

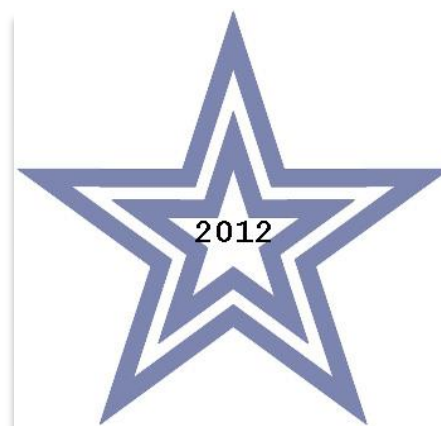
Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event: Lighthouse Fire, outside Price, Utah

“A few seconds into my cut, I thought better of it . . .”

Date: July 19, 2012

Location: Along Range Creek drainage, heel of the fire



1. What Happened?

I was working as a Class C Faller (FALC) at the heel of the fire in a large cottonwood gallery. As part of mop up operations, I was assigned to mitigate hazard trees for the crews to work beneath them.

After successfully felling a large diameter cottonwood, an Engine Captain asked me to evaluate/mitigate another cottonwood approximately 50 yards away. One of his crewmembers was cooling off the base of a totally involved, heavy leaning C-cottonwood. I asked her if I could cool the base of the tree a bit more before completing my size-up. Once enough heat was removed, I went to size-up the base. I noticed that their hose lay was directly in the way of the tree's fall.

I told the crewmember about the Dan Holmes' accident. [*In 2004, Arrowhead Interagency Hotshot Daniel Holmes was killed by a snag.* [Grant West Report part 1](#) [Grant West Report part 2.](#)]

She was directed to move the hose lay—without getting under the tree. We went to work, the engine crewmember staying out of the way of the tree, and I started bucking a log in one of my escape routes.

A few seconds into my cut, I thought better of it. I turned off the saw and ensured that the crewmember was mitigating the risk. The base and bole of the cottonwood tree was cool. Then I noticed that the charred bark pattern had a different pattern—hairline cracks like a cracked pane of glass.

Before my eyes, the black hairline cracks gave way and grew to reveal white, unburned wood underneath. I knew that the tree was about to fall. Communicating this to the Engine Captain and his crewmember, we safely watched as the cottonwood started to crack and eventually crashed to the ground.

2. Lessons

This is an example of the importance of: Observation of Risk; Situational Awareness; Importance of sharing knowledge through stories; Identifying similar incidents and responding accordingly.

3. Submitted by: Module/Crew Overhead

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