

Waterfall Fire Incident with Potential 72 Hour Briefing

Location:	Carson City Nevada
Date of Occurrence:	July 14, 2004
Time of Occurrence:	Approximately 1300
Team Leader:	Joe Freeland
Mission:	Wildland Fire Incident, Engine Operations
Activity:	Initial Attack and Extended Attack Fire Suppression Activity with Simultaneous Technical Rescue of Injured Firefighters
Number of Injured:	2 (does not include other non-burn over injuries)
Number of Fatalities:	None
Property Damage:	\$800,000

Narrative:

On July 14 initial attack forces from multiple jurisdictions were holding fireline along the eastern flank of the fire with engines, hand crews, and a dozer, supported by aerial resources. The fire was burning mid slope with moderate intensity in open pine stands with grass and sagebrush understory. The fire was burning in the hills immediately west of Carson City on lands under the jurisdiction of USDA Forest Service, Nevada Division of Forestry, and Carson City Fire Department.

As the fire progressed to the south, light and variable winds eased and the down canyon/down slope winds increased. This wind change increased fire behavior significantly and generated profuse spotting. At approximately 1245 hours the first spot fires began to cross to the east of the Kings Canyon Road. Crews were unable to confine the spot fires due to the rapid nature of their growth as well as the number of the spot fires. By 1300 hours, due to both the rapid growth of the spot fires and the increasing influence of the down canyon winds, firefighting effectiveness deteriorated rapidly. After attempting to catch the first of the spot fires unsuccessfully, the decision was made to abandon current tactical operations and move all firefighting personnel to the north east, down the Kings Canyon Road to regroup east of the fire for redeployment.

Also during this time, medical attention was being provided to two hand crew members who were being treated for injuries sustained on the fireline. Difficult technical rescue operations were underway immediately adjacent to the area impacted by the burn over, which significantly affected suppression activities and actions.

Egress of retreating firefighting resources down the Kings Canyon Road was compromised by factors including the following:

- Multiple vehicles (Law enforcement, Firefighting, Commercial, Civilian) parked in and around the trailhead on the road
- Narrow road with limited opportunities to turn around
- Significant traffic coming up the road

As a result, approximately 10 vehicles were unable to egress out of the area before being over run by the fire. Some of the vehicles were left by their operators due to the immediate threat of the fire and their inability to egress out of the area. Several vehicles were left in place due to the congestion and their operators evacuated the area on foot. Some personnel, due to the congestion, were forced to stay within the safety of their vehicles as the fire burned through the area.

This burn over resulted in minor burn injuries to one firefighter and one civilian news reporter. It also destroyed a fire engine, a fire truck and a six passenger pick-up. Several other vehicles sustained minor to moderate heat related damage.

An investigation team has been conducting a review of the burn over since 7/15/04 and will issue a report. A separate investigation to determine fire cause is underway.

Joe Freeland, Team Leader

DATE

TIME