

BLUE SHEET

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Preliminary Summary Report of Serious CAL FIRE Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-Miss Incidents



Two Firefighter Heat Related Injuries

July 20th, 2012

Border #14

12-CA-MVU-007686

California Southern Region

This Preliminary Summary Report is intended as an aid in accident prevention, and to provide factual information from the first 24 hours of the accident review. To that end it is published and distributed within a short time frame. Information contained within may be subject to revision as further investigation is conducted, and other reports and documents are received.

Lookout

Communications

Escape Routes

Safety Zones

SYNOPSIS

On Friday July 20th, 2012 at 8:10 a.m. CAL FIRE units were dispatched to an active vegetation fire. The fire, located ¼ to ½ mile inside Mexico, threatened the United States border and eventually spread into the United States. During firefighting operations two firefighters were transported to a local hospital for heat related injuries.

NARRATIVE

Approximately three hours into the Border #14 incident, a helitack crewmember began showing signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion while engaged in hand-line construction. As firefighters were engaged in cutting hand-line they observed the helitack crewmember's medical condition quickly deteriorated to a level of unconsciousness. The helitack Engineer from San Diego Copter 10 monitoring the situation immediately made the request for an air transport via the Incident Commander. San Diego County Copter 12, the closest air resource, was used to extract the injured helitack firefighter to a local CAL FIRE station where a waiting medical air ambulance transported to a local hospital. The helitack crewmember was admitted to the hospital into the Intensive Care Unit and released two days later requiring follow-up evaluation before returning to work.

Fifteen minutes after the extraction of the helitack crewmember, a firefighter from E3353 was also observed having signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion. The firefighter was given cold water, Gatorade and instructed to start cooling measures while resting in the shade. After the hand-line was completed the instruction was given by the Division Supervisor for everyone to hike down to their respective engines. During the downhill hike the firefighter was unable to continue and the decision was made for a medivac. The firefighter was extracted by County Copter 12 and transported to a local CAL FIRE Station where the firefighter was ground transported to the hospital. The firefighter was admitted overnight and released to full duty the following day.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

- Personnel and supervisors must be aware of individual limitations and act accordingly including establishing adequate work rest cycles and hydration during firefighting operations.
- All personnel should familiarize themselves with the Department Heat Illness Prevention Policy HB Section 1855- <http://cdfweb/pubs/issuance/1800/1855.pdf>
- Immediately treat heat illness if it occurs. Ignoring or delaying the need for medical attention could lead to permanent disability, even death.