

August 31, 2004

72 Hour Briefing

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

I. General Information

A. Fire Name and location:

Taylor Complex; Gardiner Creek Fire-AK-TAS-413889; Northway, AK.
Incident location: Gardiner Creek Bridge, Milepost 1246.6 Alaska Hwy

B. Number of personnel involved: 2

C. Number of injuries: 2

D. Number of fatalities: 0

II. Fire Related Information

A. Fuel Model: Alaska Spruce mixed with hardwoods (aspen, birch and poplar) and tussocks

B. Weather information was collected at ALCAN HWY MI-1244 RAWs recorded at 1700. Temperature was 62, R.H. was 30%, and wind speed was 8 mph out of the east/northeast with peak winds of 16 mph.

C. Topography is sand dunes, low lying hills and swamps

D. Fire size at time of incident/accident was 113,368 acres

III. Incident with Potential and/or Non-Serious Injury (Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book)2004, Section D, 2.B

Description:

On the afternoon of August 26, 2004 at approximately 1730, two firefighters assigned to the Taylor complex sustained burns to their feet while conducting a burnout operation on Division G on the Gardiner Creek fire near milepost 1246 Alaska Highway. The injuries sustained were not life threatening and both are expected to return to full active duty within two weeks.

The firefighters were assigned to the Taylor Complex and were providing structure protection and supporting dozer lines near the community of Northway, Alaska. One of the firefighters, from the Alaska Fire Service-BLM, was assigned as a Strike Team Leader (Trainee). The other injured firefighter, from the Tongass National Forest was assigned to an Engine.

Operational Details:

As a result of increasing fire activity and after conducting an aerial reconnaissance of the area, it was determined the main fire was going to bump the Alaska Highway. A burnout operation was deemed necessary to eliminate the potential for spotting when this occurred. After briefing participating personnel, a series of small burnout operations were successfully conducted. These were efforts to mitigate the potential for spot fires to occur across Gardiner Creek and/or the Alaska Highway which would jeopardize structures and native allotments. These operations were conducted between H-200 and the Scenic Overlook. The tactic was to use drip

torches and to ignite unburned fuel which would increase the width of the fire break along Gardiner Creek and the Alaska Highway. The two injured firefighters became disorientated in heavy smoke conditions and were injured while crossing into the black to access the road which had been previously identified as their safety zone. They both received second degree burns on their feet. Medical treatment was provided by Emergency Medical Technicians assigned to the incident. The patients were transported by ground to a helispot where they were transported by helicopter to progressive medical care and ultimately flown by fixed wing aircraft to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital where they were treated and released.

The Taylor Complex was managed by an Alaska Type II Team (Jandt) which was preparing to transition to another Alaska Type II Team (Kurth) at midnight Friday, August 27th, 2004.

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) was notified of the incident and concurred with the decision to assign an interagency investigative team from within the State of Alaska. The team disseminated and made contact with the victims and the various members of the overhead and operations personnel on the incident and is conducting a thorough investigation and will release a final report when all pertinent facts and findings have been concluded.