

CDF GREEN SHEETS

Investigation Summaries of Serious CDF Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-miss Incidents



**CONCOW FIRE
CA-BTU-10476
BUTTE RANGER UNIT
COAST-CASCADE REGION
SEPTEMBER 19, 2000
FALLING SNAG INCIDENT**

A Board of Review has not approved this Summary Report. It is intended as an aid in accident prevention, to let interested parties know what happened, and to be used as a safety training tool. 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.

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SUMMARY

On Tuesday, September 19, 2000, at approximately 1515 hours, a CDF engine company, engaging in initial attack fire suppression activities, was involved in an accident with a falling oak snag. A CDF Firefighter sustained minor injuries from being struck in the head by the falling tree. Moderate damage occurred to the engine. During initial attack the Fire Captain on the engine recognized that several snags along the road just ahead of the engine posed a significant risk. The Fire Captain elected to walk, swamping in front of the fire engine. A Firefighter was assigned to drive the engine. The Fire Captain noticed a snag that had fallen across the road and had the firefighter driving the engine stop in what appeared to be a safe location. While the engine was stopped, a snag just above the road and the engine snapped, falling on a second firefighter and the engine.

CONDITIONS

The accident occurred on the Concow Fire in Butte Ranger Unit near the Feather River. The road width is approximately 9.5 feet.

WEATHER

The initial report time was 1304 hours. The temperature was 104 degrees, relative humidity 16%, and wind speed was 10 mph from the west. The weather condition was not considered to be a factor in this incident.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

A CDF engine staffed with a Fire Captain and two Firefighters was traversing a mid-slope road above the point of origin. The fire front had crossed the road. The engine was attempting to gain access to the active fire flank. The Fire Captain recognized several black oak snags in front of the engine, as being potential hazards to the firefighters and equipment. The Fire Captain elected to walk in front of the engine in an effort to identify potential hazards. A snag was identified that had fallen across the road and the Firefighter was directed to stop the engine. The Fire Captain proceeded to a helitack crew that was located to the rear of the engine to get help with the felling and removal of the identified oak snag hazards. Without warning an oak snag snapped and fell across the engine. A firefighter standing on the front passenger side of the engine heard the snag start to fall and ran to the passenger side door for cover. The engine provided some protection to the Firefighter when the oak fell, however a limb did hit the Firefighter in the head. The Fire Captain was unaware that the oak snag that the engine was parked below was 70% rotten. The oak that fell had a damaged bole that was only visible from the uphill side.

All appropriate wildland PPE was in use. The Firefighter's helmet mitigated the severity of the injury. The Firefighter was wearing a Phenix First Due Firefighter helmet model #500-92 CA Lot # MLYFIG manufactured on 6/1/97. The helmet sustained no visible damage.

INJURIES

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The Firefighter that was struck by the falling tree was treated on scene then transported by ground and air ambulance to a nearby hospital. A CAT scan showed possible concussion. The firefighter was released later that evening.

DAMAGE

The CDF engine sustained moderate damage and remained in service.

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

All CDF personnel should use extreme caution when working near any snags. The use of wildland personal protective equipment reduces and/or prevents injuries. Appropriate LCES prevents injuries and saves lives.

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