

GREEN SHEET

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

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



Straylor Helicopter Accident Aircraft Accident with Injuries

July 26, 2004

Straylor

CALMU-002537

CACNR-000036

Northern Region

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

On July 26, 2004, a Call-When-Needed (CWN) Type-3 helicopter crashed while conducting a reconnaissance and mapping mission on the Straylor Fire in the Lassen-Modoc Unit injuring the pilot and two CDF employees who were onboard.

CONDITIONS

At the accident site:

- Temperature - 82 to 85 degrees
- Relative Humidity - 22%
- Winds - West to northwest, 7 to 10 mph with gusts to 13 mph
- Fuels - dense brush and conifer forest
- Elevation - 5,184 feet
- Slope 21%

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

A CWN Bell 206B Jet Ranger assigned to the Straylor Fire departed the Fall River Helibase with pilot and two CDF personnel at 1402 hours to conduct a mapping mission and fire suppression damage repair reconnaissance. While flying above the fire line in Division Y, the helicopter pilot attempted to gain altitude in response to rising terrain and trees in the flight path. The helicopter was unable to achieve sufficient lift to avoid a pine tree and struck it with a main rotor blade approximately 40 feet above the ground. This resulted in a complete separation of the hub and main rotor blade assembly from the aircraft. The helicopter fell to the ground and came to rest on its left side in an unburned area approximately 100 feet outside the fire line. The Fall River Helibase monitored a report of a helicopter down at 1421 hours. At 1423 hours the Division Y Supervisor confirmed the crash with the Communications Unit, described the injuries and ordered life flight.

Ground resources in the area, which included a local government engine strike team, three 10-person crews from the Lassen National Forest (LNF), a CDF Heavy Equipment Operator (HFEO), a CDF Battalion Chief (BC), a CDF division supervisor and others arrived to assist with rescue operations. The CDF BC assumed command of the rescue operation, while the division supervisor supervised the extrication and treatment of the patients.

Coincidentally, a spot fire developed below the crash site approximately 1,750 feet from the crash site. A second CWN helicopter and the Helicopter Coordinator (HELCO) came to assist the rescue operations. The second CWN helicopter made bucket drops on the spot fire.

Shortly thereafter, a CDF Copter arrived at scene and commenced water drop operations. An air ambulance arrived next and set down at the LZ to transport patients.

Concurrently, the injured were extricated and moved to a dozer line above the crash site, where they were treated and stabilized for transportation. Some of the rescuers found it necessary to abandon packs and tools that hindered their abilities to effect rescue operations. As the rescue proceeded up the dozer line to the LZ the CDF BC ordered everyone with packs and other gear to leave them and assist in transporting the patients. After reaching the LZ, one patient was loaded into the air ambulance, but it could not lift off, due to a combination of elevation, air temperature and surrounding trees. The patient was then off-loaded and the ship moved to a dry lake site at a lower elevation to the northeast, where it stood by.

The CDF Copter was reassigned to conduct the patient transport. It transported two patients to the dry lake site where the first air ambulance was standing by with a second one. Both patients were transferred to the air ambulances and transported directly to Mercy Hospital in Redding. The CDF Copter returned to the LZ and picked up the third patient for transport to Mayers Hospital in Fall River Mills.

