

72 Hour Preliminary Report

To: Tom Nichols Designated Agency Safety and Health Official, Wildland Fire
From: Jeff Brice, Team Leader, NPS, Southeast Regional Office
Subject: 72 Hour Report, Dark Ridge Felling Accident

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

LOCATION: Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (Dark Ridge)

DATE OF OCCURRENCE: November 29th, 2009

TIME OF OCCURRENCE: Approximately 1130 hours

TEAM LEADER: Jeff Brice, NPS SER Trainee

ACTIVITY: Hazard fuels reduction (felling snags)

NUMBER & TYPE OF INJURIES: One, non-life threatening

NARRATIVE:

On November 29th, 2009 a Big South Fork (BISO) FirePro crewmember was felling a snag-topped hickory tree on the park boundary in preparation for a prescribed burn. The Cumberland Gap (CUGA) Wildland Fire Module supervisor noticed that the tree was not falling as expected, and moved to the tree to assist with placing wedges. The tree then broke free and pivoted before falling against the CUGA Wildland Fire Module supervisor pinning him to the ground.

Crew members immediately radioed for assistance and began cutting and removing the tree. Local EMS was transported to the scene, where the injured employee was stabilized and then taken to a waiting helicopter for transport to the University of Tennessee Trauma Center for definitive care.

An After Action Review was conducted November 30th, 2009, with the Park Chief Ranger/FMO and the Big South Fork FirePro members. BISO crew provided written statements of the incident, and discussed both the specific events during the incident, and also made general recommendations regarding emergency response.

All further work on fire projects in the park were put on hold pending a safety stand down, completion of the Non Serious Accident Investigation Team investigation and a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing for the staff.

On December 1, 2009 GUGA Park Superintendent Woods requested a NSAI Team via the SER Chief Ranger. On December 1, 2009 SER Chief Ranger Anderson Appointed Jeff Brice, NPS SER as the Team Leader. Brice is a Trainee. Mark Ruggiero NPS SER was assigned as the shadow for Brice for this assignment.

On December 1, 2009 Brice assembled the NSAI Team and ordered the team to assemble at the GUGA Park Headquarters on December 2, 2009 at 0900 to receive the in-briefing from Chief Ranger Dirk Wiley. Other Team members include Robert Jett, NPS SER Safety Expert Trainee, Jerry Burk, USFS, Falling expert, Class C Faller, Jim Spano, USFWS Safety Expert and Sam Osborne, NPS, Documentation.

The NSAI Team will be in the Park through December 3, 2009 to conduct interviews, collect documentation, and perform a site review of the accident. The Team will interview the Module Leader involved at the UT Medical center on December 3, 2009 at 1200 hours. Currently the injured Module Leader is recovering, and should be released home within three days. A lengthy but full recovery is expected at this time.

End of Report