Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Jump Injury – Broken Fibula

Date: Aug. 9, 2016

Location: Twin Trees Fire, Oregon

"It just did not feel right."

Jumper7

NARRATIVE

From August 7-9, the Vale Bureau of Land Management District experienced a lightning event that started numerous fires on or near its lands.

This activity prompted the activation of the Vale District's High Desert Type 3 Team to manage a complex of fires near Durkee, Oregon.

Another group of fires that started in the Juntura, Oregon area resulted in ordering a Type 2 Team to manage another complex of fires there.

Due to this heavy initial attack activity on the Vale District, the Great Basin Smokejumper program prepositioned a Twin Otter jump aircraft (Jump 49) with several jumpers in Burns, Oregon.

Example of the fuel loading and fire behavior on the Twin Trees Fire.

Twin Trees Fire Poses Safety Concerns and Control Issues

The Twin Trees Fire, ignited by lighting on August 7, was staffed by three members of the local Helitack Crew and six Smokejumpers. The fire was located in steep, rugged terrain inside a thick snag patch. The fuel loading and numerus hazard trees posed safety concerns and control issues.

On the morning of August 9, the IC reported that the fire had "blown" through control lines overnight and was moving uphill with the wind in heavy fuels. Through the local Dispatch Center, he requested a Type 1 Crew and additional resources.

Knowing it would take some time to get a Type 1 Crew to the fire and that there were jumpers prepositioned in Burns, the Vale District Duty Officer asked the IC if he could utilize additional jumpers on the fire in place of the Type 1 Crew. The Duty Officer explained that the jumpers in Burns could be on the Twin Trees Fire much quicker than waiting for a Type 1 Crew to become available. The IC concurred and the jumpers were ordered for the Twin Trees Fire. A Type 2 IA Crew, who was mopping up a nearby fire, was also ordered.

Upon receiving this order, the jumpers in Burns geared up for the jump, while other jumpers at the temporary base prepared a resupply order for a para-cargo drop for the resources already on the fire. The para-cargo and a full load of jumpers boarded Jump 49 and took off for the assignment.

Determination Made That It was Safe to Jump all Eight Jumpers Onboard Jump 49

Once Jump 49 arrived over the fire, contact was made with the Smokejumpers who were currently on the incident. Having successfully jumped a few days prior, the same jump spot would be used for this mission. One of the

Smokejumpers on the ground was in the jump spot with wind indicators to help visually identify wind direction. He relayed that there were light winds with some minimal wind shifts. As the jump mission progressed, updates were continuously provided to the Spotter.

After assessing jump spot hazards, wind direction and speed, and air mass stability, it was determined that it was safe to jump all eight Smokejumpers on Jump 49.

As Jump 49 circled the fire at 3,000 feet above ground level (AGL), the jumpers exited the plane in two person "sticks."

View of the jump spot as seen from Jump 49 with jumpers in flight (in red circle). Jump spot location is the ridgetop just to right of the smoke. (Smoke is identified in black circle.)

As the spotter observed the jumpers from the airplane, he noticed that Jumper7 landed in an area with some rising terrain, slightly short of the established jump spot. Once all jumpers landed, they reported that all were safely on the ground.

> ***"I was concerned on how he landed. I needed to confirm the extent of his injury."***
>
> **Jumper in Charge**

Jumper in Charge Performs Thorough Assessment of Jumper7's Ankle

As Jumper7 was coming in for landing on final, it was witnessed by other jumpers at the jump spot that he was facing into the wind. However, just as his feet hit the ground there was a gust of wind that pushed the parachute and Jumper7 down slope. As his feet made contact with some rocks, his momentum caused them to be pinned, hyperextending his right foot and leg. Jumper7 said he heard a *"popping"* noise come from his ankle.

Jumper7 believed he might have sprained his ankle when he landed, but thought he was OK and could still work. He could still walk and said that everything *"felt normal."* But the Jumper in Charge (JIC) was concerned with the way Jumper7 landed and wanted to confirm the extent of the injury. He performed a thorough assessment on Jumper7's ankle.

