

EXHIBIT 2
ALG.

Peach Hill Fire

SUMMARY REPORT

BURN INJURIES

Vern Simmons, F.A.E.
Darren Loft, R.P.T.
Alma Helitack
October 15, 1985

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY
VENTURA COUNTY
REGION VI

SYNOPSIS

On October 15, 1985, at approximately 1520 hours, two members of the Alma Helitack crew, Santa Clara Ranger Unit, received moderate burn injuries when they were forced to deploy fire shelters during a firing operation on a vegetation fire, near the town of Thousand Oaks, in Ventura County.

FIRELINE CONDITIONS

Weather:

1. Observed from the Arboles Fire Station in Thousand Oaks:

1500		1700	
-temperature	84°	-temperature	84°
-humidity	20%	-humidity	22%
-fuel moisture	7	-fuel moisture	7
-wind	NE 12	-wind	NE 4

2. Observed by Forestry Pilot Fred Nunes from Helicopter 504, over the incident approximately 30 minutes prior to the accident -
- temperature - 87° - 88°
- wind - sustained winds of 10-15 knots from the east, with gusts to 25 knots

Fuel: Buckwheat, annual grass, and coastal sage at approximately 2-3 tons per acre.

Topography: Southern aspect of coastal ridge average slope 50%.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

C.D.F. Copter 504 arrived in Ventura County at approximately 1250 hours. The crew consisted of: Forestry Pilot Fred Nunes, F.C. Ken Gilbert, F.A.E. Vern Simmons, F.F. I Rod Evans, R.P.T. Tim Kenyon, R.P.T. David Meyers, R.P.T. David Woodworth, R.P.T. Don Vollrath, and R.P.T. Darren Loft.

At the time of arrival of Copter 504, several active fires were burning in Ventura County. Being unable to locate the incident they were originally dispatched to, contact was made with the Peach Hill I.C. Copter 504 was advised that they were not presently needed on the Peach Hill Incident and were directed to contact the Tapo I.C. Copter 504 landed at the Tapo Incident and made contact with the Tapo I.C. Copter 504 was advised to return to Camarillo Airport to stand-by for initial attack responses.

While returning to Camarillo Airport, Copter 504 again passed by the Peach Hill Incident and noticed a dwelling which was being threatened by fire.

Captain Gilbert contacted Peach Hill I.C. and advised him of the situation. Copter 504 located a water source (irrigation pond), and a second dwelling (adjacent to an avacado orchard) approximately 1 mile west of the fireline.

A major drainage which runs from a spot approximately 450' north of the pond to a vertical cliff area (without vegetation) and directly adjacent to the orchard, was chosen as a good location for a firing out operation, due to the sparse vegetative cover and the presence of a dirt road to the south and the avacado orchard to the west as anchor points.

Captain Gilbert contacted Peach Hill I.C. and advised that his crew could begin firing the drainage while the helicopter would support the crew and provide water drops to the threatened structure.

The firing operation began at 1430 hours at point 1, on attached map. Three crew members (Tim Kenyon, David Woodworth, Don Vollrath) started firing east along the orchard. FAE Simmons, with Rod Evans, David Meyers, and Darren Loft started working in a north/west direction along the edge of orchard #1. Both crews were using fuses, with back pumps. The crew, which was working to the east experienced no major problems with their operation.

The crew working to the north/west experienced no major problems as they ascended the hillside working adjacent to the orchard. The avacado orchard, with several access roads, was identified their escape route if needed. It was further identified that if escape from flames became necessary, the crew would have to retreat well into the orchard.

Throughout the operation, Captain Gilbert and Pilot Nunes in Copter 504 were making water drops to protect the structure near the fireline at intervals of approximately two minutes. On each trip they were able to visually inspect the progress of the main fire and the firing operation. Radio contact with the crew working to the north/west and Copter 504 was maintained throughout this operation. The crew working toward the east had no radio communication.

At 1500 hours - Captain Gilbert and Pilot Nunes returned to Camarillo Airport to refuel. Prior to departure from the incident a visual inspection of the fire and their crews progress was made. Captain Gilbert advised his crew that their operation was "looking good" and that he and Pilot Nunes were enroute to Camarillo for fuel.

