

**Preliminary Summary Report of Serious or Near Serious CAL FIRE  
Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents**



# GREEN SHEET

## **MVU Fire Captain Injury**

**October 11, 2016**

**Grade Project**

**CA-MVU-024280**

**California Southern Region**

### **SUMMARY**

On Tuesday, October 11, 2016, CAL FIRE La Cima Crew 3 (LCM 3) was assigned to a grade project for the Helix Water District in San Diego County. The project consisted of clearing brush and falling trees around an old diversion dam near Ramona, CA. At approximately 1:40 PM, while the Fire Crew Captain (FC1) was supervising a crew member utilizing a chain saw to fall a tree, FC1 was struck by branches from the falling tree. The Fire Captain was transported to the hospital for injuries to his lower arm and hand.

## CONDITIONS

### **Weather:**

Temperature- 80° Fahrenheit

Relative Humidity- 34%

Winds-NNW 3-4 MPH

Visibility- Clear

*Observations were taken at the nearest remote area weather station (RAWS) in Ramona, CA (Goose Valley).*

### **Topography:**

Creek bottom consisting of uneven surface with rock and sand.

Vegetation consisting of up to ten (10) feet brush with mature Eucalyptus trees.

### **Tree Felling:**

Approximately seventy-five (75) feet tall Eucalyptus tree, twenty-one (21) inches in diameter.

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On October 11, 2016, LCM 3 was working on a grade project for the Helix Water District. The project was to clear brush and trees from a diversion dam. The project site was located approximately two miles down the Tule Springs Truck Trail. FC 1 identified the trees to be felled for the day and a safety briefing was conducted.

A dead Eucalyptus snag with a 21" DBH and approximately 75' in height was identified to be felled. The tree had a right hand side lean from the intended lay towards a concrete gauging station below an old diversion dam. Two LCM 3 crew members, (Inmate 2 and Inmate 3) hung a 5/8" nylon rope approximately 20' up the tree to hold tension against the lean.

The sawyer (Inmate 1) swamped around the base of the tree and established one escape route on the "finish side" of the tree at a 45 degree angle. A second escape route was established on the "off side." However, it was not at a 45 degree angle due to the location of the tree next to a large rock and heavy underbrush, but still effective. At approximately 1340 hours, Inmate 1 proceeded to cut in his gunning/horizontal cut from the finish side. Inmate 1 gunned the tree slightly to the left of the intended lay to compensate for the right hand side lean. Once the gunning cut was completed, Inmate 1 then cut in the sloping cut.

While the saw was off, Inmate 1 turned and yelled, "back cut" and saw FC 1 standing behind him approximately 10' in the established escape route from the finished side. FC 1 repeated "back cut". FC 1 proceeded to walk parallel to the gauging station towards the project sponsors. Inmate 1 proceeded to cut the back cut. As the tree committed to the fall, Inmate's 2 & 3 pulled tension with the rope and the tree fell to its intended lay. FC 1 was

struck by the tree approximately 60' from the stump. FC 1 remained in the standing position after absorbing the impact, injuring his left arm and hand. Under assistance by the crew, FC 1 walked back to the ECT to be treated. FC 1 was transported by the project sponsor, with the crew, in the ECT back to the top of the El Capitan Truck Trail to an awaiting ALS ambulance and engine. FC 1 was transported to a local trauma center.

## **INJURIES/DAMAGES**

FC 1 sustained a left forearm laceration and deep bone contusion as well as multiple fracture(s) to his left hand.

