

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Coffee Kit Flashover

Date: August 24, 2015

Location: Grizzly Complex, Washington State



Camp Coffee Kit



NARRATIVE

Camp crews provide a support function to fire operations. Their skill set provides vital services at a moment's notice to ensure fire crews have food, bathroom/shower facilities, and a warm cup of coffee before heading out on the line.

A camp crew's ability to rapidly deploy to a location and build a camp in a short amount of time is nothing short of impressive. These crews are made up of a wide variety of backgrounds. A unique and special camp crew is comprised of Job Corps students. Job Corps' mission is to attract eligible young people, teach them the skills they need to become employable and independent, and place them in meaningful jobs or further education. Job Corps helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through vocational and academic training.

By interacting with fire camps, these students gain valuable life and job experiences while providing vital services to fire incidents. Fire camp workers traditionally work all hours, rotating shifts 24/7.

Job Corps students in the Pacific Northwest who will be functioning as camp crew workers traditionally attend a training session at the Redmond Fire Cache to ensure they are familiar with the equipment and the tools they will be using in a fire camp. This training provides a hands-on opportunity to train on equipment prior to deploying to the field during the peak of fire season.

This particular coffee kit was one they had not yet used and had not started it up the night before to test it out.

Problems with the Propane Flow

On the Grizzly Complex this August, a spike camp crew worker who was a Job Corps student awoke at 0330 for their work shift. They proceeded to their first assigned task of the day, making coffee using a coffee kit that makes approximately 20 gallons of coffee (see photo). To reduce the setup time at such an early hour, the coffee kit was set up the night before. This particular coffee kit was one they had not yet used and had not started it up the night before to test it out.

As the student went through their motions of starting the coffee kit, they noticed that this particular coffee kit was not functioning the same as others that they had used in other fire camps—and even in their current spike camp.

The student had difficulty getting the propane gas used to heat the coffee kit to flow. They turned each of the knobs on the three adjustment points of the coffee kit with no success. The student then made an adjustment with a wrench and noticed propane flowing immediately. Upon realizing the propane bottle valve was on all the way, the student quickly shut down the propane from the propane bottle valve.

After a few seconds, now that propane was flowing, the student grabbed the lighter to light the propane burner. They slightly opened the valve located at the propane bottle and clicked the lighter once—with no flame developing. They clicked the lighter again. A huge plume of fire flared-up into the Job Corps student's face and body. In that moment, the student realized that they had not allowed enough time for the propane to dissipate after the propane bottle was flowing on high.

9 Line Assessment: Priority Yellow

Now in pain, the Job Corps student called for help from a fellow student co-worker. The student co-worker immediately took the injured student to a sink where they began putting cool water on the facial burns. The student's hair was grey in color, their eyebrows were heavily singed, and their face looked sunburned. As the injured student continued to let the cool water flow onto their burns, the student co-worker went to get their crew leader. The crew leader arrived on scene, assessed the situation and determined that the student would need to be seen by the medical unit when they arrived. The student continued to cool the burn with water from the sink.

While cooling their burn, the student remembered they had some Aloe Vera in their personal bag and quickly returned to their crew vehicle to place the Aloe on their facial burn. Around this time, it was discovered that the spike camp had a medical tent. The student was taken there. The medics cleaned the burn with saline and placed a topical burn gel on the student's face. The medics also discovered minor burns on the student's fingers on their right hand. It was determined that the student's airway was not compromised during the incident. Using the 9 Line, the medics relayed information back to base camp and placed the priority of the student as a Yellow.

Ambulance Provides Transport to Nearest Hospital

An ambulance based in the spike camp and was used to transport the student to the nearest hospital where the burn was further cleaned and pain medication was prescribed. The Incident Management Team had a compensation and claims person at the hospital who helped complete the required paperwork. Doctors cleared the student to be able to go back to work as long as they were able to keep their facial and finger burns clean.

A transport driver drove the student back to the spike camp to be reunited with their crew and to continue working. The crew leader assigned the student to local Division resources to assist with note-taking and radio communications. The student maintained a positive attitude, realizing their eyebrows would grow back, their facial and hand burns were minor and would heal quickly, and the singed hair was not even noticeable. They felt thankful for the care that they received and that this incident did not have a more severe outcome.

LESSONS

- ✓ The new coffee kit was made ready the night before, but not tested. Taking the time to fully test out equipment prior to use is helpful. This also gives people a chance to become familiar with that piece of equipment prior to operational use.
- ✓ Knowing the proper procedures for equipment is important. Training was conducted prior to the start of the fire season, but training was not given for every piece of equipment. The Job Corps students all felt that hands-on testing with new equipment and going through each procedure is vital—including safe body placement for equipment operation.
- ✓ Camp crews often move from camp to camp rapidly assembling and disassembling their equipment. Time is not taken to learn the other aspects of camp such as where local medical care may be located.
- ✓ Using the 9 Line and camp medics was smooth and provided proper medical treatment for the student. This Incident Management Team regularly practices the use of the 9 Line, ensuring that when it was needed in this incident the process flowed naturally. Fully supporting the spike camp with an ambulance was exceptional for ensuring timely transport of any potential medical incidents.

This RLS Submitted by:

Damen Therkildsen

with support from the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group



Pacific Northwest Wildfire
Coordinating Group

Burn Treatment

- 1. Cool Burn. Hold burned skin under cool (not cold) running water or immerse in cool water until pain subsides.**
- 2. Protect Burn. Cover with sterile, non-adhesive bandage or clean cloth.**
- 3. Treat Pain.**
- 4. Follow-up with a physician.**
- 5. Keep burn clean and dry.**

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