



File Code: 6730

Date: July 31, 2002

Route To:

Subject: Expanded (72-Hour) Briefing

To: Chief

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Deceased: Steven K. Oustad, Fire Engine Operator, 51 years of age.

Heather J. DePaolo, Senior Fire Fighter, 29 years of age.

John Self, Fire Fighter, 19 years of age.

Next of kin have been notified. Russell Volke has been identified as the Lassen National Forest Family Liaison for the Oustad family. Janette Crowley has been identified as the Lassen National Forest Family Liaison for the Self family. Jim Davis has been identified as the Lassen National Forest Family Liaison for the DePaolo family.

Preliminary factual findings:

Lassen National Forest Engine 11 (Type III) with a five-person crew was moving slowly along a single lane Forest Service road on the Klamath National Forest approximately 20 miles south of Happy Camp, California. The driver side tires left the outside edge of the road and the Engine rolled off the road and down a steep slope approximately 1000 feet down into an old timber harvest area. The driver, the engine captain, and one fireman from the rear passenger compartment were ejected and fatally injured.

Narrative:

On July 28th Engine 11 was given the assignment to provide support during the night shift along road 15N03A.

It appears seat belts were being worn properly. Two passengers in the rear passenger compartment remained belted in and sustained serious injuries. Alex Glover was treated at the hospital and released on July 29, 2002 and Ryan Smith remains at the hospital in Redding, California and in stable condition.

There does not appear to be any mechanical failure responsible for the rollover. The accident occurred nearly eight hours into the twelve-hour night shift. Engine 11 had been assigned to this road on the previous night shift and had made numerous trips past the accident location the night of the accident. Engine 11 was providing support to a hand crew (Kentucky 8) along the fire on the uphill side of the road. The road was acting as the fire line and catching burning material, rocks, and other debris.

Weather does not appear to have been a factor, however, the area was smoky. There was dust in the area from vehicles on the road. The early morning darkness obviously influenced visibility.



The road travel way (10-12 feet wide) did not fail or give way. The travel width varies because of fire debris.

The California Highway Patrol is conducting a courtesy investigation of the accident in cooperation with the Forest Service investigation. An Occupational Safety & Health Administration representative is on site and working with the Investigation Team.

/s/ Tom L. Thompson

TOM THOMPSON
Team Leader

cc:
Ron Wilson – Safety Manager
Official case file