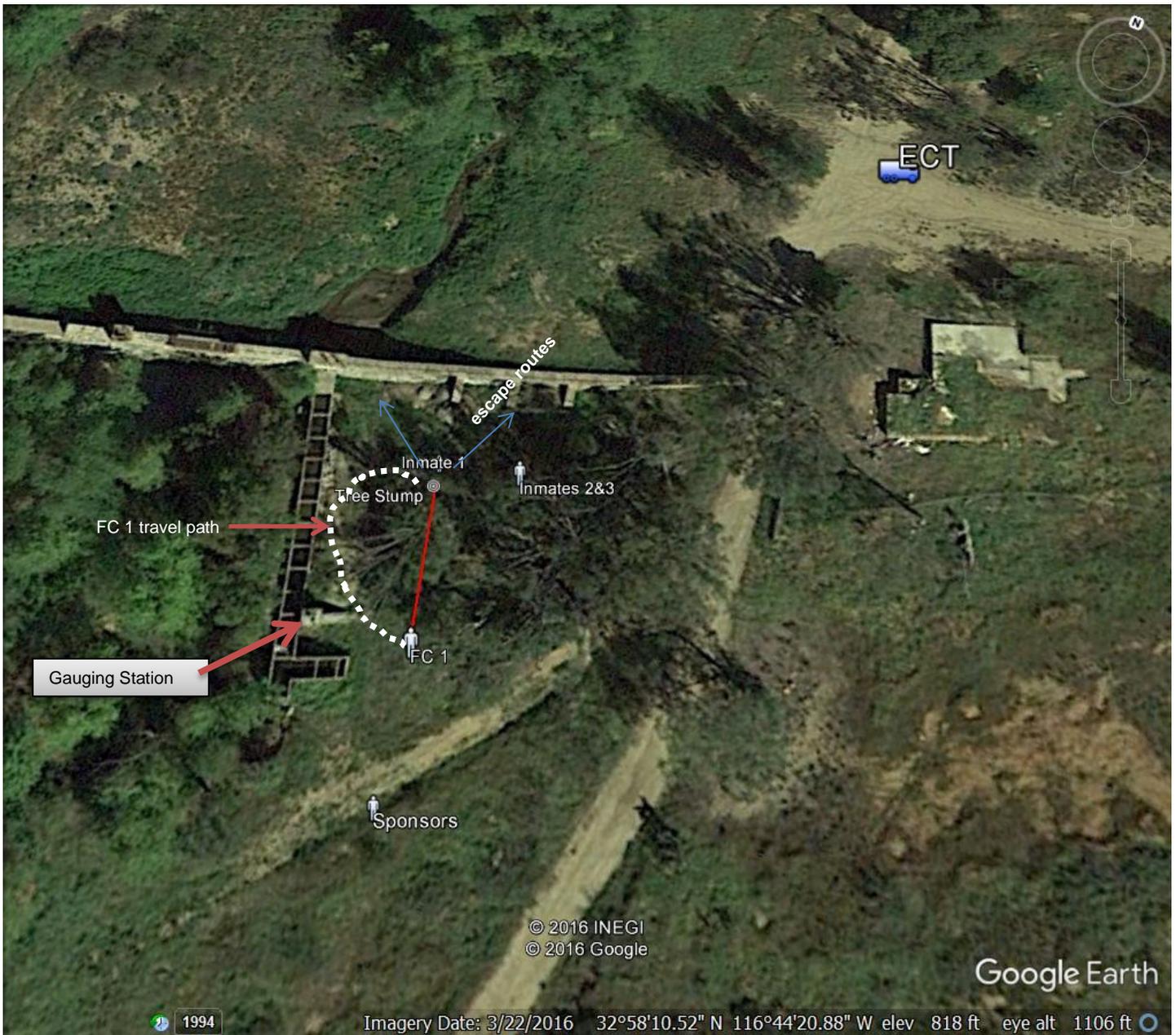
## **SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW**

- Review [CAL FIRE Policy 4031.1.2-](#) Chainsaw Standard Operating Procedures

## **INCIDENTAL ISSUES/LESSONS LEARNED (For Near Serious Accidents)**

- Maintain situational awareness at all times.
- Ensure safety communication is received by all personnel involved in the operation.
- Have visual contact with all members within falling range of tree.
- Maintain safe working distance.
- Adhere to standard falling procedures.

## PHOTOS/SITE DIAGRAMS/MAPS



Site Diagram



21" Stump



Fallers view



FC 1 general location within felled tree.