

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Chainsaw Laceration to Leg

Date: July 30, 2018

Location: Taylor Creek Fire; Grants Pass, Oregon

***“Do they still issue two-buckle saw chaps from the cache?
We must be careful with them. They bulge at the knee when working!”***

Superintendent

Background

The Taylor Creek Fire was one of six large fires (Grave Creek, Pleasant, Section 14, Swamp, and Spencer Creek) and several smaller fires within the Garner Complex, located approximately 17 miles northeast of Grants Pass, Oregon.

This lightning fire started on July 15. It is located in steep, rocky, brush and tree covered terrain. Values at risk include: residences, timber resources, threatened and endangered species habitat, utilities, utility lines, etc.

On July 30, the Taylor Creek Fire was approximately 22,000 acres in size and 20 percent contained.

The saw’s teeth grabbed the sawyer’s saw chaps and rolled them from the outside inward—exposing the sawyer’s unprotected leg. The chain bit into his leg below the knee, causing a laceration.



Narrative

The crew was constructing handline in the bottom of Taylor Creek. It was approximately 1400 when the lead sawyer and swamper came to a patch of poison oak in 2-5 inch dbh pine trees. Poison oak vines were wrapped around most of these trees.

The sawyer cut a three-inch tree. The poison oak vine grabbed the chain and pulled the cut tree down into the chainsaw bar, pushing the bar into the sawyer’s leg about four inches below the left knee.

The saw’s teeth grabbed the sawyer’s saw chaps and rolled them from the outside inward—exposing the sawyer’s unprotected leg. The chain bit into his leg below the knee, causing a laceration.

The medical unit referred the injured sawyer to the local hospital. The cut took six stitches to close. The sawyer was back to work the next day.

Lessons

1. Saw chaps with two buckles do not securely hold to the leg—even if the buckles are tightened. They remain loose between the buckles and have a tendency to bulge at the knee and along the leg, enabling the chain to grab the chaps, pull the edge inward, and expose the leg.
2. Sawyers need to be aware of additional hazards that might be on or near the tree they are cutting. Some common hazards include: rocks, other limbs, vines, brush, etc. that might affect the operation.
3. S-212 does not provide protocol or guidelines concerning the hazard of vines encircling trees to be cut.

Questions

1. Do we normalize chainsaw use? (In this incident, the lead sawyer had six years of experience.)
2. Is the chainsaw the right tool for cutting brush and small trees in front of line construction?
3. Is there a self-imposed urgency when managing fires? Is this urgency real?



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