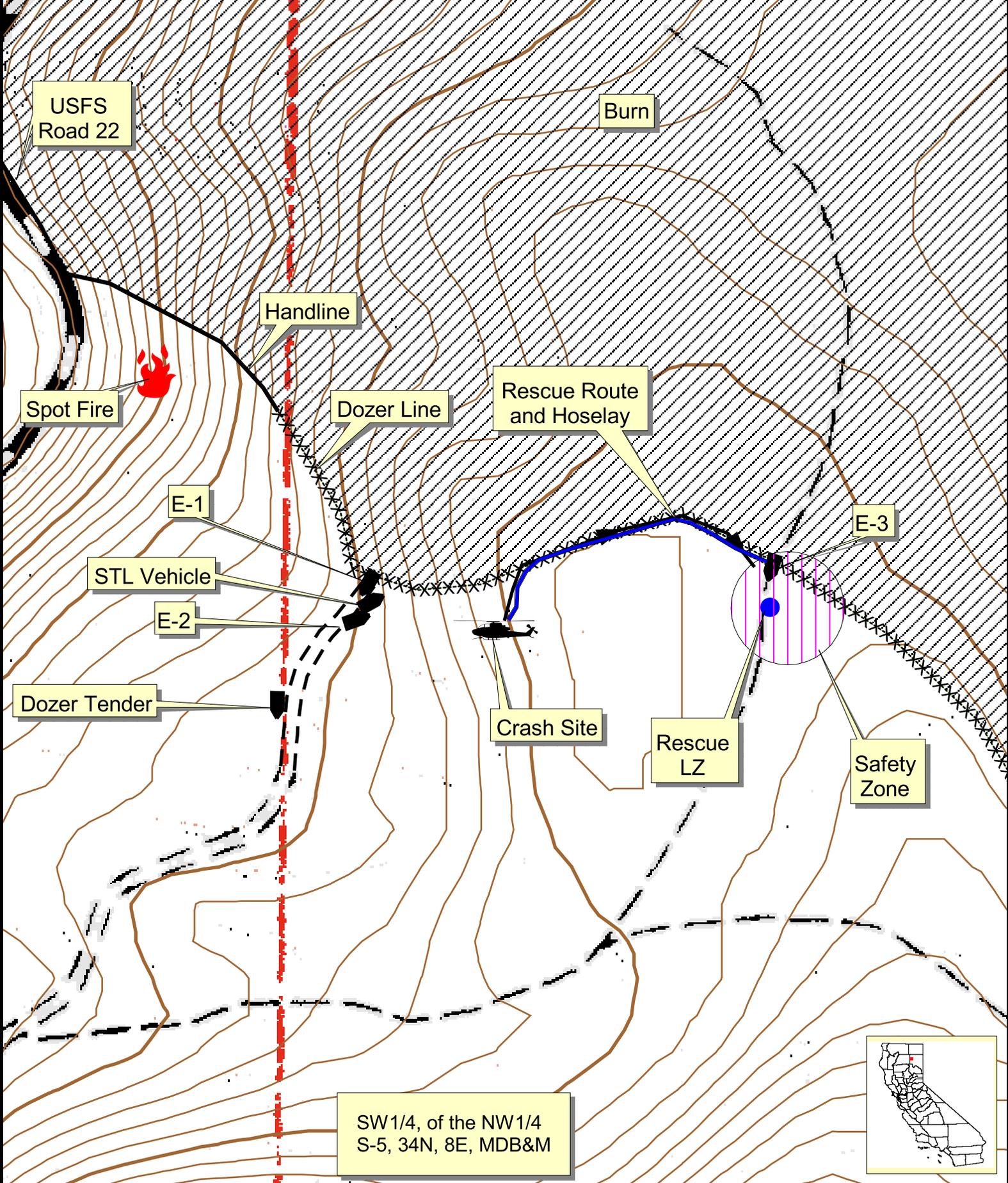
The spot fire grew and burned through the crash site, totally destroying the helicopter wreckage and equipment left behind by the rescuers.

INJURIES/DAMAGES

One major injury and two moderate injuries
and
One Bell Jet Ranger 206B destroyed

SAFETY ISSUES FOR REVIEW

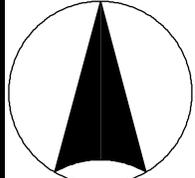
- The load calculations supplied by the pilot and reviewed by the CWN Manager were incorrect, given the conditions in existence at the time. Close monitoring of weight limitations on aircraft is mandatory. Load calculations must be checked and reviewed for accuracy prior to flight.
- Many of the personnel involved in the rescue removed their packs, so they would not be hindered while extricating and moving the patients to the safety zone. The others were eventually ordered to drop their packs and tools. Fire shelters were attached to the packs of LNF crewmembers and left behind, when personnel moved to the safety zone.
- One individual from a staged ambulance near the fire line responded to the safety zone without personal protective equipment (PPE). Although PPE was subsequently provided in the field, all personnel assigned to work on an incident must have and wear appropriate PPE.
- All three occupants of the CWN copter that crashed were wearing flight helmets. Only one sustained a head injury, and that was a minor laceration of the forehead below the area protected by the helmet.



SW1/4, of the NW1/4
S-5, 34N, 8E, MDB&M



Straylor Helicopter Incident



August 2, 2004
1751 Hours

2004-CALMU--2537
14:21 Hours July 26, 2004

1:4000
100 0 100 200 Feet

