



S A F E N E T
**Wildland Fire Safety &
 Health Reporting
 Network**
 Report unsafe situations in
 all wildland fire operations.



ID # 8X6NAGSAFE

REPORTED BY

Name : *(Optional)*

Phone : *(Optional)*

EMAIL : *(Optional)*

Date Reported : 08/14/2012

Agency/Organization : USFS

State Agency :

Other Agency :

EVENT

Event Date : 08/11/2012

Local Time :

Incident Name : STEEP CORNER

Incident Number :

State : ID

Jurisdiction : Other

Local Unit : CPTPA

Incident Type :

Incident Activity :

Stage of Incident :

Wildland

Line

Extended Attack

Position Title : Crwb lhc Superintendent

Task : Scouting, Line Construction

Management Level : 3

Resources Involved : 2 T2 Crews

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Contributing Factors : Environmental; Communications; Human Factors

Human Factors : Decision Making; Leadership; Risk Assessment; Situational Awareness

Other Factors :

NARRATIVE

Describe in detail what happened including the concern or potential issue, the environment (weather, terrain, fire behavior, etc), and the resulting safety/health issue.

8-11-12

1230 Flathead IHC arrives at Headquarters, ID a Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protection Association (CPTPA) station We were in-briefed by 2 logistics guys and received a radio clone. The logs guys led us to the fire. At 1400 we arrived at the parking area and parked the crew. Supt and foreman found CPTPA IC. IC briefed us on tactical duties. He had to be prompted for specifics on everything else. No EMS. No Wx. No Med plan other than "call the county". No direct link to Grangeville dispatch. No mention of hazards. No direction other than, "jump in the middle and work south" no crew contacts other than "a guy named [X]". IC was wearing jeans. We noticed multiple CPTPA people not wearing PPE or shelters. Supt told IC we would scout the fire before committing crew. Supt took off on a scouting mission down the burned line through the middle of the fire, as directed by IC. Foreman briefed crew. Crew established own LCES. We posted 1st lookout of day. Supt called and said to send no one down the burned line through the middle of the fire the IC had directed the crew to go down, due to snags and previously cut log decks. Line was still hot. As supt was hiking, he observed multiple cedar snags burning from half way up down to the base. Fire was more active than IC's briefing indicated. Foreman scouted north line and met with supt. Both tied in with [X] (wearing jeans). Told [X] they had a lot of hazards. Snags-safety issues...he agreed. [X] told us about the tactics of skipping sections of line due to snags. Asked for a contact for the crew working from N to S. he said they didn't have a contact. Just a hodge-podge crew. At that point, we had heard multiple people asking, "are you ok" after helicopter drops, the people directing the helicopter drops had no or little experience utilizing helicopters and were having the helicopters drop water without clearing the line of personnel. We scouted the bottom of the fire from N to S to assess what work had been done, what needed to be done and to assess hazards. Got down to the skipped section of line and noted that it was burning actively and needed attention. While scouting from N to S, we both commented that we had huge concerns about the number of snags burning, the size of them and the amount that had already come down. During this scouting mission, we were both running side hill to get out of underneath of the snag hazards. Hiking was extremely difficult due to the amount of dead and down along with the steepness of the slope. At this time, we had already determined that the crew would not be engaging on the fire until the hazards were mitigated. We tied into another section of skipped line that was actively moving downhill. Another person standing close by was not wearing Nomex pants, we commented to him about the snag hazards, skipping sections of line tactics, and active fire moving downhill and the possibility of fire hooking the made-up crew. We then told him to call a helicopter to drop on the skipped sections line where no personnel were working, to halt fire spread and reduce chance of fire moving and hooking the crew. He did not respond. We proceed on side hill to tie in with the hodge-podge crew. When we got there, we found a bunch of CPTPA folks with no PPE and running saws without chaps, mixed in with a USFS engine crew from the NFRD. We talked to the FS ENGB and expressed our concerns about snags, tactics, and safety concerns. He said he did not know who was in charge, if the IC is a real IC and did not know what their plan was. He said he has been, "Trying to help these guys out and keep his guys safe." At this point, everyone on the fire seemed to be task focused and mission driven. The only objective was to complete the handline. No one had an eye on the big picture or seemed to be in control or in charge. We told the FS ENGB what is going on here is extremely unsafe. We were not going to engage our crew and that as USFS employees we have to hold ourselves to a higher standard. FS ENGB agreed and said snags and communication had been an issue all day. We proceeded and ran in to CPTPA guy named [A]. We voiced our concerns about snags, tactics, comms and putting a helicopter on the sections that had gotten skipped. He said, "we are just doing the best we can with what we got...". He

