

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Lightning Near Miss

Date: July 3, 2022

Location: Minto Lakes Fire,
Alaska

While the ambulance crew was sitting in the tent structure taking shelter from rain, a lightning strike occurred on—or very near—their tent.

The crew observed sparks and the smell of burning plastic.

Lessons from a Near Miss Lightning Strike

An incident ambulance crew of two people was staged at their posting position at a Drop Point (DP) on the Minto Lakes Fire. The DP was at a high point of terrain relative to the surrounding terrain and was also the site of a utility tower.

While staged there, the ambulance crew was utilizing a portable structure for protection—an enclosed tent shaped similar to a Quonset hut, comprised of a metal frame and plastic covering.

The incident was under a Red Flag Warning for thunderstorms and lightning. The weather forecast was discussed at the morning briefing held at the ICP, but most resources were remote spiked and were verbally briefed by their supervisor sometime after the formal briefing.

It is unclear whether the ambulance crew received the briefing on the weather forecast or if they received a copy of the IAP.

At approximately 1845, while the ambulance crew was sitting in their tent structure taking shelter from rain, a lightning strike occurred on—or very near—their tent. The crew observed sparks and the smell of burning plastic.

They evacuated the tent and climbed into a van with other personnel from a nearby Division to wait out the weather. No injuries were reported. A small one-by-two-inch hole was noted in the tent structure cover.



The Drop Point location where the lightning strike occurred on—or very near—the Quonset hut type structure in which the two-person ambulance crew was taking shelter from the rain.

Lessons

*What do folks now know
that they wish they'd known before the event?*

- ❖ That ancillary support resources were not being adequately briefed on critical weather.

*What would folks share with others
who could be in a similar situation?*

- ❖ Ensure that all resources have an established method for receiving critical incident information. Especially if normal communications methods aren't functional.

This RLS was submitted by:
Incident Overhead

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