



North Carolina
Department of Environment &
Natural Resources

el F. Easley, Governor
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North Carolina
Division of Forest Resources

Wib Owen, Director

July 2, 2008

Subject: Expanded 72 Hour Briefing

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Location: Caldwell County, N.C.

Date of Occurrence: June 28, 2008

Preliminary Factual Findings:

Personnel on the fire were as follows: NCDFR (2), BRIDGE (15), Pre-arranged Firefighters (5) for a total of 22. The individuals on the line at the time of the lightning strike were taking a hydration break. At the time of the strike all 8 of the injuries were acquired in the direct path that the strike followed along the ground. Injuries sustained by the initial attack hand crewman were not life threatening. The 4 individuals with the most significant injuries were removed first by the aid of a Kubota RTV that was pre-assigned to the incident and three others were transported on a second trip. The remaining 14 fire fighters proceeded to leave the incident on foot. All 22 firefighters were observed or at minimum questioned by EMSat the bottom of the mountain. (1) Bridge youth offender was released from the hospital on 6/29/08. The other (3) Bridge youth offenders were released on 6/30/08. As of 7/1/08 the Bridge Project Leader is still in the hospital, and there currently is (1) NCFS Pre-Arranged fire fighter in the hospital. All N.C. Division of Forest Resources (NCDFR) required PPE was being worn by the injured Bridge Project Leader, the (4) Bridge Youth offenders, (2) NCFS pre-arranged fire fighters, and (1) NCFS full time certified employee at the time the accident occurred. The PPE available for inspection after the accident was examined and did not reveal any visible damage and remained intact, however there was damage to non PPE clothing.

Narrative:

At 14:43 hours on June 27, 2008, a fire was reported in the Buffalo Cove area of Caldwell County. Units from Yadkin Valley Fire Department and the Caldwell(256) unit from the NCDFR responded. The fire was located on a saddle near Carr Mountain. Ground access on the 27th was assisted by a NCDFR scout plane (33). The fire department units were released at approximately 17:35 hours.

Resources requested for the fire by NCDFR include (on 6-27-08):

- Scout Plane
- Helicopter w/helitack
- BRIDGE Crew, (5) certified NCDFR personnel and (1) Kubota RTV

The suppression action on June 27th included a containment line to hold fire in check until the next morning, June 28th.

On June 27/2008 it was determined that lightning was the cause of the Green Rock fire in Caldwell County. On the morning of June 28, 2008 NC Division of Forest Resources (this

includes Bridge who are under NCFS leadership) continued the suppression effort on this very remote Forest Fire (Green Rock Fire) in Caldwell County. District 2 was operating on a readiness plan 3 and allowed the Bridge units to go directly to the fire. Task units arrived on scene and placed a direct hand line on the fire between the hours of 10:00-11:00. LCES was in place. There were a total of 22 people on the ground working the fire and D-2 Ops was directly supporting the operation. D-2 Ops continually monitored local radar and communicated regularly with Incident IC. Between the hours of 15:45 and 16:20HRS the fire had been 100% contained. At approximately 16:20HRS. the crews started a 15 minute break to rehydrate. One group (approximately 4 people) had taken their break on the fire line while they watched an unburned area burn near the hand line. The second group rested in an old logging path. At approximately 16:30HRS. lightning struck a dead snag (The dead snag was short in height compared to the green surrounding trees). The lightning traveled towards the RTV and continued through a group of (5) crew members and one project leader. The lightning traveled in the other direction injuring people. Immediately followed by people screaming for help, each person reported that there was a bright light followed by a deafening bang. The entire accident happened under partly cloudy skies. As a result of the lightning strike 8 people were transported to the local hospital.

/s/Marshall Humphries, Incident Support