asked us to put our crew on the skipped sections and we told him we were not bringing the crew down. We advised him to hit them with a helicopter. We proceeded south to the farthest south and bottom corner of the fire and found it burning actively in a drainage filled with heavy dead and down and a receptive bed of fine fuel underneath. At this point we could see the prison crew digging line downhill into this drainage with fire below them. We told [A] to get a helicopter drop on this area and he did not. We hustled up the line and tied into the prison crew overhead and informed them of what was going on below them. This didn't seem to concern them. Their concern was the falling snags and rolling rocks coming down the hill. The prison crew's CRWB commented that they had been chased up the hill several times due to fire below them and big rocks coming down the hill. At this time a huge snag came down above us and started rolling down through the standing trees. The prison CRWB commented, "That is the sound of the day". We once again called [A] and told him to get buckets on the fire below the prison crew because it was hooking them. We didn't get a response. At this time, we continued uphill 100ft and then someone made the call to get everyone out due to the bucket drops. The prison crew started to leave the fire line. The fire was still moving up hill and into more dead and down. My crew-mate contacted air attack and requested a bucket drop on the heat; air attack gave him 2 helicopters. He started working them on the spot. Another member of the IHC met up with the FS ENGB and his crew heading up hill to get off the fire line. FS ENGB said he talked to [A] about the LCES, snag hazards, medevac spots and [A] said once again, "we are doing the best with what we have" FS ENGB grabbed his crew of USFS people and hiked off the line. Our IHC member informed air attack to have the helicopters keep dropping on the spots and we both bugged out. We started hiking out when we soon ran into the prison crew and some CPTPA people (again with NO PPE, fire shelter, Nomex). The prison crew commented they were slow due to injured persons on the crew. We made our way to the road on top of the fire out of harm's way, sat down and started compiling a list of broken 10 & 18, safety concerns, and ways to mitigate them. We walked down the road to where a group of CPTPA guys and the IC were gathered. We stood beside the IC and were ignored awkwardly for 10 minutes. We initiated conversation and told him we would not engage the crew because we have standards and protocols we need to follow. He said he would just have to send us home then. We said that was fine. We told him we had a list of safety concerns and mitigations if he would like to hear them. We read him our list and he said they have a different set of values and do things differently. He asked to keep the list and we tore it from the notebook and gave it to him. We told him we would contact Grangeville dispatch after we had been released. We drove to Headquarters and called dispatch.

Flathead IHC

List of safety concerns on the Steep Corner fire and our suggestions for Mitigations

Unmitigated Watchouts: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17

Violated Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

No LCES

Issues:

Lack of command structure: No one seemed in control.

Snags

Gravity Hazards

Total reliance on Air resources

Poor communications

Mixed crews with no leadership

Using the wrong kind and type of resources for the job

Solutions:

Unified Command USFS/CPTPA T3 Org with DIVS's and OPS

Pro Saws with FELB

More T1 Crews

This is a rough copy of the handwritten list we presented and physically gave to IC.

IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN

Reporting Individual : please describe actions you took to correct or mitigate the unsafe/unhealthful event.

Please see above Narrative

Photos, particularly for equipment related issues, may be attached. Please do not exceed 5 pictures and compress photos for the smallest file size that illustrates the particular concern. Photos are subject to the same sanitization criteria as SAFENETS.

ATTACHMENTS:

#1

#2

#3

#4

#5