

## Two Big Lessons Learned by Safety Officers on the Robert Complex, 2003

During our time on the Robert Complex we had a great safety record, especially considering we drove over 1,008,000 miles and worked 360,000 hours with one fender bender (a backing accident) and a handful of lost time illnesses and injuries. We instituted two changes that contributed to this success story (besides having good crews, good ops folks and SOFR's), that I think are worthy of mention.

**#1 - Inbriefings for each new crew.** The primary SOFR spent an hour with each crew right after their check-in to provide a safety in-briefing to the entire crew rather than relying on the crew boss to repeat the message. Some crew bosses do a good job of repeating/transferring information while others don't. Some crews just need to hear the tone and nature of the message from someone new, someone from the Incident Mgt Team, rather than the same old voice. We covered the following topics (for every crew and crewmember):

Their responsibility for safety - safety being a higher priority than digging the line or squirting the water - how to be an asset to the suppression effort rather than a liability (injured and detracting)

The extreme conditions - fuels and fire behavior, and the need for LCES with large safety zones that are readily available

Driving hazards and their responsibility to slow down, only move vehicles with safety belts and lights on, and stopping fully off the road-bed when pulling over. We discussed last year's van rollover enroute to Hayman and the engine rollover in CA. Hazard trees and their responsibility to scout for hazard trees, fall em, or flag and avoid - prior to occupying or working a piece of line

Bear safety - food and waste management, bear spray safety, and we showed a bear safety video

**#2 - Reduced shift lengths - by starting later.** We had difficulty with this one as the fire kept throwing curves at us and average shift lengths were just too long. So we moved our morning briefing (start time) to 0700 rather than 0600 (to get everyone more rest) and we wouldn't allow timesheets to start before 0630... There was quite a bit of grumbling however this helped bring the average number of hours per shift down, and I know it reduced fatigue levels.

We put forth other efforts that promoted safety, however I think the direct crewmember in-briefings and the later morning briefings really helped get folks what they needed.

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