

Lime Complex

Southwest Area Incident Management Team

7/28/08

Ref: Falling snag incident on division Tango

While operating on a 1 acre spot fire on 7/26/08 at 1500 hours, National Guard Bravo Company was assigned to initial attack. An MCAD (class "B" faller) identified a green rotted snag was swaying during air operations. He then identified the snag needed to be taken down and begun his assessment. The snag was to fall from west to east with a 78% downslope below the landing zone of the snag. He had removed 1 handcrew and 1 Engine Company from the area around the snag. He then had his Bravo task force proceed down the hill approximately 150 feet. He then began cutting the tree per falling standards and guidelines. Before the final cut he again made verbal contact with the National Guard task force prior to falling the tree. When the snag fell it split into 5 sections with one section rolling down the hand line / scratch line. When the tree landed, the MCAD noticed several National Guard personnel had moved further up the line to observe the snag falling and when the snag began rolling down the line several Guardsmen had to jump out away from the snag to prevent being struck. Two guardsmen jumped to safety, one sustaining cuts on his leg and the other one receiving cuts to forearm and leg. The National Guard medics treated both personnel on scene and they returned to the fireline.

An After Action Review and investigation was done at the scene with the MCAD, a Division Supervisor, a Sergeant First Class (SFC) from the Guard, the TFLD and the Safety Officer reviewed the falling procedures and actions taken on scene. The Division Supervisor recommended several falling standards that were missed and not taken during the operation. During the AAR several training procedures were suggested that would have made the operations much safer including having no one below the snag during falling operations. The SFC was concerned that his Bravo Company Guardsmen were overwhelmed by the initial attack operations, Air Ops above them and watching a large snag being taken down. They have had several AARs and training meetings since this near-miss incident that will correct there procedures the next time.

Witnesses to the incident were the MCAD and the SFC. The final portion of the AAR in the field was very productive with lessons learned about snag safety and cutting, better safety precautions being taken and handling non-wildland firefighters during initial fire attack.

Prepared by: Safety Officer Jeff Galloway (SOFR)

Reviewed by: Incident Safety Officer Paul Womack (SOF1)



