



Event Type: Burn Injury on Face

Date: June 4, 2019

Location: Coldwater Fire, Coconino National Forest, Arizona

Summary

On June 4 at approximately 1010 hours, a firefighter sustained a minor burn injury on the face while conducting holding operations during planned firing operations.

Minor burns through ember wash are routine in nature and a risk we accept in fire. Prompt treatment must be given. Firefighter PPE is a testament to a firefighter's exposure to firebrands and radiant heat. An appropriate burn injury response is required.

Narrative

The Coldwater Fire was located on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District on the Coconino National Forest. At the time of the burn accident, the fire was being managed as a Type 3 Incident. The fire was located in a remote area with elevations around 7,500 feet, typified by rolling topography covered with ponderosa pine forest.

At approximately 0830, Division Z personnel received a tactical briefing at an area known as Jones Crossing, a small drainage that—given the wet conditions of the 2019 winter and spring—holds water and is filled with green grass.

One of the objectives for the day was to initiate low intensity fire along Forest Road (FR) 141 with a larger objective of reintroducing fire into a fire-adapted ecosystem. Firing and holding assignments were given and overall tactics were discussed. At 0940, firing operations began with a test fire. By 0955, conditions were determined to be favorable and firing operations continued.

Road Blocked By Rocks

The Holding Boss and Firing Boss Trainee met to assess fire behavior on a closed interior road (732) that had been used as a holding feature on a prescribed fire the previous fall.

As the firing progressed, the Holding Boss drove down FR 732 in a UTV and discovered that the road was blocked by rocks. The Holding Boss turned around to head back up FR 732. By this time, the fire had crossed FR 732 and was creeping in the previous year's burn. The Division clarified that it was ok to have fire across FR 732. The Holding Boss evaluated the situation and decided to continue driving up FR 732 to access the main road. While driving past active fire the Holding Boss received a burn injury to the face. The burn injury consisted of a burn to the right cheek near the eye and burn to the nose most likely from an ember.

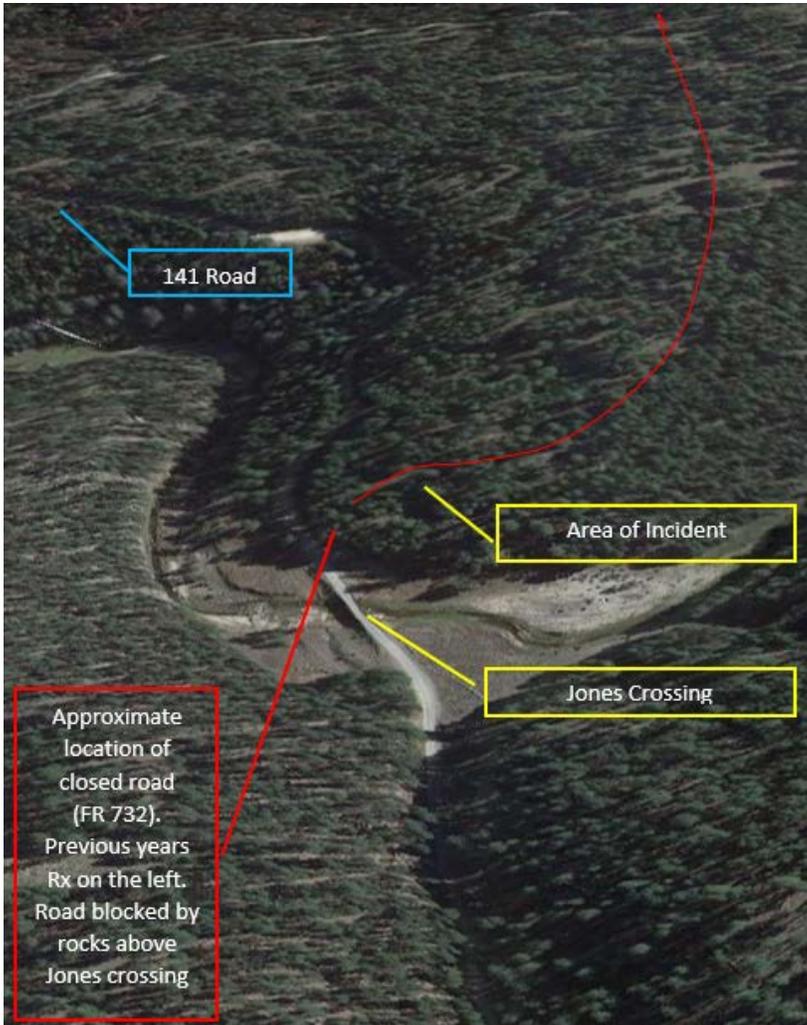
At 1010, the Holding Boss arrived at Jones Crossing and informed the Division Supervisor and Division Supervisor Trainee that they had been burned on the face and had received treatment from their engine's EMT. Division Z determined that the Holding Boss required additional medical evaluation and notified the incident's Medics assigned to the Division.

Medical Response

The Medics determined the burn to be minor. But because the burn was on the face near the eye and airway, the Division recommended transport to a medical facility for further evaluation. A "Green" Medical Incident Report was broadcast over command with Dispatch.

The firefighter was ground transported to Flagstaff Medical Center by their engine's EMT. The firefighter was met by a Forest Hospital Liaison at the hospital, assessed by a physician and released to full duty. Division Z conducted an AAR and identified several of the lessons (see next page).

The Area of Jones Crossing



Lessons

- ❖ Scout interior roads prior to firing.
- ❖ Increase the level of communication between Firing, Holding, and Division Supervisors.
- ❖ Consider allowing the fire to pulse and calm down prior to driving past it.
- ❖ The firefighter was provided excellent care through quick recognition of the potential magnitude of a burn to the face. This included EMT assessment, use of the Medical Incident Report, ALS assessment and physician's assessment complete with a hospital liaison response. Follow this example!

This RLS was submitted by: The Forest Safety Manager

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