



LESSONS LEARNED

Northern Region Safety & Occupational Health
July 2013

Smacked by a Tree Limb



While on a fire assignment an engine crew was engaged on an initial attack of a fire, the Fire Engine Operator (FEO) saw one of his crewmembers get struck by a tree limb while performing a hose lay. He checked on the crewmember who stated they were uninjured, but remarked that his sunglasses were broken. The FEO instructed the crewmember to use his goggles. After the hose lay was constructed and before the crew began mop-up operations the FEO pulled the Engine Captain aside and addressed his concerns about the crew member not wearing safety glasses. They both recognized that they had been lucky as the employee could have been **seriously** hurt. The Engine Captain had remembered seeing the employee not wearing safety glasses but did not say anything because he was more concerned about the Initial Attack at the time. The crew had been issued clear safety glasses, but not the type that afforded sun protection. As soon as the crew returned to the district they asked for safety glasses, with sun protection, but the district they were detailed to did not have any available. Therefore, the Engine Captain went into town and locally purchased some safety glasses, with sun protection, at a hardware store.

WHAT WAS DONE WELL: The FEO checked on the employee and did a follow-up. The Engine Captain knew he dismissed a safety issued and made corrections.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:

- Issuing clear safety glasses with no sun/glare protection.
- Employee not saying anything and using his own sunglasses that were not approved safety glasses.
- Leadership thinking about the Initial Attack operations, not taking the time to say something to the crewmember, and not doing a pre-check of PPE prior to operations.

LESSONS LEARNED/RECOMMENDATIONS: Safety glasses protect your eyes while you are working in a potentially dangerous environment. Safety glasses are made of shatter-resistant plastic that will protect your eyes from flying debris or splashing liquids. Two types of safety glasses are goggles and safety glasses with side shields or wrap around. Which type to use depends on the situation you are operating in. Two types should be issued: tinted safety glasses (sunglasses) for daytime work and clear for night work.