

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Firefighter Burn Injury

Date: May 25, 2015

Location: Willow Peak Fire,
Nevada



NARRATIVE

A “Fuel Geysers” Erupts from Chainsaw Tank

On Monday, May 25, a firefighter was seriously injured on the Willow Peak Fire in southern Nevada.

The fire started late Sunday evening in the Mt. Charleston Wilderness. Early the next morning, an engine module hiked in over rough terrain to suppress the fire. The initial size-up: 0.10 acre, single tree on upper third of slope with 75 percent of perimeter active.

A firefighter received serious burns after gasoline sprayed out of a chainsaw gas tank and ignited. The saw became hot during saw operations so the firefighter had set it aside to cool for a few minutes. After it would not restart, he opened the fuel tank. A “fuel geyser” erupted from the tank.

Review of this event is currently underway. An FLA team is committed to investigating the technical aspects of this incident and will complete a thorough report in the future. In the interim, firefighters and leaders are encouraged to review a 45-second video of a fuel geyser and to read three reports on similar incidents. (See link to this video on right and three reports below.)

What’s a “fuel geyser” look like?

Watch this video to see:

https://youtu.be/Ja9t4PtJx_Q



Screen Shot from Video – Shows a fuel geyser erupting from a chainsaw. (This photo is not from the Willow Peak Fire burn injury incident.)

Pressurized Saw Fuel Incidents

Other Reports in the LLC Incident Review Database

[Chainsaw Vapor Lock](#), 2014. (2 pages) “While troubleshooting the problem, the crew member held the saw at waist height and opened the saw’s fuel cap. That’s when the pressurized fuel from the tank sprayed out—into the crew member’s face and eyes.”

[Chainsaw Vapor Lock Accident](#), 2013. (2 pages) “A sawyer was injured when gas from a Stihl MS460 chainsaw fuel tank ignited after the sawyer opened the fuel cap to release excess pressure in the tank. The fuel ignited and ‘flashed’ causing minor burns to the sawyer’s right arm, right side of neck, and right ear. The sawyer was evaluated by burn center physicians and released.”

[Oak Mesa Fire](#), 2008. (6 pages) “The chainsaw operator thought the saw was running low on fuel due to the way it was running and sounded, and stopped to check. The sawyer stepped back from the line about 5 feet. When the fuel cap was opened, pressurized fuel and vapors vented from the fuel tank, spilling onto the right sleeve of the individual’s Nomex fire shirt. He tried to move the chainsaw but it ignited almost immediately and the fire spread instantly to his right arm.”

This RLS was submitted by:

Willow Peak Firefighter
Burn Injury FLA Team

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