

# Chainsaw Injury – Los Padres National Forest

## Facilitated Learning Analysis



### **Subject: Firefighter Injured While Pulling Brush for Chainsaw Operator, CA- LPF.**

Note: This was reviewed using the June 2009 Facilitated Learning Analysis Implementation Guide.

#### **Accident Date: 6/4/10 at 1300pm**

On the afternoon of June 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 an engine crew was brushing their station PT (physical training) trail using various hand and power tools including a chainsaw. As the chain saw operator (sawyer) was working on a patch of Sage Brush, the Fire Engine Operator, FEO (Detailed) approached him from uphill. The FEO reached into Sage Brush to assist the sawyer by pulling brush and made contact with the tip of the saw. The FEO received a laceration to his right index finger, requiring four stitches.

**Summary** The engine crew was lined out on three projects for the day by the FEO, supervisor. The first project was to brush the trail and the FEO gave a tailgate safety talk to the crew regarding the project. At the time of the incident the crew was working on a 15% slope with the FEO flagging the trail route ahead of the sawyer. He had taken his gloves off to hang the flagging. Weather conditions were in the low 90's.

#### **Time Table**

0930 the engine crew comes on duty.

1000 the crew conducts morning station and engine maintenance.

1100 the crew is briefed on the projects, received tailgate safety talk and begins brushing and scraping the PT trail.

1300 the crew was working through several steep areas and was very close to the project completion.

## Conditions

Three of the crew members had been doing fuels work throughout the winter and had signed a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) that included working with power saws. The other two seasonal members had not reviewed or signed a JHA. The tailgate talk included personal protective equipment (PPE), medical evacuation procedures and designating a crew member to bring a 10 person first aid kit. Only the sawyer was wearing chaps and PPE for power saws. The sawyer had been pulling the brush for himself for the duration of the project and no other puller was designated. The crew as a whole had been together for less than a month and this was the first trail/line construction project they had attempted.

## Lessons Learned from the Participates

It was getting warm and I could see the guys were getting tired but we were so close to finishing I thought if I would lend a hand to the pulling we could make a quick push to the end. Looking back I guess I got a little mission focused or target fixated and stepped out of my big picture leadership role and into a participate role. I am very lucky it was only a few stitches and that I had a good crew around me with a plan to get off that hill. If the cut was more serious (wrist area) I might not be here to talk about it.

The guys jumped right into their roles as first responders and all of a sudden that 10 person first aid kit became the most important thing we had.

I know how to approach a working sawyer, you touch their back on whatever sides you're helping on or you wait for their acknowledgement before you reach in. I thought he saw me as I came downhill to help him but with his head down and me uphill, obviously I was wrong.

Maybe I should have assigned a puller with full PPE but for sure, I should have been wearing mine. **I will never sacrifice safety for saving time again.**

I had been pulling for myself all morning and the last time I looked up the FEO was about 25 feet above me hanging flagging. The next thing I knew he was right in front of me, we both pulled back but it was too late and I had cut him. Maybe, I could have looked up more often.

## Lessons Learned from the Facilitators

When the FEO made a role change from line scout to puller, the transition did not include proper communications or PPE additions. This change should have included the sawyer's full acknowledgement and putting on ear protection, chaps and gloves.

The sense of urgency for the FEO to push to the top before the crew got too tired caused him to lose situational awareness by engaging the sawyer without PPE or an acknowledgement.

The permanent employees felt comfortable about the project and recently remembered covering a power saw JHA during spring RX projects. Leaders must remember to revisit JHA's with newly hired seasonal employees.

Our leaders should always consider their roles (lead by example with PPE), even in project work, when they step out of a supervisory role and into participant role this scenario can quickly turn into a watch out.

The crew did an outstanding job by discussing serious injury evacuations during the tailgate session and had excellent forethought by bringing the 10 person first aid kit. The kit met requirements for working with power saws under 29 CFR 1910.266(e)(2), Appendix A.

