



North Carolina
Department of Environment and
Natural Resources

Michael F. Easley, Governor
William G. Ross Jr., Secretary



North Carolina
Division of Forest Resources

Wib Owen, Director

March 29, 2008

To: Jim Prevette, Fire Chief

Subject: Expanded 72 Hour Briefing

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Location: Bertie County, N.C.

Date of Occurrence: March 25, 2008

Preliminary Factual Findings:

All N.C. Division of Forest Resources (NCDFR) required PPE was being worn by the injured Tractor Plow crewman at the time the accident occurred. The PPE utilized at the time of the accident was examined and did not reveal any visible damage and remained intact. The NCDFR blackline policy was being complied with at the time of the accident. Injuries sustained by the Tractor Plow crewman were not life threatening. The injured Tractor Plow crewman remained on the fire scene, received basic first aid treatment on-scene and returned to work the following day after a Doctor visit. The Forest Fire Equipment Operator (FFEO) is fully trained for his position and is Tractor Plow Operator (TPOP) qualified. The Tractor Plow Crewman has the required training for his position.

Narrative:

On March 25, 2008 NC Division of Forest Resources and VFD personnel initial attacked the Charles Taylor Road Fire in Bertie County. The fire started as a result of a vehicle fire along Charles Taylor Road which spread from the roadway into the woods. Estimate of size at initial attack was 6 acres. One Tractor Plow unit with a crewman anchored their fireline into a company road and started plowing the right flank (Division Charlie) of the fire which was a spot fire from the initial fire. A NCDFR Scout Plane arrived on scene and began assisting the ground crews. The fire was burning in an area that had been V-Bladed, bedded and planted with Loblolly pines that are approximately 4-6 years old. Fire intensity was moderate and the burn out fire was taking along the plowed fireline at time of initial attack. Tractor plow trafficability and visibility was good, and fireline construction progress was good. After plowing through an old saw dust pile, the FFEO advised the Tractor Plow crewman that the fire behavior and intensity appeared to be increasing and for him to be aware for detecting spotovers. Line construction continued and the FFEO was preparing to start to pinch the fire's head until the Tractor Plow crewman observed a spotover across the fire line behind himself and the Tractor Plow. The Tractor Plow crewman radioed the FFEO about the spotover and advised that he needed to "get out of here because there was fire all around me". The FFEO stopped forward line construction and advised the Tractor Plow crewman to retreat to the "Black". The Tractor Plow unit was within 200 feet from the company road at this point. The Tractor Plow crewman advised that he could not retreat to the "Black" and laid down in the fireline with his head in the direction they had plowed from until the fire intensity subsided. The FFEO attempted to turn back to catch the spotover but could not see back down the fireline due to flames laying over his already plowed line behind the tractor cab and his plow. The FFEO at this time lost sight of his Tractor Plow crewman due to the reduced

visibility. The fire intensity lessened, the Tractor Plow crewman stood up in the fireline, and the FFEO was able to head the Tractor Plow unit back toward the spotfire to suppress it. Upon the FFEO maneuvering the Tractor Plow towards the spotover, the Tractor Plow crewman exited the woods and another Tractor Plow crewman walked in behind the Tractor Plow. Basic first aid (burn cream and burn spray) was applied to the Tractor Plow crewman's right ear due to redness. He was asked if he needed EMS to respond and check him out and he advised that was not necessary. No visible blistering was present at this time. The Tractor Plow crewman did not return to the fireline that evening, but had asked if he could return to following a Tractor Plow. On March 26, 2008 the Tractor Plow crewman was directed to seek medical attention at Bertie Memorial Hospital due to a visible blister appearing on his right ear, and right temple. The Tractor Plow crewman returned to work that day after being diagnosed with 2nd degree burns to his right ear and temple.

/s/Gary C. Wood, Team Leader