

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



# GREEN SHEET

## **Firefighter Burn Injury**

**July 8, 2017**

**17-CA-BEU-003551**

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**California Southern Region**

### **SUMMARY**

On July 8, 2017, at approximately 1958 hours, a CAL FIRE Firefighter I from the San Benito-Monterey Unit suffered minor burn injuries while engaged in wildland fire fighting efforts. The employee was transported to a medical facility, evaluated, treated, and released back to full duty.

## CONDITIONS

**Weather:** (Paso Robles RAWs 1700)

Temperature: 105° Fahrenheit

Relative Humidity: 15%

Winds: 5-10 MPH out of the east, down canyon

Visibility: Clear

**Fuel Type:** Annual grass

**Topography:** Flat

**Fire Behavior:** Moderate

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

On July 8, 2017, at approximately 1820 hours, a wildland fire was reported in the area of Vineyard Canyon Road and Cross Canyon Road, just northeast of the community of San Miguel in San Luis Obispo County, California.

A CAL FIRE Type 3 fire engine (E1) staffed with one Fire Captain (FC1) and three Seasonal Firefighters (FF1, FF2 and FF3), arrived on scene at approximately 1844 hours. A short time later, a fourth Seasonal Firefighter (FF4) was assigned to FC1 on E1. FC1 reported a 20-acre fire in light flashy fuels with fire on both the north and south sides of Vineyard Canyon Road. FC1 established command of the incident and initiated fire suppression efforts on the north facing flank using a progressive hose lay (DIV Z).

A CAL FIRE Battalion Chief (BC1) arrived at scene at approximately 1910 hours, assumed role of Incident Commander, identified an Incident Command Post, and requested additional resources. FC1 was then assigned as Operations for the incident. At approximately 1945 hours, FF's 1, 2, 3 and 4 from E1 were engaged in wildland fire suppression utilizing a progressive hose-lay. Due to fire progression, the firefighters from E1 were instructed to discontinue the progressive hose-lay and meet back at E1. Once all crew members from E1 were back at the fire engine, FC1 directed the crew to begin a mobile pumping operation. At approximately 1950 hours, E1 ran out of water. (fire activity at the time was moderate, burning in annual grasses and light brush, with 2'-3' flame lengths and light winds from the northeast). FC1 instructed FF's 1, 2, 3 and 4 to construct hand line with hand tools and back-pumps. FF1 and FF2 began their hand line construction at E1 working towards Vineyard Canyon Road. FF3 and FF4 began their hand line construction at Vineyard Canyon Road working towards FF1 and FF2. At approximately 1955 hours, the prevailing northeast wind increased in velocity, resulting in acceleration of the approaching fire-front. The fire established itself in an unnamed creek drainage approximately 150 feet northwest from where the crew was working. The fire aligned with the wind and topography in the creek drainage which resulted in a rapid increase in fire behavior and rate of spread. FC1 identified the weather change and moved E1 into the already burned area (black). FF3 & FF4 also noticed the change in fire activity so they discontinued their hand line construction and

retreated onto Vineyard Canyon Road. Recognizing the danger their crew members were in, FF3 & FF4 began yelling at FF1 & FF2 to “get into the black”. FF1 & FF2 attempted to escape into the black, but due to increased fire activity they could not progress into the black. While heading towards Vineyard Canyon Road, FF2 noticed a low intensity area of the fire-front and jumped into the black. FF1 continued running towards Vineyard Canyon Road, tripping on the uneven surface and fell to the ground (The fuel type was 12”-24” tall annual grass; a CAL FIRE Type 3 fire engine (E2) with an Engineer (FAE1) on Vineyard Canyon Road reported fire behavior to be extreme with a critical rate of spread, and the fire appeared to nearly overtake FF1).

FF1 fell a second time approximately 75’ from the location of the first fall. The rate of spread had slowed at this point, likely due to a decrease in wind-speed and available fuel loading. At some point during the escape, FF1’s helmet was knocked off. E2 with FAE1 positioned nearby on Vineyard Canyon Road directed FF1 towards the location. FF1 was assisted into the cab of E2 and emergency medical care was initiated. FAE1 notified FC1 of a firefighter burn injury via the tactical radio channel. FC1 notified BC1 who requested through Monterey ECC one ground ambulance and one air ambulance.

## **INJURIES/DAMAGES**

FF1 suffered minor burns to the face including nose, lips, and throat. The wildland fire helmet and shroud both sustained moderate burn damage. No visible damage was noted on the wildland jacket, pants, boots, gloves, or hose pack. Further investigation determined that the wildland helmet shroud was down, but not securely fastened. Sunglasses were being worn in lieu of goggles. All other PPE was worn appropriately.

## **SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW**

- Ensure personnel wear all appropriate PPE.
- Review [CAL FIRE 4300 Handbook 4306.2.1](#) - Lookout, Communications, Escape Routes, Safety Zones.
- Maintain accountability of personnel at all times.
- Evaluate changing fire environments to determine the most appropriate strategy and tactic.

## **INCIDENTAL ISSUES/LESSONS LEARNED**

- Crews must utilize L.C.E.S when engaged in firefighting operations.
- The “Ten Standard Firefighting Orders” and “Eighteen Situations that Shout Watch Out” should be reviewed regularly.
- Maintain incident and crew accountability at all times.
- Correlate topographical features and changing wind patterns.
- Recognize extreme fire behavior indicators and anticipate the unexpected.
- Utilize proper risk management methods and procedures.
- Review the Common Denominators for Wildland Firefighter Fatalities.

## PHOTOS/SITE DIAGRAMS/MAPS





Southwest view from Vineyard Canyon Road. The incident occurred in the field on the right side of this picture.