The position of the firing crew at the time of Copter 504's departure is noted as 2 on the attached map. The location of the main fire, at that time (as indicated by Gilbert & Nunes), was at the crest of Ridge A.

The crew continued firing in a north/west direction along the edge of the orchard. Crew members stated that they were experiencing erratic wind conditions from calm to 15 mph winds in varied directions, the prevailing wind coming from the east. At approximately 1510 hours, the crew left the boundary of the orchard and continued their firing operation in a north direction along a truck trail approximately 10' wide (See point 3 on map).

The crew experienced some spotting across the road to the west of their firing operation. These were extinguished with back pumps. They continued to a point approximately 150' north of the orchard and stopped firing. Continuation of the firing operation at that point would have required the crew to continue into unburned fuel in very steep terrain, so the decision was made to wait at that location (4 on map) for the return of Copter 504. The fire from the firing operation was backing slowly down canyon against the wind, approximately 30-50' downhill from points 3 and 4.

The main fire was approximately 1/2 way down the western slope of Ridge A moving in a westerly direction.

While waiting for Copter 504 the crew experienced an increase in wind velocity from the east. Simultaneously, fire advanced out of the canyon at point B, sheeting across the truck trail and occluding their escape route to the orchard. The crew moved to a very sparsely covered flat area (point 5). F.F. Evans stated, "It's time for the shelters", and all members of the crew responded by deploying their fire shelters. All crew members indicated that the strong winds made deployment extremely difficult.

Darren Loft removed his right glove to enable him to open his fire shelter. Additionally, Loft's helmet fell off during shelter deployment.

While under the fire shelters, all members of the crew experienced vegetation burning on the ground inside their shelters, and used their hands to pat out the fire. R.P.T. Loft made several attempts to pat out the fire inside his shelter, using his ungloved right hand. A small clump of vegetation, probably buckwheat, flared up toward his face. It was at this time that Loft decided to vacate his fire shelter, and run toward the burned area to the east. As Loft ran by F.A.E. Simmons, Simmons vacated his shelter intending to catch Loft and cover both himself and Loft in one shelter. As Simmons got up the wind blew his shelter from his hand. (Both of these shelters were found approximately 200' to the west of the deployment site). Engineer Simmons caught Loft and laid over him until F.F. Evans came to their assistance with his shelter.

By this time, the fire had passed but the wind was still showering the crew with hot embers. Water from back pumps was used to immediately cool the burned skin areas of Loft and Simmons. Initial radio contact for help by the crew was unsuccessful. The decision was made to retreat to the pond area to wait for assistance. All four members of the crew exited the area, through the orchard, using Evan's fire shelter to shield the burn victims from flying embers. Kenyon, Woodworth, and Vollrath had already returned to the pond after they were unable to continue their firing operation. Radio contact was made with Copter 504, which was returning to the incident from Camarillo. On arrival at the pond, the burns were treated and dressed by a Ventura County Fire Captain. The burn victims were flown to the nearest emergency room (Los Robles Hospital, Thousand Oaks) in Copter 504. They were subsequently transferred to the burn center at Sherman Oaks Community Hospital.

SUMMARY OF INJURIES:

F.A.E. Vern Simmons:

Burned area, 12%

Deep 2nd degree burns on face cheeks, and 3rd and 5th fingers.
2nd degree burns on remainder of both hands.

R.P.T. Darren Loft:

Burned area, 14%

1st degree burns to 4th and 5th fingers, right hand.
2nd degree burns on remainder of right hand, face, and neck.

NOTES ON INJURIES:

1. Both injured crew members received burns to uncovered skin areas (face, neck, and ungloved hands).
2. No clothing on any of the crew was burned.
3. The two crew members who remained in their shelters received no injuries.

POST INCIDENT SUMMARY NOTES:

1. All crew members experienced difficulty opening fire shelters with gloves on.
2. In this case, the use of fire shelters prevented injuries to those who remained inside.
3. Standard protective clothing, on both injured crew members, prevented serious injuries to covered skin areas.

