

**To: Field Office Managers, FMOs, Fire Crew Supervisors**

**From: Assistant FMO, NorCal**

**Subject: Fire Safety Alert**

It is July 28, 2004. Today is the two year anniversary of the Stanza Fire and the LNF Engine 11 accident that killed 3 of our local firefighters. July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2003 was the Cramer Fire, in which 2 firefighters died. This July 2<sup>nd</sup> marked the ten year anniversary of the South Canyon Fire that killed 14 firefighters.

Consider some events that have happened this year so far:

On July 26th, 2004, on the Straylor Fire, a dozer tender was destroyed by fire and fire engines were scorched. At almost the same time a helicopter crashed on that incident and injured 2 CDF firefighters and the pilot.

On July 14, 2004, on the Waterfall Fire in Carson City, NV, approximately 10 vehicles (including firefighting vehicles) were unable to evacuate an area being over run by fire. Some of these vehicles were destroyed. One fire fighter and a civilian news reporter received burn injuries. Their escape route was blocked by incoming traffic. No controls or road guards.

On July 22, 2004, a San Bernardino National Forest engine was scorched while working a spot fire on the Citrus Fire in Southern California. Air hoses and electrical lines were burned, and the engine "locked up" while trying to drive it out of an area being over-run by the fire. The operator received first degree burns to his face, neck and back of both of his hands.

On July 2, 2004, on the Nuttall Fire in Arizona, 12 firefighters (hot shots) deployed shelters when their position experienced heavy smoke and ember wash. This position was chosen as refuge when they determined they could not make their designated safety zone. No injuries

On July 13, 2004, a hand crew member received radiant heat burn injury to his face and elbows while attacking a fire in light flashy fuels on the Mataguay Fire in San Diego County.

In all of these cases, LCES was followed. In many cases, fire behavior changed quickly, was erratic and with spotting.

These are only the incidents I have heard of, there are probably more. (This does not include the aviation accidents that we have had this fire season). To me, this seems like a lot of near misses, this early in the season.

The incidents/near misses described above serve as a heads up to all our employees engaged in firefighting operations. Fuel/fire conditions are severe in the western states. It is only July. We have several weeks of fire season remaining, and we do not want our people getting into situations that could cause injury or equipment damage.

PLEASE REVIEW FIRELINE SAFETY DAILY WITH YOUR CREWS

Take the time to review the basics: LCES, 10 Standard, 18 situations.

Make sure you have a valid escape route and a back up.

Constantly reassess the fire situation.

Evaluate fuel and weather conditions constantly.

Periodically reevaluate your escape routes.

Ensure that communications are solid before engaging in any assignment.

Ensure lookouts are posted, and have positive communication.

Fight fire aggressively, **having provided for safety first.**

*Trees and brush will grow back, firefighters will not.*