There was not visible swelling or bruising and he couldn't feel a break. Jumper7 said his ankle just felt *"weird, kind of loose."* The JIC wrapped the ankle to immobilize it and kept Jumper7 at the jump spot. The JIC remained engaged with Jumper7 and continued to assess how he was feeling and his pain level. Soon, the pain level Jumper7 was feeling elevated to a pain level 7. With this increased pain level, the JIC made the decision to get Jumper7 off the hill for evaluation and treatment.

> ***"It felt like something may be wrong, but I felt I could still work."***
>
> **Jumper7**

Helicopter Requested to Transport Jumper7 Off the Hill

The JIC got in touch with the IC and requested a "Green" non-emergency medical transport. Due to the long and hazardous hike out, the JIC requested a helicopter—when one became available—to transport Jumper7 off the hill. The JIC then notified the Spotter from Jump 49 who was refueling in Baker City.

The Spotter then notified the Boise Smokejumper Duty Officer of the injury.

The JIC and IC, working with Vale Dispatch, established a medical transport of Jumper7, via a fire helicopter, from the fire to the Ontario airport.

The Boise Smokejumper Duty Officer, also working through Vale Dispatch, organized ground transportation for Jumper7 from Ontario to Boise for treatment at a foot and ankle specialist. This decision span and coordination took only 14 minutes.

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By end of shift on August 9, it was determined that Jumper7 had broken his right fibula and was scheduled for surgery.

LESSONS

The Right Tool for the Job

Utilizing the "right tool" for the job is something we, as fire fighters on the ground and as agency leadership, need to always be considering.

There is risk in how all of our fire fighters get to a fire—be it by ground or aerial delivery. Exposing multiple firefighters on long hazardous hikes in steep rocky terrain or utilizing aerially delivered firefighters is a conversation that needs to occur, as it did on the Twin Trees Fire.

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Are You OK?

When someone says that they *"feel funny"* or *"it just doesn't feel right"* should be a Red Flag. We are a culture of working through it, toughening up, and not wanting to be "*That One.*"

Think about what additional damage you could be doing to yourself by not speaking up and the additional risk to those around you by you're not being 100%.

If you are in charge, keep asking the questions. *"Are you OK?"* If the symptoms are progressing in a negative direction, even if the individual can't really explain to you what's going on, make the call and get that person to the next level of care.

If you are injured or just not "*feeling right*" think about what additional damage you could be doing to yourself by not speaking up and the additional risk to those around you by you're not being 100%. What are you exposing them to if things go from not *"feeling right"* to a more serious medical emergency.

Have a Medical Program

The Boise Smokejumpers have an EMS program with set protocols and oversight by a medical program director. They also have a designated EMT coordinator who oversees their initial medical training (Wilderness First Responder and EMT-B) and continuing education.

As part of their annual fire refresher training, they conduct hands-on, field-based simulated medical scenarios. These scenarios allow them to become familiar with their medical equipment, protocols, and to practice their skills.

Are you practicing your plan through scenarios that include your line officers, dispatchers and those you could be fighting fire with?

Do you have a medical response plan? What resources does your plan need? How will you get those resources to your medical incident? Are you practicing your plan through scenarios that include your line officers, dispatchers and those you could be fighting fire with?

Are you sharing your incident through the Lessons Learned Center so we can be learning and increasing our knowledge base?

Smokejumper Learning Culture/System (Reporting, Sharing, Tracking)

If an incident occurs with any Smokejumper, BLM or Forest Service, a Mission Incident Worksheet describing the event is filled out and immediately sent out to Smokejumper Base Managers. This generally happens within 24 hours of the event.

Additionally, there is a Smokejumper Parachute Landing Injury Data System which is tracked by the Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC). These reports are collected to track historic injury data/trends. The form has a description of the incident, a jumper narrative, a spotter narrative, and a "conclusions/corrective actions" section.

Many jumper-specific lessons are rapidly identified and shared using these tools. The reports collected by MTDC are used to support programmatic learning. Are you sharing your incident through the Lessons Learned Center so we can be learning and increasing our knowledge base?

This RLS was submitted by:

Renae Crippen and the Great Basin Smokejumpers

Do you have a Rapid Lesson to share?
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Share Your Lessons