

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



GREEN SHEET

Pulaski Injury to Crew Member

August 19, 2016

Chimney Fire

CA-SLU-008948

California Southern Region

SUMMARY

On August 19, 2016, at approximately 9:30 AM, a California Conservation Corp (CCC) Type 1 handcrew (HC1) was preparing fire line for a future firing operation on the Chimney Fire in San Luis Obispo County. At approximately 12:30 PM, one of the crew members was struck in the left elbow by a pulaski that was being utilized by another member from the same crew. The crew member was initially treated by a fire line paramedic and prepared for ground transport. Upon further evaluation, it was determined that the crew member would be flown to a local hospital for treatment.

CONDITIONS

Weather: At accident site.

Temperature- 77° Fahrenheit

Relative Humidity- 24%

Winds- 2-3 mph, Gusts 7mph South/South West

Visibility- Skies were clear to the south and east with heavy smoke to the north and east.

Fuel Type:

Fuel Model 2- Grass with timber/shrub over story

Fuel Model 10- Mature and over mature timber and understory (Oak and Madrone trees, with leaf ground litter)

Topography:

HC1 was working on an approximately 30% slope, below a dozer line that was on relatively flat ground. The dozer line tied into an old air strip.

Fire Behavior:

Moderate, with a firing operation occurring to the west of the accident site.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On Saturday August 13, 2016, at approximately 4:03 PM, a vegetation fire was reported in San Luis Obispo County, in the Lake Nacimiento area, near Chimney Rock Road and Running Deer Road. By 7:00AM on Friday August 19, 2016, the fire burned 11,999 acres.

On Friday August 19th, at approximately 9:30 AM, HC1, consisting of 16 members, arrived at their assigned location on Division A. Their assignment was to prepare for a firing operation by reducing fuels near the dozer line that ran east from Drop Point 50 toward Drop Point 60. HC1 began their assignment from the airstrip at Drop Point 50 and worked east, 50 feet below the dozer line. The vegetation was a continuous mix of poison oak, madrone and oak trees, thick ground litter, and sporadic grass. The terrain consisted of intermittent rocks on a 30-40% slope.

HC1 sent three (3) chainsaws ahead of the crew with the Crew Captain (FC1) leaving the remaining crew with the CCC Supervisor (Sup1). The chainsaws were limbing trees and reducing the vegetation while the remainder of the crew followed behind and either moved the downed material to the dozer line, or further downhill where it would not pose a threat to the dozer line.

After working for approximately three (3) hours, the crew members with Sup1 came across two (2) to three (3) inch in diameter madrone trees that needed to be removed to

further improve the line. Due to the small size of the trees, Sup1 instructed the crew to utilize a pulaski to remove the trees since the chainsaws were busy working with FC1, well ahead of the crew. One of the crew members (CM1) began working with a pulaski that had been staged nearby. CM1 proceeded to swing the tool to remove the trees while Sup1 was working directly below CM1, approximately five (5) to six (6) feet away, helping to remove the trees as they were cut. During one of the swings, CM1 struck the tree at an angle that caused the pulaski to violently recoil. The recoil caused CM1 to be unable to maintain control of the pulaski as it slipped from his grasp. CM1 witnessed the pulaski strike Sup1 with the cutting end, in the left elbow, causing a severe laceration. CM1 immediately assisted Sup1 to remove his fire line pack. Sup1 directed his crew to follow the Incident within the Incident (IWI) protocol to notifying the fire line paramedic (FEMP1).

FEMP1 assessed Sup1, and with assistance from the crew, moved Sup1 to the dozer line where they would arrange for a ground ambulance to transport Sup1 to a local hospital. After Sup1 was moved to the dozer line, he was reassessed by FEMP1 and based on Sup1's vital signs, it was determined that he would need to be transported by helicopter. Sup1 was flown to a nearby trauma center by a California Army National Guard Helicopter, while being treated by the inflight medics.

HC1 was assigned to the incident from the initial day and were coming on the line after a 24-hour rest cycle. CM1 and Sup 1 were both wearing all of their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including their wildland gloves with wrist gauntlets.

INJURIES/DAMAGES

Sup1 suffered a severe laceration to the left elbow, as well as a fractured humerus bone.

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

- [CAL FIRE Policy 4315.3, Hand Tools – Pulaski](#): When using a Pulaski maintain a 10-foot interval - **“Maintain Your Dime.”**
- Ensure all employees are wearing their department issued PPE that fits properly, and is in good working condition.
- Adhere to, and familiarize yourself with Incident Within an Incident (IWI) procedures during assignments.

INCIDENTAL ISSUES/LESSONS LEARNED

- The review concluded that the quick treatment and evacuation by the helicopter substantially contributed to reducing the severity of the injuries to Sup1.