

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Rolling Rock  
Near Miss

**Date:** September 9, 2015

**Location:** Juniper Crest Fire,  
Colorado



*As the rock started to roll down the steep slope,  
crew members—per their training—instantly yelled "Rock!"*

## NARRATIVE

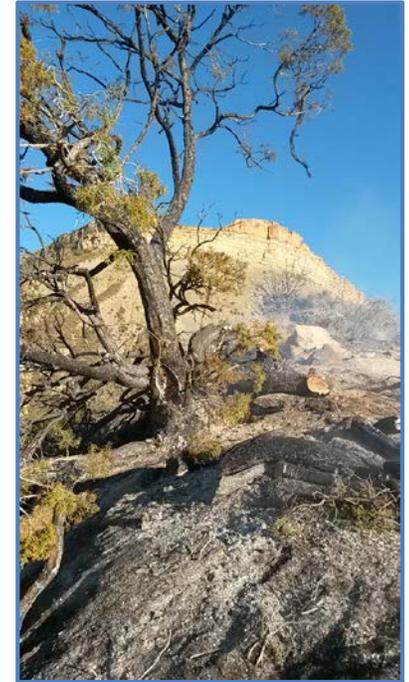
A crew is working on this 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an acre fire on a steep east-facing slope on a knife ridge. While removing limbs that had been cut off of a juniper, a large rock—maybe 200 pounds—is dislodged.

This rock, located underneath the cut juniper limbs, had not been previously noticed. (The duff and other vegetative material burned out at the rock's base which allowed it to lose its angle of repose and roll. The pulling of the limbs lying above it most likely contributed to its release.)

As the rock started to roll down the steep slope, crew members—per their training— instantly yelled "Rock!"

The Incident Commander Type 5 Trainee was located approximately 15 feet downslope from the rock—directly in its trajectory. He dove to the south and was able to miss the fall of the rock by a few feet. Another firefighter was able to grab the ICT5 Trainee's clothing—preventing him from rolling down the steep slope face.

The rock rolled approximately 200 vertical feet until it struck the gully at the bottom of the ridge. No one was hurt.



*The juniper tree on the knife ridge where this incident occurred. Photo on left, taken at twilight, also helps to show how steep this area is.*

## LESSONS

- ✓ All firefighters responded appropriately to this hazard. Everyone involved in this near-miss incident did a great job of dealing with this threat.
- ✓ Such rolling rock hazards are inherent in our operations. Are we normalizing this safety risk?
- ✓ The AAR on this incident identified that we could improve our locating of rocks with the potential to roll and mitigate by: posting a lookout, rolling the rock ahead of time, or stabilizing the rock.
- ✓ It should be remembered that the rocks such as this one in this near miss incident cannot be individually mitigated on larger fires. In this case, the only options might be to post a good lookout or not work underneath the rolling debris risk.

**This RLS Submitted by:  
Incident Personnel**

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