



CDF Weekly Safety Briefing

September 22, 2003

Fire Safety Tip

Snag Safety



On July 16th, 2003, an Oregon fire crew of eight was dispatched to the “Rough Canyon Fire.” As the Crew Supervisor walked the perimeter of the fire, checking for hazards he noticed a green pine tree approximately 24-26” DBH had been struck by lightning. There was fire burning up about 8 feet in the tree. He checked the base and felt there was enough holding wood left to support the tree. The incident Safety Officer also looked at the tree and said he would have made the same call. As one of the crew members went ahead and fell the rest of the snags on the top of the fire the crew watched from a safe distance. After the snags had been felled, the crew started constructing their fire line up the North side of the fire.

As the faller was watching the pine that had been struck by lightning he saw it starting to fall uphill into the fire and shouted to everyone on the crew to get away from the fire and the falling pine. While fleeing from the tree one crewmember caught his leg between two small trees and twisted his knee and while another crewmember fell and was able to get up and away from the falling tree; a third member hit his shins while moving away from the tree.

Snag Safety (Continued)

Fortunately, all of the injuries were minor in nature and the entire crew was able to get safely away from the falling tree.

Later, the Crew Supervisor commented that this incident had truly been a “close call. “If it hadn’t for the Faller paying attention to what was happening at the time the incident could have been tragic.”

I share this information with you so that you can remind your folks to be ever vigilant when it comes to snags and if there is ever a doubt regarding the soundness of any tree/snag within or adjacent to a fire’s perimeter it should come down. When in doubt always err on the side of caution rather than take the risk of serious or fatal injury.

Remember, that snags are one the overall top killers of Wildland Firefighters in California, and by themselves are quite hazardous. When on fire they become extremely dangerous.

The following safety points regarding snags are provided for your information and review:

SNAG SAFETY

Environmental and operational conditions that may increase snag hazards include:

- Strong winds
- Night operations
- Steep Slopes
- Diseased or bug-kill areas
- Helicopter bucket drops and rotor down drafts
- Retardant drops
- Vibrations from heavy equipment and motor vehicles operating nearby
- Use of explosives in fireline construction

HAZARD TREE INDICATORS

Some of the common signs which should warn you about a potentially dangerous condition include:

- Trees have been burning for an extended period of time
- High risk tree species (rot and shallow root system, i.e., cypress)
- Numerous down trees
- Dead or broken tops and limbs overhead
- Accumulation of down limbs
- Absence of needles, bark or limbs
- Leaning or hung-up trees

Health Safety Tip

Shoring-Up Self-Esteem

Help safeguard your partner's self-esteem by taking time to express how much you value him or her.

Feeling valued by a partner can help a person better deal with a blow to his or her self-esteem. In a study, people who did not feel positively regarded by their partners found it more difficult to feel good about themselves after a difficult experience such as rejection.

Take time to strengthen and preserve the bonds between you and your loved ones. Long-term, loving relationships not only enhance emotional well-being, but they also can be beneficial to your physical health by protecting you from the ravages of stress.

To send Comments or suggestions for future topics please contact:

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