

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



Inmate Firefighter Trainee Fatality

Cuesta Camp

San Luis Obispo Unit

January 4, 2012

12-CA-SLU-000127

12-CSR-000008

California Southern Region

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

On Wednesday, January 4, 2012, at approximately 3:45 PM, near the conclusion of a crew training hike, a 54 year old Inmate Firefighter Trainee collapsed. The injured Inmate Firefighter Trainee was transported by ambulance to a local hospital where he was later pronounced dead.

CONDITIONS

Weather information was taken from the National Weather Service Remote Automated Weather Station at McChesney Field near San Luis Obispo, located approximately 8 miles southeast of the site of the incident.

Time: 2:56 PM

Temperature: 74° F

Relative Humidity: 36%

Wind Speed/Direction: 7 MPH NW

Terrain: Average slope of the hike was 14%

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On Wednesday, January 4, 2012, the crew of Inmate Firefighter Trainees from Cuesta Conservation Camp began their first day of wildland firefighter training. At approximately 3:20 PM, the crew began an approximate 0.7 mile hike in moderately steep terrain. A CAL FIRE Fire Captain was leading the crew during the hike with the Training Crew Swamper positioned at the end of the line. The crew was carrying hand tools and wearing full wildland Personal Protective Equipment including; Nomex pants, Nomex top, helmet, gloves, fire pack with integrated hydration reservoir and canteens.

The hike started at the base of "Guard Hill" at Camp San Luis and ended at the flag pole at the top of the hill. During the hike the Fire Captain ensured that safety messages were passed down the crew and verified this by periodically contacting the Training Crew Swamper via portable radio. The Fire Captain arrived at the top of the hill first. He then turned around to monitor the crew finishing behind him. The Fire Captain noticed an Inmate Firefighter Trainee crawling on his hands and knees near the finish point. The trainee made it to the flag pole and sat down.

The Fire Captain checked on the trainee's condition determining he needed medical attention. The Fire Captain made an unsuccessful attempt to contact the San Luis Emergency Command Center (ECC) by portable radio. He then called the ECC on his cell phone requesting a medical response. The ECC dispatched a medical response at 3:45 PM.

The Fire Captain assessed the trainee, determining he was alert and oriented without complaints of chest, jaw or arm pain. The Fire Captain instructed the Training Crew Swamper to monitor the trainee.

Shortly thereafter, the Training Crew Swamper advised the Fire Captain that the trainee's condition was getting worse. The Fire Captain reassessed the trainee and noticed his level of consciousness had deteriorated. Several minutes later the trainee became unconscious and pulseless. CPR was initiated immediately by the Training Crew Swamper and the Fire Captain. At 3:59 PM, the first fire engine arrived and an AED was applied but no shock was indicated or delivered. The ambulance arrived at 4:02 PM, administered Advanced Life Support and transported the trainee to Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center.

INJURIES/DAMAGES

Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful and the Inmate Firefighter Trainee was pronounced dead at 4:42 PM.

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

- While no causal factors can be established until the cause of death has been medically determined, the following factors should always be considered:
 - Prior to and during arduous physical activity consider:
 - Physical conditioning
 - Hydration
 - Physical health
 - Nutrition
 - Weather
 - Ensure all personnel are briefed on safety concerns and procedures.
 - Consider training several crew members in CPR and First Aid.
- Always plan for potential emergencies:
 - Ensure positive radio communications from worksites and training areas.
 - Carry basic EMS PPE when away from vehicle and facilities.
 - Recognize the need for medical treatment early.
 - Treat for shock when appropriate.

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1/4/2012

