

GREEN SHEET

Los Angeles County Fire Department

Informational Summary Report of Serious Injuries, Illnesses, Accidents and Near-Miss Incidents



Julius Klein Crew 19-1

Rattlesnake Bite

Incident # 127257

May 31, 2012

A Board of Review has not approved this Summary Report. It is intended as a safety and training tool, an aid to preventing future occurrences, and to inform interested parties. Because it is published on a short time frame, the information contained herein is subject to revision as further investigation is conducted and additional information is developed.

SUMMARY

The following information is a preliminary summary of an incident involving a CDCR inmate fire crew member who was bitten by a rattlesnake. The crewmember sustained severe injuries to his right index finger and left middle finger.



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

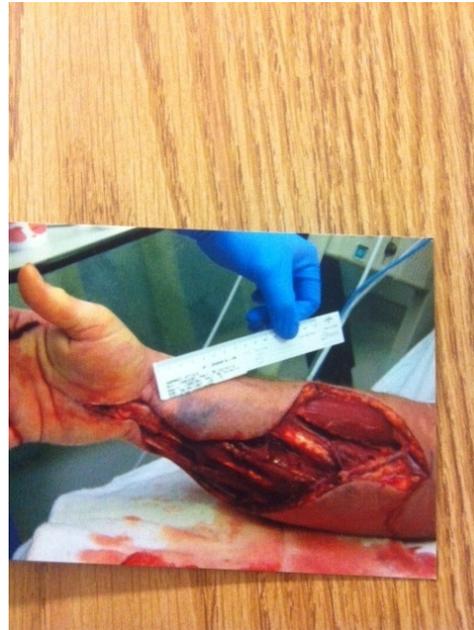
On May 31, 2012, at approximately 1015 hours, Julius Klein Crew 19-1 arrived at their work assignment on Dalton Canyon Rd. in the City of Glendora. The Fire Crew Supervisor gave the crew their assignment to clear grass and brush from the roadside and conducted a safety briefing with the crew. At approximately 1115 hours a crewmember was bitten by a rattlesnake while swinging his McLeod in the grass. The crewmember was reportedly using his gloved right hand to reach down into thick grass to pull some grass out of the way, when a Southern Pacific Rattlesnake struck his right index finger.

The crewmember withdrew his hand quickly, but the snake remained on his finger. During a reflexive attempt to remove the snake from his finger with his left hand, the snake bit his left middle finger. First aid was administered immediately, and the snake was destroyed. The body of the snake was saved for identification purposes at the hospital. The Fire Crew Supervisor drove the crew to the nearby Dalton Hotshot Station to rendezvous with Engine 97 & Squad 32. As the crew was driving, the crewmember attempted to suck venom out of his own finger causing numbness to his mouth. The crewmember was transported via ALS to Foothill Presbyterian Hospital.



INJURIES/DAMAGES

The crewmember was treated with snake bite antivenin (also known as antivenom). He sustained serious local tissue damage to the bite sites. Hospital physicians performed fasciotomy on his right hand and arm to relieve pressure from the swelling (see photos). His recovery will require multiple surgeries and grafting.



SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

- Remind all personnel working in grass and brush areas that the rattlesnakes are out.
- Remind all personnel that rattlesnakes do not always rattle before they strike (this one did not rattle until after the bite).
- Ensure that all personnel are wearing high top boots, long pants, long sleeved shirts and gloves while working in grass or brush.

TREATMENT OF A SNAKE BITE IN THE FIELD

- Keep the site of bite below the heart if possible. This might lessen lymphatic flow of venom.
- Remove all jewelry including watches, rings, and bracelets from involved extremity as severe swelling can be expected.
- Do not apply a tourniquet or constricting band to an involved extremity.
- Immobilize an affected limb, and keep the patient as quiet as possible.
- Transport patient to the closest hospital as soon as possible.