. FS Law Enforcement did not know what the status was of the individual. No follow-up was initiated.

- ***Who was the Incident Commander?***

Following Incident Command protocols, the first on scene is the IC until relieved by a more qualified individual. In this case, the Engineer was the IC. The ANF EOC Center Manager was directing some resources and information, along with the Battalion Chief (BC) doing the same via radio.

- ***How was the Forest's response in notifying the family, providing patient updates, safety/security and addressing other family concerns?***

The family was notified by the District Ranger after verifying phone numbers with dispatch and leaving voice messages. After discussion with the wife, and not knowing at that time which hospital the employee was being transported to, it was determined the best course of action was for the family to drive to the District Office (DO). Upon arrival at the District Office (DO) they were transported by the Forest Safety officer to the hospital. During the initial conversation with the wife and during the drive they were briefed by radio reports on the employee's condition. The District Ranger (filling the Patient Advocate role) and

Forest Safety Officer stayed with the family until the employee was released later that evening. The question of family safety and security was raised and why FS Law Enforcement did not take the lead. The LACO Sheriff is the investigative arm of law enforcement for employees and family members that become victims. FS Law Enforcement had no indication that the victims family was in danger.

- **Did the response to this incident meet Forest standards?**

The Forest has not identified any standards in the Forest Standard Operating Guide (SOG). A typical EMS response includes one engine, one patrol, and notification to the Chief Officer. A total of 18 resources responded to this incident.

- **Did the Forest restrict resources from responding?**

According to the WildCad Incident Card, Patrol 22 asked “would you like me to respond? The answer was affirmative”. In fact, while Patrol 22 was enroute, he was also looking for the suspect vehicle. Air 5 (LACO Sheriff Medivac) was requested, but was not available due to mechanical issues. LACO Fire helicopter (Copter 11) was dispatched to the incident.

- **Did the District follow Forest Supervisors direction (after the incident) regarding no person working alone?**

The District followed the direction as best they could while maintaining required staffing levels in the fire units. The weekend staffing was difficult because of personnel shortages and the possibility of shutting down engine modules.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations from FLA Participants:

- Consider not answering the door when alone at remote stations
- Consider working in pairs
- Place capacity controls on public vehicles at heavy use sites, especially holiday weekend

Lessons Learned and Recommendations from Facilitator(s)

- When working alone in any setting, employees need to have a heightened situational awareness of their surroundings
- Have dedicated Forest Service law enforcement in every district
- See attached Safety Alert that addresses other mitigation measures
- Provide heavy & lockable security screen doors to offices and stations
- FPO refresher training should be more specific to areas on individual forests
- Review MTDC security information program for front line employees
- Units should maintain emergency contact information and the local line officer should be prepared to make family notifications as described in the Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incidents when an employee is injured or killed.

Special Note:

Many of our employees respond to injuries every day on the forest. Injured people are generally members of the public and employees have no close ties to these people. It seems that when an employee is injured, our first responder employees take on a different role, in that: They want to ride in the ambulance or aircraft, they want to go to the hospital, they want to make sure the employee is receiving the best treatment possible, etc. This is just a part of being human and having friendships. Our employees had strong feelings regarding the victim and incident.

Facilitator(s)

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Safety Alert
(August 24, 2010)

Subject: Employee Safety

Area of Concern: All Forest Operations

Distribution: All Region 5 Forests

Discussion: This safety alert has been issued as a result of physical assault on a Forest Service employee working alone in a remote station on a Region 5 forest. A second assault with a vehicle occurred this week on the same forest. A firefighter was directing traffic at a closed roadway leading to a fire and was deliberately struck by a POV.

As the economy continues to struggle, the public is looking for recreation activities that do not cost, thus we are seeing more visitors to our National Forests. Another area of concern is a growing frustration towards government. Our employees may be subject to certain members of the public which may voice or express their frustrations and or anger sometime violently. The primary concern for safety professionals is to see that our employees go home at night alive, healthy, and well. We have listed some suggestions that, if implemented, might help defuse situations, mitigate potential assaults and keep our employees safe.

Safety Concerns to Field Going Employees: Many Forest Service employees work alone and live in barracks in remote areas. Many members of the public seek out employees to help them with information, auto problems, etc. at all hours day and night. On occasion, members of the public become irate when a fire has started near their home and they are told they cannot proceed to their house.

Mitigation Measures: We have listed some suggested mitigation measures that might help to defuse situations, mitigate potential assaults and keep our employees safe:

- A. Consider installing a two way intercom so the public can communicate concerns to employees when working alone or after hours at outstations, barracks extra.
- B. Situational awareness must be elevated when working alone and in remote locations.
- C. Never take any incident for granted, just because you are near other people or employees, anything can happen, you may have to back off on enforcing the regulation when public is uncooperative.
- D. Update field position routinely.
- E. Augment patrols with firefighters, especially on busy weekends or holidays.
- F. Make sure exterior lighting is working and the timer is set correctly.
- G. Have the front desk at Supervisors Office and District Office monitor the radio.
- H. Lock entrance gates at night and when the operating hours are closed do not answer the door.
- I. Position used Law Enforcement vehicles at remote or busy locations.
- J. Install direct line emergency phone for public use at remote sites outside the building.
- K. Enforce check-in & check-out policy.
- L. Make sure areas in our public buildings are secure for staff and employees to include barrier for retreat i.e.; secure chest high counter with a protective barrier.
- M. Set up more Forest specific Forest Protection Officer training.
- N. Follow same procedures for volunteers and students.
- O. Encourage working in pairs and to be another set of eyes and to manage radio transmission.