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**Subject:** Expanded 72-hour Briefing of Engine 71 Burn Injuries  
Indians Fire  
(Los Padres National Forest)  
(June 11, 2008)

**To:** Randy Moore-Regional Forester

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**Preliminary Fact Findings:** On June 11, 2008 at approximately 1600 hrs LPF Engine 71 with five crew members (four on the ground and one driver) was supporting a holding action during a firing operation along the Del Venturi Road. Between 1625 and 1635 hrs a sudden change in the fire behavior occurred resulting in the burn over of four engine crew members and the engine with driver in an entrapment. While attempting to return to the engine, three crew members opened their fire shelters to deflect the radiant heat the fourth crewmember was able to return to Engine 71 the driver and the crewmember were able to back out of the fire to a safe area. The three crewmembers making their way along the road were picked up by a vehicle driven by the Division Supervisor. The three crewmembers were driven to a safe location and moved from the Division Supervisor's vehicle to rejoin Engine 71, where the driver and fifth member were waiting. A rapid medical assessment was conducted by line EMT's on scene and the crew drove to the ICP Medical Unit.

Fuels in the area were predominately grassland with a mature valley oak over story. The surrounding hillsides are covered with chaparral.

**Narrative:** While supporting a firing operation on the Los Padres National Forest, the Mt. Pinos Ranger District crew members of Engine-71 were entrapped by an unexpected extreme fire behavior event. A cyclonic phenomenon contributed to four members of Engine-71 to be overcome by the fire. The crew was in a holding action as well as suppressing spot fires near the roads edge, when they experienced unusually high winds estimated to be over 70 plus miles per hour during this event that lasted between five to ten minutes. Limbs ranging in diameter from 4-15 inches were broken off and ripped from the boles of mature valley oak trees. Golf ball to fist size rocks and debris were hurled into the air. Firefighter injuries were a result of radiant and convective heat from the event. The firefighters were rapidly transported by ground transportation to the ICP Medical Unit. Medical personnel triaged, evaluated and provided emergency medical treatment to the crew members. The most serious injuries were sustained by one crew member who was evaluated and treated for second and third degree burns to the hands, neck and ears. The employee was air lifted to the Santa Clara Valley Trauma and Burn Center. Two members were evaluated, treated for burns and transported by ground ambulance to the Twin Cities Hospital emergency unit. That evening the two crew members were released from the hospital. The fourth crew member declined treatment initially at the ICP Medical Unit but after further consideration chose medical evaluation and treatment after showing physical signs of burn injuries.



The crew member that was transported to the Valley Burn Center is still at the center receiving care.

The three other crew members were re-evaluated on June 13 at a Fresno medical facility.

An Accident Prevention Analysis (APA) team was ordered on June 12th and assembled on June 13th, 2008. The team is currently developing a "Lessons Learned Analysis." The focus of this analysis is to understand systems failures and why individual behavior made sense at the time of the event. We treat accidents and near misses as learning opportunities and exploit their full value and potential as lessons to both leadership and employees. The APA Team has 45 calendar days to provide a draft report to the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region R-5.

/S/ THOMAS A. CONTRERAS  
Team Leader